

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6th April 2010	Unrestricted		
Report of: Lutfur Ali, Assistant Chief Executive Originating Officer(s): David Sommerfeld Scrutiny and Equalities Support Officer		Title: <i>Youth Offenders: Supporting Vulnerable Young People</i> Report of the Scrutiny Working Group Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of the Youth Offenders Working Group for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Agree the report.
- 2.2 Authorise the Service Head for Scrutiny and Equalities to amend the final report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Safe and Supportive.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972 (AS AMENDED) SECTION 100D (AS AMENDED)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Background paper

Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection

None

N/A

3. Background

- 3.1 The Working Group was established in July 2009 to investigate the causes of youth crime, what interventions are already in place to combat youth crime and what further work the Council could do to further reduce youth crime and lower youth crime re-offending rates.
- 3.2 The review had the following objectives. To find feasible solutions to preventing youth crime it wanted to look at:
- The national agenda on youth crime and prevention;
 - Local monitoring and partnership arrangements and respective roles of partners including consideration of local youth crime trends taking into consideration diversity issues;
 - Current preventative initiatives across the partnership;
 - Levels of health, the role of families and the links to youth offending;
 - Reasons why young people might be involved in crime and their views on preventative initiatives;
 - The support given to the most vulnerable young people in problematic and vulnerable families – young people and housing issues six main objectives.
- 3.3 To gather evidence the Working Group visited a Young Offenders Institute and a Youth Court. They also undertook a number of interviews and focus groups with young people being supported by the Youth Offending Team and parents of young offenders. In addition to this a number of evidence gathering sessions with key stakeholders such as the Police, the Youth Justice Board and the Youth Offending Team. The evidence gathered has helped develop and inform the recommendations of this review.
- 3.4 As youth crime is a complex issue the Working Group's recommendations cover a large range of issues. They look at ways of ensuring appropriate resettlement of young offenders on leaving custody, finding ways to re engage young people with the education system, ensuring families of young offenders are given appropriate support to deal with their young people, the provision of activities for young people, improving the communication between different originations, the training offered to officers and the resources for organisations dealing with young offenders. In addition the recommendations promote benchmarking and looking at the transition of young offenders from the youth justice to the adult justice system.
- 3.5 The report with recommendations is attached at Appendix A. Once agreed, the Working Groups report will be submitted to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations.

4. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

- 4.1. The Council is required by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall make reports and recommendations

to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with the Constitution and the statutory framework for Cabinet to provide a response.

- 4.2. The report contains recommendations which are capable of being carried out within the Council's statutory functions. The report identifies how it relates to the Community Plan, so there is potential for the recommendations to be related to the Council's well-being power in section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Council is required by section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to have and to implement strategies for the reduction of crime and disorder, for combating substance misuse and for the reduction of re-offending. Some of the recommendations could be built into these strategies. The Council is required under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to have a youth offending team and to secure the provision of youth justice services in Tower Hamlets. Some of the recommendations may be related to these functions. If Cabinet supported the recommendations, it would be for officers to ensure that any action is carried out lawfully.

5. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.1 This report describes the report and recommendations of the Youth Offenders Working Group.
- 5.2 There are no specific financial implications but recommendation R3 proposes investigation of further provision of additional emergency supported housing within Tower Hamlets for young people leaving custody, or appearing before the youth court and in need.
- 5.3 In the event that the Council agrees further action in response to this report's recommendation and other recommendations then officers will be obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made.

6. One Tower Hamlets consideration

- 6.1 As this report deals with youth crime, it focuses on only one section of our residents, that of young people. However as youth crime effects the whole population, it can cause tensions between young people and other groups within the population. Therefore if these recommendations are successful, they will help create a more cohesive population, were people do not fear young people. Furthermore, recommendations 1 – 10 will help to integrate young offenders into wider, law abiding society.
- 6.2 It should also be noted that the evidence gathered by the report shows that in 2008/09 that Asian/Asian British young people committed the biggest proportion of offenses that got a substantive outcome. While Black/Black British young people are over represented in the youth justice system when compared to the proportion Black/Black British make up of Tower Hamlet's population. As the recommendations aim to help all young offenders, these trends are addressed by the recommendation's actions.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the Working Group's report or recommendations.

Appendix A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group Report

Youth Offenders: Supporting Vulnerable Young People



**The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council
March 2010**

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Acknowledgements

The Working Group would like to thank HM Young Offenders' Institution Huntercombe for giving them the opportunity to visit the Institution, the Pupil Referral Unit at the Harpley Centre to allow them to meet parents and the Thames Youth Magistrate Court for allowing them to see a youth court in action and meet court officials. Much of what was learnt at these visits have informed this review. The Working Group also wishes to thank all the young people and parents they interviewed and met in focus groups. Their contribution has influenced many of the recommendations.

Working Group Chair:

Councillor Denise Jones Chair, Scrutiny Lead, Safe and Supportive Communities

Working Group Members

Councillor Carli Harper-Penman
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Rajib Ahmed
Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Phil Briscoe
Councillor Stephanie Eaton

Co – Opted Member

David Chesterton Local Resident, Magistrate, Chair of Advisory group for the Young Offenders Academy Project

Other Councillors involved in the review

Councillor Ann Jackson
Councillor Dulal Uddin
Councillor Abdul Aziz Sardar

London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Officers

Mary Durkin	Service Head Youth and Community Learning
Stuart Johnson	Head of Youth Offending Services
Douglas Canning	Operations Manager - Community Supervision Team
Paul Hains	Resettlement and Aftercare Coordinator
Peter Bullen	Youth Offending Services Information Systems Manager
Mohammed Shahazan	Youth Inclusion and Support Panel and Challenge and Support Manager
Ian Suatt	Education Coordinator and Youth Offender Team (YOT) Teacher

Colin Cormack
Jacqueline Rodney

Head of Homeless & Housing Advice Services
Housing Options Officer

Scrutiny and Equalities

Michael Keating
Afazul Hoque
David Sommerfeld

Service Head Scrutiny and Equalities
Scrutiny Policy Manager
Scrutiny and Equalities Support Officer

External Members

Stephen Stachini
John Anthony
Jaswinder Manning
Chief Inspector Nigel Nottidge
Sergeant Peter Grundy
Nasrine Matin

Senior Performance Advisor, Youth Justice Board
Youth Justice Board
Youth Justice Board
Safer Neighbourhoods Team, Metropolitan Police
Metropolitan Police
Head of Offender Management Unit at HM Young
Offenders' Institution Huntercombe
Teacher at the Pupil Referral Unit at the Harpley
Centre
Legal Team Manager (Youth) Thames Magistrate
Court

Jo Easton

Jennifer Bracher

Chair's Forward

Tower Hamlets Community Plan sets a vision to 'improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Tower Hamlets'.

