

## **WREXHAM YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE - 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 January and February 2005 carried out the Wrexham Youth Offending Service inspection.

**Andrew Bridges, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, said:**

**"The Wrexham Youth Offending Service was the second to be inspected in** Wales during phase two of the inspection programme of Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales . The service had undergone a period of change following its split from Flintshire: it had been managed through a number of different arrangements and there were operational management issues, which needed to be addressed. There was a new Management Board that had made a promising start with an appropriate and committed membership. Staffing arrangements were stabilising after a period of difficulty, but supervision and appraisal were inconsistent and the support needs of black and other minority ethnic staff needed to be addressed.

**We saw some good examples of work with children and young people who had offended and some interesting interventions had been developed by staff. Work with parents/carers was at a very early stage and some excellent work with victims was limited in its scope by resource restrictions. The quality of work was not consistent across the range of orders or interventions and a number of areas needed improvement including high risk of harm cases, supervision planning and enforcement.**

**Hence the overall assessment of Wrexham Youth Offending Service is that it requires improvement. This report contains a number of recommendations, which we believe will assist the service to move matters forward."**

**The report's main findings are:**

### ***Management and partnership arrangements***

- The YOS had a new and enthusiastic Management Board that had appropriate representation (including three elected members), a commitment to attendance and a willingness to address issues.

- The Management Board had yet to establish robust monitoring and scrutiny mechanisms and to ensure the collection of timely and accurate statistical returns.
- With the exception of an unfilled health worker post, the staffing situation was stabilising at the time of the inspection after a period of difficulty.
- The YOS had a sound recruitment process, but staff retention policies did not reflect the needs of black and other minority ethnic staff.
- Access to training was generally good, but insufficient attention had been given to supervision and appraisal.
- The YOS had a pool of committed volunteers.
- Not all staff and volunteers had current enhanced CRB checks.
- Generally, protocols, contracts and service level agreements were not finalised or signed and there were no systems in place to monitor and review them.
- The YOS was rather isolated within the authority and the wider Welsh youth justice arena.

### ***Work with children and young people and their parents/carers***

- The YOS played a part in the development and delivery of a range of preventative services through its involvement with the Children and Young People's Framework Partnership and other preventative groups.
- The YIP was having a demonstrable effect on offending and reoffending.
- The quality and timeliness of Asset and supervision plans needed to be improved.
- Staff seemed uncertain about the procedures for risk of harm to others: assessments had not been completed in a significant proportion of relevant cases, nor had they been referred to managers or reviewed.

- There was good access to specialist assessments to address specific needs, particularly education, sexual offending and substance misuse, but there was concern about health assessments.
- Frequency of appointments and enforcement needed improvement.
- The YOS had a range of interventions. Final warnings and referral panels were working well and ISSP had made a good start.
- The assessment of DTO cases required attention so that the needs identified during the custodial period were followed up on release.
- While most YOS staff were aware of diversity issues and the changing population profile of Wrexham, limited work was undertaken with children and young people on race and other diversity issues. Insufficient attention was given to the Welsh language and cultural issues and religion.
- Most children and young people, parents/carers and victims expressed satisfaction with the service they received.

### ***Victims and restorative justice***

- The standard of work with victims was good, but resources limited the scope of the work.
  - The range of reparation interventions was limited and the restorative justice element, and the benefit to the victim and the community, was often not clear.

### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. The inspection of Wrexham YOT took place during between January and February 2005
2. The County Borough of Wrexham is located in the north of Wales on the border with England . Wrexham town is the largest town in North Wales and, as such, is a busy centre of commerce with an industrial past. The total population of the County Borough of Wrexham was 128,476, as measured in the Census 2001. Of this population, 22.4% were aged 0-17 years at the time of the census. This figure was similar to the average for England and Wales of 22.7%. Most of the population in this area is located in Wrexham town and the urban villages to the west.

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 .