Ministry of Justice Stock-take of YOTs: Update

We had our second meeting with MoJ officials in London this week. AYM chair, Gareth Jones, and Ian Langley, secretary attended and were also joined by YJB Director, Luke Taylor. Disappointingly no-one from Deloittes was present even though it was agreed at our last meeting that they would be invited. It seems that the invitation had not been made. The MoJ official apologised for this oversight, and then announced that he would be moving on to a different project next week and that the new lead officer would be Ed Dinsmore. He wasn’t at the meeting. All very disappointing! We made the following points on behalf of members:

- We expect that through this exercise MoJ, and therefore Ministers, will come to understand the full complexity of life in a YOS- we gave examples where extensive YOS work had led to excellent outcomes for children, but no criminal justice outcome. For example, our work to safeguard children from sexual exploitation can prevent a first entry into the justice system.

- The unit costs asked for by Deloitte in their questionnaire are very difficult for YOT managers to provide. More free text options should have been provided so that we can give the story behind the numbers. We expressed our concern that Deloittes would struggle to provide an accurate analysis of YOTs’ work and reiterated our offer of an experienced YOT manager to assist them.

- We are worried that future policy decisions that affect us may be based on a flawed analysis of flawed data derived from a flawed process and we suggested - in fact stated- that we had from the initial days of the stocktake offered to be involved to assist in ensuring the process was not flawed. Our offers have not been taken up.

- We expressed concern over the wording in the memorandum of understanding that Deloitte were asking chairs of management boards to sign This includes restrictions on sharing information about the visits. The MoJ accepted that this could be misunderstood and said that they had no intention of preventing YOTs giving feedback to AYM about their visits.

In the course of general discussion, MoJ asked our view on the future attendance of YJB at these meetings given that they have a role in advising Ministers. We made the point that as the size of the YJB had shrunk so had their capacity to get out and about to listen to YOT managers. Board members’ role in supporting the stock-take by making visits of their own was welcomed, but perhaps long overdue. We suggested that one of the reasons our membership had grown was because the YJB capacity to listen had reduced, and the YJB director did not dispute this assessment. We reiterated the suggestion that the YJB should have AYM representation on its board- advisory or otherwise- to improve the linkages between the policy advisers and the actuality of what is happening at the front line.
We repeated our offer for an MoJ representative to speak at our regional event in Leeds on the 13th of April - we realise that the civil service will be into 'purdah' by that point but would not be asking them to stray into politics but to give an update of how the stock-take has gone and to hear the views of our members. If this was not possible then there was a similar invite to our AGM in May when purdah would be over. (Please see details of these two events later in this bulletin.)

We agreed to meet again on 9 April. In the meantime, we are grateful to members who are giving feedback on Deloitte visits to their AYM regional representative and we will continue to collate these so that we can give you an accurate summary of what they have been told.

AYM responds to Government plans regarding PACE

Members will be aware of the proposals to ensure that greater use is made of non-secure local authority accommodation in cases where police would otherwise deny bail, including for 17 year-olds. AYM was invited to contribute to the response of the Local Government Association (LGA) and we have done this as well as making our own response directly to the relevant Government Ministers. We are grateful to members who drew our attention to existing protocols and good practice in their police areas, and we have passed these on to Ministers. While we broadly welcome the initiative if it reduces the use of remands in custody, we share the LGA’s concerns about the additional resources that will be needed to accommodate 17 year-olds. A copy of our letter will be on the website shortly.

Forthcoming AYM Events

A reminder that we still have spaces available at our next event which is to be held at The Discovery Centre, Leeds on Monday 13 April from 10.30 to 13.00.

Confirmed speakers are Commissioner Alan Billings, PCC for South Yorkshire, Helen Mercer, new Director of Youth Justice Inspections at HMIP, and Nigel Richardson, DCS for Leeds and ADCS Lead for Youth Justice. There will also be a presentation from Kirklees’ Young Riders Programme, and, you never know our luck, maybe an appearance from MoJ’s stock-takers!

As ever, the event is free and we throw in a lunch and lots of discussion. Please register with phil.sutton@aym.org.uk, indicating any dietary or other requirements.

Also, a reminder of our AGM in Rugby on Thursday 19 May from 11.00 to 15.30. Please save the date. Full details will be in the April bulletin.
From Diz Minnitt, AYM Speech and Language Lead

Talklinks is offering discounts to AYM members and their teams at two full day conferences in March. The full price for the workshops is £185. AYM members can book places for themselves or their team members for £145 (no VAT). The dates are as follows:
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne 26/03/15 and Nottingham 23/04/15 for Working with Young Offenders - A Communication Skills Approach, and
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne 27/03/15 Nottingham 24/04/15 for Connecting & Communicating with Young People with ADHD
Diz highly recommends these courses and can be contacted on Diz.Minnitt@Milton-keynes.gov.uk

The British Psychological Society has published a position paper on “Children and Young People with Neuro-Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System”. Details from policyteam@bps.org.uk

The Disabilities Trust Foundation which works with brain-injured young people in YOIs and those at risk of homelessness has published a report on the work of its Brain Injury Linkworker Service. More information available from Diz.

Lastly, from the Council for Disabled Children: the implementation support materials for understanding and implementing the new framework for children and young people with SEN in custody have been published today on CDC’s website: http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources and the DfE has published their guidance on transitional arrangements to include the new duties on children and young people in custody later today or early tomorrow. This can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-managing-changes-to-legislation-from-september-2014

National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ) Event

From Sean Creaney, Trustee: ‘The National Association for Youth Justice will be holding its annual seminar ’Lessons for the Future: Where Next for Youth Justice?’ on 20th May 2015 in central London. We are delighted to have secured three eminent speakers: Lord Carlile of Berriew, Dr Laura Janes and Carlene Firmin who will address issues on the reform of the Youth Court, the secure estate and girls and young women in the youth justice system. We are able to offer a limited number of places to AYM members at a cost of only £40 (to include a drinks reception after the seminar). To reserve a place please complete the application form and return by 5th May.’ Details and form from info@thenayj.org.uk

Standing Committee for Youth Justice (SCYJ) seeks researcher

SCYJ is seeking a freelance researcher to undertake a short piece of research into the way convictions received when under 18 are dealt with in adulthood. The research will make comparisons across European and other jurisdictions. Details http://scyj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/researcher-JD.doc.pdf and the contact is Anna Boehm a.boehm@scyj.org.uk
From Portsmouth University’s Institute for Criminal Justice Studies

Tom Ellis, Senior Lecturer writes: ‘We have a number of placement options ranging from volunteering, a 60 hours placement, or up to a full sandwich year for our students and we are expanding into many different branches of CJ and beyond (the old silos have gone and crime is linked to everything!).

‘If you think there are things that you need doing that you can’t get done with regular staff, or know someone who has this problem, that is the gap we tend to fill with employers, charities, etc.. We can offer students that are reaching good academic grades and, importantly, are assessed by our HR people too as having the necessary skills (employers can be on the selection panels too).’ Contact tom.ellis@port.ac.uk

Next Newsletter

Our next newsletter will be out in May. We are always on the look-out for news items from YOTs and examples of innovative practice. Don’t be shy! Please send to phil.sutton@aym.org.uk by around the middle of April.