

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR(2) –12-06(p4)

Date: Thursday 21 September 2006

Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Progress on the Implementation of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy

Purpose

1. Committee members are asked to note progress that has been made with the implementation of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (AWYOS) since it was published in 2004. This includes the 2005-06 progress report together with proposals for 2006-07.

Summary

2. The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy contains a number of targets and objectives relating to the prevention and reduction of youth crime in Wales. The Committee are asked to note the progress in achieving those objectives agreed for 2005-06; to note the objectives and targets recently agreed by myself for 2006-07 and to endorse the future work of the group.

Background

3. The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (AWYOS) is now in its third year of existence. Published in 2004, the strategy is the result of the Welsh Assembly Government, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and local agencies working together to develop a national framework for preventing offending and re-offending among children and young people in Wales.

4. Since the inception of the strategy, the expert Implementation Group which I established have co-ordinated and developed a key range of targets and objectives year on year, with the aim of developing annual action plans for youth crime reduction and monitoring the progress of these.

5. The work of the Implementation Group has provided the opportunity for all stakeholders involved in the Youth Justice system to play a significant part in ensuring that the principles of the strategy are increasingly brought into operation throughout Wales, and in all the areas relevant to youth offending including housing, education, health, social services, police, probation and training and employment.

6. Close co-operation between different departments within the Welsh Assembly Government, local

agencies and the Youth Justice Board has also afforded the opportunity for more effective monitoring of set targets and objectives which in turn allows for more effective crime prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders.

7. The continued monitoring by the group since 2004 has given rise to positive developments, gradual improvements and a high rate of achievement in all areas.

8. The table at Annex A shows clearly that the great majority of objectives and targets for 2005-06 were met in full. There were important achievements across the whole spectrum of service areas relevant to the reduction and prevention of youth offending. Some of these include:-

In the area of education, a pilot project to provide personal support to young people in custody was initiated and preliminary indications are that this has been a successful project.

A Module of the Substance Misuse Treatment Framework for Wales has been produced, dealing with substance misuse education, prevention and treatment services for children and young people.

NACRO produced a valuable report during the year on the accommodation needs of young offenders, which will provide the basis for taking further action on this.

The Probation Service in Wales set very clear targets for effective interaction with youth offending teams and these were all met.

Skills for Justice did good work during the year on increasing the use of suitable vocational qualifications amongst youth justice workers.

The police ensured that all the recommendations of the Victoria Climbié inquiry were implemented across Wales by 31 March 2006.

9. For 2006-07, the group have adopted a different approach to defining targets and objectives by the use of cross-cutting themes like prevention of youth crime and well-being of young people. I have accepted the detailed proposals put to me by the Group and set out at Annex B. I believe these comprise a range of well focussed and challenging objectives, which can make a real contribution to our continuing efforts to reduce the level of youth crime in Wales. Examples here include:

The establishment of an All Wales Prevention Strategy. This will have the potential to pull together the work of many different agencies in Wales. It will encourage identifying of joint objectives; development of joint performance measurement; and facilitate better co-ordination of funding.

Police and Education Authorities will take further major steps to advance the All Wales Schools Programme in its efforts to prevent substance misuse by our young people.

My officials will work with the Arts and Sports Councils to develop greater links between these areas and crime prevention.

Education will be further developing the Youth Offender Learning Project in a number of significant ways.

Housing Directorate are committed to several key initiatives, including the reduction of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for released young offenders.

Skills for Justice have additional firm targets for developing vocational qualifications for youth justice workers.

Financial Implications

10. All objectives and targets for 2005-06 and 2006-07 set out in Annexes A and B are/will be met either from within existing Assembly Government Programmes or the existing programmes of partner agencies. None of the new objectives for 2006-07 involve any commitment to new spending by the Assembly, with the exception of the Secure Estate target. Here the Finance Minister has allocated funding under the BPR capital bids.

Compliance

11. There are no issues of compliance involved with this paper.

Action for the Committee

12. To note the work of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy Implementation Group and the progress made in achieving targets for 2005-06 at Annex A; and to note proposals in terms of targets and objectives set by the Implementation Group for 2006-07 at Annex B.

Mrs Edwina Hart

Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

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