

Welcome to the 13th edition of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) newsletter

For staff, colleagues and service users to update you on what's been happening in the service, since our last newsletter in August 2008. Your contributions to future newsletters would be very welcome.

Details of how to contact us are on the back page.

We hope you enjoy this edition.

In this edition we:

- Chat to the Chief Executive
- Promote our Beacon Status
- Make movies
- Win more awards
- Host a visit from the YJB Chair

YOS Manager, Guy Kirk gives an update on the service's achievements over the last six months and tells us what's in store for the future!

The last six months have been as busy as ever with many highlights and achievements by management, staff and young people which you can read about in the newsletter.

It is worth noting that Sunderland YOS has a high profile nationally because of our positive 'can-do' culture, great commitment from a fantastic staff team including our many committed volunteers and strong performance sustained over a number of years. It also has a high profile locally and a strong identity within the Corporate City Council - hence the invitation to meet the Chief Executive highlighted in the Newsletter.

As I said at our recent staff development day our key aims - to prevent offending and reduce re-offending - are clear but we can only achieve these through collaboration with a range of partners to tackle the disadvantages faced by children, young people and their families.

For example our excellent working relationship with the Police will continue to strengthen through the development of a 'YOS Officer in Police Custody Suites' under the Youth Crime Action Plan and we are working with partners to deliver a 'Youth Crime Family Intervention Project' that will support high rate offenders and their families to reduce re-offending.

The needs of victims will of course always remain a key priority and we will continue to seek their views on appropriate reparation.

'Think Family' – an ethos of joined up working and collaboration across services to address social disadvantage, will feature more prominently over the coming months and years. Did you know that the most excluded 2% of families still remain in poverty with complex needs, multiple problems and low aspirations despite the initiatives by government over many years? The Youth Offending Service works with many of these families and collaborates with others to address those factors that may lead young people to offend.

We really do have a great staff team here and I want to end this missive with a heartfelt thank you to everyone for your hard work and commitment over the past six months.



Guy Kirk, YOS Manager

YOS meets the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has recently been out and about meeting with teams across the council in a bid to raise his awareness and learning from the frontline – and the YOS was one of the few fortunate enough to be invited to attend. Such was the compliment that a wide range of representatives from the service went to meet him (Dave Smith) on 6th January 2009.



Dave Smith, Chief Executive of Sunderland City Council

The Chief Executive holds a particularly high profile position and the YOS wanted to ensure they made the most of this fantastic opportunity to chat with him face-to-face. We shared with him our achievements and highlighted some of our fantastic work with children and young people, their families and victims. We also used the

opportunity to help promote confidence in youth justice. We thought the meeting went well and the Chief Executive made the following comments on his weekly “blog”:

“I recently met some staff from the Youth Offending Service. I found out more about how this very motivated and successful team operates.”

“One of the keys to their success, they told me, was ensuring that every member of the team recognises the outcomes they were working towards and understood what was needed on their part. Another was being aware of the impact of changes, whether local or national, on their services and proactively embracing change to keep ahead of the game. To be able to do this, they place a lot of emphasis on workforce development, enabling staff to take up opportunities for training and moving up in the organisation.”

“Their ethos is to ensure employees feel they “own” the service’s performance and naturally they have a great pride in what they are achieving. I was struck by how much energy and resolve the staff showed even in very difficult circumstances.”

‘Cut up’ – The Premiere



Young Achievers Awards Ceremony

We’ve previously told you about the brilliant work of RAP staff, who work with some of the most challenging and hard to reach young offenders, helping to divert these young people from further offending. Well the team have been busy again, this time driving forward the prevention of weapons crime – resulting in the birth of ‘Cut-Up’!

‘Cut-Up’ is a short film produced in partnership between RAP and Superkrush Films which aims to explore the weapons culture from the perspectives of young people. The film, as well as entertaining, throws up a variety of issues and is therefore an excellent resource to use when working with young people in both an individual and group setting.

