



The Youth Justice SEND Quality Mark and Quality Lead Awards

Context

Between 2016 and 2021, the education charity Achievement for All, in partnership with AYM, established a successful and highly valued process for recognising the progress made by Local Area Partnerships, centred around Youth Offending Teams, to secure better outcomes for children and youth people in youth justice pathways who have SEN (Special Educational Needs).

Awards have continued at pace under our new sponsor and validation partner, **Microlink PC UK Ltd**, the UK's leading workplace accessibility organisation that has a profound commitment to levelling the playing field for the most marginalised and vulnerable people in society, removing barriers to learning, working and living.

Here are some of the most recent Area Partnership citations (Click on the link to see the relevant News Bulletin)

[**NORTH SOMERSET \(Quality Lead\) December 2023**](#)

[**BRACKNELL FOREST \(Quality Mark\) Jan 2023**](#)

[**CROYDON \(Quality Lead Redesignation with Child First Commendation\) March 23**](#)

[**NORFOLK \(Quality Mark\) March 2023**](#)

[**SWINDON \(Quality Lead with Child First Commendation\) May 2023**](#)

[**WOKINGHAM \(Quality Mark\) May 2023**](#)

[**WEST SUSSEX \(Quality Mark\) June 2023**](#)

[**ISLINGTON \(Quality Lead with Child First Commendation\) July 2023**](#)

This short paper outlines the process. We hope you consider joining our community of practice.

The Ten Key Statement Framework

A series of statements have been developed and tested to frame effective SEND practice in the youth justice system.

Statement 1 All Local Authority SEND Team staff (and others who work regularly with YOTs) have working knowledge of SEND Reform practice in the Youth Justice System

Statement 2 All relevant staff within Youth Offending Teams have a working knowledge of SEND Reform practice in the Youth Justice System

Statement 3 All staff who work with and within YOTs have had recent training that builds a basic awareness of the type and range of special educational needs that are prevalent in the youth justice system, as well as the complexities and impact of structural (social) disadvantage.

Statement 4a Information exchange regarding all forms and levels of special educational needs between secure estate, health and care professionals, LAs and YOT is timely, comprehensive and leads to continuity of/establishing appropriate provision.

Statement 4b Proactive information exchange and planning between LA SEND, Social, Health and LAC Teams, as well as YOT, leads to the early identification of YPs at risk of entering the youth justice system, with provision leading to reduced “first time” offending rates.

Statement 5 Initial screening/assessment of YPs entering the Youth Justice System is conducted by trained / experienced professionals and informs provision mapping.

Statement 6 If a YP has an EHCP, information sharing leads to continuity of provision (throughout youth justice system and into transition/resettlement)

Statement 7 If screening/assessment indicates a YP has high level needs that were previously unidentified, or has SEN support needs not met by an EHCP, timely and appropriate support is either implemented or commissioned whilst further assessment is considered.

Statement 8 Multiagency teams, working in partnership with the YOT, ensure that transition and resettlement planning/delivery are aligned to securing a series of positive life outcomes for YPs (education, independence, self-efficacy, work, etc.)

Statement 9 Young people and their families are actively engaged in all aspects of screening, identification, diagnosis and intervention planning, and have a voice in shaping the provision, and evaluating its impact

Statement 10 Strategic Commissioners within Local Authority Area Partnerships ensure that the needs of YPs in the youth justice system are adequately resourced and supported, and the provision reviewed regularly.

These statements are considered against a ten-point scoring grid:

- 0** Inappropriate/inapplicable to our setting
- 1** We do not do this
- 3** Some evidence that this happens
- 5** Evidence of effective practice (but not consistent or widespread)
- 7** **Widespread effective practice with evidence of better outcomes for young people**
- 9** Case studies of outstanding practice to share

A **benchmark profile** is created, giving a “picture” of an area partnership’s strengths and development needs.

