

Chairs report to AYM AGM 2020

2019/20 overview

I'm writing this review of the year having just submitted our YOT 'Recovery Plan' to the YJB and am very aware of what an unusual set of circumstances we are operating in at the moment. The COVID19 pandemic has created significant challenges for both the youth justice and the criminal justice systems. Courts in particular were badly affected by changes to working practices and social distancing requirements, which caused significant issues for some YOTs. Throughout this period AYM and YOTs have been concerned about the impact that the pandemic has had, and continues to have, on individual children and on those children in the justice system per se. We are particularly concerned around the longer term impact on the education of children in the justice system who often struggle with school under normal circumstances.

YOTs and YOT staff have dealt with significant changes to their working practices, being innovative and creative in the ways that they engage with children and being proactive in supporting children and families in need. Service delivery morphed into phone calls, video calls, email and socially distanced doorstep or garden visits. In most areas the levels of contact with young people has been consistently high and young people responded well to telephone contact. One of the ongoing challenges for services is around seeing more young people face to face. YOT staff overwhelmingly prefer face to face contact with young people as our work is relationship based and we hope that we will see a linear progression towards this becoming routine practice again.

As the AYM executive we have tried to influence the youth justice agenda during this period and we have worked closely with the YJB and LGA and ADCS to highlight the great work YOTs have done and does to support young people in the justice system as best as we are able.

The AYM executive continues to work to its delivery plan objectives: supporting our members; influencing the politics of Youth Justice and growing and developing the organisation. This year marked the 20th anniversary of the AYM and we were very fortunate enough to hold a celebration event at the House of Lords in March just before lockdown started. The AYM and its membership has come a long way in 20 years and Youth Offending Services have faced some extraordinary challenges – many services look very different as a result of funding reductions over time. AYM hopefully will continue to go from strength to strength due to our strong membership and the will of those working in Youth Offending Teams to make the lives of children who offend better.

Over the last year we have continued to support and develop the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Programme, and we are pleased that the programme continues to progress despite the inevitable hiatus around the Peer review programme and has a new two year plan to ensure a close fit with HMIP and the YJB's 'pathfinder' programme.

Influencing the politics of youth justice remains a big task, recognising the fact that a smaller YJB cannot cover the same ground that it used to be able to cover. We have responded to a number of different consultations and will continue to do this over the next year and we have attempted to influence policy and campaigns with key partners such as the Standing Committee in Youth Justice and NAYJ. We continue to represent the interests of YOTs in the national discussions around NPS resourcing and were very pleased to secure NPS funding for the dedicated posts to look at prevention and diversion.

AYM were represented at the Justice Select Committee on 16th June at which both the AYM chair and vice chair gave evidence. AYM held a Zoom meeting with members to identify how we can best support members in dealing with the issues of racism and disproportionality present within the youth justice system.

We were also pleased to work with colleagues at HMIP around the new inspection framework hosting seminars for members to debate the issues and assist HMIP in making their proposals. We also highlighted our concerns at the

watering down of the multi-agency nature of YOTs and produced a special bulletin on the governance arrangements for Youth Offending Teams. AYM's view remains that the continuing success of YOTs depends on all partner agencies playing a significant role in the work of YOTs, so that YOTs remain as genuine multi-agency partnerships.

We have continued to run the Youth Justice SEND Quality Mark, with Achievement for All, more than 50 Local Authority areas have achieved the Quality Mark award, and are now at that point where services are being encouraged to renew their awards.

On a personal note, I am standing down as chair at this AGM having completed two years as vice chair and two years as chair, I am incredibly proud to have been offered the opportunity to promote the Youth justice cause in this way and very grateful for the support of members and of colleagues on the executive over this time.

I am very confident that the organisation will continue from strength to strength as we strive to get the best outcomes for children in the justice system. AYM's overarching priority is to support Youth Offending Teams to deliver the most effective services to children, families and victims of youth crime, and to support and develop the knowledge and expertise of YOT managers.

We will continue to put on seminars and workshops for the sector, all suggestions and ideas for themes, subjects or speakers are very welcome. As ever, we are keen to hear from members as to how you feel AYM operates and for any views you may have as to how we might represent YOTs more effectively. If you have any suggestions or comments, please do let your regional representatives or any of the executive know

Best wishes,



Andy Peaden
Head of Leeds Youth Justice Service & AYM Chair