

Cllr Jacquie Russell

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

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Cllr Andrew Barrett-Miles

Chairman of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee

3 December 2020

Dear Andrew,

Thank-you for your letter dated 4th November 2020, regarding issues raised in the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee on the 14th September 2020, in relation to youth services and serious violence. These topics inevitably raise detailed points in a multi-agency environment, and for convenience I have numbered the paragraphs in my reply.

Youth Services

1. Regarding the provision of youth clubs and youth services, West Sussex like many other local authorities is, as you know, under significant financial pressure. As a Council we are addressing the challenges through our Reset and Reboot plans, to ensure we make the very best use of the resources available, understanding the value for money we deliver and focused on our priority outcomes. In relation to youth support the current priority is to have a more targeted focus on pre and post statutory intervention. Alongside, and in common with our partners, we are learning to be more creative in harnessing community and voluntary resources, and I am keen to support conversations within partnerships that both protect and create community assets. Youth support interventions with children and families will be targeted at children at levels 2 and 3 on the Continuum of Need where we can have most impact and will be delivered in a more agile way in communities. In addition to this, youth clubs and services will continue to be provided by partner organisations, accessible for all children, for example, Sussex Clubs for Young People provide a range of youth clubs and youth activities across West Sussex.

Serious Violence & Vulnerable Young People

2. We fully recognise that children looked after and those with special needs are particularly vulnerable groups and sadly there is an over representation of children in care, or with experience of care, in the criminal justice system, both nationally, as reported by the Prison Reform Trust, ("In Care, Out of Trouble") and within West Sussex. Youth justice studies show that the risk in relation to violence is linked to a wide variety of interconnected social issues including child poverty, parental engagement, housing, health and educational attainment, amongst others. It is therefore important that the issue of serious violence is seen in the context of tackling a broad agenda of need. Our approach is directed towards carefully assessing

vulnerability and intervening at an early stage where these factors are present, or children are at risk.

I provide below an outline of the range of more specific interventions in place across the county to address vulnerability to serious violence and associated factors.

Early Help

I have drawn attention above to the importance of preventative services in supporting those at risk of offending. The County Council together with its partners provide a range of Early Help services for young people, accessible by anyone in the community, including the following:

3. **Targeted Family Work:** Family Support Worker led Early Help Plans deliver a targeted intervention through the coordination of a multi-agency team and plan. Work is with the whole family, focused on improving outcomes for children and young people with multiple, complex needs. This includes direct work with children and young people, many of whom are on the cusp of requiring social care intervention or repeatedly coming to the attention of Children's Social Care or the Police. The issues may be entrenched, requiring a longer duration of intervention.
4. **Domestic Abuse:** The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Service continues to provide support to victims at high risk who are experiencing abuse. This includes work with young people over 13 years who are referred directly. The Independent Sexual Violence Advisors work with young people 13 years and above to provide long term support to victims of sexual assault outside of intimate relationships. The current delivery method is a mix of face to face and virtual contact.
www.westsussex.gov.uk/domesticabuse
5. **Youth Emotional Support (YES):** YES supports young people experiencing mental and emotional health issues that include anxiety, low mood, suicidal ideation and plans, significant harming behaviour, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) behaviours and issues around eating. Interventions are based upon the goals the young person has identified and focus on resourcing, equipping and empowering the young person. The service can be accessed by self-referral online, a group offer and resource packs are also available. www.westsussex.gov.uk/YES
6. **Young Carers:** The Young Carers (Family) Service continues to provide a whole family approach to supporting Young Carers (0-17) who have a caring role due to a long-term health issue or disability in their family. Online group activities are currently being developed and will be promoted to Young Carers registered with our service later in the autumn term. Transition groups, "My Futures" support young carers who are approaching adulthood and due to COVID-19 are currently running online. For further information - see the [Young Carers Website](#)
7. **Your Space:** Online advice and information for young people relating to health, education, jobs and things to do. [Your Space](#)

8. **Young Parent Pathway and Family Assist:** A pathway of support for young parents and access to online advice and information on pregnancy and the early stages of a child's life. www.westsussex.gov.uk/familyassist
9. **Youth Homeless Prevention Team:** Advice and support for 16/17-year olds at risk of becoming homeless. This includes prevention and assessment.

Safer West Sussex Partnership

10. In respect of serious violence, the Safer West Sussex Partnership brings together community safety partnerships and key agencies to provide a coordinated approach to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. The partnership has agreed 3 key priorities based on profiled risk and vulnerability factors. The three key priorities are:
 - i. Working together to support children and young people to remain safe in school and to reduce exclusions in all schools, including special schools and the Alternative Provision College.
 - ii. Developing engagement opportunities and platforms with young people, with communities disproportionately affected by violence and exploitation, and with the wider community so feedback is listened to, to help shape responses.
 - iii. Working together to reduce the risk of serious violence among young Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) victims and perpetrators, by understanding the causes, indicators and influences. The Violence Reduction Unit and the West Sussex Youth Management Board will work in collaboration with key stakeholders to develop a focused operational plan to reduce the disproportional representation of young black and minority ethnic young people exposed to serious violence and exploitation.
11. An action plan has been developed setting out a range of services and interventions being delivered to children and young people where violent crime or concerns have been identified. Community engagement and co-production with children and young people are at the heart of this approach. This is delivered through the Youth Justice Service, National Probation Service and Districts and Boroughs. For example, one programme provides mentoring services within the school environment to young people at risk of violence who are transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7.
12. A further mentoring programme is provided to children and young people at Littlehampton Alternative Provision College where children are being identified to return to mainstream education.

Youth Justice Service

13. The Youth Justice Service (a multi-agency team working together to prevent youth crime) has had a particular focus on children in care who have committed violent crime, reviewing case histories to identify learning and improve practice. Where an offending young person is care experienced, the Initial Assessment Team in the Youth Justice Service will consider the child's

history and status when they make a recommendation to the court. The Youth Justice Service also uses trauma informed practice and restorative interventions to support better outcomes for children and young people.

14. The Youth Justice Plan sets out the priorities for the Youth Justice Service for the next 3 years. Six priority areas are identified in the plan that focus on intervention, including an action to understand and address disproportionality in relation to children in our care or those who are care experienced, as well as children with special needs and from Black and Asian Minority Ethnic groups. The following actions are being taken forward within the service:

- Continue to monitor and analyse the BAME, CLA and SEND cohort to ensure service delivery is appropriate and responsive;
- Continue to develop and align working practices, assessment and interventions with children in our care and all children known to Children's Social Care;
- Improve outcomes for children with special educational needs and disability open to the Youth Justice Service, ensuring individual interventions reflect individual need.

15. To provide examples of relevant projects in this area, the Youth Justice Service accessed funding to provide an AudioActive music programme to 9 children. This programme is focused on high risk young people who have or are likely to commit a violent offence or knife crime. Angling for Education is a further bespoke programme that provides 3 placements to young people who are at risk of violence within the community. Lodge Hill provides 12 sessions of enhanced outdoor activities for young people who are involved in violent crime, as well as 4 placements to children on the foundation programme. The Youth Justice Service also creates individual intervention plans for young people focused on the reduction of violent behaviour and knife crime.

Children's Residential Homes

16. Our children's residential homes also play an important role in supporting children and young people at risk of offending and residential workers have developed close working relationships with local police and youth offending services focused on prevention. Staff have adopted strengths-based approaches, building strong and trusting relationships with young people, promoting their social and emotional development to effect changes in behaviour. Where a vulnerability is identified in respect of violence and knife crime the Missing Exploitation Operational Group will review the child's safety plan and where appropriate nominate young people for further specialist support, for example, provided by the Council's Complex High Risk Adolescents Team or Barnardo's.

Conclusion

I hope this response is helpful and assures you of the priority given and work being undertaken in relation to tackling serious violence, and the services available for children and young people. Should you wish to discuss this further,

Collette Visagie, Service Lead can be contacted via email:
collette.visagie@westsussex.gov.uk or telephone: 0330222 7312.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JRussell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J" and a stylized "R".

Cllr Jacquie Russell
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
West Sussex County Council