

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 13 DECEMBER 2013

**Statement from: Councillor B Young, Executive Councillor for
Crime Reduction, People Management, Legal**

Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service

The current service performance data underlines an encouraging longer term trend of reducing offences and young offenders entering the system. The decreasing number of young people appearing before the Courts has naturally seen a reduction in statutory orders. A shifting emphasis by many agencies towards diversionary activity and early engagement has correlated with an increase in community resolutions and restorative justice outcomes. The standard escalators which progressed young people within the Criminal Justice System have been removed, which presents the ability to apply a wider range of disposals at any time. Many youth offending services have seen a reducing cohort as a result of young people diverted away from the criminal justice system. However, for many services this has also coincided with an overall increase in the rate of re-offending as the reducing cohort now represents the most challenging.

The above changes within youth justice also provide positive opportunities and have enabled Youth Offending Service to focus on key areas of early engagement and prevention activity. The YOS is expanding its involvement in prevention work in conjunction with key partners in Police, Community Safety, ASB and Families Working Together and clear referral pathways exist. This work will be enhanced by a partnership development day in February 2014 to maximise the effectiveness of multi-agency working. The impending changes to ASB legislation in Spring 2014 will enable the Youth Offending Service to support District Councils/ Community Safety Teams in the management, enforcement and appropriate targeting of ASB orders to maximise their impact and provide both prohibitive and positive requirements. As a substantial new initiative, the YOS is developing a framework to actively engage with Lincolnshire Police in the delivery of restorative justice to young people within all stages of the criminal justice process. If successful this will provide assurance in terms of safeguarding, robust assessment, access to YOS resources and the ability to signpost to appropriate agencies. Through the LCJB Victim and Witness Group, a scrutiny and overview panel to evaluate all out of court disposals will soon be in place and this will enable greater transparency of decision making to maintain confidence in restorative justice outcomes.

The number of remands to Youth Detention Accommodation remains low, and the service is working in close co-operation to ensure the new demands of remand management and the associated looked after status are addressed. The remand process within the YOS was recently audited by Lincolnshire County Council corporate audit team and received substantial assurance. A recruitment campaign for remand foster carers is continuing within Children's Services and, when fully established, will provide credible alternatives to remand to custody. The remand budget formula is currently being reviewed by the Youth Justice Board with some areas experiencing significant overspends and others under spending. However, the process remains volatile with spike events and long term remands representing a future financial risk for the local authority.

Due to the large number of private care providers in the county, the Youth Offending Service recently took part in a Department for Education consultation exercise looking at private care home provision and placing of young people outside of their home authority. The consultation results will be published shortly but may result in new regulations which are geared towards improving the standards of care provision and safeguarding vulnerable young people within Lincolnshire. The YOS continues to raise individual care home issues with relevant authorities and have escalated cases with respective local authorities where necessary. The chair of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Board is planning to meet with OFSTED to raise concerns regarding care home provision, and evidence has been submitted from Police, Health and the local authority to support this case.

The reduction in output from the Youth Courts has also resulted in a decrease in the number of Youth Court sittings and the ending of dedicated youth courts at both Spalding and Boston. The rural geography of Lincolnshire and limitations of public transport will inevitably lead to young people travelling greater distances to attend court. The impact of these changes is yet to be evaluated but could potentially result in an increase of failures to attend court and proceedings being delayed incurring costs on relevant agencies.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse includes a range of abusive behaviours which are used by an abusive partner, ex-partner or family member to maintain power and control over their victims. This is not a one off incident but is an ongoing pattern of behaviour. Once begun, the abuse and/or violence will repeat itself and will often get worse over a period of time.

Domestic abuse incidents in Lincolnshire saw an increase from 8,404 in 2010/2011 to 9,363 in 2011/12 - this increase was consistent across all seven county districts. This year current data shows a 2.35% increase in reported incidents. As Domestic Abuse is under reported across the county (research shows victims often experience 20-30 incidents before reporting it to anyone), a target to increase reporting by 5% has been set. Work continues to support victims to give them the confidence to report incidents, and with public bodies to give them the confidence to tackle these complex issues. A strong partnership is in place with LCC taking a leading role in conjunction with Police and Health colleagues.

In October, new contracts commenced to deliver key services to prevent and protect victims of domestic abuse. These include the Domestic Abuse Service, which offers a wide range of support to victims and their families across the county, and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates who support high risk victims, including support through the court process. Work has also started to help schools further understand domestic abuse and their role in this important area.

People Management

Discussions have started with Trades Unions to modify the Council's terms and conditions of employment. In these tough economic times, the council has to look at all ways possible to make the most of our resources. We believe that modernising our terms and conditions in line with local circumstances, whilst at the same time

promoting the importance of good staff performance, will make us a more effective organisation.

People Management Service has restructured to assist the transition into our new contract that will be awarded at the end of this financial year and be fully implemented in April 2015.

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