The theme of Safe and Supportive Communities, embedded in 'One Tower Hamlets,' is central to this vision. It is about creating a place where crime is rare and tackled effectively and where communities feel they can live in peace. It recognises that the most disadvantaged people are at risk of becoming perpetrators and victims of crime and calls for strong targeted support and intervention.

The aim of this Review was to gather information from the Youth Justice Board, Youth Offending Team (YOT), the establishments young offenders are involved in (such as the Courts and Young Offending Institutions), and young people and parents to enable us to find out why young people in Tower Hamlets get involved in crime, how effective the national and local prevention schemes are and to see if we could come up with some suggestions that might make improvements.

As this review developed it became clear that youth offending is complex. The Scrutiny Members found that the majority of young people we interviewed had underachieved at school and had opted out of the education system. Many had housing problems and most had difficulty with anger management. We believe that closer communications could be developed between local agencies, to ensure that families, schools, housing and health providers work together on the progress of young offenders.

The Youth Justice Board point out that as the risk factors of youth offending overlap with educational underachievement, young parenthood and adolescent mental health problems, addressing them helps to tackle a number of negative outcomes and not only youth offending. This is why the 17 recommendations we make are so important. These recommendations also cover a wide set of issues, as each new piece of evidence gained, uncovered further issues.

We were impressed with the quality of the work carried out by the YOT, the YJB, the Young Offenders Institutions and the Youth Courts. We were even more impressed by the clear dedication, and care shown by officers for the young people they were working with.

I would like to thank all the young people and their parents who took part in this Review. We see this as a first attempt and would like to suggest the London Criminal Justice Board and Youth Justice Board could encourage other Boroughs to conduct a similar review. I would also like to thank all those listed above for giving their time and for making suggestions to improve the system.

I hope this Review will go some way towards changing systems for the better and that maybe, with effective cross-agency working, Tower Hamlets could one day become a custody free zone.

Cllr Denise Jones
Scrutiny Lead, Safe and Supportive.

Recommendations

Resettlement of young offenders

- R1** That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate sign up to the principles of the London Youth Resettlement Pledge.
- R2** That all young offenders who are at risk of becoming homeless are assessed by a housing officer prior to discharge.
- R3** That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate and the Housing service investigate the provision of additional emergency supported housing within Tower Hamlets for young people leaving custody, or appearing before the youth court and in need.

Re engagement of young people with the Education system

- R4** That the Youth Offending Team maintains up to date data on the number of young people in the Youth Offending Team cohort with special educational needs.
- R5** That, in line with the Rose review, the Children, Schools and Families Directorate support schools so that all teachers are made aware of the difficulties of dyslexia and specialist teachers in each school are trained to recognise the symptoms of dyslexia.
- R6** That Cabinet consider supporting the UK Foyer Federation's proposal to create a Young Offenders Academy in East London.

Family support

- R7** That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate ensure that parenting courses are recommended as a matter of course to parents of young people who are entering the Youth Justice system.
- R8** That the Youth Offending Team develop exit strategies for families of young offenders, linking with targeted youth support and parenting support.

Provision of activities

- R9** That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate use innovative methods of communication to publicise the activities and courses available through Youth Services.
- R10** That the Human Resources Team and Skillsmatch explore increasing the number of work experience placements, specifically targeting ex-offenders (linked with the Worklessness Scrutiny Review).

R11 That the Youth Offending Team discuss with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) the provision of anger management training for young offenders, as appropriate.

Communication

R12 That the Youth Offending Team and Social Care ensure there is good and appropriate communication between them and any Tower Hamlets young person placed in a Young Offenders Institution, Secure Training Centres or Secure Children's Homes, whether on remand or sentence.

Training

R13 That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate ensure that as part of their basic training all social workers and youth workers are given introductory training in local systems for work with young people at risk of offending.

Resources

R14 That Cabinet lobbies Central Government and the Youth Justice Board to ensure Young Offenders Institutions are sufficiently funded to provide a full range of education, mental health and other support services, to facilitate each young offenders transition into responsible, law abiding adulthood.

R15 That in preparation for a period of fiscal tightening the Youth Offending Team identifies and tracks all its current and anticipated funding. Many important programmes have at risk all or part of their funding. This situation requires close monitoring, particularly where partnerships are involved.

Benchmarking

R16 That the Youth Offending Team regularly benchmark against innovative youth offending schemes nationally and where appropriate internationally.

Transition

R17 That the Youth Offending Team ensures young offenders are supported during the transition from the youth justice to the adult justice system, providing full information to Probation services at the point of transfer.

Introduction

1. In 2009/10 the Scrutiny Lead for Safe and Supportive Communities, Councillor Denise Jones, identified the challenges of youth offending and its impact on young people's lives, aspirations and the wider community as the focus for a scrutiny review. Youth crime is a concern for residents that continues to be raised with Councillors. Neither the Council, nor the Police, can tackle youth offending alone; it requires a sophisticated partnership approach. In addition to managing youth offending, it is important that there are interventions in place to prevent young people from offending both for their well being and to reduce the cost of addressing the aftermath. Crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime pose risks to the harmony of communities and challenges community cohesion. It is therefore important to have systems in place to help young people resist being involved in crime and to support those who succumb to reduce the risks of re-offending.
2. Tackling youth crime should not just be about enforcement and punishment or prevention and support as required by our regional partners. It should also be about listening to local people and developing local solutions with them. This review has been a useful opportunity to explore the reasons why local young people get involved in crime and what they think preventative measures should look like. In involving both young people and their parents the Working Group have gained a better understanding of a young offender's experience, allowing them to identify ways of improving support and intervention.
3. The aims of the review were to find feasible solutions to preventing youth crime by looking at:
 - The national agenda on youth crime and prevention;
 - Local monitoring and partnership arrangements and respective roles of partners including consideration of local youth crime trends taking into consideration diversity issues;
 - Current preventative initiatives across the partnership;
 - Levels of health, the role of families and the links to youth offending;
 - Reasons why young people might be involved in crime and their views on preventative initiatives;
 - The support given to the most vulnerable young people in problematic and vulnerable families – young people and housing issues
4. To achieve this aim the Working Group agreed the following work programme for the review:

Introductory Meeting (November 2009)

- Agree scoping document
- The National and Local drivers behind youth offending
- Young Offenders Academy Project, a new approach to young offenders in East London

Visits, Interviews and Focus Groups (October 2009 – February 2010)

- Visit to Huntercombe Young Offenders Institute in Oxfordshire
- Interviews with young people on the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP)
- Focus group with young people referred to the Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP)
- Interviews with young people on the Resettlement and Aftercare Programme (RAP)
- Focus group with parents of young offenders
- Focus group with young people on the Triage Programme
- Visit to Thames Youth Court

Second Review Meeting (December 2009)

- The Police's perspective of youth offending
- Tower Hamlets' Youth Offending Team's (YOT) performance
- Trends of learning difficulties amongst young offenders
- The current local preventative measures

Third Review Meeting (January 2010)

- Young offenders and housing
- The London Youth Resettlement Pledge
- Review of evidence and discussion of possible recommendations

5. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the Working Group's report and its recommendations. Following this, Cabinet will develop an action plan to outline how the recommendations will be implemented.

Background

National context

6. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out measures to prevent offending, as part of the youth justice system. The implementation of this aim is undertaken nationally through the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and locally through the Youth Offending Team (YOT). With the recent implementation of the Police & Justice Act 2006 councils now have powers to scrutinise crime and disorder partnerships. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 also grants powers to review and scrutinise Local Area Agreements and the work of partner organisations signed up to targets within them.
7. The YJB for England and Wales is an executive non-departmental public body. Its board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice. The YJB oversees the youth justice system in England and Wales. It works to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people under the age of 18, and to ensure that custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour.
8. An important part of the youth justice system is the YOT. Every local authority in England and Wales has a YOT and their work will involve working in partnership with the police, probation service, social services, health, education, drugs and alcohol misuse and housing officers. In addressing youth offending, YOTs are responsible for putting in place preventative initiatives. With key partners the YOT is required to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan setting out what youth offending looks like and local preventative measures to address the findings.
9. The Government's Youth Crime Action Plan 2008¹ is a cross-government action plan for tackling youth crime. Recognising that the majority of young people are law abiding citizens, it sets out measures to tackle the issue. Enforcement and punishment where behaviour is unacceptable, non-negotiable support and challenge where it is needed are the foundations of its approach.
10. The London Reducing Re-offending Action Plan sets out the commitment to address the needs of offenders and re-offenders against the backdrop of a growing national prison population. It sets out to improve the co-ordination of services for prisoners on release from custody which is likely to reduce the risks of re-offending. It promotes better information sharing enabling better co-ordination and has the potential to reduce costs and tackle social exclusion issues for the individual. Following on from the consultation on this, the Government has made a commitment to improve the resettlement of young offenders. A key part of this is to forge better links between housing and YOTs. Part of this would be a Youth Re-settlement Pledge, which aims to place children aged 16 and 17 years of age as children in need under the Children

¹ 'Youth Crime Action Plan 2008,' HM Government, July 2008.

Act 1989. The potential negative impact of young people who cannot return to their parental home cannot be under-estimated. Recognising the vulnerability of children placed in bed and breakfast who then re-offend, the Youth Resettlement Pledge sets out to provide suitable accommodation which meets their needs.

11. The YJB's research has classified the risks factors of a young person becoming an offender within four different areas of family, school, community and personal.² The risks factors are shown below:

Risks factors for youth offending			
Family	School	Community	Personal
Poor parental supervision and discipline	Low achievement beginning in primary school	Living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood	Hyperactivity and impulsivity
Conflict	Aggressive behaviour (including bullying)	Disorganisation and neglect	Low intelligence and cognitive impairment
History of criminal activity	Lack of commitment (including truancy)	Availability of drugs	Alienation and lack of social commitment
Parental attitudes that condone anti-social and criminal behaviour	School disorganisation	High population turnover, and lack of neighbourhood Attachment	Attitudes that condone offending and drug misuse
Low income			Early involvement in crime and drug misuse
Poor housing			Friendships with peers involved in crime and drug misuse

12. The YJB point out that as the risk factors of youth offending overlap with educational underachievement, young parenthood and adolescent mental health problems, addressing them helps to tackle a number of negative outcomes and not only youth offending.

Local context

13. The Community Plan for Tower Hamlets sets out the vision to 'improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Tower Hamlets'. The theme of Safe and Supportive Communities embedded in 'One Tower Hamlets' is central

² 'Risk and Protective Factors.' Youth Justice Board, 2005.

to this review. It is about creating a place where crime is rare and tackled effectively and where communities feel they can live in peace. It recognises that the most disadvantaged people are highest at risk of becoming perpetrators and victims of crime; it calls for strong targeted support and intervention.

14. Though Resident concerns about crime reduced from 55% in 2007/08 to 47% in 2008/09³, it is still a key priority for residents. Another key concern for residents is anti-social behaviour, although there has been a significant reduction in the percentage of residents seeing anti-social behaviour as a problem from 2007/08 to 2008/09. Over 50% of residents say teenagers hanging around the streets, people using drugs and parents not taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children are key anti-social behaviour related issues of concern for them.
15. According to the Office for National Statistics, the total population of Tower Hamlets was approximately 223,000 in 2005 and was characterised by youth and ethnic diversity. 28% of residents are aged 19 years or younger (National Statistics, 2005) and 76% of the school age population are from a minority ethnic group. GLA (2006) projections for Tower Hamlets demonstrates that the number of young people aged 5 to 19 is likely to increase by 2011. This makes Tower Hamlets a relatively young borough and has implications for service provision. It increases the risk and perceptions of young people being involved in youth offending activities and the management of this jointly with partners and parents is crucial. A growing young population in a borough ranked as the third most deprived could present further challenges in addressing youth offending.

