

Minutes

Meeting: Board Meeting
Date: 12 February 2014
Time: 09.30 – 11.30
Ref: YJB (14) 1st meeting

Attendees

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| Angela Sarkis (Acting Chair) | Lin Hinnigan |
| Lord Tom McNally (observer and Chair designate) | Dusty Kennedy |
| Amanda Sater (Board member) | Lucy Dawes |
| Rob Butler (Board member) | Cathy Robinson |
| Seamus Oates (Board member) | Martin Skeats |
| John Wrangham (Board member) | Ray Hill |
| David Banks (Board member) | Amie Wilsdon-Tagg |
| Neil Rhodes (Board member) | Paul Candler (Ministry of Justice) |
| Gillian Fairfield (Board member) | Clive Newsome (item 6 only) |
| Bob Reitemeier (Board member) | David Wells [minutes] |

Item 1- Apologies, register of interests, minutes of previous meetings and matters arising

1. Apologies were received from Chris Davies. There were no declarations of interest outside of those recorded on the register. Board members were reminded of the need to send any updates to the register to Rowena Finnegan.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without change, and there were no matters arising. The updates recorded on the outstanding actions log were noted.

Item 2 – Chair’s Items

3. Angela Sarkis welcomed Lord McNally as an observer. Angela provided a brief oral report as her role as acting chair had only begun on 2 February 2014. On behalf of the Board and the wider YJB Angela paid thanks to Frances Done for her achievements during her time as Chair and observed the excellent turn out of colleagues and supporters from across the Youth Justice System for her leaving reception on 21 January 2014. Angela attended a lunch meeting with Lord McNally on 6 February 2014 to discuss his induction and future priorities and a number of stakeholder visits and visits to YOI’s are being arranged. Angela has also met with Lin Hinnigan to discuss current events and in particular the imminent publication of the YJB report *Deaths in Custody; Actions Taken, Lessons Learnt*.

Item 3 – Chief Executive’s Report

4. Lin Hinnigan’s written report was noted. Lin drew particular attention to item 4 in relation to the re-contracting of Secure Children’s Homes (SCHs). The business case has been

cleared by the Ministry of Justice Executive Committee and has received Ministerial agreement. The proposal is for contracts to be awarded for 138 places, down from 166 at present, reflecting reduced demand. One current home will not have its contract renewed, and discussions are ongoing with them regarding the potential for young people being able to see out their sentences out beyond the current contract end date of 31 March 2014.

5. In relation to item 9 on the planned changes that will allow gang injunctions to be heard in youth courts, it was noted that the changes have been delayed given issues around young people accessing legal advocacy services, which will require Parliamentary approval to address.
6. The YJB has received approval to publish the report *Deaths in Custody: Actions Taken, Lessons Learnt*, with a planned date of 20 February 2014. Letters have been sent to the families of the young people concerned. Board members will receive embargoed copies 24 hours in advance of publication. Lin Hinnigan stated that a communications plan is in place, and while the plan is reactive there are positive messages to promote. Lord McNally stated that the Board ought to set aside time to have a longer discussion on the issues raised, including links with the recently announced review of deaths in custody among 18-24 year olds, at a future Board meeting.
Action: An item on deaths in custody to be added to a future Board meeting, as outlined above.
7. In relation to item 5, on escort contracts, David Banks asked whether the discrepancies in billing were material and if so whether the scope was known. Ray Hill stated that his team are still trying to gauge the level of the discrepancies, although it was not thought they are significant.
8. In relation to the item on liaison and diversion pathfinders, Gillian Fairfield asked that the Board be kept informed of how the schemes progress. Cathy Robinson stated that her team will provide updates as the work continues, although it will be a few months for there to be any real progress to be reported against.
Action: The Board to be kept informed on the work in relation to liaison and diversion pathfinders.
9. Amanda Sater stated that the issue of young people being placed in custody far from home continued to be a concern, and that pressure needed to be kept up on addressing the matter.

Item 4 – Board Forward Look

10. Angela Sarkis observed the Forward Look needed updating to accurately reflect the current activities of Board Members. It was agreed that the format of the Forward Look needs to be amended to place more emphasis on future activity. Board members were invited to submit items for inclusion to Rowena Finnegan. It was agreed that the report should be split into two separate sections: (1) what has taken place and (2) what is planned.

Action: The format of the Forward Look to be amended as described above, with Board members invited to submit items for inclusion to Rowena Finnegan.

Item 5 – Quarterly Corporate Performance Report

11. Martin Skeats introduced the item, stating that the format of the report will be reviewed in conjunction with the corporate business planning process. It was noted that the report is currently used for three different audiences: the YJB executive, the Board and the

Ministry of Justice. The report included for the first time progress against meeting Triennial Review recommendations.

12. The Board agreed that the report represented an excellent management tool and noted the multiple audiences it was aimed at, but also agreed that for its purposes the format needed to be reviewed. It was suggested that the detail should be condensed as much as possible, with the critical issues summarised in a self-contained cover paper which could be read without specific reference to the underlying report. It was also suggested that one of the sub-committees could be responsible for overseeing the whole report, with the Board's role to focus on a summary and from an assurance perspective.