‘Cut-Up’ premiered at the Sunderland University Media Centre and has attracted significant positive media coverage with full page features in the Sunderland Echo and The Journal. Gary Kitching, Superkrush Drama Facilitator said of the film **“Cut-Up has been one of the most thought-provoking pieces I’ve ever worked on.”**

The project which ran from February to June 2008 featured seven young people working with the YOS. One young person who starred in the film said **“I’ve never had anything to do with knife crime, but it’s getting worse in the UK so we thought we’d make a film to try and get the message across to kids younger than us. They need to learn not to carry them because they will get used against them.”**

Young people and RAP staff involved in the production of the film have been highly commended, receiving the ‘Putting Something Back’ and ‘Innovation Award’ at the North East Youth Justice Awards and Young Achievers Awards for ‘Services to the Community’ and ‘Contribution to Music & Performing Arts’.

‘Cut-Up’ has also been touring the national film festival circuit and has been so well-received that it has won a prestigious Royal Television Society Niche Audience Best Drama Production Award for opening a window into the experiences of inner city youths.

SAFC star helps us celebrate Tackle It

The already extremely successful Tackle it scheme had another reason to celebrate recently with 4000 young people to date having completed the programme.

Sunderland AFC goalkeeper Craig Gordon helped to celebrate this fantastic achievement, meeting the first and the 4000th young people to participate.

Craig said **“There are challenges all young people face, the same things as when we were growing up, that they have to learn to say no to. It is a big thing for young people which they have to go through to achieve their goals. If I can help this project by being a role model as a professional footballer then I will because that in turn will help the local community.”**

YOS Prevention Team Manager, Jack Saward, believes the success of this programme is partly due to the loyalty of football fans in Sunderland, he said **“Introducing messages endorsed by the area’s footballing heroes helps to get the messages across and positively influences young people’s behaviour.”**



Craig Gordon (centre) helps celebrate the 'Tackle It' Programme which so far has worked with 4000 youngsters

Mother's Pride

Several staff at the YOS recently received a thank you letter from the mother of a young person that they had been working with for over two years.

This is nothing new, as we are often thanked for the intensive support provided to young people and their families, but what is new is the poem that the mother wrote as an expression of her gratitude and how proud she was of her son's achievements.

The telephone rang, my mind was elsewhere
I answered the phone and asked, "who's there?"
A voice in the background answered me back
What he had said took me aback
The strange sound of something so nice
It took me a while, I had to think twice
One of my boys was being highly praised
I could not answer, I was so amazed
My boy's been given credit for what he's achieved
A few years ago I would not have believed
Looking back over the years –
I wondered where had I gone wrong
Now my life for my boy, I feel I'm so strong
There's no doubt in my mind I had to seek help
But where did I turn – I could not determine
Then I found that there is hope out there
Only believe that you are not the only one there
My life's on a high, I feel like a cloud
Now what I want is to shout it out loud.

For my precious boy, I'm so proud to be your mam.

RJ brings a unique offender-victim relationship



Young Person participating in Direct Reparation

There are lots of brilliant examples of the service delivering Restorative Justice (RJ) in line with victim wishes, but one recent example particularly stands out for the impact it has had on the victim and

offender and the unique relationship that has developed between them.

A local fisherman whose boat was damaged in excess of £600 agreed to allowing the young offender to work towards repaying some of this damage as part of his court order. It was decided after consultation this would involve cleaning up the boat and helping to clear the 'slipway' of debris. The result was that the boat was repaired to the delight and satisfaction of the owner who said he was **“over the moon”**.

This work also signalled the start of a new relationship between the two with the victim being so impressed with the young person's attitude he subsequently offered him the opportunity to help with the maintenance of the boat and take part in a future fishing expedition. What a great outcome this is for all involved!

