

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY****10 JUNE 2014****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDRENS****Update on “Annual Local Safeguarding Children Board Report and Update on Serious Case Reviews” report presented in February 2013.****1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To summarise the findings of research commissioned by the Youth Offending Service (YOS) in response to a series of serious incidents throughout 2012 involving young people putting their lives at risk through overdose.

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority**

- 2.1 This report links to the following improvement priorities in the corporate plan:
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early.
  - Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Bridgend YOS had been concerned about the number of young people they were working with (mainly 16 and 17 year old males) who had taken overdoses following e.g. arguments with their girlfriends. The young people involved had either admitted to trying to end their lives or stated that they did not care if they lived or died. In line with national Youth Justice Board (YJB) guidance and procedures the YOS reported the incidents to the YJB and Local Safeguarding Children Board and completed detailed Local Management Reports analysing the assessment processes and levels of supervision in place. The YOS identified areas where practise could be improved but in none of the cases was it considered by the YOS or YJB that the YOS could have prevented this very risky behaviour. The YOS wanted to be proactive and approached the YJB regarding possible research and further analysis into the behaviours being reported as it seemed that these individuals did not value their own lives. It was important to identify any possible improvements or gaps in practise and be able to identify any others who may be at risk of displaying the same behaviours at the earliest opportunity. The initial intention was to engage a PhD student through the YJB Effective Practise Panel however this was not the course of action taken partly due to the length of time such a study would take and the urgency the YOS felt to identify any lessons to be learnt in order to effectively safeguard young people in the future.
- 3.2 On advice from the YJB and YOS colleagues Pam Hibbert OBE, an independent researcher with a keen interest in this field, was commissioned to specifically

analyse the Local Management Reports mentioned above on seven self-harm or suicide attempts by young people reported in 2012. The aim of the analysis was to produce a short report identifying any themes or patterns that may emerge and assist the YOS to develop practise to respond to the findings.

3.3 The researcher chose to look at key risk areas likely to impact on YOS practitioners assessing risk of self-harm. These were: the assessment quality and the assessment tools used; young person's mental health; loss and bereavement; domestic abuse; parental substance misuse; parental mental health and parental history of self-harm; social services involvement; young person's substance misuse and the influence of substance misuse coupled with other issues in the young person's life.

3.4 The potential areas of learning identified were as follows:

Within the sample three key themes were evident, the existence of domestic violence in the family home, experience of bereavement of a close friend or family member and the young person's involvement in substance misuse.

- It was suggested that the YOS may wish to consider reviewing vulnerability assessments when in particular both substance misuse and bereavement are identified. The relationship of substance misuse as a response to loss and bereavement should be seen as an indicator of higher vulnerability.
- It was unclear to the researcher to what extent the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) nurse provided an input and support to staff rather than directly to young people. Therefore it was suggested that the YOS may wish to consider whether more effective use could be made of mental health resources to educate, advise and support front line staff.
- There were some inconsistencies found in the quality of assessments of vulnerability and risk of harm to others.
- Observations were also made regarding the existing processes in place for the effective analysis of practice and self-assessment provided by the YJB itself. This was particularly timely as the YJB were reviewing practices and consulting Youth Offending Services in order to improve the process.

The report referred to two main documents from England to support the observations made.

*'Children First: the child protection system in England'*. House of Commons Education Committee. Fourth report of session 2012-2013. Volume 1

*'I think I must have been born bad: Emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people in the youth justice system'* Office of the Children's Commissioner for England. 2012

#### **4. Current Situation**

4.1 The observations made by Pam Hibbert informed the development of practise within the YOS alongside the action plans already put in place from the YOS's own self assessments for improvement.

- All young people who present factors highlighted by the researcher as key to heightened levels of vulnerability are automatically referred for multi-agency discussion in the YOS Vulnerability Management Meetings. This is to ensure that vulnerability is managed effectively through internal and external controls, all appropriate referrals in place and protective factors supported.
- There has been a reduction in CAMHS input in the YOS unfortunately due to initially long term sickness of the YOS CAMHS nurse followed by the decision to reduce the number of nurses available to the Youth Offending Services across Western Bay. This will be discussed further by the Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service Management Board.
- Good practise workshops have been well attended by staff in relation to improving levels of consistency in assessments and audits completed by the YOS Operational Manager to ensure improvements are maintained

4.2 In addition a revised system has been introduced by the YJB enabling YOTs to notify, review and learn from safeguarding and public protection incidents more effectively. The process is now more aligned with the new arrangements for Child Practise Reviews in Wales.

4.3 No serious incidents have been reported to the YJB from Bridgend YOS since February 2013. This is believed to be the result of a combination of factors. The reduction in numbers of young people entering the Youth Justice System as a result of successful diversion and early intervention work, the revised reporting arrangements combined with the focus gained from the research on those key indicators of heightened risk. The YOS have also been concentrating on developing opportunities for young people to gain a sense of achievement and long term goals in life something that was lacking for those young people who had taken such risks with their very young lives.

#### **5. Effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.**

5.1 There is no impact on the Policy and Procedural rules.

#### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There is no negative impact in relation to any equality group arising from the research undertaken.

**7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 There were no financial implications for the Council as the research was financed through the Youth Justice Board Effective Practise Grant

**8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 That Committee note the content of this report and provide any necessary feedback

**Deborah MacMillan**  
**Corporate Director - Children**

**Contact Officer:** **Caroline Dyer**  
**Telephone:** (01656) 815655  
**E-mail:** caroline.dyer@bridgend.co.uk  
**Postal Address** Tremains Road, Bridgend. CF31 1TZ