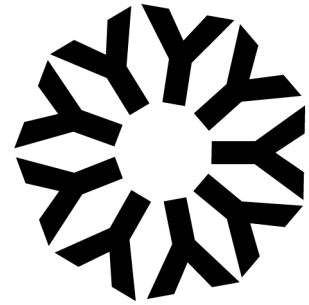


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HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HM Inspectorate of Probation
Office for Standards in Education
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales*



Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Teams of England and Wales

Report on:
Bolton
Youth Offending Team

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Foreword

The inspection of Bolton YOT took place in the fourth phase of our YOT programme and was undertaken in conjunction with the Enhanced Youth Inspection, the Joint Area Review of children's services and the Corporate Assessment. The findings also contributed to the latter two inspections.

We found much to commend in this YOT. A clear corporate ownership combined with a robust local leadership and an energetic and committed workforce to produce a largely effective organisation that was well regarded and well placed to influence future developments in both community safety and children's services. Particular strengths were noted in the key areas of direct work with children and young people; prevention and work with those who offend both in the community and in custody. Strong performance was noted where education, health or safeguarding needs were evident. High quality interventions with many children and young people were seen, though workload pressures did challenge the resilience of the service to respond. Partnership arrangements for resourcing and supporting the service would benefit from review.

Other improvements were necessary. The consistency of work by individuals, and service performance management needed greater focus. Significant development was needed in addressing victim related issues, in all parts of the service. Other improvements could be achieved in partnership with local agencies, notably those involving the police, the courts and the Youth Justice Board. More attention to meeting individual needs, establishing effective consultation mechanisms and extending the range of interventions would all assist in service development.

Andrew Bridges
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

January 2008

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<i>Lead Inspector</i>	<i>Dan Parks HM Inspectorate of Probation</i>
<i>Inspectors</i>	<i>Helen Boocock HM Inspectorate of Probation, Rose Burgess HM Inspectorate of Probation, Sally Lester HM Inspectorate of Probation, Nigel Scarff HM Inspectorate of Probation, Roger Thompson Healthcare Commission, Phil Whittaker Office for Standards in Education</i>
<i>Practice Assessors</i>	<i>Stephen Hubbard, Ushma Sharma</i>
<i>Support Staff</i>	<i>Oliver Kenton, Anita McGuckin</i>
<i>Publications Team</i>	<i>Deborah Hewitt, Zach Rathore</i>
<i>Editor</i>	<i>Julie Fox HM Inspectorate of Probation</i>
<i>YOT Representative</i>	<i>Rebecca Key</i>

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Glossary

ASBO	Antisocial Behaviour Order
Asset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
BSafe	Bolton Community Safety Partnership
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
Estyn	HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
E2E	Entry to employment
EPQA	Effective Practice Quality Assurance – framework of the Youth Justice Board
ETE	Employment, training and education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
ISSP	Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PAYP	Positive Activities for Young People
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PPO	Prolific and other Priority Offenders
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSR	Pre-sentence report
PYO	Persistent Young Offender
RAP	Resettlement and Aftercare Provision
RoH	Risk of Harm
RoSH	Risk of Serious Harm
SIFA	Screening Interview for Adolescents (YJB approved mental health screening tool for specialist workers)
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bounded
SQUIFA	Screening questionnaire interview for adolescents (YJB approved mental health screening tool for YOT workers)
VLO	Victim liaison officer
YIP	Youth Inclusion Programme
YISP	Youth Inclusion Support Panel
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOI	Young Offender Institution
YOIS	Youth Offending Information System
YOT/S	Youth Offending Team/Service

Summary

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Judgement	Descriptor
4	Excellent – performs strongly, well above minimum requirements with outstanding features
3	Good – performs well, consistently above minimum requirements with no important shortcomings
2	Adequate – only meets minimum requirements
1	Inadequate – does not deliver minimum requirements, with many important shortcomings

Work in the courts

- ◆ Bolton youth court was busy, with all cases being fitted into six courts on a single day during the week. This placed considerable pressure on all parts of the system, including the YOT court workers. Court duty staff worked hard at establishing individually appropriate bail assessments with safeguarding focused proposals for children and young people. Many children were dealt with by the use of stand-down reports. The facilities in the court were not conducive to conducting assessments sensitively and in confidence.
- ◆ A high degree of confidence in the professionalism and integrity of the YOT staff was expressed by both magistrates and court officers. The YOT had good links with the court and engaged positively. This was supported by a well engaged Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme and the Appropriate Adult service. None of these persuaded the court away from making high levels of secure remands, though custodial sentences were within national expectations. The quality of reports was variable, requiring improvements in assessments of risk, more focus on health and learning needs, and reducing the use of colloquial language.

Work with children and young people in the community

- ◆ Prevention and early intervention services were well established, delivering good quality assessments and interventions focused on reintegration into mainstream services. Whilst there were good community links, this part of the service had limited capacity to operate outside of a small number of targeted neighbourhoods.
- ◆ Whilst there was some good work in relation to risk, notably with safeguarding and vulnerability, Risk of Harm to the public and the likelihood of reoffending were less well established, consistent and accurate. Considerable energy and commitment produced some outstanding individual success stories but these were not found with sufficient consistency.
- ◆ Specialist or seconded services to the YOT, particularly addressing health, education needs and the resettlement and aftercare programme, were delivering some high quality interventions. Of particular note was the growth of alcohol related offending, which the YOT had acknowledged as a development of some concern.
- ◆ The YOT was finding difficulty in consistently addressing some key issues: assessment and management of Risk of Harm; considering individual needs; compliance with requirements, and meeting the needs of victims.
- ◆ The YOT was not delivering a consistent reduction either in the rate of first-time offending or in reducing the rate of reoffending within the community order cohort. This was despite considerable efforts, alongside a range of other agencies. The limited focus on compliance and breach activity with this group coincided with this.

- ◇ The delivery of parenting services was sustained by the individual efforts of practitioners rather than a well established programme of group and individual support and guidance. Consultation with all service users was inconsistent, failing to feed back into service development.

Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences

- ◇ Much good work was seen through the custodial stage of these sentences by both case managers and specialist staff in addressing the many identified issues. Children and young people felt that the YOT workers cared about them. Many had complex circumstances, with a high proportion considered vulnerable. Diversity needs were most frequently addressed.
- ◇ Parents/carers remained engaged and involved with the child or young person supporting active planning for the community part of the sentence. Reintegration with education, training and employment was a strength.
- ◇ Reoffending by these children and young people had not consistently reduced over time, with compliance not being sufficiently achieved. Higher than expected proportions were subject to breach activity. Insufficiently robust assessment and risk management planning was noted. Difficulties in effecting reintegration to schools and in achieving safe accommodation were also noted with this group.

Victims and restorative justice

- ◇ The YOT did not have sufficient emphasis on assessing and addressing victim needs, and restorative justice and planning was underway to address this. With the limitations in resources and projects available to this part of the YOT it was difficult for it to deliver reparation that took the range of circumstances and needs of both victims and offenders into account.
- ◇ Community reparation projects were in place, though limited in scope and capacity. Direct reparation was rare. Insufficient attention was given to addressing these issues in the work undertaken with children and young people towards accepting responsibility for their actions and behaviour.

Management and leadership

- ◇ The YOT's Management Board was in a good position to shape and influence the delivery of services in relation to youth crime and antisocial behaviour. Less capacity to focus on the YOT's detailed performance management was noted. Key partnerships were in place and were often effective. When there were difficulties, however, this could lead to problems for the YOT as few service agreements or protocols were in place; those that were needed to be more effective.
- ◇ A combination of workload pressures and limited physical space led the YOT to its minimalist recording practices and a zealous policy on record destruction. These limited the YOT's capacity to utilise previous knowledge and interventions and in using the systems to aid assessment, planning, communication and review.

- ◇ The YOT had been through some turbulence in the recent past – with resulting uncertainties for its workforce, funding, place in the organisational structure and with the Youth Justice Board. It was challenged in its overall resourcing, resilience and capacity to deliver on all requirements. Many hopes rested on the impending review of the service and its imminent transfer to children’s services. Most staff worked hard and were committed both to children and young people and to effective outcomes. They were well supported by their own managers but struggled to deliver on all expectations. Over a third of the workforce remained on extremely short-term employment contracts.

Recommendations

Changes are necessary to ensure that:

- (1) permanent funding and staffing commitments by the statutory partners are delivered to enable the YOT to undertake its statutory responsibilities (*Chair of the Management Board*)
- (2) assessment and planning (for Risk of Harm and vulnerability) are well understood, rooted in practice and performance managed (*YOT Manager*)
- (3) standards of recording, including retention of records, are commensurate with organisational guidance. This requires urgent attention (*YOT Manager*)
- (4) prevention and YOT services are more effectively coordinated and available to children and young people in all parts of the area (*YOT Manager*)
- (5) the quality and extent of victim related and restorative justice work is significantly improved throughout the YOT (*YOT Manager*)
- (6) effective arrangements are in place for the delivery of court work, including the quality of pre-sentence and other reports, and reduction in the levels of secure remands (*YOT Manager*)
- (7) effective communication takes place between the police and the YOT with regard to those bailed for assessments prior to final warnings, and to the full and timely provision of victim information to the YOT (*YOT Manager and the police Divisional Commander*)
- (8) performance management arrangements are in place to ensure the quality and consistency of the work undertaken by the YOT in all its services (*YOT Manager*)
- (9) a more effective relationship is re-established between the YOT and the Youth Justice Board towards enabling improved service planning, delivery and evaluation of all aspects of the work (*YOT Manager and Youth Justice Board Regional Manager*).

Next steps

An improvement plan addressing the recommendations should be submitted to HMI Probation for approval four weeks after publication. Once agreed, this is forwarded to the YJB to monitor its implementation.

Service users' perspective

Children and Young People

59 children and young people completed a questionnaire for the inspection, of which 53 were interactive on IT software. The remainder were completed on paper, either independently or in interview with an inspector.

- ◆ Children and young people held their YOT workers consistently in high regard. They were clear that they were treated with respect, listened to and had the commitment of their worker. YOT staff understood the purpose of their involvement. Most had been involved with the YOT for up to six months, with the overwhelming majority being subject to community orders. Almost a quarter were not resident within their birth family.
- ◆ Two-thirds noted an improvement in their learning needs being addressed after contact with the YOT, though less than half felt likewise about their health needs. The former matched the same area in the YOT assessed as a significant strength.
- ◆ They were, universally, clear about the need for compliance and, slightly less so, what could happen should they fail to do so. A very large majority considered that things had improved for them by having engaged with the YOT, though fewer noted that were less likely to reoffend in the future. Improvements in a wide range of criminogenic factors were noted, with the experience of some being summed up by the comments of one child *"They are helping me. Every time I come to the YOT I get gooder"*.
- ◆ Less than half knew how to make a complaint should they have wished to do so. Over half did not feel that it was very easy to have a say in what happened in the YOT. Fewer (around a quarter) felt that they could make a difference to how the YOT was run.

Nine interviews were conducted with children and young people in custody.

- ◆ It was clear that the YOT placed a high value on maintaining contact, at least through all the planning meetings with the children in custody. The previously noted commitment by workers to supporting and assisting the children and young people was, again, evident here. Over half noted that they received visits from their worker at other times as well, though there was little contact by telephone or letter. Many echoed the views of this young man - *"If you want to talk to him he will come. Feels like he is there (if he needs him)"*
- ◆ Those who responded were clear that their worker was often not able to effect or influence changes in the establishment that could make things easier or more helpful for them. Many did, however, cite examples of being helped with particular enduring issues, notably substance misuse, accommodation and ETE upon return to the community. Whilst feeling that they had been treated with respect and sensitivity, most did not know how to make a complaint. There were a small number who had also felt unsafe

whilst in custody but they did not feel that their YOT worker had helped with these issues. Feelings of vulnerability and anxiety that were present at the point of sentence were addressed, although this was not by their known case manager, but a court officer who did not really know them as well.