In discussion with the assessment team, local area partnerships describe strategic and operational improvement planning already underway, and work out ways to integrate development needs as highlighted by the benchmark profile into existing plans.

For other partnership areas, the results from the benchmark process (and the sharing of effective practice gathered from all participating area partnerships) trigger new thinking and new development planning.

The benchmark profile

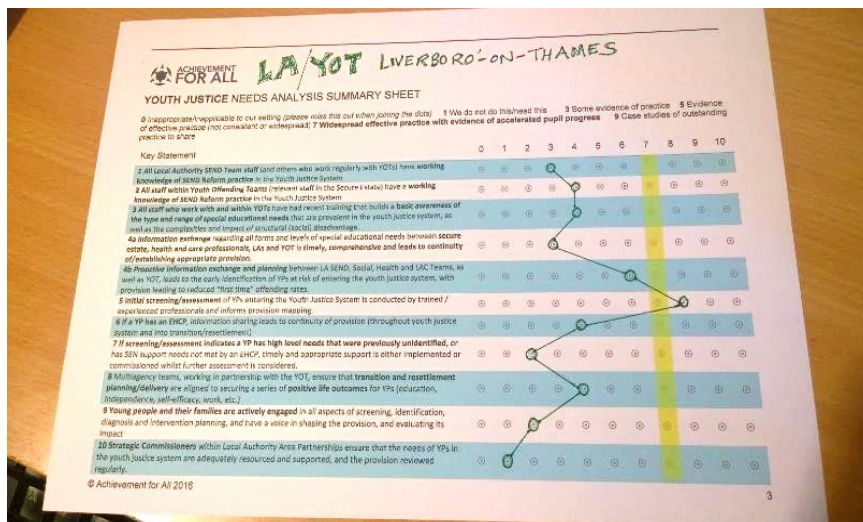
ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

YOUTH JUSTICE NEEDS ANALYSIS SUMMARY SHEET

0 Inappropriate/applicable to our setting (please miss this out when joining the dots) 1 We do not do this/need this 3 Some evidence of practice
5 Evidence of effective practice (not consistent or widespread) 7 Widespread effective practice with evidence of accelerated pupil progress 9 Case studies of outstanding practice to share

Key Statement	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 All Local Authority SEND Team staff (and others who work regularly with YOTs) have working knowledge of SEND Reform practice in the Youth Justice System											
2 All staff within Youth Offending Teams (relevant staff in the Secure Estate) have a working knowledge of SEND Reform practice in the Youth Justice System											
3 All staff who work with and within YOTs have had recent training that builds a basic awareness of the type and range of special educational needs that are prevalent in the youth justice system, as well as the complexities and impact of structural (social) disadvantage											
4a Information exchange regarding all forms and levels of special educational needs between secure estate, health and care professionals, LAs and YOT is timely, comprehensive and leads to continuity of establishing appropriate provision.											
4b Proactive information exchange and planning between LA SEND, Social, Health and LAC Teams, as well as YOT, leads to the early identification of YPs at risk of entering the youth justice system, with provision leading to reduced “first time” offending rates.											
5 Initial screening/assessment of YPs entering the Youth Justice System is conducted by trained / experienced professionals and informs provision mapping.											
6 If a YP has an EHCP, information sharing leads to continuity of provision (throughout youth justice system and into transition/resettlement)											
7 If screening/assessment indicates a YP has high level needs that were previously unidentified, or has SEN support needs not met by an EHCP, timely and appropriate support is either implemented or commissioned whilst further assessment is considered.											
8 Multiagency teams, working in partnership with the YOT, ensure that transition and resettlement planning/delivery are aligned to securing a series of positive life outcomes for YPs (education, independence, self-efficacy, work, etc.)											
9 Young people and their families are actively engaged in all aspects of screening, identification, diagnosis and intervention planning, and have a voice in shaping the provision, and evaluating its impact.											
10 Strategic Commissioners within Local Authority Area Partnerships ensure that the needs of YPs in the youth justice system are adequately resourced and supported, and the provision reviewed regularly.											