Action: The format of the Quarterly Performance Report to be reviewed, as outlined above.

13. The Board raised the issue of young people being placed in custody some distance from home, and the impact that the low custodial population and move to the secure college model would have on it. Ray Hill stated that the location of the planned secure college, in Leicestershire, would not make a significant difference, but that the use of the estate in the context of falling custodial numbers required stark choices to be made.

Item 6 – Corporate and Business Plan 2014-17

14. The paper provided the Board with an early draft of the YJB Corporate and Business Plan for comment. The draft has also been sent to the Ministry of Justice and other government departments for comment. Martin Skeats stated that the plan is focussing on what it is that the YJB wants to achieve, rather than how.

15. The Board agreed that the draft represented a clear and well structured plan. However, it felt that more could be made of achievements in the youth justice system, with a more positive tone to certain sections – for example, the “*Who we are and what we do*” chapter could be more upbeat and proactive, as well as saying something about the role of the YJB as a leading and influencing organisation – including at the local level. Similarly, more could be said of the importance of the YJB working and being integrated with other bodies both within and outside of the youth justice system. It was also suggested that the plan could contain a greater emphasis on resettlement.

16. The Board agreed that at some juncture it needs to revisit the “*Our Vision*” section of the plan, which has remained unchanged for some time, both in terms of wording and the vision itself. However, for the current plan, the wording would remain as drafted.

Action: The Board to have a discussion on its “vision” for the YJB, for inclusion in future Business and Corporate Plans.

17. In terms of drafting, it was suggested that the Communications Plan has positive examples of wording that could be lifted and used (for example, “*our success is only achieved through influencing others*”). It was suggested that the deliverables section could be brought forward and added to the ‘*Who we are and what we do*’ section. Overall, the plan needed to be more powerful and convincing, and thought was needed as to how the YJB meets the third and fourth bullet in the stated vision: “*victims are better supported*” and “*the public are protected*”.

18. The Board were asked to send any further thoughts and comments to Clive Newsome, by 18 February 2014.

Item 7 – Changes to the YOT Escalation Process

19. The paper was provided for information, outlining changes to the escalation process for YOTs and the strengthening of grant conditions. The revised escalation process includes the following:
- the provision of qualitative information by priority YOTs;
 - agreeing a defined period within which the YOT will demonstrate improvement;
 - escalation to Chief Executive level and agreement on a further improvement period;
 - escalation to the Minister, who may choose to issue a performance notice, which would be published.
20. HM Inspectorate of Probation has agreed to inspect YOTs during the process to help assess progress. Ministers are satisfied that the process can be sufficiently strengthened without recourse to legislation, although this could be considered in the future if necessary.
21. A wide range of options have been considered in terms of strengthening YOT grant conditions. Those being put forward include:
- underpinning the new process for priority YOTs to provide qualitative information by making this a grant condition;
 - underpinning the newly revised National Standards by making the completion of self assessment returns a condition of the grant;
 - the possibility of linking the grant to performance in relation to missing documentation.
22. The Board welcomed the changes and agreed they were very encouraging. Gillian Fairfield suggested that an informal approach to Chief Executives should be made before raising matters with them formally at stage 3 of the process.

Item 8 – Junior Attendance Centres

23. The paper provided the Board with an overview of the proposed transfer of responsibility for the delivery of Junior Attendance Centre services from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to Youth Offending Teams/Local Authorities. Specifically, the Board was invited to:
- a) agree the arrangements for the 'transitional' year and the date of transfer for delivery by local authorities; and
 - b) to endorse the details of the agreement between the YJB and NOMS which lays out the commitments of both parties to the transfer of services,
24. In terms of the transitional year, David Banks asked whether the YJB has the skills and resources to achieve the aims, particularly in relation to ICT and Human Resources. Martin Skeats stated that a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed with NOMS. The ICT issues are not significant, with NOMS continuing to operate the ICT. On the staffing side, it was noted that staff remain on the NOMS payroll until services transfer to local authorities. Advice is being sought from the Treasury Solicitors and the YJB is confident that the aims can be achieved.
25. Bob Reitemeier stated that it was right that the YJB steps in for the transitional period. However, there was a risk regarding the quality of assessment centres and this ought to be more specifically reflected in the assessment of risks outlined in the paper. Rob Butler stated that there was an opportunity in the transitional year to make sentencers more aware of the existence of Junior Attendance Centres.

26. The Board sought assurance that sufficient finances were going to be provided for the work the YJB was taking on. Martin Skeats stated that the costs were well understood and that NOMS were fully engaged with the YJB on the matter. The Board agreed to the requests in the paper, set out at paragraph 23 above.

Item 9 – Any other business

27. There was no further business. The meeting closed at 11.30.

David Wells
YJB Corporate Governance
17 February 2014