Youth offending in Tower Hamlets

16. The four main offences in the last three years involving 10 to 17 year olds in Tower Hamlets have been violence against the person (204 offenders in 08/09, relating to 20.1% proportion of youth crime committed that year), drugs (153 offenders in 08/09, relating to 15.1% of the proportion of youth crime committed that year), theft and handling (111 offenders in 08/09, relating to 10.9% of the proportion of youth crime committed that year) and public order offences (98 offenders in 08/09, relating to 9.7% of the proportion of youth crime committed that year). There have also been high incidences of motor vehicle crime, robbery and criminal damage related offences. Although the numbers of offences with substantive outcomes, such as reprimand, final warnings or court sentences, have reduced from 1159 in 2006/07 to 1015 in 2008/09, such offences impact negatively on the 10 to 17 years olds who are involved and on the wider community.

³ 'Annual Residents Survey' 2008/09

17. Table 1 shows offences in 2008/09 with a substantive outcome committed by young people broken down by ethnicity.⁴ The percentages in the table express what proportion of the overall number of offences these numbers relate to. Given the diversity of the young population, there appears to be a high percentage of Asian young people who are involved in youth crime.

Table 1

Ethnic Category	Number	%
Asian or Asian British	542	53.4%
White	260	25.6%
Black or Black British	109	10.7%
Mixed	96	9.5%
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	Figures too small for statistical analysis	

18. Table 2 shows the ethnicity of young offenders over a three year period, against ethnicity breakdown of the general population. This shows that Black or Black British youth are over represented in Tower Hamlets' youth justice system compared to the percentage of the population they make up.

Table 2

Offenders Ethnicity	All Years	Population Estimate
Asian or Asian British	56.6%	58.5%
Black or Black British	9.9%	6.2%
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	0.7%	2.3%
Mixed	6.3%	3.8%
Unknown	0.3%	
White	26.2%	29.1%

19. Table 3 shows there appears to be a disproportionate number of young 10 to 17 year old males involved in youth offending during 2008/09 where there has been a substantive outcome.

Table 3

Gender	% of offences committed by group
Male	89.6%
Female	10.4%

⁴ The data highlighted is for 2008/09, any trends identified can change year on year.

Tower Hamlets Youth Justice Plan

20. It is a requirement of all local authorities and their partners to produce a Youth Justice Plan. It sets out local youth offending issues and what preventative measures will be put in place. Its remit is to focus on young people aged 10-17 years at risk of youth offending. The key strategic aims of the Youth Justice Plan are to:

- Prevent offending
- Reduce re-offending
- Ensure the safe and effective use of custody
- Increase victim and public confidence.

21. The priorities in the Youth Justice Plan 2008 were informed by the Youth Justice Service's work which aimed to engage with the families and to expand on their early intervention work. It was recognised that this approach would have some immediate effect but the impact on youth crime would be seen in the long and medium terms.

22. Due to this direction of work the Plan⁵ recognised the need to develop work with First Time Entrants, Custodial Remands and Parenting Support and the need to improve performance on Accommodation. The following preventative and support measures have been put in place:

- Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP)
- Triage
- Out of School Patrols

Current preventative and supportive measures.

23. The YOT already use a number of tools to both prevent youth offending and to support young offenders. A summary of these are given below:

- **A case management role** - For a significant number of the young offenders the YOT works with, the YOT provide a case management role.
- **Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP)** - This provides an alternative to custody. It is designed to meet the needs of the community and the young offender. The offender has to spend 25 hours a week under intensive supervision for the first 3 months. After this they have reduced supervision (minimum of 5 hours a week and weekend supervision) usually for 3 months. During these supervisions, the young people are engaged in activities that look at offending behaviour, interpersonal skills, education, training, employment, family support and restorative justice.

⁵ 'Youth Justice Plan Planning Tool,' 2008/09

- **Challenge and Support Programme (CaSP)** - This programme aims to prevent the escalation of anti social behaviour by children and young people by using a 'triple track' approach to tackle anti social behaviour and youth crime. The first track is 'tough enforcement,' where measures like Anti Social Behaviour Orders are used to stop escalation of anti social behaviour. The second track is 'non-negotiable support,' where support is given in conjunction with the tough enforcement. The final track is 'early effective intervention,' where it is ensured young people have access to support, such as the YISP, that could help them break down the barriers they face.
- **Resettlement and aftercare programme (RAP)** - This provides support to vulnerable children and young people leaving custody by supporting the young person with employment and housing issues. Their aim is to help young people escape the re-offending cycle.
- **Triage Programme** - This programme includes the expertise of the YOT in the Police's decision making process for low gravity, first time offences committed by 10 -17 year olds. Young people on the programme participate in activities of restorative intervention and, crime and consequences sessions. Support is also offered to the Parent or Carer of the young person.
- **Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP)** - 8 – 13 year olds who are seen as being at risk of committing crimes (they may not have committed a crime) are referred to the panel by social workers, teachers and sometimes parents. Once referred to the panel, the panel will try and find ways to help the young person and their family, aiming to help them access mainstream services.

