

Introduction of ASSET Plus within a strategic plan

Nottingham City

Key points:

- **Nottingham City have played a leading role in the evaluation and use of ASSET Plus**
- **But it is important to recognise that ASSET Plus sits within a constantly evolving and developing provision, driven in part by budget pressures, but also to maximise the impact of the resources that are available, or can be secured through partnership working**

NOTTINGHAM YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM – STRATEGIC CONTEXT 2016

The Challenge

Following a period of transition, services for Children and Families were restructured in Nottingham City Council in early 2015 as the Director for Children's Social Care took on the leadership and management of all services for children (excluding education and disabled children's team). The YOT manager also took on strategic oversight of our Family Intervention Project and the operational delivery of Priority Families, Nottingham's version of the Troubled Families Programme. The YOT manager has since that time developed an increased presence and operational and strategic links in work to tackle cross-cutting priorities for Nottingham – such as tackling CSE in a multi-agency approach through involvement in a MASE Panel and increased links with Children in Care and Placements colleagues to secure appropriate placements for our most challenging adolescents.

As early help, targeted and social work services began to work together under one, integrated Leadership Team it became apparent that existing thresholds and procedures were creating silo-based working and a culture of 'transfer' between teams rather than collaboration and joint working. This meant that children and families could experience a disjointed service offer and as all cases escalating from early help or targeted services to children's social work services had to go through our 'front door' it was also leading to inefficiencies in the system.

As a result of this the Heads of Service across the Directorate worked together to reshape the front door to services and develop a locality model. The YOT had itself adopted a 'locality' model (see structure chart) in 2012 to embed close working links with both statutory and third sector partners and ensure a responsive approach to youth crime-related issues in the diverse communities across the city. Whilst not directly involved in the newly formed locality hubs there is a strong YOT presence in Young Peoples' Panels which take place across the city to identify young people at risk of offending /ASB and direct referrals to our preventative workers.

In relation to the most recent performance on Nottingham YOT's three KPIs: reoffending rates have increased slightly but not as much as comparator groups; custody rates have reduced over a number of years but show a slight increase in 2015/16, resulting from a spike in October of 7 cases; (a number of those cases relate to the changed in sentencing around knife crime, which has been recognised with partners as a concern for Nottingham and which has engendered considerable partnership activity to reduce the risks and incidences of knife-related offending by young people); first-time entrants were at their lowest ever number in 2015/16 (210) but the rate per 100,000 of the 10-17 year old population remains high (810) such that Nottingham is bottom of the league table of 138 English YOTs.

In February 2016, the YOT was pleased to be awarded the RJC's Restorative Service Quality Mark, ensuring that a restorative focus remains high in all aspects of its activity This has further embedded the YOT's involvement in and support of other services and partners in delivering training, offering restorative conferencing and promoting best practice in this area – particularly in the arena of reducing the criminalisation of children in care, where we have seen significant improvement in outcomes recently from 19% to less than 6%.

A particular feature of the long list of cases open to Nottingham shows a relatively high number of young people 'caretaken' by Nottingham on behalf of Lincolnshire and there has been discussion both at case/supervisor and Heads of Service level with colleagues in Lincolnshire arising from concerns about those placements.