Beacon Update

Since receiving the prestigious Beacon award for reducing re-offending the YOS has participated and hosted a number of key, high profile events, and this is what's been happening recently:

Beacon Learning Exchange

A national Beacon Learning Exchange was held in September 2008. The aim of the event was to create a forum for delegates to share practice and learn from the successes of other local authorities.

In a bid to demonstrate a number of Sunderland's key successes in this area, representatives of the local authority delivered a presentation and facilitated an exhibition stand, displaying various materials which supported both the exemplars and other areas of innovation in the city. The stand received a large amount of interest and enabled us to share our expertise with local authorities from up and down the country.



Left to Right - Stuart Thompson (Safer Communities Team), Judith Hay (Head of Positive Contribution and Economic Well Being), Alan Johnson (Safer Communities Team), Right Honourable David Hanson (Minister of State) and Guy Kirk (YOS Manager)

Linking in with National Inside Justice Week

National Inside Justice Week gives the public the chance to take a closer look at the criminal justice system in England and Wales. To mark this occasion Sunderland held a series of events and activities throughout the city, one of which was a public information stand in the busy Bridges Shopping Centre.

Staffing the stand with Probation, gave the YOS the chance to locally promote its work on reducing re-offending, demonstrate achievements and highlight future plans/initiatives to build upon current successes.

The stand was particularly successful in attracting a number of expressions from people who were interested in becoming service volunteers.

Wallace Wilson, Youth Justice Board Head of Region said of the event **"Inside Justice Week was a national initiative designed to raise public awareness of the great work being done within the criminal justice system."**



Staff facilitated the information stand throughout the day



YOS Manager, Guy Kirk recruiting new volunteers

One key aim of the stand was to highlight the award winning work of the YOS. It was also hoped that by promoting Sunderland's Beacon Status and publicising how the city had successfully gained the award would help to increase public understanding and confidence in the criminal justice system.

"We are seeing levels of offending and re-offending coming down across the region and this initiative allows Sunderland Youth Offending Service to showcase their work to the public as well as giving some well-deserved recognition to unsung individuals who make the system work."

Sunderland's National Reducing Re-offending Conference



Barbara Blyth (Sunderland Resident), Frances Done (Chair of YJB), Councillor Pat Smith

On the 9th of December 2008 at the Stadium of Light, Sunderland hosted a Beacon Reducing Re-offending Event. The event was well attended by colleagues from across the country and gave delegates another opportunity to share learning around the theme of reducing re-offending.

The day commenced with key note speeches from Dave Smith, Chief Executive of Sunderland City Council, and Frances Done, Chair of the YJB, and included an overview of the Sunderland Strategy for reducing re-offending, highlighting key areas of innovation and outcome achievements.

Workshops were delivered by partners and covered a range of youth and adult themes related to reducing re-offending such as Restorative Justice and Domestic Violence.

There were also several exhibition stands providing information on a number of key areas including Crime Prevention, Unpaid Work, Reducing Youth Custody as well promoting the Beacon Legacy Products (resources developed by young people in Sunderland).

The day was extremely successful and feedback from the conference was overwhelmingly positive with delegates agreeing that the conference was productive/constructive and a worthwhile investment of their time. A significant number also stated that the conference had helped them to identify new ways of reducing re-offending in their own authorities.

This success was echoed in the comments of Frances Done, Chair of the YJB who said **"It's good to see Sunderland continuing to set an example to the rest of the country, and spreading the good practice around."**



Panel 'Question and Answer' Session

Beacon Key Achievements to Date:

- There has been much positive media coverage relating to Beacon and reducing re-offending. Articles on the Reducing Re-offending Conference have been featured in the Sunderland Echo titled 'City leads the way in the fight against crime' and January's edition of Northumbria News, which also published a report on knife crime and the YOS 'Be Safe Weapons Programme'.
- At the request of the YJB the YOS recently hosted a Data Management Workshop. The service was approached to facilitate this event through recognition of its strong performance management arrangements.
- The YOS has hosted two 'Learning visits' by Bradford and Leicestershire YOT, who were interested in the service's achievements in relation to ETE, PR Communication Strategy, Use of Peer Mentors and Reduced Use of Custody.
- Homeless Conference - A regional event took place in March to explore issues around accommodation for young people.



