



**YOUTH
OFFENDING
TEAM**
Inspection

Press Notice

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 17 JANUARY 2007 BARNSELY YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM – PUBLICATION OF INSPECTION REPORT

The latest report from the third phase of inspections of Youth Offending Teams (YOT) in England and Wales was published today. A multi-agency inspection team carried out Barnsley Youth Offending Team inspection.

Andrew Bridges, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, said:

“The inspection of Barnsley YOT showed a service that was performing well in an area characterised by considerable social deprivation. The YOT staff were talented, enthusiastic and well led and the atmosphere in the office was one of support and cooperation. The Senior Management Group was working well together and managers were developing some good systems to help ensure consistency of practice across the team.

There were some specific areas of practice that required improvement, most notably in ensuring that supervision planning and review were developed, not least by giving some attention to the documentation used. Specialist staff provided good levels of support to children and young people and their parents/carers, but opportunities to access mental health services, employment, training and education, although being developed, were limited.

We were confident that the Board and the operational management team were well positioned to ensure that the recommendations made following the inspection would be properly implemented.”

The report's main findings are:

Management

- Barnsley YOT benefited from being led by a well-run strategic Management Board which had improved its own performance during the 12 months preceding the inspection.
- Attendance had increased significantly and the Board had developed a routine of requiring detailed performance information from the YOT manager. There was now scope to consider the quality of the work being undertaken.
- There was an imbalance in the range of responsibilities in the management team which needed attention and a review of structures and responsibilities was planned and awaiting the inspection findings.
- There were a number of service level agreements in place and there would be some merit in agreeing one with the Children Service's Department.

Work in the courts

- A court liaison officer attended court each weekday to provide a duty service, which included an increasing number of stand down reports.
- Staff from SOVA, a partnership organisation, provided a daily bail assessment and a bail support service, including Saturdays and bank holidays. All of these staff were specifically praised by the Chair of the youth court bench for the quality of the service they provided.

- Pre-sentence reports were generally of an acceptable standard, although were weak in terms of Risk of Harm analysis.

Work with children and young people in the community

- The YOT was very involved in the wider prevention structure and was seen as a key player in this arena.
- There were some innovative and impressive prevention projects which specifically included provision for children and young people known to the YOT. Although the YOT had developed its own supervision plan pro forma for use with community orders and detention and training orders, it did not help workers formulate or review specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bounded objectives and needed attention.
- Some staff described a poor response from children's services staff when trying to secure non-statutory involvement. There was good cross-agency support for parents/carers and the YOT gave priority to receiving children and young people's views.

Work with children and young people subject to Detention and Training Orders (DTOs)

- As a result of work with the courts, Barnsley had moved from a high to a low use of custody area. This meant that the overall numbers of detention and training orders was small, therefore, it was difficult to draw general practice analysis from the six cases inspected.
- Although it was noteworthy that in the four cases where the Risk of Harm screen indicated a full assessment, this had been well completed. In general the sentence and supervision planning were inconsistent and relatively weak.

Victims and restorative justice

- *Remedi*, a voluntary organisation, provided victim contact and reparation services under contract for the YOT. Separate staff dealt with victim contact and support issues and victim awareness work with the children and young people. This was an excellent service, although it was limited in its provision.
- Plans were in place to secure additional resource to extend the level of victim contact routinely. The police officers involved in final warnings contacted and engaged with victims in those cases

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The inspection of Barnsley YOT took place between June 2006.
2. Barnsley had a total population of 218,063, measured in the Census 2001. Of this population, 10.5% were aged 10-17 years at the time of the census. This figure was slightly higher than the average for England, which was 10.4%.
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 Inspectorate 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.