

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE AT 10.30 AM



FINAL WARNINGS/CONVICTIONS OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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1. Purpose of the report

This report was requested by Richard Smith for possible scrutiny by the Committee; the report will examine the position of Hertfordshire in relation to the PAF indicator C18, and inform members of actions underway to improve the current position which has been flagged by the Department of Health (DOH) as appropriate for review.

2. Summary

This is an area of work where there is concern about young people's activity. There are a number of initiatives underway to build on the improvement made in 2000/2001.

3. Conclusions

Despite the method of measurement by the DOH being somewhat imperfect, this is an area of work where there is a strong commitment to improve on the 2000 / 2001 figures. There are a number of joint initiatives between the local quadrant teams, children's residential services and the youth offending teams in place for 2002-2003 and beyond which will take time to take full effect. This is an indicator that is annually reviewed.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Performance Assessment Framework is a central government initiative to improve the outcomes for Looked After children (LAC). Indicator C18 is expressed as a ratio of the number of Looked After Children age 10 to 17 who get into trouble with the Police compared with those children in the general population. The published national figure is 2.5:1 while that for Hertfordshire was 3.6:1 in 2001 with past performance and targets below.

2. Actuals and Targets using DOH data

	Actual	Actual	Target	Target	Target	Target	Target
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Ratio	4.1:1	3.6:1	3.3:1	3.0:1	2.8:1	2.5:1	2:1

These are identified in the CSF plan strategic area 5.5 and the Youth Justice Plan, performance measures 1 & 2.

- 2.1 Both the DOH and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) collect these figures – and do so in slightly different ways. Since the Hertfordshire figures were flagged, it has been possible to review the figures submitted to the Youth Justice Board for other areas. Using the YJB figures those offending in both populations are taken as percentages and then converted to a ratio.

3. Actuals submitted to the YJB for 2000

- 3.1 The selection of authorities illustrated below highlight some of the anomalies which emerge from the calculation of the indicator. High offending in the general population drives down the ratio while areas like Herts and Surrey with low rates of offending in the general population offer figures, which on the face of it trigger review. Large numbers of LAC placed outside of the authority also reduces offending in the local Looked After population. The majority of authorities have no returns for this indicator.

Authority	% LAC Offending	% Gen popn offending	Ratio
Herts	4.6%	1.6%	2.9:1
Nottingham City	19%	4%	4.7:1
Northampton	9%	2%	4.5:1
Surrey	6%	1%	6:1
Croydon	4%	3%	1.9:1
Hammersmith and Fulham	3%	4%	0.7:1

- 3.2 In the case of Herts the above percentages relate to 53 young people who offended in 2001 out of a looked after total for the year of 1148 children. They committed a total of 83 offences.

4. Analysis of the offenders and offences.

Offences committed during 2001 by children looked after during 2001

OFFENCE TYPE	No of Offences
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON	19
THEFT AND HANDLING	19
ARSON AND CRIMINAL DAMAGE	17
MOTORING/VEHICLE THEFT	7
PUBLIC ORDER	5
BREACH STATUTORY ORDER	5
DRUGS OFFENCE	4
OTHER	3
BURGLARY	2
ROBBERY	2
TOTAL	83

5. Gender of Looked After Offenders - (Looked after and offended during 2001)

Gender	No of young offenders
Male	36 (67%)
Female	17 (33%)
Total	53

6. Ethnicity of Looked After Offenders - (Looked after and offended during 2001)

Ethnicity Desc	No of young offenders
White	49
Black or Black British	3
Chinese or other ethnic	1
Total	53

7. Initiatives

- 7.1 The 'Making it Happen in Sport' project will target 40 LAC to enhance their use of positive leisure activities through engagement with sporting opportunities over 2 years. These LAC will be encouraged and assisted to participate in and try sports, gain help in joining clubs, purchasing equipment and getting lessons much as children might expect in family homes. This is a new opportunity available to LAC. The focus of this work is positive leisure activity and links with positive role models for young people.

- 7.2 When young people enter children's residential they are given a clear introduction and the ground-rules regarding behaviour. Each young person has a care plan with issues and actions to be worked on identified and agreed. Two key workers are appointed with each child and formal sessions held weekly to review progress. There are sanctions for those who break the rules with rewards for those who do well. Offending both within and outside the Home is raised in these sessions.
- 7.3 The four Young Citizens Project (YCP) teams (which are the preventative arm of CSF Quadrant Youth Teams, and work with young people to help reduce disaffection and exclusion), have nominated liaison officers to each Children's Home in their quadrant to offer advice on dealing with offending behaviour. They can also offer short interventions to children on the consequences of offending. A nominated liaison within the Children's Home will take responsibility for making referrals, this has been available since April 2002 and demand is yet to be established.
- 7.4 Every LAC in a Children's Home who receives a Police reprimand is referred to the YCP for assessment and intervention if appropriate (all those who receive a Final Warning will be offered intervention by either the YCP or local Youth Offending Team). This takes the form of an assessment to establish underlying reasons for the behaviour, some work on the consequences of continued offending behaviour and either brief intervention or further discussion with other carers about the way forward with the other issues that have been uncovered. This resource is not normally available to children and young people at the Reprimand stage.
- 7.5 Stanfield, the largest of the Herts Children's Homes has trained all its staff and is piloting a restorative justice approach to child care management, focused on putting things right rather than punishment, it is hoped this will reduce the need for police intervention. This 'pilot' is being evaluated by the University of Hertfordshire for CSF and the Youth Justice Board. Staff who have received training alongside the police secondees to the local Youth Offending Team are enthusiastic about the application of this approach in this setting and should the initiative show results it is proposed to roll it out to the other Children's Residential Unit.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Cost of training Residential Staff in Restorative Approaches
£8500 funded by Youth Justice Service (Youth Justice Board)
£4000 Evaluation (Youth Justice Board grant aid)
- 8.2 "Making it Happen in Sport"
£20,000 over two years from CC Community Safety Budget.

9. Background information used by the author in preparing this report:

C.S.F Plan

Youth Justice Plan

Youth Justice Board annual returns: 2000

(1)Wiltshire Local Authority Brewin 2001 unpublished.