Restorative Justice Exhibition Stand

Future Events

The next Beacon event which is already in the planning stages is:

LCJB Conference – Reducing Offending and Re-offending event.

YJB Chair visits the YOS

The YOS recently had the privilege of being visited by Frances Done, Chair of the YJB. Frances was scheduled to make a visit to the North East Region and as part of this specifically requested to come to the YOS as she had heard so much about the pioneering work of the service.

After welcoming her, we set about giving her a real flavour of what we do here with presentations on Reducing Reoffending in Sunderland and Restorative Justice, two case study examples (which included interviews with victims and a young person), and the opportunity to circulate around the YOS market place (which consisted of several presentation stands aimed at providing an insight into key areas of the service). She even got to sample lunch cooked and served by the ISSP young people!

Kelly Davison-Pullan, Policy & Performance Manager said of the day **“It was a great success and a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of some of the excellent work of Sunderland Youth Offending Service.”**



Helen Paterson (Director of Children's Services), Frances Done (Chair of the YJB), Councillor Pat Smith

Positive Media coverage for the YOS

In July 2008 stories and interviews relating to the YOS were featured on Radio Newcastle during the Mike Parr Breakfast Show. On both days part of the show was dedicated to illustrating positive new stories about young people. The first day focused on Peer Mentoring and day two, Restorative Justice Work. Interviews with YOS staff and managers, volunteers, young people and members of the community gave context to the stories.

The YOS was also recently visited by the BBC Social Affairs correspondent Andrew Bomford, who was interested in the use of custody for young people and chose to attend Sunderland above any other YOT because he had heard about our award winning ISSP scheme and wanted to explore how we work with our most persistent and prolific offenders to divert them from custody. This was a great opportunity for the service to publicise some of its many achievements in this area.

Such a high profile visit highlights the fantastic reputation the YOS has achieved through its innovative projects and positive media coverage. The piece was broadcast on Radio 4's pm programme, giving recognition at a national level of the work done in Sunderland.

Frances Done, Chair of the YJB fed back to YOS Manager, Guy Kirk **“Guy, this is excellent news – well done, not easy to get profiled in this prime slot.”**

Inside Justice Open Days

Newcastle Crown Court recently opened its doors as part of an Inside Justice Event in a bid to give the public a chance to learn more about Criminal Justice Agencies. The YOS were invited to be involved in this event and it was a great opportunity to share information about the service.

The YOS, who facilitated a presentation stall with Newcastle YOS handed out leaflets, answered questions and provided information on the work of the service. There were also a number of interactive activities throughout the day.

Feedback from John Mackay, HMCS, Community Engagement Project Manager was particularly positive and he praised all those who had attended and **“put in much effort/thought into a very successful event. Overall this was an excellent inter-agency event.”**



Staff provided an insight into the work of the YOS

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

As reported in August's edition of the Newsletter the ISSP Team have been supporting young people working towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award. On 10th February 18 of those young people were invited to the Stadium of Light for an awards presentation evening.

Between them the young people had achieved 59 'Certificates of Prior Learning', with four of the 18 young people achieving the full bronze award.

Gaining each certificate has involved a high level of commitment from the young people and has been an extremely credible achievement for all involved, who through their participation have all made a positive contribution to their communities.

Awards were presented by Ex Sunderland footballer Kevin Ball and youth team players.



Young Person receiving his certificates from Kevin Ball

Transitions Parenting Group

In partnership with Barnardo's Parenting Service, Amanda Smith (YOS RAP Team) recently devised and delivered a new innovative programme tailored to the needs of parents of older teenagers with substance misuse problems. The programme ran for eight weeks and 11 parents participated, with attendance at all sessions being very good.