Tower Hamlets' YOT's performance

24. It should be recognised that the YOT in Tower Hamlets is successful in the work it does. This is clearly seen by its performance figures as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Indicator	Result by percentage	Result by number	London Average
NI 19 Rate of proven re-offending by young offenders	0.39% (Jan 09 – March 09)	63 re-offences in a cohort of 162 during the period Jan – March 2009	0.28% (Jan 09 – March 09)
NI 111 First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10 – 17	14.4% reduction when comparing the six month period of April 09 – Sep 09 with April 08 – Sep 08	113 (April 09 – Sep 09) 132 (April 08 – Sep 08)	14.5% reduction
NI 43 Young people within the	6.1% (April 09 – Sep 09)	264 sentences, 16 of these were	7.5% (April 09 – Sep 09)

Youth Justice System receiving a conviction in court who are sentenced to custody		custodial (April 09 – Sep 09)	
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<p>NI 45 Young offenders' engagement in suitable education, training and employment (ETE)</p>	<p>82.2% (April 09 – Sep 09)</p>	<p>67 young people aged 16 and over are supervised by the YOT</p> <p>58 young people aged 16 and over in suitable education, training and employment (ETE)</p> <p>85 young people aged below 16 supervised by the YOT</p> <p>69 young people aged below 16 in ETE.</p>	<p>75.7% (April 09 – Sep 09)</p>
<p>NI 46 Young Offenders' access to suitable accommodation</p>	<p>97.2% (April 09 – Sep 09)</p>		<p>96.2% (April 09 – Sep 09)</p>

25. The Working Group heard from officers at the YJB that Tower Hamlets tends to out perform their statistical neighbours. In particular the performance around resettlement has meant the YJB have often sign posted other YOTs to Tower Hamlet's integrated resettlement service as good practice. The Working Group also found that the Council is on track to meet its Local Area Agreement indicator of NI 19 (Rate of re-offending by young offenders). Though this shows the YOT work in Tower Hamlets to be effective, this does not mean there is not space for improvement.

Findings

Resettlement of young offenders

26. The Government Office for London (GOL), the YJB and Young London Matters claim that nationally, approximately 70% of young offenders will re-offend within 12 months of being released from custody.⁶ In Tower Hamlets the average number of re-offences per young person in the youth offenders cohort, between January and March 2009 was 0.39 (out of a cohort of 162 there were 63 re-offences). The risk of re-offending increases if support, such as appropriate accommodation, is not given to the young offender when leaving custody.
27. These findings were borne out by information gained by Members from the interviews and the visit to the Huntercombe Young Offenders Institution. In interviews with young people from Tower Hamlets on the Resettlement and Aftercare Programme (RAP), they told stories of being resettled in hostels which also housed drug dealers and prostitutes, were dirty and there was no one of their own age. One young person told how the hostel she had been placed in was not near her school, resulting in her staying away from school. All of these factors were not conducive to stopping the young person re-offending. It was not until there was further intervention by a support officer from the RAP that the young person's risk of re-offending seemed to be reduced. When speaking to officers at the Young Offenders Institution, Members were told that one of the challenges faced was resettlement of the young people after leaving the Institution.
28. The Working Group noted that Tower Hamlets is already doing a lot to deal with this issue of resettlement. The Head of Homelessness and Housing Advice Services informed the Working Group that the Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 had changed the originally limited response to resettling homeless young offenders. They now have a Housing Options Support Team (HOST), which includes a Criminal Justice Worker and a dedicated Young Persons Worker. They are now moving to the cessation of using Bed and Breakfast accommodation by mid 2010. They have also increased the use of 'supportive' accommodation such as Drapers City Foyer, Kipper: Jeremiah House and Whites Row. All of this is designed so a homeless young offender referred to the Homeless Team is both resettled and given adequate support.
29. The London Youth Resettlement pledge was GOL's, YJB's and Young London Matters response to the issues of resettlement of young offenders leaving custody. The pledge identified 10 key services that a young person should get on leaving custody (see Appendix 1). From the Working Group's consideration of the London Youth Resettlement pledge, it became apparent that the Children Schools and Families Directorate are in the process of doing or already do the majority of the Pledge's requirements. Though the majority of the services mentioned by the pledge are being done, Members felt that to ensure this work

⁶ 'London Youth Resettlement Pledge,' GOL, YJB and Young London Matters, 2008. Page 2.

continues and we meet all areas of the pledge the Council should sign up to the principles of the Youth Resettlement Pledge.

R1 That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate sign up to the principles of the London Youth Resettlement Pledge.

30. One of the key services mentioned in the London Youth Resettlement Pledge is the need to ensure that homeless young offenders are assessed for housing before they leave custody. This service is important, as if done fully it will reduce the chances of a young person leaving custody homeless and should reduce their likelihood of re-offending. The Working Group felt this service should be strengthened and so recommends that young offenders at risk of being homeless are assessed before they are discharged.

R2 That all young offenders who are at risk of becoming homeless are assessed by a housing officer prior to discharge.

31. Though there is a lot of work happening around resettlement, it was recognised by Members that there was space for improvement. One area that needs improvement is that there is not enough emergency supported housing for young people. This was particularly a problem when young people were suddenly released from a Young Offenders Institute. Informed by the findings that the risk of re-offending is increased if a young person is not given support on leaving custody, the Working Group felt this lack of emergency supported housing was a particular risk to seeing an increase in re-offending. Therefore the Working Group recommends that the Children, Schools and Families directorate and Housing service explore the provision of additional emergency supported housing for young people from Tower Hamlets who are leaving custody.

R3 That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate and the Housing service investigate the provision of additional emergency supported housing within Tower Hamlets for young people leaving custody, or appearing before the youth court and in need.

Re engagement of young people with the Education system

32. The Working Group learnt that many young people in custody had literacy and learning difficulties. According to the YJB, in 2003, 90% of the young people in custody in the United Kingdom had difficulty in writing. In Tower Hamlets, 210 of the young people who were part of the YOT during 2003 – 2005 were screened for reading recognition and comprehension. This related to about 40% of the young people who had been on the YOT during that period. Out of this group, 32% were referred to a Dyslexic assessment. It became clear to the Members, from this information, that young people in custody or on the YOT often have learning difficulties. However, this data was old and therefore was unable to give an up to date picture about the learning difficulties faced by young people on the YOT. Without up-to-date data it is difficult to assess the appropriate actions that need to be taken. For these reasons, the Review recommends that up to date

data on the special education needs of the young people in the YOT should be available for all partners working with young offenders.

R4 That the Youth Offending Team maintains up to date data on the number of young people in the Youth Offending Team cohort with special educational needs.

