

NORTHUMBERLAND ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Northumberland Adolescent Service is part of children's social care and the services we provide are as follows:

- Sorted - Substance Misuse Service for under 18's
- Youth Offending Service including the Liaison and Diversion Service
- 14+ LAC, Care Leavers & CIN Social Work Team
- Accommodation Service
- Participation and Programmes
- Youth Service

Description of services:

1. Sorted

Sorted offers information, advice, treatment and care to young people experiencing difficulties with substance misuse (including alcohol). Sorted provide assessment, care planning and psychosocial intervention. Some of the psychosocial interventions undertaken with young people include, motivational work, exploring practical skills that young people can use not only with regard to substance misuse, but throughout all aspects of their lives.

Sorted provide a range of treatment and care interventions including initial assessment, drug and alcohol awareness, harm minimisation, relapse prevention, as well as access to a prescribing service if this is needed. As well as any substance misuse intervention, Sorted provide health screening for all young people within the service and full health assessment and health interventions for those that require this. This is undertaken as some young people have underlying health issues and use substances as a way of managing this.

There are a number of care pathways in place to ensure that young people are picked up by the service at the earliest opportunity to prevent further harm these include A & E, Children excluded from school, Looked After Children living in residential settings, Early help hubs, and those who are stopped by the Police either in possession of alcohol or under the influence. Sorted also offer a substance misuse service into Kyloe House Secure Children's Home, providing all the above for the young people who are placed there. Sorted provide substance misuse training to the Children's Service's workforce across Northumberland as well as support and consultation to professionals and parents and carers.

2. Youth Offending Service

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 created the Youth Justice Board and Youth Offending Teams and set out the key aim for the youth justice system of 'preventing offending and re offending by young people.

Performance is measured against three key indicator areas:

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1. First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system
2. Reoffending rates and
3. Use of custody.

In February 2017 the Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss announced she had appointed Charlie Taylor as the new Chair of the YJB. This is on the back of his review into Youth Justice published Dec 16. This demonstrates the Government's commitment to reforming the Youth Justice System which will help drive improved outcomes for young offenders both in custody and in the community. The report stated our aim 'should be to create a 21st century system that moves away from justice with some welfare, to a welfare system with justice' The government have also announced they will create a new Youth Custody Service. It will also be interesting to see if Charlie Taylor is able over the new few years to implement many of proposals which include improving the treatment of children in police custody and the introduction of Children's Panels committed to rehabilitating children.

In 2016 Northumberland YOS had a Short Quality Screening Inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and received exceptionally positive feedback about the quality of case management being provided.

The service until recently has consisted of an Early Help Team, Court Team and Out of Court Team (including Liaison and Diversion and Restorative Justice). The service has also been supported to provide interventions by the Programmes Team and Family Support Team.

The Youth Offending Service works in partnership with a range of other agencies such as health, police, probation and substance misuse services to ensure a 'joined up' approach to working with young people who offend or are at risk of offending.

Liaison and Diversion Scheme (L&D)

The Liaison and Diversion Service sits alongside the Out of Court Team. The Team offer a health screening and intervention to young people who come into contact with the police and meet the L&D criteria, currently young people who are not supported by other services. The scheme is funded through NHS England and is based on research which tells us that a high proportion of the prison population have unmet health needs which were not identified in childhood or adolescence. Interventions offered by the L&D contribute to the reduction of First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system.

Out of Court Team

The Out of court Team delivers interventions to young people who are dealt with by way of the Out of Court Framework for lower gravity offences or sometimes high gravity offences at the discretion of the Crown Prosecution Service. Part of this work is formal scaled approach intervention where the young person has accepted guilt for a crime. Another part is the delivery of interventions at an earlier stage

(Triage) where young people can be diverted from the formal process. The Out of Court Team also contributes to the performance measure of reducing First Time Entrants and reducing reoffending.

Court Services

The Court Team are responsible for undertaking statutory work in relation to young people subject to court orders, bail support, remands and custodial sentences. This work is governed by YJB National Standards Required contact and interventions with the young person are determined following the completion of the ASSETPlus assessment which assesses risk of re-offending, risk of harm and vulnerability. Plans are implemented specifically in relation to the risks and needs identified to the individual and intensity of YOS involvement determined by the scaled approach.

The YOS attend all Youth and remand Courts in the County as well as Crown Courts when required.

Northumberland have maintained a low custody rate. The reoffending rate in Northumberland has risen to 42% but this is in line with regional and national trends. The YOS have responded to this with the introduction of a 'live tracker'. Those young people who are assessed as medium to high risk of re-offending are monitored closely and we are working with our partners to ensure we respond to any unmet needs which may contribute to further offending.

Restorative Justice

The YOS is required to deliver services to victims of crime through the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. The service has a victim worker who contacts all victims of crimes committed by young people involved with the YOS. We have a commitment to restorative justice and the victim's views inform restorative interventions when appropriate.

