
PLACEMENT OF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE PREVENTIONS WORKER IN
HUMMERSKNOTT & SKERNE PARK SCHOOLS

Purpose of Report

1. This report is prepared to update members of the current placement of one Youth Offending Service (YOS) Preventions Officer serving Hummersknott and Skerne Park schools and to provide information on recent changes in relation to the cluster arrangements.

Summary

2. Members may be aware that Darlington YOS was allocated Youth Justice Board (YJB) Preventions funding for 06/07 and 07/08. This funding was supplemented by additional matched funding from the Extended Schools Programme in order to develop targeted prevention services at Hummersknott and Skerne Park Primary with the placement of a YOS Prevention Officer

Information and Analysis

3. The development and delivery of targeted prevention services within Hummersknott and Skerne Park schools contributes to a number of complementary government initiatives (health, social care, education, social inclusion). In addition, the programme has focused on preventing youth crime and anti-social behaviour, and improving the quality of life of those young people at risk and their families and also for those who live in their communities. This targeted approach will also contribute to the PSA stretch target to reduce by 10% the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system by 2008-09.
4. The original key objectives of the YOS Preventions Officer placement :
 - To reduce the number of first time entrants into the Criminal Justice System
 - To improve assessment of risk and need of young people who are potential offenders
 - To improve access to specialist and mainstream services.
 - To work with young people who are at risk of permanent and fixed term exclusion
 - To work with young people who may be, or are involved in substance misuse
 - To work with families who are not engaging in the “school process”
 - To work with year 6 pupils at Skerne Park Primary School to support them through transition to Hummersknott School
5. However, since the recent introduction of Children Services cluster arrangements, a cluster plan has been developed to build upon the work already being undertaken at Hummersknott and Skerne Park schools. These prevention arrangements will now cover other Schools in that cluster i.e. Carmel, Heighington High Coniscliffe, Mowden Infants and Juniors, Abbey Federation, St Augustine’s and George Dent.
6. The YOS Preventions Officer will provide similar interventions at the additional schools, however, as a consequence it is anticipated that the numbers of young people being referred and worked with, will be much lower than those previously from Hummersknott and Skerne Park. To further enhance services to young people and their families attending these schools,

a referral system has been introduced to ensure provision is needs led. The Prevention Officers time will be dependent on engagement if pupils and/or their families fail to engage, the support will have to be withdrawn.

7. The Head Teacher from Hummersknott School has recently reported that “there have been some clear benefits to the school and therefore the students, the Preventions Officer has brought a different dimension to our work with young people. They themselves relate readily to him as someone who they can relate to and find helpful”. Some of the benefits include:-
 - Rapid access to additional support, e.g. Substance Misuse, Sexual Health, CAMHS and anger management.
 - Increased engagement from parents
 - Meeting the needs of the most difficult children
 - Access to information regarding students behaviors outside of school
 - Development of projects that have improved transition and assistance in ensuring students settle well into the environment of a new large school
 - Staff development within school

Activities undertaken to end June 2007

Transition work with Skerne Park

8. This included work with year 6 children from Skerne Park school, involved in holiday activities at Hummersknott to help aid transition. It has been reported that there is evidence that students were more confident on entry to Hummersknott by having a person they could engage with through Y6 into Y7. The school has stated that “such relationships with children and parents has formed a firm foundation on which to build at Hummersknott and also enabled us to engage with parents at an early stage. It has also helped overcome some of the barriers that might otherwise prevent parents working with the school”.

A garden project has been developed following a successful lottery funding bid. This has been developed to raise the health standards in the school. The work has been developed in conjunction with the Community Partnership so that the garden can be utilized by all members of the local community.

A system of pod casting has also been set up for children in Skerne Park School to seek answers to some of the many questions that children may have about Hummersknott School. These include a variety of staff from the cook to the Head Teacher.

Anger Management

9. The Preventions Officer has organized work with approx. 30 girls in years 7,8 and 9. There are regular activity sessions held each week. The students are referred to the group via their College Director or by the Deputy Head. The Preventions Officer has also used these sessions to train a Teaching Assistant in order to facilitate further groups.

1:1 support

10. To date there have been 26 students accessing 1:1 support.(17 – Hummerskott School; 9 – Skerne Park School) These young people have been assessed using the Youth Justice Boards risk assessment tool ONSET. ONSET identifies the risk factors and enables the Prevention Officer to develop an intervention plan to address the identified needs.

Parenting Support

11. The Preventions Officer has been able to work directly with parents through home visits and meetings at school. He has been successful in engaging 11 sets of parents and assisting them to access YOS Parenting Support Services.

Girls Sexual Health Groups

12. Following group work with girls in years 10 and 11 the Teaching Assistant involved expressed concerns over issues relating to their sexual health. The Preventions Officer organized intervention work and established a girl's sexual health group to enable them to discuss their attitudes to sexual behaviour and consider the risks to their own health and what to do to minimize these.

Chill Out café

13. The Chill Out Café was originally set up for use outside normal school hours. The Preventions Officer has now opened this up during lunch times. This enables students to gather in a safe and relaxed place. The impact on the school has been very positive as many of those attending would otherwise become bored and may have engaged in anti-social behaviour in or around the school. It also forms another means of building relationships and reinforcing positive behaviour.
14. Hummersknott School has noted however, "that a number of young people have not responded to intervention and support. What was more worrying was that 10% of the year 7 which joined Hummersknott, were already at risk of exclusion on arrival". It has been suggested that those children were already known about for a number of years and that intervention with those children and their families could be introduced at an even earlier stage of their education.

Conclusion

- 15 The current arrangements have had clear benefits for some children and young people. It is also acknowledged that there has been increased engagement from parents. The new cluster arrangement will provide the Preventions Officer with the opportunity to support the additional schools; however, the number of referrals will need careful monitoring to ensure that the quality of work is not compromised.
16. From 1st April 2008 the Prevention Officer will be funded through Cluster Funding arrangements.

Recommendation

17. Members are asked to
 - (a) Note the progress made within the current schools
 - (b) Receive further reports on the progress of this work at the additional schools

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