33. Though this data is out of date, the Working Group noted that learning difficulties can lead to frustration and low self esteem, which in turn can lead to depression and violence, though this does not mean that because a young person has learning difficulties they will automatically commit a crime. The point is that a lot of young offenders suffer from these problems and need help.
34. The Working Group noted that for some young people, problems with reading and writing made it difficult to engage with the education system. This lack of engagement was seen in the interviews undertaken by Members, where the young people often described school as 'boring.' This boredom seemed to arise from a lack of interest in the subject matter covered, some even suggested it was, 'too easy.' This seems to result in many of the young people the Members met having a laissez-faire attitude towards education and school. However, it was also clear that this could lead to frustration, which in turn could lead to depression and violence. A lack of engagement in the education system often leads to staying away from school and a higher likelihood of getting in trouble with authorities. If we assume that this lack of engagement also leads to a low attainment in literacy and numeracy (due to not being at school), Stephenson (Cited in the Department for Education and Skills report 'Rising Standards')⁷ shows that this has a greater effect on the young person as they get older. Having low attainment leads to a failure to achieve qualifications, this leads to decreased employability which leads to an increased risk of offending. Therefore, to stop youth offending, even when they are older, it is important that this disengagement with the education system is addressed.
35. One way of addressing this disengagement is through dealing with the learning difficulties. Though dyslexia is only one of the learning difficulties, the Rose Report, which looked into dyslexia for the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, made a recommendation to ensure teachers are supported to recognise the difficulties of dyslexia and schools have specialist teachers who are trained to identify the symptoms of dyslexia at an early age. Rose points out that success in spotting learning difficulties and dealing with them is achieved if the teachers know what they are doing and why they are doing it.⁸ It is likely that if teachers are taught to recognise the difficulties of dyslexia they may also see the signs of other learning difficulties which they would not be able to diagnose but could refer to specialists.

⁷ Stephenson cited in 'Raising Standards, A Contextual Guide to Support Success in Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Provision.' Department for Education and Skills, 2007

⁸ 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties. An independent report from Sir Jim Rose to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families' June 2009. Pages 15 -16.

R5 That, in line with the Rose review, the Children, Schools and Families Directorate support schools so that all teachers are made aware of the difficulties of dyslexia and specialist teachers in each school are trained to recognise the symptoms of dyslexia.

36. The belief that we need to find ways to re-engage young offenders with the education system is also one of the motivations behind the UK Foyer Federation's proposal to develop a Young Offenders Academy in East London. The Chair of the advisory group for the Young Offenders Academy Project explained to Members that currently the State is required to provide education to young people in custody, however due to lack of resources the education provided is not always of great quality or for long periods of time. What is more, by going into custody, the education and any other support the young person was receiving, is disrupted. This disruption makes it more difficult to fully educate or support the young person. The proposed Young Offenders Academy has been designed to combat this in a cost effective way.
37. The Young Offenders Academy would be a campus model. It would consist of three units. The first would be a secure unit that accommodated 75 young people, the second would be a residential unit that supported 75 young people and the third would be a service hub. Importantly the Academy would be situated somewhere within East London, no further than one hour's transport ride from where the young person lives. The service hub would have organisations based there like the YJB, so outreach work could be done.
38. The importance of the location and having support organisations based on the hub is that it will stop the disruption caused by being sent to Young Offenders Institutions that are often miles away from home. In Lord Woolf's inquiry⁹ into the prison disturbances of the 1990's, it was found that a way to help the running of a prison and reduce the risk of re-offending was to ensure the prisoner was situated in a prison that was near enough to home that they could keep their links with their community and family. While youth offenders establishments run by Fundacion Diagrama in Spain, have found that having a local catchment area means that close communications are developed with local agencies, ensuring everyone, from families and schools to accommodation and health providers are continually involved in the progress of young offenders. Therefore the location also allows the young person's previous provision of education or social work to not be disrupted.
39. The advantage of having the three different units means that the Academy can concentrate not only on lowering the risk of re-offending among those in custody but also intervene, through the other two units, with those who have not entered custody and help lower the risk of them becoming offenders. Furthermore, according to the Foyer Federation's calculations this type of academy would cost less than the amount currently spent on keeping young people in custody. It is

⁹ Woolf cited in 'Youth Offenders in East London.' East Potential, 2008.

proposed that the Council should look at the possibility of supporting a pilot of the Young Offenders Academy in East London.

R6 That Cabinet consider supporting the UK Foyer Federation's proposal to create a Young Offenders Academy in East London.

Family support

40. Through interviews with the young people and the review meetings, it became clear to Members that youth offending has many complex reasons behind why it happens and affects more than just the young offender and their victim. A group that youth offending affects in a big way is the family of the offender. The Working Group recognised that the family needed as much support as the offender. An interview with the parent of a young offender showed how they felt at a loss to know what they could do to prevent their child from re-offending.
41. It also became apparent to the Working Group that the Family has an important role in reducing the risk of a young person offending. It was particularly noticeable to Members that many of the young people they saw in their short visit to the Thames Youth Court, had a home life that was not very stable. Some of the young people seen at the Court were in foster care and others had parents who were very ill. While the majority of the young people seemed to have a problem with anger.
42. On speaking to the Legal Team Manager at the Thames Youth Court, the Working Group were told that it was felt that parenting orders were not being used effectively. As any form of support for the Family gives them the tools and ability to support the young offender not to re-offend, parenting orders are a useful tool. Therefore, the Working group recommends they are readily available to parents of young people entering the justice system and that the Youth Court could consider summoning absent parents to court to impose a parenting order.

R7 That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate ensure that parenting courses are recommended as a matter of course to parents of young people who are entering the Youth Justice system.

43. When the Working Group interviewed a parent, she said she had found the support provided by the YOT, Pupil Referral Unit and Police was brilliant at first. However, it was later, when the young person was still getting into trouble and the parent had tried everything to solve the problem, she felt the family lacked the support they needed. They no longer knew who they could turn to for help.
44. The Working Group recognised that the YOT cannot provide support to parents indefinitely. However it was felt that exit strategies developed for the families, which could signpost families to other support, would ensure families could still receive the support they needed.

R8 That the Youth Offending Team develop exit strategies for families of young offenders, linking with targeted youth support and parenting support.

