

YJB Pathfinder – Tackling Serious Youth Violence

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) is working to support frontline service improvement through grants and activity which target system-wide challenges. This involves a pathfinder approach whereby local authorities and partners can pilot, develop and disseminate whole system solutions.

Organisation(s)

London Borough of Lewisham Youth Offending Service

What does your project aim to achieve?

The YJB's strategic plan for 2019-22 highlights serious youth violence as one of the YJB's priorities, including an aim to see a sustainable reduction in serious youth violence within the cohort of local authorities in the upper quartile of serious youth violence for at least three out of four periods in the last 12-month data cycle.

The funding allocated to the Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) within the serious youth violence reference group is for the purpose of those YOTs to develop and deliver best practice and disseminate this with others to meet that priority. This fits with the YJB's mandate under S41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to make known and promote good practice across the sector.

Overview of planned activity

The funding will contribute to two projects;

Project 1

The aim of the project is **to evaluate the trauma informed approach** developed at the London Borough of Lewisham. This study aims to contribute to the evidence base to inform future policy and practice in a fast-developing field.

This project is the first phase and will focus upon evaluating the trauma informed group work programme.

The aim of the study is to develop a Theory of Change that explains how and why the programme has achieved change in young people's lives through improved stress management and internal controls, increased trusting relationships and reductions in reoffending. The research design will focus upon individual semi-structured interviews with all former participants and group leaders. This will be combined with survey information from caseworkers and data about reoffending and other key indicators to establish pre and post-intervention baselines.

Project 2

To further embed the Restorative Justice model into the work of the Referral Order Panel. It is intended to involve the Young Person in Restorative Enquiry ahead of their attendance at the Panel.

The second phase of the project would be to widen the focus of the evaluation to evaluate the impact of a trauma informed approach across the service. Lewisham has been developing its multi modal approach focusing on Trauma-informed, Restorative approaches and Reducing Unconscious bias.

The funding will be used for on-going work on 'proof of concept' and evidencing the approach.

In developing and delivering an approach, four methods are considered key components in creating a place with a purpose, creating safe spaces and empowering individuals, and form the basis of the Lewisham YOS practice model:

- Trauma informed
- Restorative approaches
- Unconsciousness bias
- Contextual safeguarding

Milestones & length of funding

The Grant funding is to run from September 2019 to March 2020.

How will the outcomes and benefits of this work be shared with YOTs and others? (Both universal offer and any additional intensive support that will be available)

Lewisham YOS has been piloting the trauma-informed restorative model for the past two years and has been called upon to contribute to discussions about innovative approaches (YJB, London Councils, DFE). Other boroughs have requested input and advice which has been fulfilled to some extent however a robust and meaningful evaluation will further enhance this learning by capturing theory and methods used to date and disseminating to others.

Lewisham's new Referral Panel processes have been developed based on the trauma-informed, restorative model. The review has to date entailed several focus groups with staff, young people and panel members. Consequently, the outcomes are likely to be:

- More attention to the pre-panel phase of the process- induction will include biographies and photos of the allocated panel members
- The pre-meeting to be enhanced and will be 30 mins minimum (diversity and ACEs adverse life experience to be covered).
- Reports will be different – ideally produced from ASSET Plus. There will be more time given to communicating and engaging rather than administration of reports.
- The panel will be a more collaborative co-production seen as part of case formulation using visuals and interaction at the pace the young person can understand and engage
- There will be a one page My Contract/Intervention Plan written in plain language without jargon or bias language
- The role of the panel members is key and will be further developed– an independent and committed representative member of the community with an interest in supporting the process of change
- Panel members will be encouraged to move away from the 'script' and all professionals to practice plain language and communication.

Lewisham YOS will provide the evaluated model as a best practice model to disseminate more widely.

How will the project be evaluated?

Project 1

The project will:

- Provide an initial evaluation of the effectiveness of the group work programme, including whether it is more effective with particular groups or backgrounds.
- Examine the processes by which change is achieved for young people.

- Capture the learning gained from adapting a trauma informed approach to a group work programme, addressing both positive achievements and challenges.
- Assess the transferability of the programme to other local authorities.

Project 2

Staff will apply measuring tools addressing aspects of identity, belonging and strength of intrafamilial relationships before the Restorative Intervention and six weeks later. This data will enable an evaluation of impact alongside gathering additional data related to the Young Person's subsequent quality of engagement in the intervention programmes offered as a result of their contract made with the Referral Order Panel.

- Staff surveys and consultations
- Staff interviews
- Young people's feedback
- Young people's good news stories
- Good case examples

Universities are currently academically evaluating elements of the model.

Contact

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Why this project was chosen:

The grant is designed to develop and share effective practice to reduce the number of children involved in serious youth violence in the YOTs experiencing the highest levels of serious violence.

The Youth Justice Board identified the local authorities with persistent high levels of serious violence. For the purposes of the YJB's analysis, 'serious youth violence' is defined as the most serious robbery, drugs or violence against the person offences (those with a gravity score of 5 or more as outlined in the Police National Legal Database).

We took the rate of these offences per 10,000 of the general 10-17 population for each YOT and identified those YOTs that had been in the top quartile for three or more quarters during the 2017/18 financial year. We applied these criteria so that it would select the YOTs that consistently had high levels of SYV over the year, rather than one anomalous quarter that would increase their rate.

From that group we identified 12 YOTs to fund as pathfinders.

Due diligence:

All Youth Justice Board grants for pathfinder activity have been through the Ministry of Justice Grant Challenge Panel. This panel scrutinises grants made by the MoJ and its arms-length bodies to ensure public money is being spent effectively and responsibly. It provided objective scrutiny of our business case for the grant in line with guidance on managing public money. The YJB will monitor the project at intervals agreed with the grant recipient.