Education, Training and Employment

Attached to the Family Support Team is the Troubled Families Employment Advisor. The YOS also has a dedicated full time Education Welfare Officer, and a half time Careers Guidance Advisor attached from the Careers Guidance Service. These workers support young people to access appropriate Education, training and employment opportunities.

3. 14+ Social Work Team

The 14+ Team is a County wide service within NAS and work with young people up to 25 years old. Young people become involved with this service for a variety of reasons.

Looked After Children and Leaving Care young people, these are described as

Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant children under Children Leaving Care Act 2000. This role is to support and prepare young people to make successful transition to independent living at a time when they are ready, support is provided to young people until the age of 21 or 25 if they continue onto further education. The main focus of work is securing and maintaining safe, suitable accommodation. Encourage and maintaining engagement with education, training and employment. Supporting young people to meet their own physical and emotional health needs. For those looked after regular Child & Family (C&F) assessments are completed and Looked After Children (LAC) processes followed with regular care team meetings and 6 monthly LAC reviews with plans overseen by an independent reviewing officer (IRO). From the age of 15 and three quarters all LAC children have pathway plans to ensure a clear focus on support for the transition to independence. Pathway plans are reviewed 6 monthly and as part of service development it is hoped IRO's will remain involved with care leavers post 18 years.

New 14+ referrals to Children's Services where concerns are with regards:

- Homelessness
- Substance Misuse
- Self-harming
- Behaviours which place the young person at risk
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Referral route is through the SPA following a triage assessment
- C&F assessments are completed to determine any further 14+ support
- Young people can have access to interventions from other teams in the adolescent service, such as sorted, health team, programmes and accommodation support, if identified as needed from the C&F.

14+ Child Protection If concerns increase for young people already involved within the team then a strategy meeting will be held and CP procedures followed if necessary. The team also has a team manager who has recently worked in a Child Care locality team who has CP and legal experience to support staff and manage this type of work.

The social work team provides support to young people who are subject to the Risk Management Group (RMG). These young people are in crisis and are at risk of significant harm through CSE, substance misuse, mental health difficulties and offending. The RMG enables an alternative approach to safeguarding this group of young people, ensuring a multi-agency approach with senior management oversight.

The vulnerability checklist (VCL) is completed and four weekly care team meetings held with the young person to review plans of support. The young person is discussed at RMG to ensure all appropriate supports are in place. Young people are encouraged to be involved with the completion of the VCL and can attend the RMG. Northumberland County Council are responsible for the funding required for 14+ Looked after children and those leaving care and although there is no requirement to financially support young people over 18 years (unless in further educational

accommodation), there is a requirement to continue to provide support which is a cost to the Local Authority.

The 14+ team was identified as requiring improvement from the Ofsted SIF inspection last year, especially in relation to pathway planning for those young people leaving care. The team has experienced a number of difficulties over the past 18 months which includes staff sickness due to work related stress and personal circumstances, capability and staff finding it difficult to accept change. Management and senior management have implemented a number of measures to improve performance within the team and reduce staff sickness. This has included a reduction in caseloads, additional training and support for staff and extra management time and supervisions. The team still have a number of staff not in work due to sickness but occupational health support is being provided to those staff, with return to work plans and stress at work risk assessments being completed to reduce to risk of further sickness and to support staff in work.

There has been recent drive to recruit additional suitable social workers to ensure our service user group are receiving a better, improved service and to transfer across a backlog of 14+ LAC cases from the locality teams. This has highlighted that there needs to be a focus on service improvement including improved quality of assessments, planning and intervention and with the above additional resources in place improvements are evident.

4. Accommodation Team/ Moving On Project

Following the successful bid for National Treatment Association Tier 4 capital funding in 2009, the opportunity was created for NAS to purchase property via Asset Management, which led to the development of the Moving On Project.

The criteria for occupation of the Moving On properties' is specifically young people who are at risk of custody or leaving custody and those young people who have been identified by the Risk Management Group as requiring accommodation and support. Care leavers who have offending and substance misuse issues can also be considered.

In order to provide support to these young people, the Accommodation Team was created and consists of a Senior Practitioner and six workers (Band 5). Initially their role was to support the young people in the Moving On Project. This has developed further with the introduction of the accommodation framework and the workers being allocated additional cases of floating support, along with other accommodation related duties as required.

NAS currently have nine properties in the Moving On Project portfolio, 6 are owned by the Service and 3 are rented. All properties are single occupancy placements. The properties are all 2 bedroom properties comprising of 6 houses and 3 flats all located in the South East of the County.

The Accommodation Team have also been responsible for acquiring single occupancy and bespoke placements for the 14+ Team, through the procurement of properties owned by private landlords and arranged through Letting agencies and

our Asset Management Team.

Levels of support that are provided to young people is dependent on the needs of the individual and range from welfare visits, daily checks and up to 24 hour support that would be provided by temporary Agency staff.