Provision of activities

45. When the Members spoke to the focus group of young people on the Triage programme and when they met young offenders from Tower Hamlets at the Huntercombe Young Offenders Institution, the young people complained that one of the reasons they got into crime was because they were bored as there was nothing for them to do in their areas, with things like youth clubs open at the wrong times. When challenged over this statement, it became apparent that the young people did not actually know what was available for them in the Borough or what time youth clubs were open. When Council Officers were questioned about this at the review meetings, they pointed out that youth clubs are widely publicised in the local areas through East End Life and the Tower Hamlets' youth website 'amp.' (<http://www.amp.uk.net/>). Though this is the case, it was clear that the young people still did not know what options they had available. As young people are more likely to use new technologies to find out about what is happening, it is recommended that it be investigated how such technologies could be used to ensure young people both knew about activities available and got involved in them.

R9 That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate use innovative methods of communication to publicise the activities and courses available through Youth Services.

46. When speaking with young people, the Members found that some wanted to go on training courses which could help them get a job. This was particularly the case for the young people on the ISSP and Triage programmes that the Members interviewed. Looking again at Stephenson's¹⁰ model, this would have a positive effect on the young person's future, as it would make them more employable and therefore less likely to re-offend. It is suggested that to address this issue the recommendation from the Scrutiny Review on Reducing Worklessness (2009/10), that looks at increasing the number of work experience placements for ex-offenders is included in the recommendations for this review.

R10 That the Human Resources Team and Skillsmatch explore increasing the number of work experience placements, specifically targeting ex-offenders (linked with the Worklessness Scrutiny Review).

47. It became clear to the Working Group that many of the young people they spoke to had anger management difficulties. It seemed that many had got into trouble as they believed the way to solve their problems was through violence. The Working Group understood that problems around aggression was a common factor of young offenders in the system. This alludes to the findings of the YJB

¹⁰ Stephenson cited in 'Raising Standards, A Contextual Guide to Support Success in Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Provision.' Department for Education and Skills, 2007

that found out of 301 young offenders, 31% had mental health needs.¹¹ It was recommended by the young people on the ISSP programme that a way to deal with this challenge would be to offer anger management training to young offenders on the YOT, where appropriate. The Members agreed that such a provision is essential to lower the risk of offending.

R11 That the Youth Offending Team discuss with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) the provision of anger management training for young offenders, as appropriate.

Communication

48. As identified by the UK Foyer Federation, when a young person enters custody often their support services and education are disrupted. This can happen because the young person can be sent to a Young Offenders Institution miles away from where they live (Feltham, in Surrey, is the nearest Institution to Tower Hamlets). On the visit to the Huntercombe Young Offenders Institution the Working Group also heard of this lack of continuity between the support services and found another cause of it was a lack of communication between the Institution, the YOT and Social Care services.

49. If this disruption is addressed the young person would continue to get the support they need to lower their risk of re-offending. Therefore the Members recommend that communication between YOT, Social Care and the places like Youth Offending Institutes is both good and regular.

R12 That the Youth Offending Team and Social Care ensure there is good and appropriate communication between them and any Tower Hamlets young person placed in a Young Offenders Institution, Secure Training Centres or Secure Children's Homes, whether on remand or sentence.

Training

50. The Working Group agreed that one of the best ways to stop a young person getting into crime was through early intervention. Programmes like the YISP, which work with young people who have been identified as being at risk of offending but are not convicted, allow this to happen. However, for such programmes to work they rely on professionals being able to identify the young people who would come under this category. Such identification could happen through clear assessments by social workers who had been trained to recognise the symptoms. Additionally, if youth workers undergo training they could identify some of the young people they work with.

51. In the first review meeting Members were told about the current development of the Youth Crime Action Plan which introduces a scaled approach to intervening with young people who are at risk at offending. It was recognised that such an

¹¹ 'Mental Health, Source Document.' Youth Justice Board, 2008.

approach was designed to help those who were more likely to offend. This in turn meant that resources were being taken away from those at the lower end of the scale, young people who were just getting into criminal activities. Again, training of professionals such as social workers and youth workers would ensure those young people on the lower end of the scale were picked up, through tools such as assessments, and referred to appropriate help.

52. The Working Group recognised that the YOT deals with young people who could be classed as being at the higher end of the scale regarding their likelihood to offend or re-offend. Those at the lower end were likely to be dealt with by professions such as youth workers or social workers. To ensure that these young people did not become a higher risk, it is essential that these professionals are trained to identify young people at risk of offending and signpost them to the local systems for working with such young people.

R13 That the Children, Schools and Families Directorate ensure that as part of their basic training all social workers and youth workers are given introductory training in local systems for work with young people at risk of offending.

Resources

53. At Huntercombe Young Offenders Institution the Working Group discovered that there had been a cut in education provision for the young people in custody from 18 hours to 15 hours a week. They also got 10 hours of prison activities a week. This meant that when the prison was at full capacity, it was unable to ensure all young offenders got appropriate activities all day, every day. This can result in the young people spending long periods of time sitting in their cells watching TV. In the long term this also means the young people are not given the opportunity to learn the skills that could prevent them from re-offending in the future.

54. It was suggested that the key issue was the lack of funding for the Institute to allow them to provide appropriate activities and education. Therefore the Working Group recommends that while other options, such as the Young Offenders Academy are being developed, the Council takes a proactive role in lobbying Central Government to ensure Young Offending Institutions have adequate funds to provide education and training for young offenders.

R14 That Cabinet lobbies Central Government and the Youth Justice Board to ensure Young Offenders Institutions are sufficiently funded to provide a full range of education, mental health and other support services, to facilitate each young offenders transition into responsible, law abiding adulthood.

55. In a presentation to Members on Tower Hamlets' performance around youth offending, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) identified that a challenge that would be faced by Tower Hamlets' YOT was the likely financial limitations they would encounter due to the current recession and future cuts in public sector spending. The Working Group, later found that successful programmes such as the YISP did not have secure long term funding, as they were being funded through pots of money such as Participatory Budgeting.

56. Therefore, in light of the current economic situation, the Members feel that programmes at risk of losing funding should be identified as being at risk and closely monitored.