Parents/carers

Three questionnaires were completed by parents/carers, either independently or in interview with an inspector.

- ◇ Whilst there were few parents/carers who did not respond to the postal questionnaire or attended for interview, those who did expressed positive regard for the YOT's involvement. They noted the integrated nature of the assistance received from the team. They commented that they had not had much assistance prior to being involved with the YOT.
- ◇ Those seen articulated clearly the benefits of engagement with the YOT: (it is) *"good to have a team like the YOT. Everything is in the same team so you don't have to run around to different places,"* and *"They have helped me and my son talk about what had happened...They have a special quality- they can be friends with the kids whilst staying one step ahead."*
- ◇ Whilst there were a small number responding, none thought that they had needed parenting support in terms of their skills and knowledge. Support was focused on their specific pressures e.g. working to prevent the eviction of the family. There were no clear references to being helped to manage the behaviour, care or control of their children.

Victims

Three questionnaires were completed by victims of offending by children or young people, either in interview with an inspector or independently.

- ◇ Again, only a small number of responses were received. There were no specific difficulties noted and all were very, or completely, satisfied with the service they had received from the YOT. Given the judgments about the quality of the work seen by the YOT within the body of the report, it was, perhaps, unsurprising that more responses were not received.
- ◇ Two of the three responses indicated that they had not been provided with sufficient information about the implications of the sentence to the child or young person concerned.
- ◇ Only one person had benefited from any reparation efforts by the child or young person, and one victim had not felt that they had been sufficiently well informed about what the YOT could offer them.

Sharing good practice

Below are examples of good practice we found in the YOT.

Work in the courts

**General Criterion:
1.1**

The commissioned Appropriate Adult service (shared with two other YOTs) delivered a consistently high quality service to children and young people from the point of arrest through until first appearance in court, if necessary. Well trained and supported volunteers were available round the clock to work with children and young people, identify risks and vulnerabilities and promote the meeting of any identified safeguarding needs. It had clear performance management and reporting mechanisms, enabling a clear analysis of trends in arrest and detention.

Work with children and young people at risk of offending

**General Criterion:
2.4**

James had specific learning needs resulting in not having a commitment to formal education and being at risk of offending. He had also been a Looked After Child. Prevention services obtained a psychological assessment of his needs, funded by Bolton Business Enterprise. Identifying his interests and abilities, James was supported by LACE (Looked After Children Enterprise) in becoming an apprentice plasterer. He was given considerable support throughout. An improvement in self-esteem, the development of friendships with pro-social adults and contributing to his family, all considerably reduced his likelihood of offending and vulnerability to others.

Work with children and young people who have offended

**General criterion:
2.8**

Emma, by 14 years old, had refused to attend school for over a year, consuming substantial quantities of alcohol. The latter contributed to many public order offences resulting, in the making of an ASBO and a supervision order when she breached this. Through daily contact and commitment by the YOT worker and others she was reintegrated into learning. Over a long period of time this resulted in her successfully sitting some GCSEs, attending an additional computer literacy course and seeking a further education place at Bolton College. She continued with support from the YOT worker, and others, in improving her life chances.

Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences

**General criterion:
3.3**

Felicity was 15 when she was sentenced to a Detention and Training Order. Her offence of burglary was linked with negative parental influence, drug misuse and sexual exploitation. Whilst thriving in the secure unit she was sent to, those influences rapidly took hold once more when she was in the community. When recalled to prison, the YOT led a coordinated effort (with Connexions and a drugs worker), resulting in Felicity having safe accommodation on release. She had considerable support to resist involvement with drugs, and risk of sexual exploitation and offending. Felicity still had a long way to go but had made a good start in working closely with the YOT.

Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences

**General criterion:
3.3**

Kevin had been using heroin since the age of 14, as had his brothers before him. Taking the opportunity afforded by his Detention and Training Order to withdraw, he went further, accepting the involvement of the RAP team in staying drug free on return to the community. Intensive support from RAP workers, including practical support (housing tenancies, clothing, food, sexual health advice and relaxation techniques) had been provided. Over a year later Kevin had not offended again, was clear of drugs, in both full-time employment and a stable relationship.

Management and leadership

**General criterion:
5.2**

The effects of Bolton's national pilot youth health programme were being felt by children and young people in the YOT. The healthy eating project, in particular, was opening up new dietary experiences for them, challenging less healthy foods through a combination of an information campaign coupled with making fruit and healthy snacks directly available. Funding for these had been provided locally and a coordinated effort was made to target hard-to-reach groups, through the YOT and RAP.

Management and leadership

**General criterion:
5.2**

Problematic levels of reoffending, coupled with data analysis and police intelligence, encouraged the senior managers of criminal justice and community safety agencies to pool their efforts. This resulted in regular meetings focusing on a problematic group of PPOs. This assisted all agencies in tracking and evaluating the activities of this group, leading to more effective planning interventions and tasking in a coordinated way. This was an example of effective inter-agency coordination and collaboration towards meeting shared objectives.

1. WORK IN THE COURTS

1.1 **General criterion:**

Children and young people are safeguarded and the likelihood of their further offending reduced by the provision of an appropriate pre-sentence service, including bail supervision and support programmes.

Bolton had a single youth court that operated on one day a week. Whilst being located very close to the YOT, it was in a building that was no longer conducive to delivering the higher standards expected from a youth court environment. The YOT did not have access to its database in court. There were six courts that functioned simultaneously. The YOT would provide officers for all six courts and had a duty rota covering the rest of the week, including weekends and bank holidays.

Strengths:

- (1) Effective communication links were well established between the court services and the YOT, ensuring that the YOT was made aware of all children and young people appearing before the court, with indications as to whether the matter was so serious that custody was being considered. The YOT was able to address most relevant matters through contact with the key children's services agencies. The YOT was well prepared, having conducted an interview with the children and young people, and drawing on any previous YOT assessments and a brief assessment of current circumstances.
- (2) The Appropriate Adult arrangements (shared with two adjacent areas) delivered a high quality service to children and young people. It also ensured a robust system for alerting the YOT to overnight detentions, risk and vulnerability. Observations were made that, on occasions, children and young people had been detained in police cells for lengthy periods in the absence of suitable alternative accommodation in the community.
- (3) Where children or young people were Looked After Children or were the subject of 'child in need' services from Bolton children's services, effective communication was seen between the authorities to ensure safeguarding, and most other responsibilities were effectively addressed.
- (4) There were both effective links with the ISSP services, which Bolton hosted on behalf of a consortium of local areas, and active work around developing bail proposals.
- (5) There was a general clarity by staff around the range of potential risk issues for children and young people in certain bail or remand arrangements and these were communicated well to the courts. Where these were present they

gave proportionate attention to the three core risk issues – harm, vulnerability and likelihood of reoffending. It was not always the case, however, that recommendations made were then followed by the court.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) There continued to be too high a proportion of custodial and secure remands. This had not shown incremental reduction over time (although actual numbers had shown a general decrease in the most recent years). The most recent figures supplied by the YJB for April 2006–March 2007 showed continued high levels of secure remands (at 71.3%). This was at considerable variance from the family, regional and national figures, which were within the range 38-44%. This was particularly stark given that custodial sentences for Bolton did not vary greatly (at 5.8%). Issues frequently cited for the large proportion were breach of bail and lengthy periods on remand pending sentence at Crown Court. There were a number of assumptions made by all involved, but a lack of analysis prevented a more informed debate on this.
- (2) The presumption that secure remands most often took place following the breakdown of previous bail packages would, if true, call into question the appropriateness of the original proposals as well as the capacity and motivation of the child or young person to comply with them.
- (3) The positive communication with the key Bolton agencies did not extend fully to adjacent authorities that had children placed in Bolton, nor internally to some staff who would have the case transferred to them after court. Several examples were seen where information exchange and general communication, both internally and externally, could have been improved. This resulted, at times, in discontinuities for children and young people in intervention planning and delivery.
- (4) In over half of all custodial remand episodes seen, the quality of actions taken to address vulnerability was considered inadequate. The procedural guidance for staff did not sufficiently cover this. Once a custodial remand had taken place, however, there was a significant improvement with sufficient attention being given in almost all cases, and across almost all elements of their responsibilities, except in evidencing communication of information immediately to the establishment.
- (5) The high proportion of secure remands was not matched by a commensurate level of provision in community-based resources for those remanded to local authority accommodation or bailed to reside as directed. The level of specific provision was lower than would have been expected and had, in any case, reduced over time.
- (6) Organisational uncertainties (the displacement of cases around the court building during the court day) coupled with the absence of access to the YOIS database and often inadequate provision of suitable interview facilities contributed to a reduced level of professional presentation and delivery of services by the YOT than could have been achieved.

- (7) A prevailing lack of bail Assets was noted, with almost two-thirds of relevant cases not having one at the time of the inspection. This was also affected by the YOT's limited approach to recording and records retention.

1.2 General criterion:

Courts are assisted in making informed, timely and effective decisions by the provision of good quality reports and appropriate information from the YOTs.

The number of PSRs was comparatively small, with many sentences delivered following the provision of a stand-down report. Occasionally, adjournments of a week would be provided for these reports. PSRs were reserved for the most serious range of offences and where a custodial sentence was a possible outcome.

Strengths:

- 1) Positive regard was expressed by court staff and magistrates for the quality of work and commitment to the tasks surrounding support for the administration of justice. Regular meetings, including attendance at the Youth Court User Group, and briefings with court staff and magistrates contributed to this. Representations made about court facilities had not always yielded results.
- 2) Workers were generally experienced, confident and knowledgeable in the work they did with children and young people and the courts. Given that every worker was needed to attend every court there was a challenge to the resilience of the assessment team in consistently delivering the service.
- 3) Feedback was sought and received on all PSRs produced. The magistrates generally considered that the reports were comprehensive and provided them with the necessary information to support the sentencing process. Comments were noted that magistrates had, at times, been dissuaded from making a custodial sentence because of the content of the reports.
- 4) Reports were delivered to the court on time with outcomes that most frequently were in accord with the proposals made. These were sufficiently detailed to enable the magistrates to have a clear understanding of the interventions that were to be delivered.
- 5) Parents/carers were frequently well engaged and visited by the YOT in formulating the reports, though a difficulty in ensuring they attended court was noted. It was clear that this was not an infrequent occurrence and did have the effect of delaying disposals by the court.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) PSRs tended to be too descriptive and, at times, too colloquial or imprecise in the language they used. They did not incorporate sufficient victim information and orientation (only 17% of the sample reports included this). They were not always based on thorough assessments of the children and young people and their circumstances. Several examples were noted where significant criminogenic factors were quickly identified post-sentence by the subsequent

case manager. Less than a quarter of PSRs were found to be suitably concise and nearly three-quarters lacked sufficient analysis of the offence, though it was noted that the magistrates felt better informed by longer, descriptive reports.

- 2) There appeared some confusion over the application of the national standard relating to victims and interpretation of the Attorney General's Practice Direction regarding section nine of the Criminal Justice Act (1967), (section III.28 of the Consolidated Criminal Practice Direction). The YOT should have continued to provide information about the effects of the offence on the victim, whether or not there was a formal victim impact statement recorded by the police.
- 3) Gatekeeping arrangements for ensuring the quality and consistency of PSRs were insufficiently robust to ensure that reports were of a consistently adequate quality. There was no evidence of the use of aggregated feedback or the use of benchmarking techniques in relation to either PSRs or stand-down reports.
- 4) Magistrates were not confident in their knowledge of the provision of, or circumstances in which parenting support, or the making of such orders, would be appropriate. This was an area of service that was also noted as inadequate in the provision of reports.
- 5) Insufficient specific focus was provided in the reports, particularly in relation to assessment of vulnerability (less than two-thirds having one), learning or health needs of those with PSRs. Stand-down reports had even less information, despite the courts adjourning, at times for up to a week, for the provision of a stand down report. Additionally, almost half of the reports did not consider the individual, or diverse, needs of the children and young people they reported on.
- 6) Despite the substantial focus of the YOT on their own approach to risk led interventions, almost a third of PSRs failed to differentiate between the RoH to others and the likelihood of reoffending. A combination of this and a number of the factors identified above contributed to the overall judgment of the quality of PSRs being insufficient or poor in almost two-thirds of the sample seen.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **adequate**.

2. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Work with children and young people at risk of offending

2.1 **General criterion:**

The YOT (or others on its behalf) undertake appropriate activities to prevent children and young people from offending.

All prevention and early intervention services funded by, or supporting the objectives of, the YOT were provided by other service providers. These included two YISPs (based around targeted communities), a YIP and a juvenile response team all managed through a programme manager based in the Sports, Health and Inclusion service. PAYP services were provided, through a partnership agreement, by the Connexions service. Some uncertainty remained surrounding the exact configuration of services and teams in this area of work beyond the end of year 2007/2008 due to funding issues.

Strengths:

- 1) Assessments were always completed and clearly linked with referral processes. They were generally thorough, containing relevant information from a range of public service and other sources, relating to needs as well as any positive factors present. This involved contact with parents/carers (including a universally applied approach to home visiting), education/training services and the referring agency - all in a timely way. All but one were of sufficient quality.
- 2) All children and young people in the sample were involved in completing the *What do you think?* questionnaire. This inevitably contributed to the full consideration of individual need and potential discriminatory factors, as well as a full consideration of the most appropriate methods to use in seeking change.
- 3) Assessments clearly led to planned interventions, which were supported by a range of enthusiastic and committed staff working within a strong network of services. Many parts of the intervention planning received robust attention. Elements that were less well delivered - attention to restorative justice and establishing clear exit strategies - unfortunately reduced the overall sufficiency of intervention planning to three-quarters of the sampled cases.
- 4) There was a significant focus upon targeting those communities that had historically shown the highest rates of antisocial behaviour. This had, over time, resulted in a network of community support and confidence in these services.
- 5) Good communication with other agencies was seen generally, including joint/coordinated working, leading to more informed reviews. Interventions were overwhelmingly well focused on the likelihood of offending, community reintegration and issues around staying safe. Workers who were involved demonstrated determination, reinforcement of positive behaviour, and provided

support for children and young people throughout assessments and interventions.

- 6) Effective assessment and linking in with local services was noted, particularly where there were health needs (and two-thirds of the sample had emotional or mental health difficulties).

Areas for improvement:

- 1) There was not a year-on-year reduction in the numbers of first-time offenders. Despite reductions in some previous years, there was a 10.7% increase in 2006/2007 over the previous year. The reasons for this had not been fully evaluated by the key partnership agencies to date.
- 2) The prevention services did not have the flexibility to respond to individual need where the children and young people resided outside of specific, targeted neighbourhoods. The organisational strategy of the service was to target those small areas where shared information and data (provided to the Young Person's Theme Group) highlighted geographical clustering of offending and nuisance. This, inevitably, left some without a service if they lived some distance from the designated areas. The targeting of specific neighbourhoods did not provide sufficient resilience to enable work with all children and young people who had the greatest likelihood of reoffending.
- 3) Whilst some understood the risk led approach adopted by the YOT, this was neither fully comprehensive nor fully implemented. This led to inconsistency in the undertaking of risk assessments, and the use of various assessment tools was noted. Although none of the sample showed high levels of risk, one case was incorrectly assessed, and the other case that had been formally assessed had not been completed to a sufficient standard.
- 4) The above issue was not helped by the organisational 'distance' between the YOT and the prevention services. At times there were also operational communication difficulties, most often in getting information from the YOT about children and young people, and in sharing intelligence between these separate elements of the service (the YISPs and YIP presented as more effective in maintaining good communication links).

2.2 General criterion:

The health of children and young people who are at risk of offending is promoted by the work of the YOT and its partners.

The prevention services were able to access all the available primary health and community specialist workers and services within the area.

Strengths:

- 1) The case files contained assessments of the health needs of children and young people. They also contained evidence of effective contact and intervention through primary health services as well as specialist services, particularly those focused on substance and alcohol misuse, and the emotional health team. In only one case was the work in this area considered insufficient.

- 2) Focused services, including an emotional health service, sexual health screening and advice and the healthy eating initiative were all well linked into by the workers in the YISPs and YIP. This had been aided by the proximity of youth work provision for these health services, managed within the same programme management structure.
- 3) The seconded health staff within the YOT placed a high priority not only on the importance of preventive health care but also on ensuring that children and young people were supported in accessing mainstream health services.

Area for improvement:

- 1) There were some uncertainties around the thresholds for involvement by the CAMHS service. While they did well to keep their waiting list down to a few weeks, examples were seen where children and young people were assessed as not meeting the threshold for service, yet clearly had a range of potentially damaging earlier childhood experiences that appeared to remain unresolved at the point of the assessment.

2.3 General criterion:
Children and young people who are at risk of offending are safeguarded through the work of the YOT and its partners to contribute to the promotion of their welfare and, where applicable, their protection.

Strengths:

- 1) Strong performance was seen in relation to initial contact and effective ongoing communication and engagement with the social care service. Clear recording was in place, describing any vulnerabilities the children and young people might have had and the impact upon their risk of offending. Over a quarter of the sample had clear evidence of risk from their own behaviour, predominantly around previous self-harm. These issues had been both recognised and addressed where needed.
- 2) Where joint working with social care services was indicated, this did happen, was timely, with effective mutual communication and with both agencies delivering the intervention to plan. Information sharing was a positive feature in all relevant cases.
- 3) Actions, where needed, were reasonable, proportionate and generally timely. There were no cases in the sample that fell below a good enough standard. Only one child was currently at RoH from others in the family and services were delivered during the relevant period. Involvement with other 'children in need' was equally positive. The work seen was highly creditable to both these services and those of the social care services.

Area for improvement:

- 1) There was an inconsistency in the use of vulnerability management planning. Whilst acknowledging that there was no formal policy to adopt such an approach, it was clear that some children and young people had such a plan whilst others did not. This variation had the potential to create uncertainty and confusion and needed to be addressed. These were small but not insignificant

numbers with more than a quarter of the cases showing a risk from others.

2.4 General criterion:

Children and young people who are at risk of offending are enabled and encouraged to achieve their potential.

Strengths:

- 1) The identification of education difficulties was matched by active interventions that were designed to address these. The high numbers of children and young people with mainstream education difficulties (almost two-thirds of the sample) indicated that this was an area of need generally in relation to antisocial behaviour and likelihood of offending in this area. In this regard, Bolton was reflective of the national picture. In all of these cases, and in others where schooling was not such a significant issue, improvements were achieved through the support of the prevention services in effective improvement.
- 2) Some children were on short timetables or had been subject to exclusion. The YISPs showed that they were able to support these children and young people in reintegrating into mainstream schools.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **good**.

Work with children and young people who have offended

2.5 General criterion:

The YOT (or others on its behalf) undertake appropriate activities to prevent children and young people from reoffending.

The YOT case management arrangements had been organised to deliver interventions according to assessed levels of risk (vulnerability, harm and/or likelihood of reoffending) in late 2006, although the adapted risk matrix tool had been in use since being authorised by the Management Board (then Steering Group) in 2005. The core teams were designated as low and high intensity, working with children along the respective part of the assessed risk spectrum. Specialist functions (RAP, reparation) and the individual specialist seconded officers (police, education and health) were spread across different teams. All work would progress from the assessment team (dealing with all court hearings) through to one or more of the other teams. Should the level of risk change over time, the case would, in theory, be transferred should it cease to meet the threshold for involvement by the team it was allocated to.

Strengths:

- 1) Some sound, sensitive work with issues of individual or diverse need was seen. The individual circumstances and needs of children and young people were, generally, well addressed. The Assets completed involved all of the children and young people and almost all had been offered (and completed) a self-assessment – *What do you think?* Many included positive factors in the child or

young person's circumstances. Two-thirds had active input from parents/carers (though this did not necessarily inform the assessment in relation to specific needs). Almost three-quarters had home visits made, and in half of the cases these visits were repeated according to assessed need. Where workers assessed the presence of individual or other diversity needs (almost three-quarters of cases) they then went on to address ways to minimise any negative impact or consider methods most likely to take these circumstances into account.

- 2) The Bolton-developed risk matrix tool was generally understood, fully used and often helpful in the assessment of RoH, reoffending and vulnerability. A good proportion of cases (83%) were accurately screened in relation to serious harm. Despite the significant focus given to this by the YOT, and the good practice of having a case planning forum (chaired by a rota of the operational managers) for those assessed as high or very high risk there was inconsistency in the application of the equivalent of the RoSH form. In almost half of the relevant cases neither was a form completed nor was there any explanation in the records as to why.
- 3) Parts of the general intervention planning were very good, with a timely plan (or report in relation to referral orders) being made, clearly identifying what was to be done and by whom. Where there were other agencies' plans in place there was evidence of alignment with the YOT plans. Referral processes were largely well focused, with all having appropriate reports and most having parents/carers present, identified reparation activity and a focus on preventing reoffending. Many were also clearly sensitive to any individual needs of the children and young people.
- 4) Interventions did address both the likelihood of reoffending and issues around community integration more often than not, but were less successful in addressing victim awareness (delivered in under half of relevant cases) and were less likely to successfully provide the necessary challenge to accept responsibility for offending behaviour. These elements reduced the overall success in achieving sufficient quality in the interventions to under two-thirds of cases.
- 5) Numerous examples of sound, supportive and committed practice that also reinforced any positives were found across all teams. Notable in this were the RAP and high intensity teams. The RAP team had their own budget, which they deployed effectively, showing particular determination and effective inter-agency working with a group of children and young people who had particularly troubled and troublesome circumstances. Within the low intensity team, many examples were also noted where contact not only continued to meet national standards but exceeded it, despite the reduced focus on this group organisationally. Only a small number of cases did not provide evidence of such engagement.
- 6) A strong focus on addressing accommodation needs was found. With almost a third of children and young people experiencing difficulties or insecurity in their accommodation, over three-quarters showed clear action by the YOT to address need, with a universally positive attention given to regularly monitoring need in this area. Although there were no links with the Supporting People programme,

there had been the funding of three tenancies that were provided with the equivalent of floating support. Positive links with the STAY (Short Term Accommodation for Young People) project, a faith-based crisis accommodation service, added to the focus given. Unfortunately there was no strong or regulated relationship between the YOT and the housing authority in the area. There was still unacceptable use of bed and breakfast accommodation in a small number of cases.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) The work of the YOT with children and young people who offended consistently showed a lower level of recording than expected – in both computer and paper formats. The limitations in the former related to consistently described pressures of work impacting upon the extent of recording. The absence of the latter was consequent to a managerial decision to destroy almost all such material very soon after the expiry of an order, unless superseded by a further order. The reason for this was given as the limited availability of storage space for records. Such a limitation was not a good enough reason for the speed and extent of document destruction. The combination potentially left both children and young people and the YOT vulnerable in terms of effective record keeping and evidencing involvement. For example, there were some cases where previous convictions had not effectively been taken into account in determining assessments of risk in subsequent orders. Hard-copy information that would have informed such decisions had universally been destroyed at the end of the previous order.
- 2) Whilst Assets were completed on all cases, almost a third were not completed within the required timescales. Given that interventions are designed to be based on the assessment of circumstances, such delays at the outset did not give the right messages to children and young people about compliance. When they were completed, there were a smaller, but still significant, number of cases where the Asset was not of sufficient quality (almost a quarter). The issue of a minimalist approach to recording impacted here.
- 3) The adapted arrangements in the area of risk management were not fully embedded, with different and multiple forms/formats seen during the inspection. Action/risk management plans were, at times, limited in addressing identified risk. Almost half of relevant cases were considered incorrectly classified in terms of level of risk. A limited attention to victim issues was seen in just under half of the cases with an identifiable victim. Overall, these issues contributed significantly to reducing the quality of RoH assessment and risk management planning, with almost one-third of cases being considered insufficient or poor.
- 4) Intervention planning did not always fulfil all requirements, with less than half having either clear restorative processes or clearly articulated outcome objectives. Even fewer (a quarter) had the identified interventions sequenced in ways designed to maximise impact and learning.
- 5) The arrangements for final warnings and the associated assessments and interventions were often not appropriate. Examples were seen of notifications to the YOT after the final warning had been undertaken (in one the final warning

was given on the day of the arrest), Assets being completed after the final warning (one example where the assessment did not take place until three months after the arrest), and assessment and intervention being delivered in the same interview. Half of the sample had an intervention.

