

3 **Outline, with reference to a specific case (a geographical area, a particular section of the community, an individual or particular issue) how you have taken action to address an issue and the impact that this action has had.**

The award winning Phoenix scheme was designed to address specific offending issues of arson and malicious fire setting. Since its implementation the scheme has captured the attention of young people with its appeal, been recognised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and praised by the media. With evidenced outcomes of increased self-esteem, positive attitudes to education/employment and reduced re-offending, the scheme is now influencing practice and policy elsewhere by duplication in other areas.

The Sunderland Phoenix Project is a pioneering partnership between Sunderland Youth Offending Service and Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service, funded in part by local Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. The scheme was initially established in April 2000, as one of a collection of 7 Pathway schemes, which were developed to bring added value to mainstream YJ services. The project offers youngsters an intensive fire fighters course providing work experience and education in the consequences of fire incidents/malicious fire setting. It provides first hand experience of working as part of a disciplined team, promoting personal and social development and the tasks of a fire fighter including extinguishing fire blazes, mine rescues and fire safety. The appeal of the scheme has enabled engagement of the most disaffected young people with high attendance rates of 94% for summer 2006. Consideration has been given to the accessibility of the scheme reflecting the YOS commitments set out in the service equality and diversity policy to removing barriers to accessing services. Specific 'girls groups' have been run as well as groups for children and looked after by the LA and groups for young people placed by the fostering and adoption service. The course culminates in a passing out parade for the young people, attended by their proud parents, they are also presented with a certificate for their hard efforts. Feedback from those involved has been extremely positive including comments such as:

"The course was really good. It gave me an insight into the way the fire brigade works and the dangers they go through. It has also taught me that actions could cause injury, or even death" - young person.

"Since [he] attended the Fire Brigade his whole attitude has changed" - parent

"[He] returned to school with a positive attitude and a change in behaviour" - teacher

Feedback from parents and teachers has indicated significant interest in the scheme and this feedback has been used to further shape and develop the service. Open nights are current being for professionals referring young people to the scheme (e.g. volunteer community Referral Order Panel members referring young people to the Phoenix Scheme as part of their Referral Order intervention) are to be extended to include teachers. A 'Parenting Phoenix' course is also being developed at the request of parents who have expressed an interest in learning more about fire safety and how to educate their children on the dangers of malicious fire setting.

There is significant evidence that the scheme works in increasing self-esteem, promoting positive attitudes to education, training and employment and reducing re-offending. Dramatic attitudinal and self-perception changes have been seen from pre and post course questionnaires with young people. When asked 'Is education/training important to you to help you develop?' only 50% said it was important prior to the course compared with nearly 90% following the course and when asked 'if asked to do something, how confident are you that you would finish it completely?', only 50% said they would be confident prior to the course compared with over 80% following the course.

The Phoenix scheme has been evaluated by three separate academic studies demonstrating our commitment to re-shaping services on the basis of 'what works' and in accordance with need. The most recent evaluation by Sunderland University highlighted that a snapshot of 58 young people attending the Phoenix project before the end of May 2005 showed significant outcomes for re-offending:

- 50 participants (86%) showed a decrease in their offending *seriousness* score after completing the course with the average seriousness rating for the group of 58 dropping from 7.09 to 2.16.

- The *number of offences* committed after completing the course decreased by 70%.
- Almost half (48%) the young people who completed the course desisted from offending altogether in the year following their attendance.

The scheme has attracted a number of national awards including: British Community Safety Awards 2001, Community Care Awards 2002 and the National Award of the Association of High Sheriffs 2003. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) highlighted the scheme as *leading the way in promoting awareness amongst youngsters of fire safety* and the scheme has now been replicated in three other areas across England. The good practice from the scheme has also been shared with others via a number of national conferences. As a scheme with so much appeal the Phoenix has been central to our pro-active media strategy and our press releases have attracted significant local media coverage promoting community safety messages and reducing the fear of crime by young people. This has included prominently placed articles and headlines including: *'Phoenix fire fight wins praise from Government'*, *'Youngsters get fired up for project'*, *'Phoenix success'* and *'A BLITZ on firebugs has stamped out arson attacks on Wearside's schools'*. *The latter article highlights* that whilst 15% of arson attacks on schools took place in the North East, not one school in the city of Sunderland was targeted by fire setters in the previous year and the article links this to the Phoenix Project targeting known 'troublemakers' and potential young arsonists since 2000.

The Phoenix scheme remains at the heart of the Sunderland strategy for reducing re-offending sitting within the prevention theme of the Youth Justice Plan 2007-2008 and linked with key performance areas of re-offending rates and Education, Training and Employment (work experience element). As one of the many innovative YOS schemes designed to appeal to young people and targeted at specific need, it engages some of the most disengaged young people proving specialist intervention to support mainstream youth justice provision.