R15 That in preparation for a period of fiscal tightening the Youth Offending Team identifies and tracks all its current and anticipated funding. Many important programmes have at risk all or part of their funding. This situation requires close monitoring, particularly where partnerships are involved.

Benchmarking

57. In researching for this review the Working Group have not only seen innovative practices by Tower Hamlet's YOT but have come across other progressive practices around dealing with youth offending elsewhere in the country and abroad. One example is the young offenders establishments managed by Fundacion Diagrama in Spain.¹² At these establishments, the primary function of each member of staff is to facilitate a young offender's transition into a law abiding individual within society. Their local catchment areas and funding allow them to build a close working relationship with all parties involved in a young offender's life. The Spanish legal system sees the duration of custodial sentence for a young person as an opportunity for that young person to pass an education or training course. This idea is so prevalent that the sentences often relate to an education cycle. At the same time, Judges will regularly visit custodial establishments and are in frequent communication to review the progress of offenders.

58. The Working Group suggests that Tower Hamlet's YOT can continue to improve its work by investigating such innovative schemes as described above and so recommends that benchmarking against innovative schemes is carried out on a regular bases by the YOT.

R16 That the Youth Offending Team regularly benchmark against innovative youth offending schemes nationally and where appropriate internationally.

Transition

59. This Scrutiny review has dealt with many different issues. However, some of the issues that the research identified could not be dealt with fully by this review. One such issue was the difficulty faced by those transitioning from the youth justice system to the adult justice system. Within the youth justice system a person is given a lot of targeted support. This changes when a young person becomes an adult, making the transition challenging. It is suggested by the Working Group that a piece of work should be carried out to investigate this issue. However, at the same time, to help this transition, the

¹² 'Notes of a brief visit to young offenders establishments managed by Fundacion Diagrama in Spain. 2, 3, 4, February 2010.' Unpublished notes. Copies available from the Scrutiny and Equalities Team.

Working Group recommend that the YOT work with Probation at the point of transfer, to ensure Probation have all the information they require to support the offender.

R17 That the Youth Offending Team ensures young offenders are supported during the transition from the youth justice to the adult justice system, providing full information to Probation services at the point of transfer.

Conclusions

60. The Working Group welcomed the opportunity to look in depth at the issues of youth offending. The review aimed to find feasible solutions to preventing youth crime. To do this, they looked at what intervention measures are already in place, the support given to the vulnerable children and families and why young people get involved in crime.
61. The Working Group found that youth crime is a complex issue. There is no one reason for why a young person may get into crime, instead there are many reasons, some obvious and some not. This is seen in the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) findings that shows the many risk factors for a young person getting into crime could be grouped into four categories of family, school, community and personal. Within these categories the risk factors stretch from poor housing to alienation. The Working Group's research showed that areas of particular importance for Tower Hamlets were resettlement of young offenders, re engagement of young people with the Education system, support provided to Families of young offenders and the provision of activities for young people. The Working Group also found that to combat youth crime communication between organisations needed to be improved, training for officers outside of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) should be offered, questions over resources needed to be taken into account, continual benchmarking of best practice needed to happen and support needed to be provided to offenders transitioning from the youth justice to the adult justice systems.
62. The Working Group's recommendations have suggested include looking at how to re-engage young people with the education system and ensuring emergency accommodation is available for young people coming out of custody. If engaged with education, the young person is less likely to offend and more likely to move away from crime. This includes being more employable later on in life. It was also noted that by ensuring that there is adequate support systems for young people they are less likely to re-offend.
63. The Working Group also found that the YOT is a high performing team that provide an essential service. They work extremely well with other partners, such as schools, Police and the YJB. This partnership working has helped achieve impressive successes with youth crime in the borough. Finally, in interviews with young people the Working Group continued to come across stories where the YOT's intervention had helped young people reduce the risk of them offending or re-offending.

Appendix 1

The London Youth Resettlement Pledge (The 10 Key Services)

Directors of Childrens Services with local authority partners:

1. Local authority childrens services to carry out CIN assessments under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 on all children and young people released from custody where the YOT or secure establishment identifies that they may be a child in need¹³

For those young people who reach the threshold for services following a CIN assessment, the necessary resettlement and support services should be provided to address assessed levels of need.

2. Where a young person is already looked after by the local authority, the allocated social worker should continue to discharge their statutory responsibilities throughout the period in custody and on release, including co-ordinating LAC reviews and subsequent care planning.
3. Young people of school age to have a 'back to school' interview with a representative from childrens services prior to release, or at the latest within 2 days of release, with an offer of a school place/education placement made within 5 working days of release.
4. All NEET young people to have an agreed education and training plan prior to release and meet with a Connexions PA or equivalent within 5 working days of release from custody
5. Where a parent / carer is not able to meet a young person on release, a key worker(s) should meet them at the secure establishment in order to accompany them home. In the case of young people who are looked after, the allocated social worker should meet them.
6. All parents/carers of young people in custody to be given access to parenting/ family support prior to release from custody, and for a period after release
7. All young people leaving custody to have prompt access to positive activities on release from custody¹⁴
8. Joint accommodation assessments between the YOT and Local Authority Homeless Persons Unit will be undertaken for all homeless 16/17/18 year olds

¹³ See Howard League judicial review judgement on Manchester City Council re. Local Authorities duties to young people in custody (November 2006)

¹⁴ Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 6)

prior to release from custody for advice on housing options and where appropriate, provision of accommodation and support

And in partnership:

9. Registration with GP and access to sexual health advice within 5 working days
10. All young people with an identified alcohol and substance misuse problem to have an agreed careplan prior to release, and meet with their YOT drugs worker / community drugs worker either immediately on release, or within no more than 5 working days, depending on levels of risk and need.

All young people with significant mental health problems and those who are subject to the CAMHS CPA (Care Programme Approach) to be seen by the YOT health worker immediately on release, or within no more than 2 working days, depending on levels of risk and need.

Scrutiny and Equalities in Tower Hamlets

To find out more about Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets:

Please contact:

Scrutiny and Equalities Team
Tower Hamlets Council
6th Floor, Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London E14 2BG

Telephone: 020 7364 4636

E-mail: scrutiny@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Web: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/scrutiny