- 6) There was both inconsistent and insufficient focus on compliance with the requirements of orders. In minorities of the relevant cases, first appointments, referral order panels and subsequent commencement of the contract took place within expected timescales. Reparation workers were clear that case managers often did not effectively deal with children and young people who failed to attend restorative justice or reparation interventions. Only a small number of cases achieved no absences (18% of the total). In those cases where absences occurred, less than three-quarters showed consistent and appropriate judgements in relation to the explanations given. There were variations, namely:
- higher risk cases made breach action more likely
 - many examples were noted where three or more unexplained or inadequately justified absences had not resulted in warning letters being issued
 - substantial latitude/flexibility was exercised, and supported by managers, in matters of compliance.

These factors, in combination, served to reduce the overall quality of work in compliance to be sufficient in just over half of the sample.

- 7) In the small numbers where transfer of cases to probation took place, a protocol was designed to regulate the process but there seemed some confusion still for the workers, as none of those seen were planned, timely and effectively undertaken.

2.6 General criterion:

The health of children and young people who have offended is promoted by the work of the YOT.

Three health worker posts provide the seconded health component. One of these was designated as an emotional health worker. Further support was provided through a monthly consultancy service from a CAMHS psychiatrist. The RAP team, focusing on working with children and young people with substance misuse issues, was embedded in Project 360, a Tier 3 specialist substance misuse service for the whole of Bolton.

Strengths:

- 1) Case managers screened, and referred on, those who it appeared had a health related need. In the case of emotional health or substance misuse these were substantial numbers (respectively 45% and 54% of the sampled cases). Whilst limited evidence was seen of the use of the SIFA and SQUIFA, it was clear that interventions were delivered, and universally aimed to discourage substance misuse.

- 2) There was considerable evidence of YOT staff enabling access to, and engagement with, local health services. In the very small number of cases where referrals were made for services and then not provided, there was no evidence of these being referred through a manager to the Board or the relevant trust managers.
- 3) There were no concerns either with matters of confidentiality or information sharing as far as health workers were concerned. A protocol was in place for this. They kept their own health records and formed judgements about what information they needed to share. Children and young people signed a confidentiality agreement at the outset. The only difficulties described in this area were around the lack of an agreement with health providers that could make attendance at a health intervention a requirement as part of the order.
- 4) The health workers aimed to provide a service that addressed individual and diverse needs. They were active in supporting young women with appropriate sexual health advice, and were involved in the Sexual Exploitation Strategic Group, linking with the LSCB. The health workers were also proactive in encouraging children and young people to have a range of immunisations; many engaged in behaviours that carried health risks, having not received all vaccinations recommended for children and young people.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Health workers offered an assured range of services to children and young people referred by case managers or who self-referred. They had wanted to offer a health assessment for all but there was insufficient resource for this in view of the increased numbers dealt with by the YOT (an overall one-third increase since 2002), without commensurate increases in the seconded resource. These pressures did not, however, detract from the excellent achievement of targets over a lengthy period of time.
- 2) A small number of children and young people were identified who had health needs but these had not been identified by the case manager and therefore had not received a relevant intervention. These contributed to the judgement that the vast majority had received good work in this area, but this was not universally the case.

2.7 General criterion:

Children and young people who have offended are safeguarded through the work of the YOT to contribute to the promotion of their welfare and, where applicable, their protection.

The YOT did not have specifically designated seconded social workers in the team, though a number of workers were social work qualified. A third of children in the sample had been involved in risk behaviours, some having been involved in more than one type. 17% of the whole case file sample were Looked After Children (though not necessarily by Bolton), and 10% were receiving or were entitled to leaving care services.

Strengths:

- 1) A consistently strong welfare and safeguarding focus was noted, with significant numbers of children who had extensive and complex needs as well as vulnerabilities. Almost a third of the sample in this group had, or would have, involvement with the social care strand of children's services during their involvement with the YOT. YOT workers were clearly involved in extensive communication with that service, referring using the CAF, and convening child concern inter-agency meetings, where necessary.
- 2) Timely, focused and effective individual and joint agency work was almost universally seen between the YOT and social care where indicated. This was supported by a draft reviewed protocol between the service areas and was likely to be further enhanced by the impending transfer of the YOT to be placed within children's services, and YOT representation on key sub-groups of the LSCB.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Only two-thirds of those children and young people assessed as vulnerable had a plan to address those needs. Whilst much action was undertaken in the vast majority of cases, this was not always so. This, unfortunately, led to a lower quality of work around safeguarding than the many very good features would otherwise have indicated.
- 2) The active working relationships with Bolton's social care services were not replicated where children were Looked After by other local authorities and placed in Bolton. Several examples were noted of limited communication, information sharing and coordinated planning relating to children and young people placed, often temporarily, in Bolton. Whilst these children and young people often had a greater range of behavioural and relationship difficulties than others, they were afforded limited opportunities for success across the Every Child Matters outcomes.
- 3) In a small number of cases, the social care status of the children and young people was unclear, with some potential confusion over whether the child or young person was accommodated and maintained, or Looked After by virtue of a court order. Given the potential implications around parental responsibility, it was important that workers were clear about different status and their implications in the work of the YOT.

2.8 General criterion:

Children and young people who have offended are enabled and encouraged to achieve their potential.

An education worker was seconded into the YOT from children's services. This arrangement was not embedded through any current service agreement or protocol. The almost exclusive role was to undertake work in relation to individual children and young people. The relationship with Connexions was managed through a partnership agreement, providing for 0.3 fte personal adviser time, dedicated to the YOT to address the ETE needs of those moving beyond statutory education.

Strengths:

- 1) Some positive interventions by specialist education providers were noted in many individual cases. Good examples were seen from the two PRUs in particular. Within both mainstream and some post-16 provider areas, active and effective work by the education worker to achieve reintegration was noted. On average half of all those with individual need were referred to the specialist worker in the YOT. In the vast majority of cases there was, consequently, clear evidence of active intervention by that worker. In almost all cases, services were then provided to meet identified need. The small number of cases in which this did not happen reduced the otherwise high quality of work (good work was noted in well over three-quarters of relevant cases).
- 2) Good relationships and communication existed between the specialist worker and the case managers. The education worker accompanied referred children and young people and their parents/carers to meetings with schools and other organisations, and provided ongoing support until they were settled. This worker was also involved in some, though not all, planning meetings and reviews.
- 3) Positive use of RAP funding to develop partnerships with two training providers had increased pre-E2E places across the borough. This was a good example of initiative in an area that was not well supported in relation to post-16 vocational provision. These had contributed to improvements overall in the range of alternative education placements across the borough.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) There were significant proportions of children and young people in the file sample whose education had not been effectively addressed or delivered prior to involvement with the YOT – across the ETE spectrum. Specific mainstream schools had provided limited arrangements for delivering learning services (at times only one hour a week face-to-face contact) so it was difficult to consider these as purposeful, or constructive, provision. Over one-third of those in the file sample had experienced exclusion or sanctioned absence from school. In all but two cases there was clear evidence that the YOT had actively supported reintegration.
- 2) Unacceptable delays in processing/arranging placements of 25 hours ETE for excluded children and young people with no school place had been noted, resulting in some children and young people receiving no educational support for a considerable time.
- 3) Despite good integration within the YOT, targets set within the files in relation to ETE were not sufficiently SMART, with progress towards outcomes being insufficiently reviewed. With the lack of basic skills, literacy or numeracy assessments being undertaken by YOT staff, and with up-to-date assessments not having been received from the school, an insufficient focus on providing information to support detailed performance management was noted in this area of work.
- 4) There was a limited range of post-16 vocational placements at colleges, and suitable construction courses particularly, which took into account where low

levels of literacy and numeracy were identified. Additionally, some colleges and training providers were described as having been reluctant to accept children and young people with criminal records.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **good**.

Work with parents/carers

2.9 General criterion:

Parents/carers are supported in addressing their children's antisocial and offending behaviour.

Whilst there was an established post of parenting coordinator in the YOT, this was not filled at the time of the inspection and had been vacant for some time. There was uncertainty around the delivery mechanism for parenting interventions, though all workers were, potentially, involved. Involvement in a parenting intervention was considered appropriate in over half of the case file sample.

Strengths:

- 1) An excellent and universal focus by case managers was seen across the board in providing information and maintaining communication with parents/carers. This was followed up, in almost all cases, by the YOT workers making efforts to actively engage them in the intervention programme for their child. This led to an overwhelming majority of the sample cases being considered sufficient in showing that the YOT workers supported parents/carers in addressing their child or young person's behaviour. The YOT did report undertaking parenting interventions at almost twice the YJB recommended baseline level (at 18.3% of the total number of community disposals for the year 2006/2007).
- 2) In circumstances where family relationships were fracturing and a high risk of family breakdown threatened, individual workers exhibited commitment and tenacity in attempting to support the child in remaining within their family.
- 3) Direct feedback from small numbers of service users seen indicated they had received a valued service with clear praise for the individual workers involved.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) The absence of a clear strategy and coordinated operational delivery was a clear gap in relation to working with the courts. An absence of recognition in PSRs and stand-down reports left the court with insufficient confidence and preparedness in using its powers in this area. This was despite the perception that the parents/carers of those designated as PYOs persistently failed to accept responsibility or show motivation to parent more effectively. Parenting interventions were not seen as being promoted by the operational management, with all such interventions being driven and provided by the individual case managers.
- 2) Only a small number of cases were seen where there was a clear, specific

parenting intervention. An absence of effective parenting programmes had led to most work, when done, being undertaken on an individual – almost random – basis. Workers described generally limited resources to deliver effective family support at times of crisis.

- 3) There was no clear evidence of the delivery of interventions that were sensitive to individual or diverse needs; neither were arrangements available to enable parents with younger dependant children, nor those who were lone parents, nor specific approaches with male or young parents, nor those whose first language was not English, to participate in specific parenting interventions.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **adequate**.

Outcomes of work with children and young people in the community

2.10 General criterion:

The YOT promotes consultation with service users about the services they receive, and this information is used to improve outcomes.

Strength:

- 1) Leaflets were available written in plain language, and accessible to people with more limited literacy skills. They provided brief and essential information about the subject area.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) There were neither systematic nor positive approaches taken to specifically seek the views of service users (except in the case of victims). Information that was received was not fed into any improvement arrangements.
- 2) The range of leaflets for children and young people were not readily available in other languages. They did not cover some key services; for example, remands to custody or local authority accommodation, and some court orders were not addressed. None explained the routes that could be taken if people wished to complain or were unhappy with any of the services they received/were subject to.
- 3) Provision was not made, either within the Management Board or operational management arrangements, to reflect on feedback from any of the groups of service users.
- 4) Complaints systems were not evident, were certainly not easily accessible or well publicised. There were no regular reports on themes from complaints within operational management or for the workers to reflect upon.

