

Benjamin Awkal

From: Hughes, Carwyn 61092 <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 26 July 2020 10:10
To: Benjamin Awkal
Cc: Bryony Crossland Davies; fash.mohammadi
Subject: RE: Select Committee request for information - supporting vulnerable young people

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Ben

Please find below the Surrey Police response to your questions kindly coordinated by CI Fash Mohammadi.

1. How does your organisation support looked-after children and care leavers?

As a Force, we are committed to supporting Looked After Children and Care Leavers. We are aware that a disproportionate number of Looked After Children are victims of Child Exploitation and are reported missing on a regular basis. All children who are experiencing abuse through exploitation or repeatedly going missing, will have a dedicated police single point of contact from the Child Exploitation Missing Unit. The SPOC meets with the child to discuss and agree a safety and risk management plan with that individual whilst ensuring they are in regular contact and offered diversion schemes as an exit strategy to deter from those that seek to harm them.

'Total Respect' training has been delivered to hundreds of police officers and staff from all Departments and ranks. This training aims to enable officers to stop and take the time to imagine walking in the shoes of a young person who is going to be taken into care and/or lives in care. The training packages aims to educate about their journey and how we, the police, fit into that picture and what our impact might be on a young person's life. Total Respect training is an immersive learning experience led by young people, most of whom have been brought up in care, have experience of the care system or have lived in domestic abuse environments as children. Respect is one of the nine principles that make up our Police Code of Ethics and should be something we automatically apply in all our interactions. The aim of 'Total Respect' is to help police officers and staff better understand situations experienced by young people in care.

We recognise that negative impacts in a child's early development are a major factor in underachievement which frequently becomes a recurring generational cycle. We have delivered training on Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) and understand the higher the combination of ACEs, or the greater impact of just one, the more likely the child will have problems and take part in criminality in later life. As such, we are piloting an Early Help scheme which aims to offer the right intervention at an early stage to prevent the reoccurring generational cycle of families experiencing ACEs therefore improving outcomes for children. We are also work with partners to prevent negative outcomes for children using a problem solving approach, recognising that a policing intervention is not always the most appropriate. A dedicated Early Help Hub SPOC led by a Detective Sergeant is now positioned within Police SPA to co-ordinate referral into this pilot which aims to improve outcomes for young people.

Surrey Police utilises 'Checkpoint', a deferred prosecution scheme for lower level criminal offences; so when the evidential thresholds are met to charge, Checkpoint scheme is then offered as an alternative to a formal outcome if they are eligible. If the individuals complete all the conditions set as part of the scheme, the criminal matter is then it is finalised as a community resolution. This scheme has been rolled out due to lessons learnt from our Youth Restorative Intervention scheme and the Women's Justice Intervention scheme. We know that by offering appropriate support to offenders whilst addressing the reasons for their offending pattern combined with satisfying the victims' needs, results in a reduction in further reoffending, this in turn improves victim satisfaction.

With Checkpoint, women as a cohort, are already included as a whole regardless of previous offending, given their vulnerabilities within the criminal justice system. Men however are not. It is known that young men who have been looked after make up the greatest statistic of men in prison. For this reason, men who have been looked after [care leavers] and who are between the ages of 18-24 years [up until the day before they turn 25 years] are offered an enhanced service under the Checkpoint Plus scheme, in order to address their offending and keep them out of the courts. Decision makers on the youth and adult criminal justice panel [JDMP and Checkpoint] are trauma informed. Understanding a person's journey through life helps provide an understanding of that character and will provide some mitigation when deciding on the outcome of cases.

All children who are placed on a Child Protection Plan are flagged on our police computer system. This means that any calls to their address can be prioritised and the right support put in place quickly.

2. What are the common needs and aspirations of looked-after children and care leavers?

We know that looked-after children and care leavers want to feel listened to, valued and not judged. This is through our 'voice of the child' work, the direct contact we have had with children and the user voice surveys. In terms of police intervention, when this occurs, both cohorts also look for swift justice [i.e. not waiting months for court dates or decisions on outcomes] – both youth intervention and the checkpoint scheme offer this within the remit of applicable offences.

3. What commonly prevents looked-after children and care leavers from achieving their aspirations and having their needs met?

Being treated differently because they are a looked-after child or care leaver, not having someone who is 'crazy about them' and the unnecessary criminalisation of young people. We have worked with partners to try and stop the unnecessarily criminalisation of young people, we have asked Children's Homes and Foster carers to try and resolve most low level matters in house, as the corporate parents. Additionally as mentioned above in response to question 1, Surrey Checkpoint is a deferred prosecution scheme for lower level criminal offences; at the point we have sufficient evidence to caution, PND, or charge, we instead offer the scheme as an alternative to a formal outcome. If they complete all the conditions we set as part of the scheme it is finalised as a community resolution. If they fail to meet these conditions, they then receive a formal outcome. This initiative was implemented as a result of the lessons learnt from our Youth Restorative Intervention scheme and the Women's Justice Intervention scheme. We know that giving offenders support addressing the reasons for their offending, while listening to the needs of the victim, reduces re-offending, and provides high victim satisfaction. Care leavers are automatically eligible for Checkpoint.

4. What could be done to better support looked-after children, children at risk of entering care and care leavers? When answering this, please consider the way that services are delivered and the proposals outlined below.

One area for improvement is around what ongoing support is offered to young people who have turned 18, especially those who are looked after and/or are deemed still at risk of exploitation. We have children who have been discussed at the multi-agency Risk Management Meetings and assessed as being at risk of exploitation, who have a whole support package in place for them as part of their safety and disruption plan. However, when they turn 18 the support ends. We need to ensure there is a clear transition and pathway into adult services to manage the support for the young person, ensuring they do not fall between the gaps in service provision. We are also see care leavers aged 18+ who are allocated accommodation, leaving them vulnerable to grooming via county lines and local drug organised crime groups, who may try and take over their property (cuckooing) as a base to run their drug distribution. We understand from the NWG (National Working Group for CSE) that transitions for 18+ at risk of exploitation is a National issue. In order to support this work we have added this as an Action on our Child Exploitation Multi Agency Strategic Action Plan 'Safeguarding Adolescents and Young Adults - what happens when you turn 18?'

5. Are you content for this response to be published as an annex to the Task Group's report?

Yes

6. Would you or a representative of your organisation be prepared to meet remotely with the Task Group to further discuss this response?

Yes

I hope this assists as you intended.

Kind regards

Carwyn Hughes (MSc)
Detective Chief Superintendent
Head of Public Protection
Surrey Police