Within the last year 2016 the Moving On Project has provided accommodation for 22 young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years and the occupancy level over the last year was 57% this figure is down by 6% from the previous year. However extensive repairs over the property portfolio were undertaken due to the recent SIF Inspection, which highlighted the Project as a good piece of practice.

5. Participation and Programmes Team

This team delivers a wide range of one to one and group work interventions to young people across the Adolescent Service and wider Children's Social Care Service. There are 4 core work strands:

Youth Offending Programme Work, Which includes; Reparation, Unpaid Work Orders, Intensive Surveillance Support work, Early Help & Prevention Programmes, Youth Justice Centre & 1 to 1 mentoring support are all delivered on a regular basis. Interventions are developed based on an individual's offences or support needs. Programmes can last from a brief 30 minutes information session through to 18 month court orders.

Advocacy Service, An advocate is someone who can help an individual to speak up so that their views are heard, their rights met and their problems solved. If a young person wants an independent advocate we refer to Action for Children to help address concerns and issues that arise. The Advocacy Service is used to help individuals address their general views on how children's services should be run through to how their own personal life is affected. Young people can access this service themselves through self-referral & Mind Of My Own our online app based advocacy service or through formal referrals through caseworkers with NAS.

Children in Care Council, We aim to ensure the voices of our most vulnerable children and young people are heard, giving them the influence to directly affect the way we develop and deliver the services that support them. Through the Children in Care Council (Voices Making Choices) Young people in care come together on a regular basis to help shape and develop children's social care services. Over the last 12 months young people have been involved with social work interviews, Corporate Parenting presentations, residentials, and developing and running the Celebrating Achievement at Alnwick Castle as well as social and recreational trips.

Young Advisors Programme, Young advisors are trained young people from a range of backgrounds who come together to work on a range of projects to develop young people's services on a wider level. Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day,

Democracy Week and the Alcohol Intervention Project have all been recently developed and delivered. Projects currently include the development of the #free2bme Emotional Health Project and the Charners Wilderness Centre in the hills near to Rothbury.

6. The Youth Service

Northumberland Youth Service provides a comprehensive programme of activity, support and intervention for some of the most vulnerable young people in Northumberland. It works using a variety of methodologies in partnership with other statutory services, voluntary and community sector agencies and communities to develop innovative, effective projects which result in positive outcomes for young people experiencing child sexual exploitation, health and wellbeing issues including sexual health and mental health, safeguarding issues, vulnerability factors and rural isolation. In addition, the service offers opportunities for young people to engage in youth participation and engagement, employability and enterprise; volunteering and local, regional and national opportunities available to young people e.g. National Citizen Service.

7. Summing Up

Work within teams across NAS varies greatly and therefore time is needed to interrogate workloads. For those services that have case management responsibilities, caseload also are not consistent across services and an audit of what casework is required by each service is to be carefully carried out to ensure efficient, effective workflow and fairness overall.

This update has highlighted stark similarities in service delivery, these are to be considered in light of the current climate and a review is to begin this year. This is to ensure absolute efficiency across all service areas.

Priority areas for NAS has begun and a review of Accommodation Services is well underway, plans are currently underway also to review 14+ Team, Participation & Programs and Youth Service this is either due to cost of the service or duplication of work.

- Independent accommodation review began in January as this needs to improve accommodation provision for young people and ensure for this to be delivered in a more cost effective way.
- Need to consider substance misuse provision within NAS and the review of this service will begin on 1st April 2017.
- Also across services certain similar posts have different grades, these need to be observed, Job Descriptions require interrogation and adjusting to ensure equity and fairness.
- Youth Service and the Participation & Programs element of NAS both run almost identical services, however this does not reach all young people especially those who are harder to reach and engage with. One participation

approach for the whole of children's services to ensure there is a consistent and all young people can be involved.

- Independent living skills; the accommodation team offer support to young people in accommodation but this tends to be welfare checks, property maintenance, supporting young people to go shopping. There needs to be a more targeted independent living programme rolled out across the whole of NAS and this could also be delivered in a more creative purposeful way.
- In NAS Qualified social workers lie within YOS and 14+ both completed detailed assessments. For those young people who are involved with both service areas it means two different social workers completing assessments. More work is needed around this.
- The current duty system is that there are 14+ social worker, Sorted, Court, Accommodation and Appropriate Adult duty workers along with 14+ duty manager, YOS duty manager and sorted manager covering on a daily basis. All members of NAS to be skilled and able to fulfil this role which could enable one NAS manager and one NAS service member to carry out this role.
- We need to consider what other resources are available within NCC Children's and Adult's Services as a whole as well as within NAS i.e. accommodation, education, preparation for independence, promoting health needs etc.

Over the past two years there has been change in Team managers, Senior Managers and Structures within these services, for example; the prevention team becoming early help which has moved into locality areas and there have been cuts within the Health Service. SIF and YOT inspections have been complete with very differing outcomes.

As senior manager new to Northumberland I have begun to review priority areas and we are looking at how they will come together as one to ensure better outcomes for young people while efficiency across all service areas.