2.11 General criterion:

The YOT demonstrates positive outcomes in its work with children and young people in the community.

Strengths:

- 1) Clear briefing reports were provided to the BSafe Partnership reporting on key indicators and, where there was variation from good outcomes, analysis and interpretation was offered by the YOT Manager. Operational managers had opportunities to both monitor the performance of individual children and young people who presented with the highest RoH (as well as those that had increased in risk level), and benchmark this against each other in risk management planning.
- 2) Safeguarding outcomes, with community cases, were well handled, with the majority evidencing a reduction in risks associated with staying safe.
- 3) Prevention services presented a generally good picture across the board in relation to the case sample seen. Where Onset had been rescored (almost two-thirds of cases) all but one case had shown an improvement, and none of the children and young people had been convicted of an offence up until the point of the inspection. Targeting the primary criminogenic factor (family relationships and statutory education) had seen improvements in almost three-quarters of cases, and no deterioration. The second and third factors identified also managed to show progress in almost two-thirds of all cases.
- 4) From the limited consultation with both children and young people and parents/carers during the inspection and from some of the case files read, evidence showed some good individual work being done, with children and young people who had complex and chronic difficulties in their lives prior to becoming known to the YOT services. In terms of 'distance travelled', some showed significant improvement.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Limited examples of internal performance management data were found, beyond that which was provided by the YJB. Given the detachment from national standards following the adoption of their 'risk led approach', Bolton YOT had not developed or commissioned research in relation to key outcome measures to establish the effectiveness, or otherwise, of this approach. Bolton YOT was hoping to participate in outcome studies research, along with some of the risk pilot YOTs. There was a quarterly reporting mechanism to the operational managers in relation to the risk led approach. Key global figures, in this regard, would be the levels of first-time entrants, the reoffending rates (both in terms of frequency and seriousness), and the overall number of disposals. Overall, Bolton had moved down a grade, from Level 3 to Level 2, in successive years in relation to reoffending performance¹. Key examples here were:
 - first-time entrants to the criminal justice system in Bolton showed an increase of over 10% rather than meeting the YJB target of 5% reduction.

¹ All figures relate to outcomes as measured by the YJB using YOT provided data for the full year 2006 – 2007.

There had been a 6% reduction nationally and almost 8% in the region

- limited evidence of any significant shift in reoffending, either in frequency or seriousness with the pre-court, first tier or custody groups between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. Bolton's comparison 'family' of YOTS more often showed some improvement in the same period. There was a slight deterioration in both frequency and seriousness for Bolton with the community penalty cohort. Bolton had already shown improvement in previous years in some of these areas
 - the gross numbers of children and young people who had offended had increased in all three key areas (pre-court, first tier and community) in the two most recent years, although there had been a reduction in the number of offences being committed by children and young people consistently over the previous three years.
- 2) For those children and young people who had offended, the picture in terms of outcomes was more mixed. Only half of those originally showing evidence of safeguarding issues showed evidence of a reduction in the linked factors, whilst the stability and safety of accommodation for almost two-thirds had not improved. Reoffending had taken place in almost half of the cases, with less than three-quarters evidencing compliance with the conditions of their order.
 - 3) In those Assets that were rescored (only two-thirds of the sample), just over half had shown an improvement over the initial scores, with the same number showing some, or good, progress in the primary criminogenic factor. With the second and third factors, improvement rates dropped to around one-third of cases. Very little change in victim awareness was noted, with a third of cases additionally showing no demonstrable improvement in attitude or behaviour. This led to a third of cases that were considered to have had insufficient outcomes overall.
 - 4) The absence of robust consultation mechanisms left the YOT without indicative feedback that could evidence improvements in any of the five key outcome measures.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **adequate**

3. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SUBJECT TO CUSTODIAL SENTENCES

3.1 General criterion:

The YOT (or others on its behalf), undertake appropriate activities during the custodial phase of the sentence, to prevent children and young people from reoffending.

Bolton did not have a YOI within its borders but there were two, most frequently used, in adjacent authorities. 58 children and young people were given custodial sentences during 2006/2007.

Strengths:

- 1) Initial assessments of children and young people sentenced to custody were most often of high quality, conducted with the child or young person, parents/carers and relevant others. The Assets were overwhelmingly balanced, showing positive as well as criminogenic factors. Individual needs were both identified and addressed, in most cases, as well as often informing the intervention methods. Where there were risk management plans in place they were always completed at the same time as the full risk assessment (RoSH).
- 2) During the custodial phase and beyond, excellent attention was given to assessing and working towards achieving safe and suitable accommodation on transfer to the community. A particular strength noted in almost every case was the involvement of both the education worker, and a focus on consistently addressing any substance misuse needs through the training plan meetings. The visiting patterns of the worker and other specialists strongly and positively aligned with supporting the objectives of the training plan and aided in the planning for transfer back to community services.
- 3) Almost all cases had a full Asset sent to the establishment with immediate effect, though there was limited recording evidencing whether the full range of other reports quickly followed.
- 4) Virtually all cases had initial reviews on time, clearly identifying what the interventions were and who would deliver these (either in custody or the community). Interventions focused on the likelihood of reoffending and enhancing community reintegration, but were generally let down by very limited evidence of addressing victim awareness and RoH. These elements contributed to a lower than expected number achieving quality intervention planning (only two-thirds were sufficient). The one case that needed to involve MAPPA was conducted well, with effective communication regarding risk planning and delivery arrangements.
- 5) There was clear documentary evidence of engagement with, and support of, parents/carers in maintaining purposeful contact during custody. Anecdotal

evidence and the views of children and young people in custody supported this but recording was not always sufficiently complete.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Whilst there had been a small reduction in the numbers and proportion sentenced to custody between the years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 (adding to reductions in previous years), the figures for this YOT remained relatively high, above the national target ceiling of 5% for children and young people receiving such sentences.
- 2) There were limitations in establishing accurate and effectively recorded assessments of RoH. Whilst almost two-thirds had evidence of RoH, in not all cases was it either accurately evidenced or completed to a sufficient standard. With several others, insufficient reasons were given for not undertaking a RoSH. In barely a third of these cases was sufficient consideration given to victim issues. These factors contributed to an insufficient or poor quality RoH in almost two-thirds of cases.
- 3) Objectives in intervention planning were not always within timescales. Whilst this was an area of practice that the YOT had a strong commitment to, there was a lack of focus, in over a third of all cases, in ensuring that the interventions were both SMART and effectively sequenced. As with other elements of this YOT's work, there was relatively weak attention given to victim focused work throughout the course of interventions in custodial sentences.
- 4) Evidence from the files, as well as those children and young people seen whilst serving their sentence, indicated that a significant minority did not have proper consideration of their individual or diverse needs. This was, clearly, inconsistent in the practice of the team. With the post-16s group, it was unfortunate that the linked Connexions personal adviser was unable to attend planning meetings to support thorough planning for ETE needs, although a protocol for such support had been developed.

3.2 General criterion:

Children and young people are safeguarded through the work of the YOT during the custodial phase of the sentence to contribute to the promotion of their welfare and, where applicable, their protection.

Significant numbers of those within the case sample showed evidence of current or past RoH to themselves (39%) or from others (50%). A high proportion had substance/alcohol misuse and/or reckless behaviour. In almost all of those seen as at risk from others, this had been in relation to parents/carers.

Strengths:

- 1) Safeguarding and other staying safe focused activity was afforded a high priority for children and young people subject to custodial sentences. Consistently seen were high levels of worker commitment to seeing them immediately after sentence (although this was usually not their current case manager but the court duty officer). Effective contact, attendance at planning meetings and positive engagement with parents/carers all contributed to this.

The social care status was almost always clearly recorded. There were no instances where such needs were evident but had not been acted upon.

- 2) Children and young people were clear that their YOT worker looked out for them, with most knowing that their worker was really interested in helping, checking with the establishment to see if they were coping, being treated with the fairness and respect they considered that they needed, and in actively supporting their parents/carers to sustain contact and plan for their transfer back to the community.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) In a small number of cases, social care services were already involved, but there was no evidence from the YOT records, nor from indicative accounts from those children and young people interviewed in custody, that there had been contact from their social workers during the custodial phase of the sentence.
- 2) Whilst contact was almost universally consistent with planning meeting requirements, there was limited evidence of any other contact by the case manager, either by visit, telephone or letter, regardless of individual need. This was further supported by recent YJB figures (2006/2007) showing a significant reduction in the once a month minimum contact - a drop of almost 20% - to achieving this in only 80% of cases during the year.
- 3) There was an absence of vulnerability action plans, in almost three quarters of the cases where need was identified. In the small number of cases where it was seen, however, it was of good quality.

3.3 General criterion:

The YOT (or others on its behalf), undertake appropriate activities during the community phase of the sentence, to prevent children and young people from reoffending.

Strengths:

- 1) Attention was paid to ensuring that children and young people were seen in a timely way, and a review of both the Asset and then the intervention plan were undertaken. Three weeks prior to release the YOT undertook a case planning forum intended to plan objectives and, every two to three months, review progress. Where relevant, updating and re-evaluating the risk management plan was also done in a timely way. Not all cases, however, were as consistently addressed in all of these aspects as would have been expected. Overall, almost three-quarters of all children and young people had good quality attention to interventions delivered in the community phase of the sentence.
- 2) A strong performance was noted in addressing both health and ETE issues, with attempts to continue the interventions commenced in custody. These had been well supported and promoted by both RAP and ISSP particularly in partnership with services delivered through the NACRO and Fairbridge voluntary sector support provision. Strengthening relationships were also noted with the LSC and training providers. Where the learning plan had been continued after release, there was excellent communication between the agencies, with most plans being periodically reviewed.

- 3) Significantly better attention to compliance took place in this part of the work. Given the orientation of the YOT towards focusing resources on those with higher levels of risk, a robust approach was seen in monitoring the attendance across all interventions and initiating breach proceedings in a timely way (as happened with a third of all cases in the sample). Magistrates were clear that there had been an increase in breach activity by the YOT. This was not only in relation to bail but post-custody requirements. The work in this area included full engagement, where relevant, with the parents/carers of the child or young person. In only two cases was the attention to this aspect of the sentence seen as insufficient.
- 4) As with so many other parts of the work, the enthusiasm and determination of many workers was evident. To have been excellent in this regard, however, somewhat greater attention was needed in reinforcing positive behaviour and achievements across the board. The individual examples of good practice with this group told the story of just how far some of the children and young people had journeyed to achieve safe and productive outcomes.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) The practice, by many schools in Bolton, of removing children and young people from school rolls when they had been sentenced to four months or more in custody clearly made the tasks in enabling reintegration more difficult for the YOT to achieve. Despite the efforts by the education worker and others in continuing the intervention plan, less than half of such plans were able to be sustained following release. With post-16 ETE services, there was also less flexible provision in the further education field into which a child or young person could be introduced at the point of need.
- 2) There was limited evidence of interventions that recognised and worked with children and young people with particular individual or diverse needs, though some effective work was seen with at least one young woman following her release from custody.

3.4 General criterion:

The YOT demonstrates positive outcomes in its work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences.