The programme covered parenting skills, parenting resources and dealing with family issues. In particular it addressed how to deal with children's offending behaviour and the need to set appropriate rules and boundaries.

On completion of the programme the parents were able to use the parenting skills they had more effectively. The informative based sessions, which helped parents gain knowledge to support their children in key areas such as career options, were also particularly well received with one parent commenting **"There will be a future for my son and I can help him."**

As a result of this group there were also a number of highly successful outcomes for individual families and seven of the parents have gone on to complete a Phoenix Fire-fighting Programme!

YOS hosts a 'Magistrates Open Day'

The YOS recently held an open day for local magistrates to demonstrate the work of the service, how this is delivered to young people, and to highlight the effectiveness of the ISSP community programme in engaging young people and preventing further offending.

Magistrates were shown the YOS Beacon Presentation on Reducing Reoffending and heard the experiences and successes of parents and young people who outlined how the ISSP Programme had changed their lives.



Presentations highlighted key messages and successes

There was also the opportunity for the magistrates to mingle with staff and learn more about specific ISSP projects and other YOS interventions.

The visit was a huge success and feedback received from Louise Martin, Magistrates Clerk was **"It was a fantastic presentation and I personally found it very worthwhile"**.



Magistrates met with staff at the YOS 'market place'

Last years efforts doubled!!

Friday 21st November was Children in Need 2008, an event which is of particular importance to YOS staff who are always highly committed and motivated when raising money for this cause. The 2007 event was a huge success and an extremely hard act to follow but this time efforts managed to exceed any expectations.



The YOS five-a-side teams

As usual the service was not short of fundraising ideas or willing volunteers. As well as the now traditional raffle the cake sale once again proved a hit, with staff and young people baking and donating cakes. The 2008 major event, however, was the five-a-side football match which took place at the Raich Carter. Aside from the mention of some dubious refereeing the match passed in good humour and was a great success. In total the YOS raised a fantastic £1001.90, more than doubling the amount raised last year. YOS donations accounted for 10% of the total amount collected by the City of Sunderland Council.

Phoenix Project shortlisted for award

The Sunderland Phoenix Project was shortlisted for a 2008 Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) award. The Project, a partnership between the YOS and the Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service was nominated in the Best Partnership Working Initiative (Public/Public) Category.

Although the project was not successful on this occasion it was an achievement in itself to be shortlisted for such an award.



Phoenix participants

As part of Sunderland's commitment to a balanced and sustainable future this leaflet is printed on paper made from 80% recycled post consumer waste. Please recycle it again after use by putting it in your Kerb-it box or your paper bank.

North East Youth Justice Awards

Once again YOS staff and young people have been awarded for their achievements, this time at the 2008 North East Youth Justice Awards.

Awards recognised the personal achievements of young people as well as teams and individuals across the Criminal Youth Justice System. Several staff and young people from the YOS were shortlisted and won awards:

Eric Hodge – Winner of the Individual Award in the outstanding contribution to tackling young crime category.

Resettlement and Aftercare Provision – Winner of the Team Award in the innovation category.

The ISSP Consortium were Runners up in 'Partnership of the Year' award and highly commended in Working with Young Offenders Team award.

Ontrack were highly commended in the category Team of The Year - Innovation.

Two young people from the YOS won awards for 'Putting Something Back' and 'Getting ahead', with two more highly commended in this category.

Contacting the Youth Offending Service

For further information you can contact the Youth Offending Service at:

Lambton House, 145 High Street West,
Sunderland, SR1 1UW.

Tel: **0191 566 3000**

Fax: **0191 566 3002**

E-mail: yos@sunderland.gov.uk

Website: www.sunderland.gov.uk/yos

For all newsletter enquiries, please contact the Planning and Information Team at the Youth Offending Service on **0191 566 3000**.

This publication can be made available in Braille, large print, on audio-cassette and in other languages.

Please contact the Youth Offending Service for further information if you require any of these.