



**YOUTH
OFFENDING
TEAM**
Inspection

Press Notice

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 31 JANUARY 2007 BIRMINGHAM YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE – 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 Birmingham Youth Offending Service inspection.

Andrew Bridges, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, said:

“We found a positive and professional team led by a committed and enthusiastic Acting Head of Service. Despite the fact that the Management Board was going through a process of change, there was a firm focus on delivering a good quality service. The YOS was integrated into both the community safety and children’s agendas. There was good communication between agencies, however partners needed to be more accountable both to the YOS and their home organisation in order to deliver services that improved outcomes for young people.

We were impressed with much of the work carried out with young people. The YOS was at the forefront of delivering numerous initiatives to prevent offending, and had a range of diverse intervention projects to refer those that had entered the criminal justice system. There was a need to ensure that the outcomes of intervention work were measured to inform future service delivery.

Overall we judged that the Birmingham Youth Offending Service was well placed to address the issues raised by the inspection. This report contains a number of recommendations that we believe will assist the service in consolidating its existing work and continuing to make progress.”

The report’s main findings are:

Management

- The partnership arrangements facilitated the provision of a variety of services being made available to children and young people, including health and education. There were examples of good practice in the YOS of work being integrated with other agencies.
- The management board needed to ensure that it had full and active participation by all the necessary agencies and that this led to improved access to services on the part of the YOS young people. This was particularly the case in respect of housing and social care.
- The YOS was held in high regard by partner agencies; being an organisation that was very forward thinking and very much at the forefront of tackling key issues affecting children and young people. The acting Head of Service was respected by partners and colleagues alike, and led a very committed and enthusiastic large team of staff.

Work in the courts

- There were good relationships with the youth courts in Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield. YOS staff were described as being ‘very professional’

- The Race Audit for the YOS indicated that black and asian young men were over-represented in the secure estate. Black young men accounted for 22% of the remanded population and overall remand rates for all young people were high. The number of custodial sentences however was falling.

Work with children and young people in the community

- There was evidence of good and effective relationships with children and young people showing a reduction in offending. Work was needed on evaluating and measuring the outcome of the interventions that had been carried out.
- There were a wide range of projects aimed at preventing children and young people entering the criminal justice system. Likewise there was a broad range of diverse activities, including reparation projects targeted at those that had committed offences.
- There was a large number of children looked after by the local authority whose needs were not being met. They were often unnecessarily being dealt with through the criminal justice system when other interventions may have been more appropriate.

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

- The YOS provided good support to children and young people whilst in custody. For the second part of the sentence which took place in the community home visits needed to improve.

Victims and restorative justice

- We saw some effective work that had taken place with victims that included the use of restorative justice. The YOS needed to ensure that all victims were able to utilise the service, and feedback their views on interventions that young offenders were involved in.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The inspection of Birmingham YOT took place between September and October 2006.
2. Birmingham had a total population of 977,087, measured in the Census 2001. Of this population, 26.2% were aged 10-17 years at the time of the census. This figure was higher than the average for England, which was 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 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 156 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.