Strengths:

- 1) In considering levels of improvement in outcomes for those in the sample, it was important to note the substantial range of criminogenic factors within the lives of this group of children and young people. The majority had, on average, eight of the range of thirteen factors that were likely to be associated with reoffending at the start of their order. This indicated an extensive and complex array of needs and circumstances. Nonetheless, some progress was made with the main factor in well over half of the sample. Equally, progress was made in the second and third priority factors in 36% and 29% of cases respectively. No particular deterioration was seen in these key factors in any of the cases.
- 2) The broad staying safe agenda, and safeguarding specifically, was a strength in this part of the work (as it generally was in the other parts). All of the relevant

cases (half of all those sampled) had been managed effectively. This was further supported by ensuring improvements in living circumstances for all those with accommodation vulnerability.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Neither overall improvement nor any substantive deterioration in recidivism rates within the custody cohort could be gleaned from the rates over the most recent two year period. Some variations were noted but none indicated a general trend. Bolton did slip from Level 3 performance nationally in a range of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), to a Level 2 band. Although the deterioration was not marked, this YOT was not going in the right direction. This was compounded by a judgement that there had been no demonstrable benefit to the community as a result of the making of the order, with only small numbers of individual cases showing occasional elements in terms of offending or RoH. In fact, only in one case could any community reparation be identified.
- 2) As noted above, one of the major issues for Bolton YOT was that of compliance, with almost half of the children and young people failing in this. Added to this, almost a third of the sample had been subject to an increase in restrictive interventions since release.
- 3) Unfortunately, the efforts made during custody were not capitalised on, with regard to learning and skills outcomes. Less than a third of cases had been able to apply those skills upon release.
- 4) Whilst some key needs and circumstances had improved across the whole cohort, there was very limited evidence of change in terms of attitude or behaviour. In relation to victim awareness there was, perhaps unsurprisingly, not a single example of positive development in this area. Overall, nearly half of the children and young people failed to show evidence of positive change in these key aspects.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **good**.

4. VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

4.1 **General criterion:**

Victims of children and young people who have offended feel that they have been assisted by the intervention of the YOT in feeling safer and achieving closure.

A VLO had recently commenced with the YOT after a period of several months without such a specialist. Organisation and delivery of mediation work, including in schools, was commissioned from Bolton Mediation, a voluntary sector organisation.

Strengths:

- 1) Despite starting from a position of weakness, the YOT had, in very recent times, revitalised this part of the work. With the combination of the commencement of a new operational manager and the energy and enthusiasm of the workers, there were early aspirations for the future of this part of the service.
- 2) When victim related work was conducted it did, most often, take into account individual and diversity needs of both the victim and the children and young people involved. Interviews with a small number of recent victims indicated that involvement with the YOT had been of benefit to them.
- 3) The adoption of the restorative justice assessment tool, developed by the Greater Manchester Youth Justice Trust, was providing a positive way forward in establishing the appropriateness of direct reparation for both the victim and the child or young person who had committed the offence.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Overall, there were significant deficits across the board in addressing victim issues, the delivery of effective reparation and the development of restorative justice approaches (particularly within some schools and Looked After Children provision not managed by Bolton Council). From a very good base in 2005/2006, the position of this YOT had deteriorated significantly, with less than half of all identified victims having been offered any restorative justice process. This figure matched the findings from the inspection sample almost precisely. In only a quarter of the case sample was the work in this area considered to have been carried out in assisting the victim to feel safer and achieve closure.
- 2) Difficulties appeared to commence with obtaining timely victim information from the police. This then impacted upon the assessment in relation to final warnings, PSRs, Asset assessment focus, informing the referral order panel, and then the invitation to engage in reparation. In only half of the cases were the YOT informed, in a timely way, of victim details. This led, for example, to only 17% of PSRs having appropriate victim information and 10% of victims

having been invited to youth offender panels.

- 3) There was little individual direct reparation seen during the inspection. Only five children and young people out of a possible 67 had been involved in any form of direct reparation. Service delivery improved in the wider area of reparation, with almost a quarter being involved in some form within the community.
- 4) Case managers presented, in interview, as minimising the importance of victim work in relation to compliance with restorative justice, particularly with community reparation. This was found in only a quarter of community order cases.
- 5) There had been insufficient commitment and oversight of this part of the work. This had contributed to the lack of orientation toward victims and restorative justice related matters across the YOT. The loss of the YOT-held victim database earlier in 2007 was a further indication of a lack of both resilience and oversight of this area of service. The resources, providing two workers for reparation, limited both the capacity of the service provided but also risked 'contamination' of younger children with those who were almost adults.
- 6) There were limitations in the nature and extent of reparation activities and schemes. Community reparation work was undertaken over five days per week (Sunday to Thursday) for four hours a day (in the middle of the day, restricting the opportunity considerably for all those who were in full-time ETE). The capacity to respond to individual and diversity needs was restricted, though the workers demonstrated knowledge for addressing some circumstances. Youth offender panel members no longer had a 'menu' of projects to consider and this detached them from the overall intervention plans they were creating.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **inadequate**.

5. MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership and planning

5.1 General criterion:

The Management Board works actively with others, including the YOT manager, in an integrated way to maximise the likelihood of improving outcomes for children and young people.

The YOT was managed through the BSafe Partnership Executive, Bolton's CDRP Board. Whilst operationally managed through the community safety service, located in Adult Services, at the time of the inspection, plans were at an advance stage to transfer the service to children's services during 2007 while integrating community safety with the police service – having jointly funded a head of service.

Strengths:

- 1) A strong and supportive Management Board comprising senior officers from all funding and other partners was in place. The performance management provisions, whilst not effectively delivered within this group, were addressed through the Partnership Business Performance Group. The substantial commitment expressed to the YOT by key senior managers potentially augured well for the YOT over the next period of time. This was particularly the case in relation to the Chief Executive and the Chair of the BSafe Partnership Executive.
- 2) The impending transfer to children's services was considered most likely to serve the long-term interests of the YOT in its efforts to deliver coordinated services within its statutory responsibilities. There was a good understanding of the role and function of the YOT as well as an appreciation of a number of the key challenges facing it. The maintenance of the formal Management Board function within the current Community Safety Partnership also ensured the continued delivery of services within an integrated framework. The balance between the requirements of both criminal justice and the welfare of children and young people was at the forefront of thinking by the Chief Executive and others.
- 3) The approach adopted within Bolton to meeting individual and diverse needs, and the work towards this, was well regarded. Bolton YOT benefited from this on a number of levels. Monitoring, in general, was in place and there were not significantly disproportionate numbers of children and young people in the criminal justice system. It was, however, challenged in seeking ways to address the needs of groups having more recently arrived within the community. A general approach was seen whereby Bolton was striving to enhance its effectiveness in reflecting and engaging with the diverse community. The impending invitation to the Institute of Community Cohesion to review Bolton's work overall in this area was an example of this commitment.

- 4) Regular, clear reports were submitted by the YOT Manager to the Strategic Partnership Executive highlighting the key issues, including those related to performance. They also highlighted key issues that were likely to require decisions by the Board.
- 5) There was considerable evidence of coordination and focus on data sharing, analysis and tasking that was taking place within arrangements that marshalled the resources of many public services within the safer communities' responsibilities. The YOT was both valued and addressed as a key player in some of the development and implementation of the overarching strategic commitments of the area.
- 6) A corporate culture, referred to on a number of occasions with pride as the 'Bolton Way', supported the Bolton-focused planning approach within the partnership network of public services. It also provided a strong identification for workers and managers within the YOT, having a positive impact upon morale.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) The YOT, since its inception in 2000, will have changed operational management three times within the local authority: from social services to the Chief Executive's; then, via community safety, back to children's services, before the end of 2007. Whilst each move would have been considered, this had detracted from the longer term planning arrangements for the service. This was most notable in relation to its funding arrangements. A large proportion of the YOT's council funding had been time-limited. When combined with the short-term funding by the YJB for a number of developments, this had led to considerable difficulties for many staff in the service. Serial short-term contracts were not conducive to service stability, staff morale or service planning. There remained significant baseline funding shortfall at the time of the inspection due to an 'oversight' by a senior officer. The YOT had been provided with a further short-term arrangement. The funding structure of the YOT was due to form part of a service review later in 2007. This situation was unsatisfactory.
- 2) The overall funding levels of the YOT were of concern, particularly in combination with the issue above. When measured against the number of disposals, Bolton YOT was significantly adrift from the authorities in its 'family' of similar areas. Some of the variation was likely to be accounted for by prevention services being placed in another service area, but Bolton remained pressured. Further evidence of this was noted through pressures of workloads, and the efforts to re-target the resources of the YOT on those children and young people with the highest levels of risk. This produced, effectively, a raising of the thresholds for YOT intervention.
- 3) Whilst the YOT reported to its Board on its performance, it remained one element of a broad agenda. The BSafe Partnership Executive was not effective in implementing performance management responsibilities in a robust fashion, given the extent of its working agenda and other Management Board responsibilities (for drug and alcohol services). It relied on reports using the YJB generated data but, given the departure from national standards authorised by this group in 2005, no additional or separate performance standards had been

established to effectively provide oversight and challenge. The move by the YOT to a risk based approach, whilst associated with enhanced information and data gathering by the BSafe Partnership and endorsed by it, was not specifically linked to performance criteria designed for this system other than those used by all other YOTs not exercising the same 'flexibilities' asserted by Bolton.

- 4) Whilst the YOT contributed to the LSCB, this was not, as expected, at Board level. This potentially diminished its contribution, particularly around children living away from home, domestic violence, MAPPA and impact of crime on child victims. The draft LSCB Business Plan for 2008 contained a limited number of elements that the YOT could make an effective contribution to.
- 5) The relationship with the YJB presented as being under pressure in several respects. These had created strains that were unhelpful in managerial terms, not least in some detachment from performance measurements, such as:
 - the departure from national standards without the necessary approval by the YJB. national standards were set by the Home Secretary in 2004 being described as "*required standards of practice which practitioners who provide youth justice services are expected to achieve*"² Regardless of the merits, or otherwise, of the risk-based approach adopted and sanctioned by the BSafe Partnership, the decision to pursue this (including the use of an unvalidated assessment tool) had created a detachment that could not have served the broader interests of this most important relationship
 - the recent failure to deliver the two EPQA assessments on resettlement and remand management. These were considerably late in delivery at the time of the inspection
 - the potentially negative impact of non-compliance, in the above respects, on peer YOTs and YOSs. As criminal justice organisations had been aware, adherence to requirements had been a cornerstone of effective practice. Bolton risked losing much in its efforts to refocus its resources prior to approval by the YJB.

While the Board claimed that they had risk assessed the decision to depart from national standards, this had not been provided to the inspection as part of the evidence in advance by the YOT.

² Paragraph 2 of the introduction to "National Standards for Youth Justice Services" 2004

Partnership and resources

5.2 General criterion:

Partner organisations and the YOT work together effectively to protect the public, reduce antisocial and offending behaviour and deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.

The YOT consisted of 49 staff (of whom 18 had temporary contracts) with 48 volunteers. The YISPs and the YIP were based outside of the YOT, within another council department (as noted above).

Strengths:

- 1) An extensive range of partnership undertakings and links were in place throughout Bolton. Considerable efforts were noted, particularly in the use of data and information being used as intelligence, to inform and focus the resources of a number of agencies – notably, but not exclusively, in the safer communities arena. Many examples of effective partnership working that delivered genuine outcomes for children and young people once the YOT became involved were noted. Regular meetings with court officers and magistrates, as well as effective antisocial behaviour partnership links, supported the responsibilities of the YOT.
- 2) Very effective inter-agency commitments, coordination and delivery were in place in relation to PPOs. Much effort had been invested by a wide range of agencies in addressing the risks posed by intelligence-based tasking and intervention planning for this group of children and young people. Extensive information sharing, joint analysis and focusing were evident in identifying and reviewing the targeting of children and young people at risk of offending as well as the efforts made to divert them within particular communities.
- 3) All statutory partners contributed seconded staff to the YOT according to legislation. Amongst the partners, only probation, however, had managed to achieve the notional average contribution noted in 'Sustaining the Success'³, they were seeking to 'top slice' the budget to this and other YOTs in the region in order to achieve savings in its own service.
- 4) Much was achieved through an approach that, largely, relied upon people making services work, rather than the people in combination with protocols and service agreements (this formalised relationships, ensuring a stable organisational basis from which to continue developing and improving services). Initiative, commitment and drive were valued and were evident in achieving outcomes for children and young people at different levels in various public service organisations.
- 5) Resources were clearly organised to follow RoH and vulnerability. The organisation into assessment, followed by high and low intensity teams (in autumn 2006), was developed to support this approach. These arrangements showed strains, with difficulties in the transfer of work between the teams. The

³ "Sustaining the Success – extending the guidance in establishing Youth Offending Teams" YJB 2004

issues were of incomplete assessments and, therefore, an inaccurate banding within the adopted 'risk matrix'. These views were supported by evidence of quality of risk assessments at the PSR stage (with two of the 11 PSRs being insufficient in this respect), with almost a third of such assessments of children and young people who had offended being insufficient or poor.