Achievement for All 2017 3



Specimen completed Scoring Grid

Criteria for Quality Mark Award



- On completion of the benchmark profile, or after a period of time during which demonstrable improvement activity has taken place, a consistent “5s”, “6s” or higher are scored across all Key Statements (in other words, an area partnership has the deckchairs lined up, and is working towards consistent evidence-based practice in all areas)
- Case studies are welcomed as supporting evidence, or short witness testimonies from key professionals. Standing reports, local statistics and other evidence all contribute to the evidence base
- Submissions needs to be “signed off” by Local Authority SEND Leadership and YOS Leadership (this can simply be a joint email back to the project team with the supporting evidence, or attendance at benchmarking and final assessment Zoom or Teams meetings.
- The Awards Delivery Team is on hand to support the journey. One of the (few) benefits of the Covid pandemic means that working on Zoom or Teams is now established practice. Short sharing discussions can take place, so that Service Leads are assured of progress, data can be shared, and ideas from around the national network suggested. As a result, the final meeting is more of a celebration of a journey travelled, rather than a test!

The Award is current for three years, when re-designation is required.

Re-designation at the same level is not an onerous process- but checks and balances need to take place in order to preserve the validity of the process.

Many YOTs use Quality Mark as a springboard to Quality Lead.

Criteria for Quality Lead Award



- Ratings of “7” in all statement areas are agreed during the initial benchmarking activity, or after a period of time during which demonstrable improvement activity has taken place, backed up by additional evidence of effective practice and partnership working (such as first-time offending rates, reoffending rates, joint working protocols in place, transition planning and provision, training plans completed and in action, systems in place and operational, appropriate panels and forums active and functioning effectively, etc.)
- At least one score of “8” or higher, with a case study of effective practice submitted that can be shared across participating Local Area Partnerships.
- Submissions needs to be “signed off” by Local Authority SEND Leadership and YOS Leadership (this can simply be a joint email back to the project team with the supporting evidence, or attendance at benchmarking and final assessment Zoom or Teams meetings.
- The Awards Delivery Team is on hand to support the journey. One of the (few) benefits of the Covid pandemic means that working on Zoom or Teams is now established practice. Short sharing discussions can take place, so that Service Leads are assured of progress, data can be shared, and ideas from around the national network suggested. As a result, the final meeting is more of a celebration of a journey travelled, rather than a test!

The Award is current for three years, when re-designation is required.

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Criteria for “Child First Commendation”



In a new development for 2022, the Youth Justice SEND Quality Assurance process is embracing the imperatives signaled within the current YJB three-year strategic plan. Whilst the YJB initiative focuses on practice within a youth justice service, we recognise that you cannot do the heavy-lifting alone: this is why our award looks to Local Area Partnerships to deliver effective SEND practice... and this framework is easily generalised to any child or young person with complex needs. Indeed, it is good to see the Ministry of Justice and Department for Education combining data streams, formally, to recognise this¹, examining the education and social care background of children cautioned or sentenced for an offence.

A **Child First Commendation** will only be awarded if these criteria are met:

- The *Local Area Partnership* is judged to be performing at Quality Lead standards
- A feature of *Local Area Partnership practice* aligns to the strategic challenges as laid out in the YJB 3-year Child First framework
 - **Prioritise the best interests of children** and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
 - **Promote children’s individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims.** All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
 - **Encourage children’s active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion.** All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
 - **Promote a childhood removed from the justice system,** using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.
- A case study of effective practice is submitted

The additional citation costs nothing additional and will be a part of the natural flow of assessment or redesignation activity.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-childrens-social-care-and-offending>

How much does the process cost for a new entry?

New entry into the process: **£1100+VAT** for AYM member, **£1300+VAT** for non-AYM members

This assumes all business will be contacted via Zoom or Teams meetings. If site visits are requested, a fee + travel and subsistence can be agreed.

For Teams seeking redesignation at the same level (QM to QM, QL to QL)

- Register for redesignation, ideally a few months before the 3 year period lapses
- Microlink Assessors will assist in the identification of process and evidence (this is not an onerous process); a formal concall/ZOOM/Teams meeting will confirm the redesignation
- New logos and new certificates will be issued, the latter formally stating that standards have been maintained
- Please note that if you choose not to redesignate, existing logos will have to be removed from all websites, letter heads and other official documentation
- The costs have been kept to an absolute minimum (**£600+VAT** for AYM member, **£700+VAT** for non-AYM members)

For Teams seeking a higher rating at redesignation (QM to QL)

- Register for redesignation, ideally a few months before the 3 year period lapses
- Microlink Assessors will assist in the identification of process and evidence (informally benchmark, identify the critical evidence required, and assist with additional meetings. We do not want this to be perceived as a test; more like an iterative process towards the final outcome); a formal concall/ZOOM/Teams meeting will confirm the award
- New logos and new certificates will be issued, the latter formally stating that new standards have been attained, and identifying where this has occurred
- Please note that if you choose not to redesignate, existing logos will have to be removed from all websites, letter heads and other official documentation
- If benchmarking uncovers practice development needs further time to embed, or evidence needs to be collected, the redesignation window will be held open without any additional charge)
- The costs are the same for a new entry into the process (**£1100+VAT** for AYM member, **£1300+VAT** for non-AYM members)

For further details please contact either

Phil Sutton at AYM: phil.sutton@aym.org.uk or

Marius Frank (Delivery Team and Assessment Coordinator): marius.frank@microlinkpc.com

Endorsements

“**Blackburn with Darwen Youth Justice Service** received their SEND Quality Lead Award at the AYM Annual General Meeting on 5 June 2019. On 17 June 2019 we were part of a joint Local Area SEND inspection between Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. Buoyed up by our recent success I went fully armed to our meeting with said framed Award, explaining that we were very proud of it!

Gaining the SEND Lead Award enabled me to go to that meeting with confidence in that all the excellent evidence and statistics we had sourced previously was key for the areas that the inspectors questioned. In feedback following the inspection around the effectiveness of the local area in improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities our work was highlighted in the Strengths: **“The successful work of the youth justice service has been recognised. The team has received a national award. As a result of effective support, the rate of reoffending for this group has reduced significantly over the past 12 months.”**

Glenda Astley Blackburn and Darwen Area Team Manager

Also wanted to thank you sincerely for all your work, guidance and support in helping us achieve the QM and QL status recently. It mattered enormously to us and will make a difference to us securing the resource our young people truly do need and deserve.

Thank you

Warm wishes

Helen

Helen MacDonald – Operations Manager Somerset YOS (Prevention)



The Blackpool Youth Justice Service and the Blackpool SEND Team commissioned a Quality Assessment because of the excellent reputation and expertise it could offer to our services. The framework enabled us to assess our current practices and the impact on the service we provide for our young people and families. Marius Frank was instrumental in the assessment and provided us with specialist knowledge and skills. His experience and knowledge was invaluable to us and how we developed out practice. The resources and access to the Youth Justice SEND Bubble have had a dramatic impact on our service and interventions. I have been able to provide high quality resources to my team and managers.

The partnership work and assessment were used in our evidence submitted for our HMIP Inspection in June 2021. The Blackpool Youth Justice Service previous inspection rated us as Inadequate in 2018. In our inspection in 2021 we were rated as Good with some areas of Outstanding. The work and evidence of the Quality Mark and the resources and specialist advice from Marius Frank was a major contributor to this. He provided me with skills knowledge and confidence to improve or service for young people and to build and up skill my team. This work must continue to ensure young people with SEND and speech language and communication difficulties are recognised and supported within the criminal justice system.

Fiona Downey

YOT Education Officer

Adolescent Services (Youth Offending)

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