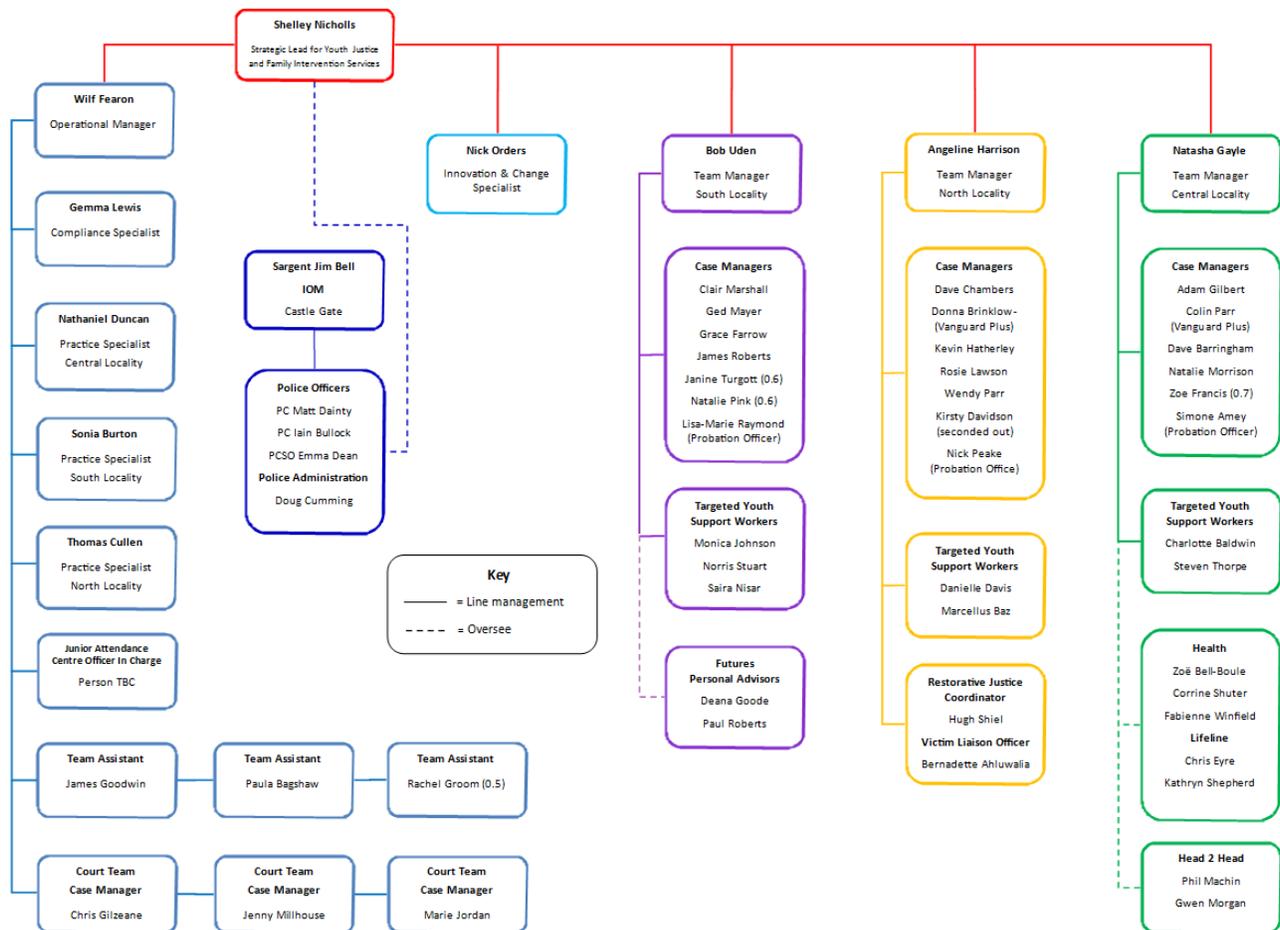
Budget pressures resulted in the YOT losing over £350,000 of funding in the year 2015/16 with a further £200,000 planned reduction for 2016/17, representing a 23% reduction in funding over the two years. Efforts have been made to ensure that the focus on service delivery remains strong, but some specialist areas of support will need to be reduced in the future. During the period we had not filled case manager vacancies, despite rising workload and the impact of both the training requirements for and implementation of ASSET PLUS, as there was still uncertainty about the 16/17 financial position. However in the past weeks we have been in a position to begin processes to recruit to two vacant posts and as frontline practitioners become ever more comfortable with Assetplus this will support better outcomes for children, families and communities in Nottingham.

The policies that are being developed:

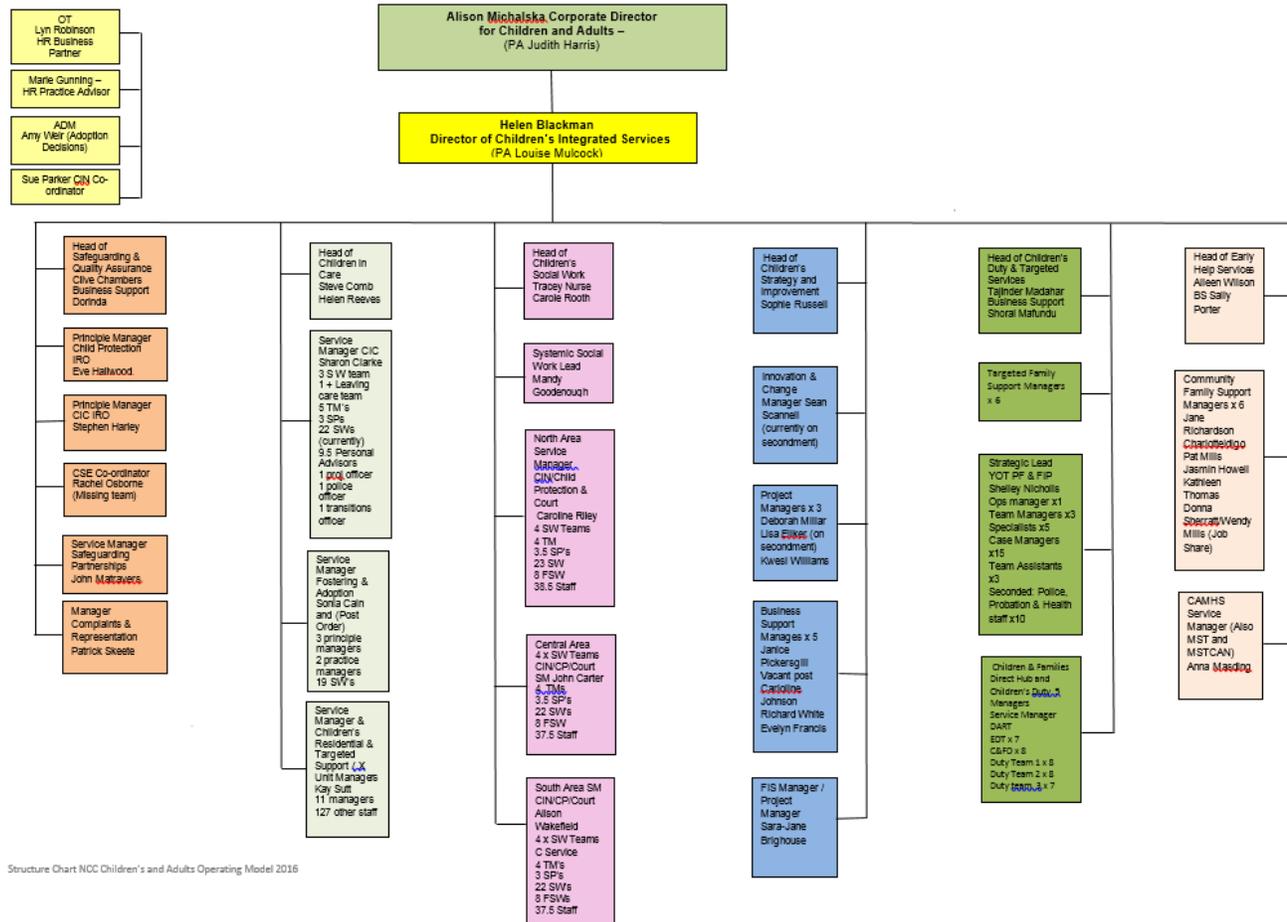
- QA framework 2016 draft – This is the quality assurance policy which is currently being reviewed and still in draft format. The review is being carried out to enable the YOT to take account of the implementation of Asset Plus and the impact this has had on assessments, auditing and service delivery. The YOT is also redeveloping its audit tool to take account of Asset Plus and the different ways it assesses and outlines interventions.
- ROH, Reoffending & Safety & Wellbeing Draft - This is the current ROH, Reoffending & Safety & Wellbeing policy which is currently being reviewed and still in draft format. The review is being

carried out to enable the YOT to take account of the implementation of Asset Plus and the impact this has had on assessments, auditing and service delivery.

- Local approach to working practices – This outlines the YOT’s approach to practice since the implementation of Asset Plus. It signposts and provides information for specific working areas, i.e. background, local approach, system configuration and related documents.
- With regard to compliance, engagement and enforcement, we ensure all practitioners’ make use of the YJB case management guidance and national standards to inform their decisions.



Children's Integrated Services Directorate.



Structure Chart NCC Children's and Adults Operating Model 2016

Evaluation of ASSET Plus (by Gemma Lewis- Youth Justice Compliance Specialist Nottingham City Youth Offending Team)

Asset Plus is the new comprehensive end-to end assessment and planning framework. It aims to identify strengths, needs, risks and issues to facilitate the planning of appropriate interventions for young people who have offended or are at risk of offending.

Within the framework, the health section covers three main health screening areas that are aligned with the CHAT (Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool). One of which is the SLCN tool. Asset Plus incorporates these tools within the framework and provides the opportunity to identify and support young people as early as possible either by identifying the need for further assessment or referral. The Royal College of Speech and Language state that the identification of needs is essential to ensure interventions are tailored to the young person's ability. Whilst practitioners would previously complete just a learning styles questionnaire and tailor the delivery of interventions based upon the findings,

practitioners now acknowledge the SLCN tool allows for a more thorough screening and can be effective as a screening tool. The challenge arises when there is a need to signpost to the appropriate services or specialist support and there is a lack of resources available to meet the needs of the young person.

Whilst it has been made aware to practitioners using Asset Plus that there are resources available to use with young people with SLCN needs, there is a lack of confidence and limited knowledge of the area. As Asset Plus encourages more detailed thinking and increased professional judgement, practitioners are finding it difficult to obtain the relevant information in relation to special educational needs from education providers. This in turn can mean that there is a fragmented approach to correctly identify young people's needs and how they will be addressed. What the framework does ensure is that identified needs are not missed. There are alert flags within the framework that alert the user to a particular fact or circumstance. In particular in the Pathways and planning section of the framework, there is a section called 'Tailoring interventions' which covers how interventions will be tailored to take into account the young person's specific needs and how they will be addressed. An alert displays in this section where preferred learning styles or particular barriers to engagement and participation have been identified.

It is clear that Asset Plus provides a better quality and more rounded assessment, however, whilst staff are becoming more confident about using the framework and the screening tools, it would be an added bonus if we had the right resources to work with young people with identified SLCN needs to promote better outcomes.

Contact Details

Shelley Nicholls

Strategic Lead for Youth Justice and Family Intervention Services

Nottingham City Council

Tel 0115 8765671

Email shelley.nicholls@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