- 6) Links to MAPPA were in place. Procedures and communication for the effective coordination of planning were sound. Some case managers were not as clear as they might have been about their responsibilities, indicating some improvements in training and policy guidance in this area.
- 7) Some effective individual arrangements were in place, providing for safe accommodation and associated support for those post-16s, notable in the work and resources supported by RAP, and the strong links with the leaving care services. Bed and breakfast was, however, still in use, with no effective links with the Supporting People programme.
- 8) National recognition of the work of the YOT in addressing antisocial behaviour had been received with the award of Beacon Status for this work and a good practice note for the YIP. With a resource focus on those at high risk (of harm, reoffending and vulnerability) through the YOT and the allied prevention services, there was much positive evidence at these ends of the spectrum of service by the YOT.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Overall, funding agreements as well as some core funding commitments were not effectively in place. At the time of the inspection only the contribution by the police as a statutory partner had been assured for the future. The YOT was potentially vulnerable as:
 - there were no partnership agreements in place that provided stability of funding arrangements. Without such explicit commitments, the YOT would be vulnerable to the periodic pressures partner agencies themselves experienced
 - the YOT was being sustained by serial short-term funding covering a large proportion of its annual budget. Whilst verbal assurances had been made about continuation and mainstreaming funding, there was nothing in place at the time of inspection. Almost a quarter of the annual budget was sustained through funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, being used to fill the large gap created through error in the annual budget cycle
 - the relationship with the YJB left some measure of uncertainty in relation to the conditions attached to the YOTs own compliance with YJB requirements. A potentially negative impact on the YOT's available resources could be further created if the YJB felt its conditions of grant were breached
 - the funding levels, in general, of the YOT fell considerably below almost all members of its 'family' of similar authorities. When measured against budget per disposal, Bolton was least well funded in the 'family' with an average of one-third to a half of what others were allocated. The promised 'fundamental review' of YOT resourcing, in September 2007, was due to address the global budget as well as the mainstreaming of substantial

elements of temporary budget allocation.

- 2) Whilst a number of partnerships were successful on the ground, improvements were needed managerially to enable the YOT to contribute more effectively within the LSCB (particularly in its strategic planning function); with the police in resolving the considerable difficulties in the coordination of the provision of information leading to final warnings and victim information; with children's services in relation to coordination of the YOT's position in the 'roll out' of the CAF. It was noted by case managers that interventions with many children and young people were completed before the process involved in producing a CAF had been undertaken.
- 3) Whilst there had been some service agreements or protocols developed, many required review, particularly linking to outcome measures (social care, Connexions and probation). Some were not in place at all, needing urgent attention to their further development (notably police, learning services - mainstream and post-16 - and health trusts: both primary and secondary care arrangements).
- 4) The service agreement with the social care services needed to be revisited to ensure that the YOT was responsible for the remand element of a remand to local authority accommodation, not for the Looked After episode. It was clear that not only could these elements be in conflict, but also that Looked After Children were the statutory function of social services (or its successor authority - social care).

Staff supervision, development and training

5.3 General criterion:

Positive outcomes for children and young people are enhanced by effective staff.

Four operational - and one administration - teams combined to create the YOT. Prevention and early intervention services (YISPs, YIP and PAYP) had been outsourced to other organisations, though Bolton hosted a consortium arrangement for the provision of ISSP services. Other responsibilities had, at the time of inspection, been contracted outside the YOT, notably Appropriate Adult and victim support services.

Strengths:

- 1) An almost universal welcoming by staff of both the supervision and the personal support given to them by their line manager was noted. This was particularly noteworthy given the uncertainties and many time-limited contracts that were in place. Until 2006, the YOT had enjoyed considerable levels of staffing stability, at all levels of the organisation. Managers positively modelled good practice, were accessible and enabled workers to be clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- 2) Training, development planning and supervision were all in place, assured and valued by a wide range of staff across the YOT. Delivery of those responsibilities, through personal development plans, team/service meetings

and regular individual supervision all contributed to the mainly high regard for the performance of these functions by managers in the YOT. Training and support for volunteers, both Appropriate Adults and referral panel members, was viewed positively.

- 3) Safeguarding, through CRB checking and core training of staff, had been afforded a high priority. Strong evidence was noted in many places, from a high proportion of case files (in excess of 80% at all stages of intervention), through the positive interactions with social care, to the individual examples given by workers and volunteers from their involvements with children and young people.
- 4) A strong identification with, and pride in, the YOT persisted in all parts of the team. This was testament to both the determination and resilience of the workers as well as the individual and collective efforts of the managers; the latter being particularly challenged by the absence for a long period of one of the four operational managers (comprising 3.6 full-time equivalent posts in total).

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Strains within the staff groups were noted. These were based on both an insecurity driven by the funding uncertainties and the unevaluated restructuring of the service designed to embed the independently developed risk-based approach. There was evidence that the new arrangements were grafted into the existing YJB supported systems.
- 2) There was a range of evidence (from staff and YJB performance information) that national standards were still effectively being adhered to, notably within the group assessed as of lower risk. The combination of a focus on high risk work and that on prevention and early intervention had left a significant group of workers feeling under-resourced, with high workloads and insufficient time to contribute to positive outcomes.
- 3) Not enough focus was placed on achieving a balanced workforce and volunteer group that reflected the diverse population of the area. The YOT and Management Board were aware of this, though no specific plans were in place to address it.
- 4) A greater focus on seeking views, and then developing learning from the experiences, of those receiving services from the YOT was needed. Whilst there were many examples of individual sensitivity to the needs of the range of service users, there were no mechanisms for using information to develop service quality.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **adequate**.

Appendix 1: Contextual information

Area

Bolton YOT was located in the North West and, as a single YOT, covered the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton local authority.

The area had a population of 261,037 as measured in the Census 2001, 11.2% of which were aged 10-17 years old. This was slightly higher than the average for England & Wales, which was 10.4%.

The population of Bolton was predominantly white British (89%). The population with a black and minority ethnic heritage (11%) was significantly above the average for England & Wales of 8.7%.

Reported crime levels for children and young people aged 10-17 years old across the area, at 71.3 per 1,000, were above the average for England & Wales of 53.

The proportion of Looked After Children aged ten and over sanctioned for an offence committed whilst Looked After was 9% in Bolton, which was the same as the average for England & Wales of 9%.

YOT

The YOT boundaries were co-terminus with those of Greater Manchester Probation and Police areas. Bolton PCT covered the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton area.

The Youth Justice Plan 2007/2008 showed that the YOT had 49 staff and 36 volunteers. 58% of staff were female and 6% had a black and minority ethnic heritage.

The work of the YOT (covering all functions) was based in one main office located in Bolton town centre.

YJB performance data

The YJB summary of overall YOT performance for the period to the end of the quarter April – June 2007 gave Bolton YOT a score of 2 on a scale where 5 was the maximum. This was below that of the national and regional performance as well as that of comparable YOTs. Each was given a score of 3.

Performance on reducing reoffending received a score of 2, which was below that of all comparators, but only slightly below that of its regional neighbours.

Appendix 2: Inspection data

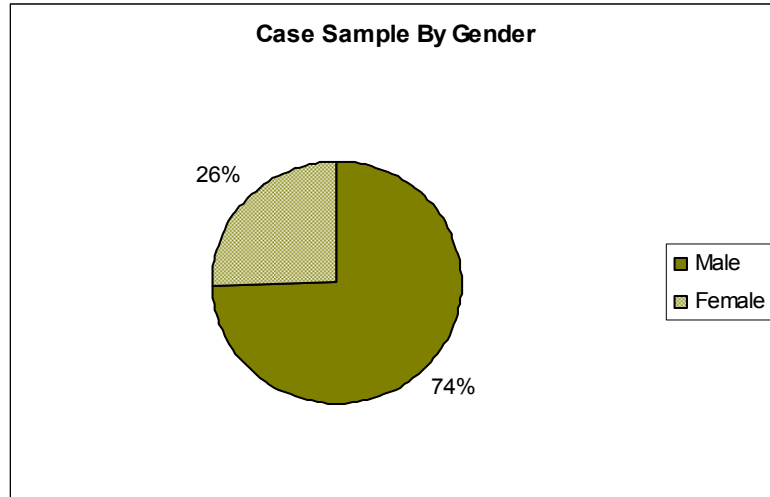
Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in July 2007 and during a contribution to the Bolton Joint Area Review in September 2007.

The inspection consisted of:

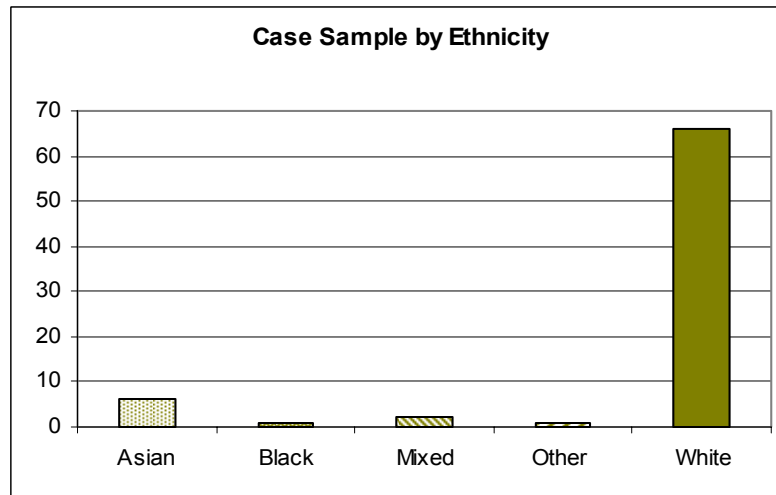
- ◇ evidence in advance
- ◇ examination of YJB performance data and assessments
- ◇ examination of practice in a sample of cases, normally in conjunction with the case manager or other representative, as follows:
 - 11 prevention files
 - 15 final warnings
 - 16 first tier penalties (referral orders, reparation orders)
 - 18 community sentences
 - 18 custodial cases
- ◇ interviews and questionnaire responses from children and young people, parents/carers, and victims
- ◇ interviews with children and young people in custody
- ◇ meetings with staff, managers and partners.

