

BRISTOL YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM - PUBLICATION OF INSPECTION REPORT

The latest report on the second phase of inspections of Youth Offending Teams (YOT) in England and Wales was published today. A multi-agency inspection team between December 2004 and February 2005 carried out the Bristol Youth Offending Team inspection.

Andrew Bridges, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, said:

"This inspection was undertaken during the second phase of the inspection programme for Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales. Difficulties in the performance of the Bristol Youth Offending Team had been identified in early 2004 and action taken to tackle the various areas of concern.

Our judgement, that the performance of the Bristol Youth Offending Team still required improvement, is therefore a reflection of the action taken over the past six months to address the poor overall performance and an indication that it is moving in the right direction. To the team's credit, it has worked with partners to achieve a 5% decrease in overall youth crime, for the last two years.

The new Management Board is showing positive signs of providing a strong strategic lead to the team since its reorganisation and although the inspection highlights a number of areas of concern within working practices, it also identifies examples of good practice. We were impressed by the dedication shown by staff, but it will be important for the Youth Offending Team's future that both managers and staff ensure standards are consistently implemented across all areas of work.

This report contains a number of recommendations that we believe will assist the Bristol Youth Offending Team in continuing its progress."

The report's main findings are:

Management and partnership arrangements

- Until recently, the YOT had been managed through a steering group but a new Management Board had been constituted, chaired by the Chief Executive, which appeared to be providing direction and an effective strategic lead.
- Action was being taken to clarify the funding arrangements for the YOT, some of which dated back to 1999.

- Staff received regular documented supervision from their managers and all had recently been appraised. The appraisals did not, however, contain objectives linked to the Youth Justice Plan 2002-2005 or address training needs.

- All staff and volunteers had received enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, but none had had a three year renewal check.

Work with children and young people and their parents/carers

- The YOT had seen a 5% yearly reduction in youth crime over the past two years.

- All prevention schemes had a well documented referral process, supported by formal assessment procedures.

- The assessment and management of cases posing a risk of harm to others required immediate attention.

- The number of appointments offered did not meet the national standard and attendance was poor.

- The enforcement of orders required attention.

- Too many children and young people under the age of 16 were excluded from mainstream education.

- There were unacceptable delays in mental health assessments and identified gaps in the services provided to meet the general health needs of children and young people seen by the YOT.

- The police had not adopted the Home Office/YJB guidance (2002), but despite this the YOT was preventing reoffending in 70% of cases.

- Reintegration into mainstream education was poor, but the YOT had developed a positive initiative working with children and young people excluded from education.

- The provision of appropriate accommodation for children and young people needed to be reviewed through reference to the Supporting People agenda.

- A parenting policy had still to be developed, but a parenting coordinator had recently been appointed.

Victims and restorative justice

- The YOT had just appointed a victim liaison officer.
- The YOT did not use a formal tool to assess victims' needs and not all victims were contacted.
- There was a comprehensive range of restorative interventions.
- The YOT did not appear to have sought victims' views about the service provided to them.
- Inspectors received positive feedback from the victims spoken to, about their interaction with the YOT.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The inspection of Bristol YOT took place during between December 2004 and February 2005
2. Bristol had a total population of 380,615, measured in the Census 2001. Of this population, 21.4% were aged 0-17 years at the time of the census. This figure was slightly lower than the average for England and Wales of 22.7%.
3. Nine Inspectorates conduct the Youth Offending Team Inspections. They are Commission for Social Care Inspection, Estyn (HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales), Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation, Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales .
4. The YOT inspection programme started in June 2003. All 155 YOTs within England and Wales are being inspected over a five to six year cycle.
5. The inspection will be carried out in line with the Government's commitment to proportionate and coordinated inspection in local government, informed by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment results and the Wales Programme for Improvement. A programme has therefore been developed that:

§ is proportionate to risk and only inspects those areas of work where a team is performing well in order to disseminate good practice

§ complements, and is coordinated with, other inspection programmes, including those currently being developed following the publication of the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (2003)

§ takes account of YOTs' recent development as organisations.

6. Comprehensive standards and criteria have been developed to cover the first phase of the inspection, focusing on:

§ management and partnership arrangements

§ children and young people considered at risk of offending

§ children and young people who offend

§ parents/carers of children and young people who are at risk of offending or who offend

§ work with victims of crime .