Data charts

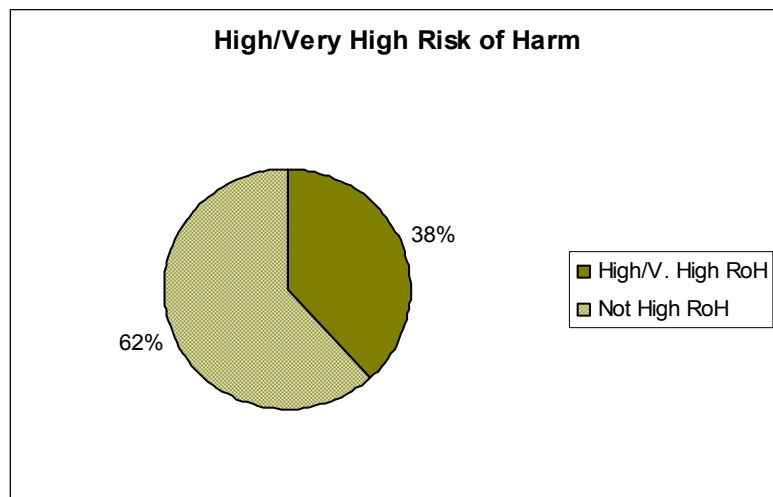
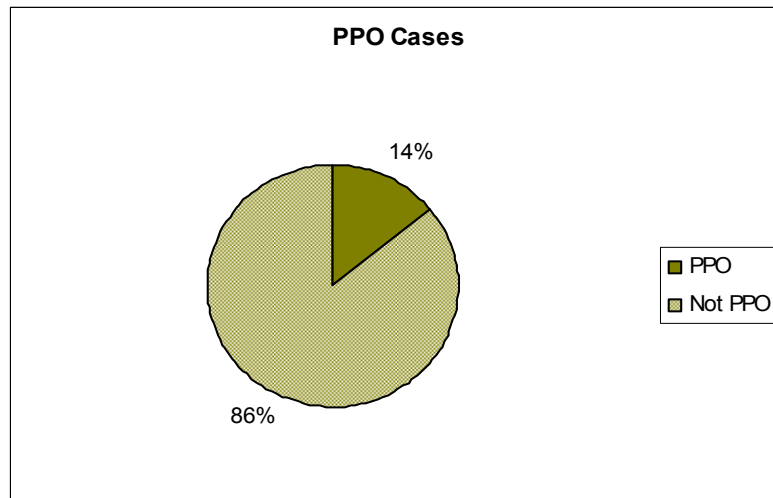
The chosen sample takes into consideration the percentage of girls or young women in contact with the YOT. A representative number is then included in the sample of cases.



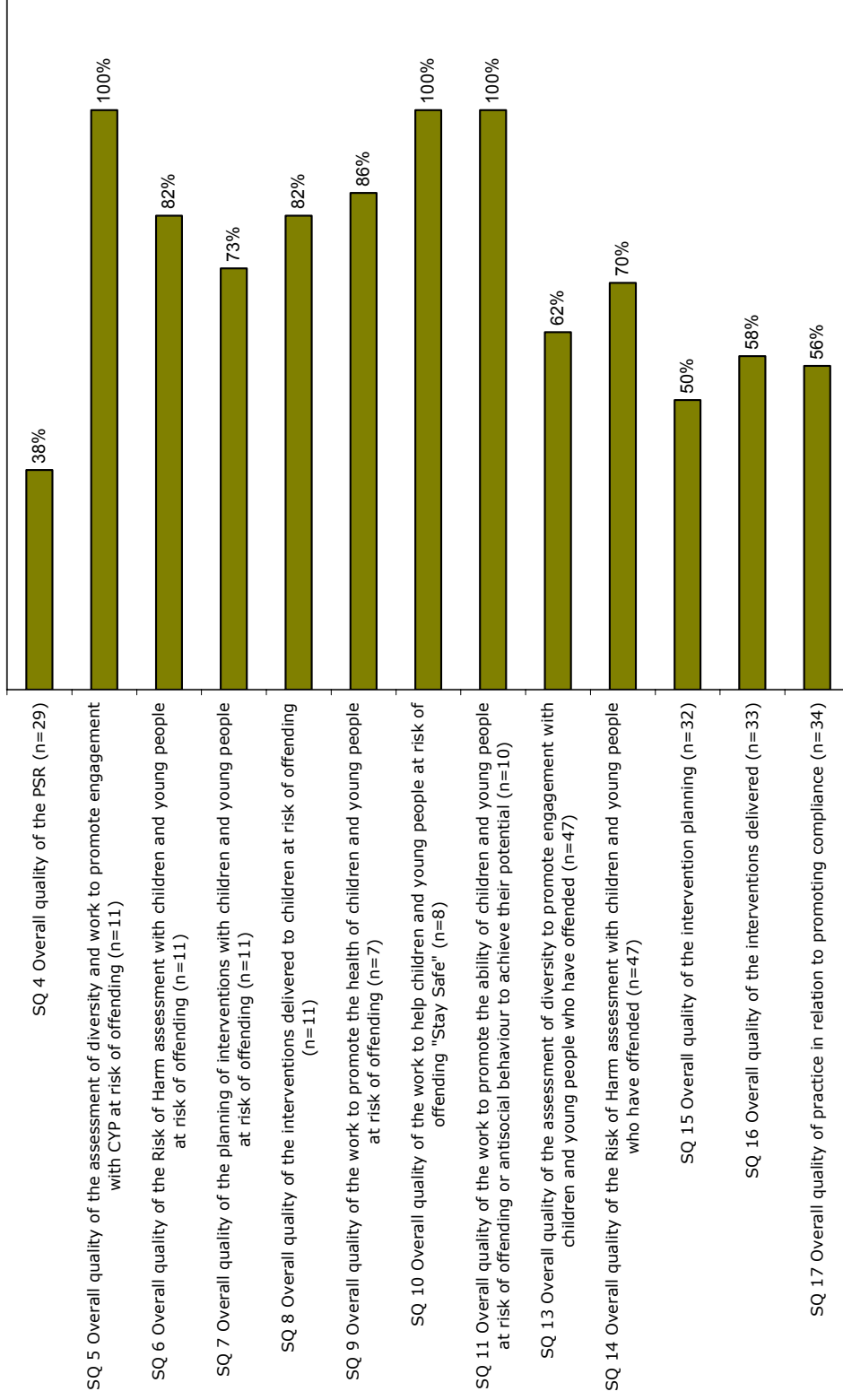
The chosen sample takes into consideration the percentage of black and minority ethnic children or young people in contact with the YOT. A representative number is then included in the sample of cases.

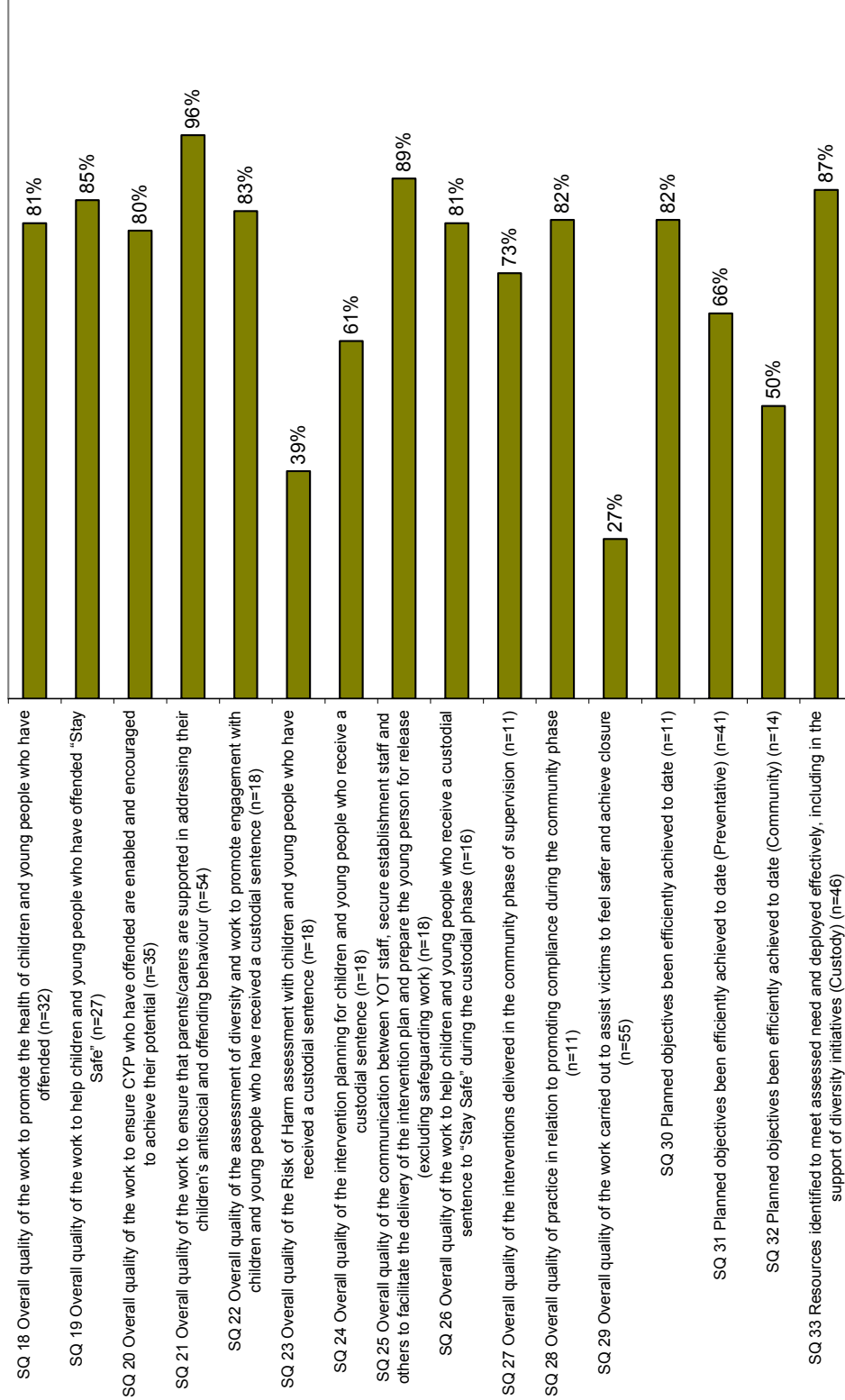


The chosen sample includes a number of high risk of harm cases and ISSP/PPO cases. The numbers included depend on the size of the YOT/YOS involved, and range from 6-12 cases per sample.



Appendix 3: Scoring for summary questions





Appendix 4: Joint inspection arrangements

The joint YOT inspection programme began in September 2003 and is the first full inspection programme to examine the work of the YOTs. It has been implemented over four phases, covering all YOTs in England and Wales over a five year period. From September 2005, the findings in England have contributed to the Joint Area Reviews of children's services (led by Ofsted) and the Corporate Assessment of local authority services (led by the Audit Commission).

Appendix 5: Role of HMI Probation and code of practice

HMI Probation is an independent Inspectorate, funded by the Ministry of Justice and reporting directly to the Secretary of State. Our purpose is to:

- report to the Secretary of State on the effectiveness of work with individual offenders, children and young people aimed at reducing reoffending and protecting the public, whoever undertakes this work under the auspices of the National Offender Management Service or the Youth Justice Board
- report on the effectiveness of the arrangements for this work, working with other Inspectorates as necessary
- contribute to improved performance by the organisations we inspect
- contribute to sound policy and effective service delivery, especially in public protection, by providing advice and disseminating good practice, based on inspection findings, to Ministers, officials, managers and practitioners
- promote actively race equality and wider diversity issues, especially in the organisations we inspect
- contribute to the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system, particularly through joint work with other inspectorates.

HMI Probation aims to achieve its purpose and to meet the Government's principles for inspection in the public sector by:

- working in an honest, professional, fair and polite way
- reporting and publishing inspection findings and recommendations for improvement in good time and to a good standard
- promoting race equality and wider attention to diversity in all aspects of its work, including within its own employment practices and organisational processes
- minimising the amount of extra work arising for probation areas or youth offending teams [those inspected] as a result of the inspection process.

The Inspectorate is a public body. Anyone wishing to comment on an inspection, a report or any other matter falling within its remit should write to:

*HM Chief Inspector of Probation
2nd Floor, Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London, SW1P 2BQ*

<http://www.inspectorates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprobation>