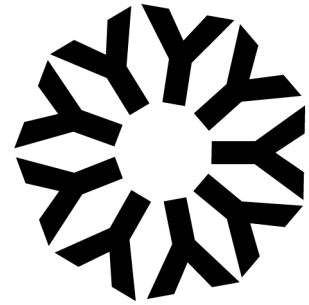


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Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Teams of England and Wales

Report on: Bracknell Forest Youth Offending Service

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Foreword

The inspection of Bracknell Forest took place in the fourth phase of our YOT inspection 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.

In this, and concurrent inspections during September 2007, it emerged that there were discrepancies between Asset completion and entry dates. This was due to a number of reasons including software problems. There was no evidence to suggest that the YOTs concerned were intending to deliberately enhance their performance, but the effect of this was that it was not possible for inspectors to know definitely when an Asset had been completed. As timeliness affects the assessment of quality, a judgement as to the validity of the data had to be made. These findings are based on the recorded date of the Asset on the system. We have raised our concerns with the Youth Justice Board in the expectation that these problems will be rectified.

The governance arrangements for the YOS had been reviewed and the Performance Management Group provided appropriate support and leadership. The YOS was well regarded, and influenced the main criminal justice and children's agenda locally. Although there was a specific problem with the recording of assessments on children and young people that was revealed by the inspection, prompt action was put in place to rectify these shortcomings.

The YOS had an enthusiastic staff group, all of whom were committed to working together to deliver effective interventions. The YOS performed particularly well with regard to the prevention strategy, health interventions and parenting. Greater attention now needs to be paid to the quality of staff supervision and to ensuring that risk management plans and vulnerability action plans are completed where necessary. We found that the YOS was well placed to learn from the inspection findings and improve the quality of services delivered in the future.

Andrew Bridges
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

January 2008

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the staff from the YOS, members of the Management Board and partner organisations for their assistance in ensuring the smooth running of this inspection.

We would particularly like to express our gratitude to Karen Roberts, Head of YOS, for her commitment to the inspection.

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Glossary

ABC	Antisocial Behaviour Contract
ASBO	Antisocial Behaviour Order
Asset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
DAT	Drugs Action Team
DTO	Detention and training order
EIP	Early Intervention Project
Estyn	HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
ETE	Employment, training and education
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GP	General Practitioner
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
ISSP	Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme
KPI	Key performance indicator
LAC	Looked After Child
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PMG	Performance Management Group
PC	Police constable
PPO	Prolific and other Priority Offender
PSR	Pre-sentence report
PRU	Pupil referral unit
RoH	Risk of Harm
RoSH	Risk of Serious Harm
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bounded
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOT	Youth Offending Team
YOS	Youth Offending 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

- ❖ YOS staff working in court were well trained, confident and competent. Work was based on recently amended protocols. YOS staff were generally well supported by children's services staff. A good quality service was available to all courts.
- ❖ There were good relationships between the YOS and the court. Feedback from sentencers on the work of the YOS was very positive.
- ❖ Nearly all reports to the court contained clear proposals and these proposals were followed in three-quarters of cases. Reports were produced in a timely manner.
- ❖ The overall quality of reports was an area for improvement. Too many reports simply repeated the child or young person's account of the offence, rather than analysing the reasons for it. Reports were often too lengthy.

Work with children and young people in the community

- ❖ Bracknell Forest had a well thought out strategy for delivering interventions to those at risk of offending. Although small in scale, services had the potential to make a positive impact.
- ❖ The Early Intervention Project took referrals from a wide range of partners. Interventions were based on appropriate assessments, and were sensitive to the diverse needs of children and young people.
- ❖ Relationships within the team and with all relevant partners were positive. In nearly all cases, the case manager utilised appropriate services well.
- ❖ A significant number of staff and managers had misunderstood the correct process for recording the dates when Asset assessments had been undertaken. This problem was compounded by some staff who, months after making preliminary pre-sentence assessments, copied these assessments and dated them as if they had been done on the date of sentence.
- ❖ Diversity issues that might have hindered the work of the YOS were routinely explored with children and young people as part of the assessment process. Where issues were identified, suitable plans to minimise their impact had been made in all cases.
- ❖ Work with regard to the physical, mental and emotional health of children and young people was given a high priority. Good use was made of the specialist drug worker.
- ❖ The YOS was close to achieving the 90% target of all pre-16 year olds in education or training at the point of case closure.

- ◇ Parenting interventions were offered in a high proportion of cases. Interventions were delivered in a variety of ways aimed at meeting the particular needs of parents. Feedback from parents was very positive.
- ◇ Consultation with children and young people was comprehensive. Measures were undertaken to meet the expressed needs of children and young people where this was practical.
- ◇ Risk management plans and vulnerability action plans were not completed in all necessary cases.

Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences

- ◇ The quality of the communication between the YOS and the secure establishment to deliver the training plan and prepare the child or young person for release was sufficient in nearly all cases.
- ◇ The frequency of appointments during the custodial phase of the sentence met the requirements of the national standard in all cases. Contact between parents/carers and children and young people was actively encouraged.
- ◇ *What do you think?* Asset self-assessments had been completed in very few cases.

Victims and restorative justice

- ◇ Where a victim was successfully contacted by the YOS, there was evidence that good efforts were made to engage with them. Once contact had been established, a restorative process was undertaken in nearly a third of cases.
- ◇ Victims had been invited to participate in a restorative justice process in slightly under half of the cases where there was an identified victim. In over half of cases the reasons for not contacting victims were not recorded.

Management and leadership

- ◇ The YOS was well placed within the local authority structures. The Head of the YOS made an effective strategic contribution to all the relevant multi agency crime reduction partnerships.
- ◇ All statutory partners provided funding to the YOS. Practical solutions had been found when staffing problems had arisen. The YOS was highly valued by its partners.
- ◇ The quality of staff supervision was an area requiring further attention.

Recommendations

Changes are necessary to ensure that:

- (1) staff complete Asset assessments within the timescales required by national standards (*Head of YOS*)
- (2) the practice of repeatedly copying Asset assessments and updating them from order to order is stopped (*Head of YOS*)
- (3) information collected on the quality of pre-sentence reports through feedback arrangements is collated and used to improve the overall standard of reports (*Head of YOS*)
- (4) interventions for children and young people are informed by an Asset self-assessment in a greater number of cases (*Head of YOS*)
- (5) vulnerability action plans and risk management plans are completed in all necessary cases (*Head of YOS*)
- (6) a greater number of victims are invited to participate in restorative justice processes (*Head of YOS*)
- (7) the YOS has sufficient resources to meet the mental health and substance misuse needs of children and young people coming to the attention of the YOS (*Performance Management Board*)
- (8) effective arrangements are put in place for the clinical supervision and line management of the psychologist who provides services for children and young people in contact with the YOS (*Performance Management Group*)
- (9) a greater number of staff are satisfied with the quality of their supervision (*Head of YOS*).

Next steps

An improvement plan addressing the recommendations should be submitted to HM Inspectorate of Probation for approval four weeks after the publication of this inspection report. Once agreed, the plan will be forwarded to the YJB to monitor its implementation.

Service users' perspective

Children and young people

Forty-two children and young people completed a questionnaire for the inspection, of which 33 questionnaires were interactive on computer software. The remainder were completed on paper, either independently or during an interview with an inspector.

- ◆ The number of responses from children and young people as a proportion of those worked with by the YOS was extremely high. Nearly all the responses to the questionnaire indicated that the YOS treated children and young people with respect
- ◆ Over three-quarters of the respondents felt that things had got better for them as a result of the work of the YOS. Improvements in physical health and education were strong themes. Nearly all felt that the YOS had helped them to stop offending.
- ◆ Those in contact with the YOS were clear about its purpose. Nearly all were aware of their supervision plan and had played an active part in agreeing it.

Parents/carers

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

- ◆ All parents/carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the services they had received from the YOS.
- ◆ The range of services available to parents/carers was believed by all to have been clearly explained, and their personal needs were taken into account. They reported that things improved for themselves as parents, and for their children.
- ◆ All parents/carers who responded described themselves as completely or reasonably satisfied. "*They have been brilliant,*" and "*I could not fault them*" were typical responses.

Victims

Six questionnaires were completed by victims of offending by children and young people, either independently or during an interview with an inspector.

- ◆ All but one of the respondents described themselves as completely satisfied with their contact with the YOS; the remaining one was partially satisfied.

- ◇ The YOS explained the services they could offer in all cases and all victims felt their individual needs were taken into account.
- ◇ Most comments from victims were positive. *"They handled it pretty well,"* and *"I have no ideas for improving the service"* were typical. One person thought that they could have been involved earlier, and was *"disappointed to have been contacted only after the young person had been through the court process"*.

Sharing good practice

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

Work in the courts

General criterion:
1.2

YOS youth court staff were described by sentencers as *"incredibly proactive in court, if they have anything to say they will put it forward effectively. I can not over emphasise the support we get from the YOS"*.

Work with children and young people at risk of offending

General criterion:
2.3

In response to the relatively high numbers of LAC committing offences, the YOS and children's services formulated a policy of assessing the needs of all children becoming Looked After and offering interventions to reduce the likelihood of offending where necessary.

Work with children and young people who have offended

General criterion:
2.6

The physical health work undertaken by the nurse with children and young people known to the YOS with a score of two on the relevant section of Asset was exceptional. The physical health worker offered a wide range of advice and assistance to children and young people and their case managers.

Work with parents/carers

General criterion:
2.9

The YOS had adopted a very robust policy with regard to offering parenting interventions. The result of this policy was that a very high proportion of cases received a parenting intervention. Once engaged with the parenting team, most parents/carers gave positive feedback on the services they had received.

Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences

**General criterion:
3.3**

A young person assessed as presenting a high RoSH was sentenced to a DTO after repeatedly breaching a supervision order. A pre-release meeting identified that non-compliance with court orders was a prelude to offending behaviour. It was concluded that structure and tight boundaries needed to be in place. He was released subject to an ISSP that progressively allowed him more freedom as the months passed. As part of his ISSP he was expected to undertake 25 hours directed activities to include ETE work, work on his substance misuse, psychological health and offending behaviour. The licence was worded so as to indicate that breach would follow one rather than two warnings over non-compliance with the licence.

Victims and restorative justice

**General criterion:
4.1**

S, a 17 year old male, had committed an offence under the influence of alcohol. He received a referral order and completed 24 hrs of reparation, a combination of a restorative justice conference, a letter of apology and community reparation at a local church and a park.

The victim's experience of the restorative justice conference was so positive that he felt that the young person did not need to complete any more reparation. The young person's experience of reparation was so positive that he enquired about becoming a volunteer.

Management and leadership

**General criterion:
5.1**

YOS staff were regularly invited to attend the PMG to give presentations on their work. This had a number of positive effects for both the PMG and the staff, who felt able to contribute in a significant way to strategic management.

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.

Inspection findings confirmed the YJB data that there were very few cases of children and young people in need of remand services in Bracknell Forest in the year leading up to the inspection. Although performing close to the necessary targets, the small number of children and young people meant that a year-on-year percentage reduction target was subject to significant fluctuation and was not a good indicator of performance.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS had a clear and recently amended procedure for bail supervision and support. Systems were in place to ensure that YOS staff were aware of any children and young people who had been held in cells overnight and that an early assessment was made of their status.
- (2) Local Authority accommodation for remanded children and young people was available where necessary. Relationships with children's services staff were positive and social workers regularly accompanied LAC to court.
- (3) YOS workers liaised with appropriate legal staff and offered supervision and support services based on the individual needs of children and young people and the likelihood of reoffending and/or RoSH that they posed.
- (4) Bail supervision packages, managed by YOS staff, were offered in cases where there was a risk of secure or custodial remand.

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 YOT.

Bracknell Forest YOS had a small dedicated court team that covered the two relevant youth court sittings per week. Staff cover was provided for the local Crown Court as necessary. Saturday and bank holiday courts were covered on a shared basis with other local YOTs.

Strengths:

- (1) YOS staff responsible for work in courts were well trained, knowledgeable and aware of local policies and procedures. They provided an effective service to the youth court.
- (2) YOS staff interviewed all children and young people who were remanded or sentenced to secure accommodation. Systems were in place to ensure that all relevant documentation was passed to the secure establishment promptly. Where staff were concerned about vulnerability a telephone call was also made.
- (3) There were good relationships between the YOS and the youth court. Work was based on a recently reviewed Youth Court User Group protocol. Staff at all levels engaged well on court duty, case progression meetings, quarterly court users meetings and meetings of the youth panel. Sentencers interviewed by the inspection team were impressed with the service they received.
- (4) The overwhelming majority of reports contained clear proposals that were followed in almost three-quarters of cases. Almost all reports were prepared for the relevant court date. The great majority of reports were based on a specific interview with the child or young person, and where appropriate, their parent/carer.
- (5) All reports appropriately separated the issues of the likelihood of reoffending and the RoSH.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Although feedback was requested from sentencers on the quality of PSRs, this information was only returned to the PSR author. There was no overall analysis of the data received, meaning that learning was not shared at a team level.
- (2) Only one-third of PSRs included a satisfactory analysis of the offence as opposed to a description. In many cases, the offence description was a detailed summary of the child or young person's account of the offence. Few reports were considered sufficiently concise. Overall, only 56% of PSRs were considered to be of a sufficient quality.
- (3) Reports did not routinely include an assessment of victims' wishes with regard to reparation or restorative justice.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **good**.

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) undertakes appropriate activities to prevent children and young people from offending.

Bracknell Forest had a well thought out strategy for delivering interventions to those at risk of offending. Although small in scale, there were five elements to the strategy: the EIP, parenting interventions, the Behaviour Change Programme, support for the management of ASBOs and interventions for LAC assessed as at risk of offending. The EIP had only one worker, and only six cases were identified for detailed inspection.

Strengths:

- (1) The EIP took referrals for children aged eight to 13 from partner agencies across Bracknell Forest. Interventions were delivered by the EIP worker. In all cases inspected, the referrals were appropriate and made in accordance with local policies. Nearly all initial Onset assessments were completed on time with over two-thirds being of sufficient quality.
- (2) There was good liaison with the referring agency and contacts were made with an appropriate range of services to meet the needs of children and young people. In all cases the children and young people had completed a self-assessment and had actively participated in the planning of interventions. Home visits were routinely undertaken. Interventions were sensitive to the diverse needs of children and young people. Parents/carers were effectively involved in all cases.
- (3) The overall quality of interventions delivered by the EIP to children and young people at risk of offending was sufficient in all cases. Structured interventions were used to meet planned objectives in most cases.
- (4) The parents/carers of all children and young people referred to the EIP were offered support, either through group work or individual sessions.
- (5) Bracknell Forest also ran a Behaviour Change Programme in several local secondary schools with a high proportion of children at risk of exclusion. Members of the YOS and staff from the local schools co-led the programme, designed to help pupils re-engage with learning activities. It had been hoped that ownership of the group would pass to the schools themselves in time. This strategy had limited success due to staffing changes in schools;

however, the YOS was continuing to offer the service.

- (6) The YOS operational manager was effectively engaged with the antisocial behaviour task group in Bracknell Forest, contributing effectively to targeting decisions.
- (7) The YOS had an agreed protocol with children's services, which set out clearly the responsibilities of both parties with regard to LAC. Where a child or young person became Looked After and was not known to the YOS, an assessment of their risk of offending was made and, if necessary, interventions planned.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Although in most cases a RoH screening had been accurately carried out, an Onset RoSH to others assessment was not undertaken in all cases when this was indicated by the screening. The EIP worker had not received sufficient training to complete RoH assessments and risk management plans on the relevant computerised system.
- (2) The EIP struggled to find suitable resources to refer on to at the end of time-limited interventions, making successful disengagement more difficult.
- (3) The schools' Behaviour Change Programme had not been evaluated and it was difficult to assess if there were positive outcomes.

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.

Strengths:

- (1) Health needs (physical, emotional and mental) and substance misuse needs had been accurately assessed in most cases, with appropriate referrals made.
- (2) Four out of the five relevant cases with an emotional or mental health need had been successfully referred on for further specialist interventions. Substance misuse services were utilised where necessary.

Area for improvement:

- (1) Onset assessments did not always draw on health sources of information, meaning that some needs were insufficiently assessed. In one case this had led to an intervention that was judged insufficient. The YOS had not provided sufficient training for the EIP worker on health matters.

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) In all prevention cases inspected, the child or young person's name had been checked with children's services to ascertain their status and ensure that the worker was fully aware of any other professional involvement. This was clearly recorded on all files.
- (2) In five out of six cases, work to ensure children and young people were kept safe was of sufficient quality.
- (3) The welfare of vulnerable children and young people was promoted through interventions with children's services and education for those at risk of offending due to their Looked After status or deteriorating relationship with their schools.

Area for improvement:

- (1) In one case there had been insufficient attention paid to safeguarding issues concerning the capacity of a parent to care for their child.

2.4 General criterion:

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

Strengths:

- (1) In all cases where there was an assessed need, referrals were made to education provision, leading to an improvement in services for the child or young person.
- (2) Good outcomes had been achieved in schools and the local PRU with children and young people at risk of offending.
- (3) The overall quality of the work to promote the ability of children and young people at risk of offending or antisocial behaviour to achieve their potential was sufficient in all cases inspected.

Conclusion: These criteria are 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.

During the inspection it was apparent that a significant number of staff and managers had misunderstood the correct process for recording the dates when Asset assessments had been completed. A significant number of staff believed that they were required to date assessments on the day that the court order started.

The correct procedure is to date the assessment on the day that it is completed and entered onto the computerised record. Depending on the type of order, this allows up to 15 days for the assessment to be completed.

This problem was compounded by some staff who, after making preliminary pre-sentence assessments, copied these assessments and dated them as if they had been done on the date of sentence.

When these errors in procedures were pointed out to the Head of the YOS, she was able to issue new instructions to staff immediately.

Strengths:

- (1) Relationships within the team and with all relevant partners were positive. Case managers made appropriate internal and external referrals to services and had good communication links with all parties to the case. In nearly all cases, the case manager utilised appropriate services well, particularly with regard to drugs and physical health.
- (2) Nearly all initial assessments were based on specific interviews with children and young people and their parents/carers where appropriate. Where necessary contact was also made with children's services, education and other service providers. There was good identification of positive factors in the lives of children and young people where these existed. In nearly three-quarters of cases the quality of the initial assessment was sufficient.
- (3) Diversity issues that might have hindered the work of the YOS were routinely explored with children and young people as part of the assessment process. Where issues were identified, suitable plans to minimise their impact had been made in all cases.
- (4) There were regular team discussions as part of the Prevent and Deter Strategy. All cases with an Asset score in excess of 30 were brought to the meeting to share ideas and assist in the planning and delivery of interventions.
- (5) An accurate RoSH screening had been undertaken in the great majority of cases. In most cases this had led to a full assessment, where necessary, and in all but one case the risk classification appeared to be correct.

- (6) The overall quality of intervention planning was sufficient in almost three-quarters of cases.
- (7) In nearly three-quarters of cases, constructive interventions successfully challenged children and young people to accept responsibility for their offending behaviour.
- (8) In the great majority of cases, the frequency of appointments was sufficient to meet the requirements of the national standards, any RoH and safeguarding issues and support the achievement of the intervention plan objectives.
- (9) Judgements about the acceptability of absences were consistent and appropriate in all cases. Case managers demonstrated a strong commitment to engaging children and young people even when they were approaching breach proceedings. Compliance was actively sought rather than simply relying on enforcement.
- (10) A written report, with a full assessment of risks and needs, was provided in all referral order cases inspected. Parents/carers were encouraged successfully to attend panels.
- (11) Effective joint work with children's services was undertaken where necessary in nearly all cases.
- (12) Despite sickness absence from the YOS police secondee during the lead up to the inspection, final warnings were delivered on time, with nearly all cases containing appropriate interventions.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) There were a number of problems concerning the completion of Asset assessments that have been referred to earlier. The widespread practice of dating assets as if they had been completed at the start date of orders was incorrect.
- (2) Many staff had adopted a practice of continually updating assessments rather than completing new reviews when there were changes of circumstances. This made effective inspection or management oversight problematic. In some cases, when new interventions were started, earlier assessments were copied and outdated information was included.
- (3) There was some evidence that case managers did not treat each new order as requiring a new assessment and an updated intervention plan with the correct frequency of reporting. In one case there was confusion as to who was the responsible officer for assessment and planning when two orders were running at the same time, managed by two members of staff.
- (4) In only one third of cases was there evidence of a recent *What do you think?* self-assessment informing the interventions identified for children and young people.

- (5) In only half of the cases requiring a risk management plan was one completed.
- (6) Fewer than half the cases inspected had received a timely home visit.
- (7) Progress against the objectives in the intervention plan had not been reviewed in line with national standards timescales in nearly two-thirds of cases.

2.6 General criterion:

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

Bracknell Forest YOS utilised the services of three health professionals within the team. There was a part-time specialist nurse from the school nursing service for physical health issues for two days per week. Mental health services were provided by a psychologist located within one of the children's services teams, whose remit included referrals from the YOS. Substance misuse services were provided by a half-time substance misuse worker seconded from the DAT. These posts were paid for from a range of funding streams.

Strengths:

- (1) Case managers in the YOS were skilled in identifying health and substance misuse issues and in most cases undertook appropriate joint work with internal health specialists.
- (2) The work of the physical health nurse was well integrated into the YOS. She provided services for nearly all cases that had been assessed as having a physical health need through the Asset assessment. She was also able to assist children and young people without GPs to access medical advice.
- (3) The physical health specialist practitioner provided a range of services for children and young people, including height and weight measurement, diet/obesity advice, immunisations, smoking cessation and screening for sexually transmitted infections.
- (4) The YOS psychologist provided a consultancy service to case managers in relation to cases assessed as needing Tier 1 and 3 mental health services. There was evidence of good short-term interventions and referral on to specialists for further assessment.
- (5) The work of the psychologist in the YOS facilitated a good link to CAHMS services, where necessary. There were good formal and informal communications between cases managers, the psychologist and CAHMS professionals.
- (6) The substance misuse worker offered a screening service to many of the cases known to the YOS. She was able to offer directly a wide range of

services including devising plans to help children and young people reduce or stop substance misuse, harm minimisation, overdose awareness and relapse prevention. Where necessary, arrangements were available to provide for substitute prescribing for children and young people. There was evidence of skilled and sensitive work to promote the disclosure of drug misuse issues in individual cases.

- (7) The overall quality of the work to promote the health of children and young people who had offended was sufficient or better in the great majority of cases.

Area for improvement:

- (1) The physical health worker lacked a clear job description for her role within the YOS.

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.

Strengths:

- (1) The overall quality of work to safeguard children and young people who had offended was sufficient in the great majority of cases.
- (2) In most cases there had been good liaison between the YOS and children's services. In all cases checks had been made about the child or young person's social care status on their current or recent order
- (3) When undertaken, vulnerability action plans were assessed as being of sufficient quality.

Area for improvement:

- (1) Vulnerability action plans had been completed in slightly less than two-thirds of cases where action was required to reduce identified risks.

2.8 General criterion:
Children and young people who have offended are enabled and encouraged to achieve their potential.

The local authority provided funding to the YOS to employ a part-time (0.7) ETE worker. She supported case managers to access suitable ETE provision for children and young people in contact with the YOS. Relatively few cases in the inspection sample had needs relating to statutory education.

Strengths:

- (1) In nearly three-quarters of cases, the overall quality of the work to ensure children and young people who had offended were enabled and encouraged to achieve their potential was sufficient.
- (2) In most relevant cases there was evidence that an intervention related to their identified need was offered to the child or young person by the education worker.
- (3) Progress overall by the YOS towards the KPI of 90% of children and young people in ETE at case closure was good; data for the last nine months indicated that 85% of pre-16 and 56% at post-16 were in ETE at case closure.
- (4) The ETE worker provided a range of innovative interventions and good brokerage to meet the needs of children and young people. Good outcomes had been achieved in schools and the PRU.
- (5) The PRU had provided teachers to work with YOS children and young people on a short- term basis while awaiting placement.
- (6) There was a clear procedure to refer children and young people for ETE support where there was an Asset score of two or above for ETE needs.
- (7) Protocols existed with all six secondary schools in the area. The protocols specified liaison arrangements, information sharing, expectations of attendance at meetings, preventative work and notification of exclusions.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Basic skills, literacy or numeracy assessments were not routinely undertaken on children and young people in contact with the YOS.
- (2) Targets for ETE intervention plans were insufficiently SMART, the ETE worker was not routinely involved in reviews and as a consequence children and young people's attainment was not regularly monitored or recorded.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **adequate**.

Work with parents/carers

2.9 General criterion:

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

Since April 2006 parenting interventions within Bracknell Forest YOS had been provided by a private organisation, Solutions Together UK. This service was funded from a YJB grant for preventative work.

Strengths:

- (1) The overall quality of the work to ensure that parents/carers were supported in addressing their children's antisocial and offending behaviour was sufficient in almost all cases.
- (2) Parents/carers had been made aware of the requirements of interventions undertaken and kept informed about the progress of their child or young person. YOS staff sought to engage parents/carers in supervision in nearly all cases.
- (3) Specific interventions were offered to the parents/carers of children and young people in all relevant cases.
- (4) Information leaflets on the services offered to parents/carers were clear and user friendly.
- (5) The parenting team provided a range of styles of intervention to maximize the relevance and appropriateness of their work with parents/carers. They undertook innovative work such as a 'parents' drop in' session during school holidays and attempted to engage with parents/carers of children and young people from the PRU on the basis that these children were at greater risk of exclusion and offending.
- (6) Parents/carers were pursued assiduously by the parenting team in an effort to maximize the take-up of services. There was a good range of standard letters that were sent out by the Head of the YOS to encourage compliance and to set out the consequences of not doing so.
- (7) There was a presumption that parents/carers would take advantage of the services offered with a clear expectation that failure to do so could result in a statutory intervention at a later stage. As a result there were high levels of take-up. Sixty-three parents were assisted in the first year of operation of the parenting service. At the time of the inspection, work with 19 cases was ongoing. These were very high numbers in a small YOS.
- (8) The parenting team had established excellent working relationships with the rest of the YOS. Their work was well integrated with the case manager and was characterised by good communications.

- (9) Information on the services offered and the aims of interventions were clear and well presented. There was an end of year report.

Area for improvement:

- (1) Arrangements for the funding of the delivery of parenting interventions were short-term.

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

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.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS collected data on the views of children and young people using a comprehensive *How was it for you?* questionnaire. This had been completed by a high proportion of the caseload in the last six months of the previous financial year. A comprehensive analysis of the data had been undertaken.
- (2) The overall feedback to the YOS from children and young people was very positive. The YOS had made a number of practical and policy changes as a result of the feedback.
- (3) A bike rack was provided in response to a suggestion about difficulties in travelling to the YOS. A policy of refunding fares where a bus ticket could be produced by the child or young person was also instigated. Following feedback, refreshments were also provided at group meetings for children and young people.
- (4) The parenting team regularly collected feedback to ensure services remained relevant to parents/carers needs.

2.11 General criterion:

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

Due to the small number of cases included in the reoffending cohorts, it was difficult for the YOS to demonstrate positive outcomes in a robust statistical manner. The behaviour of a very small number of individuals had a significant

effect on levels of reoffending. Despite this, there were a number of positive indicators.

Strengths:

- (1) In all six prevention cases inspected, children and young people had complied with the requirements of the intervention. In all but one case there had been no convictions or warnings since the start of the programme. One young person had received a final warning.
- (2) In five out of six prevention cases, Onset assessments had been rescored at the end of the intervention. Of the five rescored, four showed an improvement in criminogenic factors.
- (3) Resources were used effectively in five of the six prevention cases, with planned objectives being met in four.
- (4) The Asset assessments on children and young people who had offended had been rescored in most cases. More than two-thirds of children and young people who had offended had not gone on to commit a further offence since the start of the order.
- (5) In two-thirds of cases, children and young people who had offended complied with the terms of their orders.
- (6) Planned objectives had been efficiently achieved in more than two-thirds of cases. In nearly all cases the resources used were consistent with the child or young person's RoH and likelihood of reoffending.
- (7) Consultation with children and young people as part of the inspection process indicated that nearly all felt that they had been treated with respect by the YOS. Over three-quarters felt the YOS had helped them in a significant way and the great majority felt they were less likely to offend as a result.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) There was a lack of routine analysis of outcomes for children and young people known to the YOS.
- (2) Although in approximately two-thirds of cases there was progress against the first two priority objectives, overall, there was a demonstrable improvement in attitudes and behaviour in less than half of the cases inspected. Victim awareness was assessed as improved in less than a quarter of cases.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **good**

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.

Bracknell Forest YOS had a relatively small number of cases sentenced to custody in the period prior to the inspection. As a result it was only possible to inspect six cases for this section. Four of the six cases were sentenced more than a year prior to the inspection fieldwork. Similar problems existed about the Asset assessment for children and young people subject to community orders. Thus it was not possible to be definitive about when Asset assessments were completed.

Strengths:

- (1) Initial Assets were completed to a sufficient standard in two-thirds of cases where a custodial sentence was imposed.
- (2) Race and ethnicity details had been accurately recorded in all cases. Where diversity issues had been identified, plans had been put in place to minimise their impact in all relevant cases.
- (3) Where a full RoSH had been completed it was considered to be accurate in three out of four cases. In the two cases assessed as presenting a high RoSH, this had been conveyed to all relevant staff.
- (4) Systems were in place to ensure that all relevant assessments were sent to the establishment within 24 hours. This routinely included the PSR and the post-court report. Where necessary, specific risk factors were communicated to the secure establishment in nearly all cases.
- (5) The YOS worker contributed to the initial training plan in all cases. In all but one case the initial training plan was completed on time, with a copy of the plan signed by the child or young person.
- (6) In all relevant cases there had been joint work between the YOS and the secure establishment staff to address mental health issues and alcohol and substance misuse needs as identified in the Asset assessment.
- (7) The quality of the communication between YOS and the secure establishment to deliver the training plan and prepare the child or young person for release was sufficient in nearly all cases.

- (8) The frequency of appointments with the child or young person during the custodial phase of the sentence met the requirements of the national standard in all cases. Contact between parents/carers and children and young people was actively encouraged, with YOS staff assisting with visits to establishments as appropriate.
- (9) The overall quality of practice to promote compliance during the community phase was sufficient in all cases. Where breach action was required, this was completed in the required timescales in all cases.
- (10) The YOS had recently introduced a 'risk focus meeting', with a view to improving performance in cases assessed as presenting a high RoH to themselves or others. Cases assessed as part of the inspection had been commenced prior to the introduction of this procedure.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) A *What do you think?* Asset had been completed in very few custodial cases.
- (2) The RoH screening in two of the six cases missed significant risk factors, leading to incomplete risk assessments. Full RoSH assessments were not undertaken in these cases.
- (3) Four of the six cases assessed as medium or high risk should have had a risk management plan, although none did. Overall the work with regard to RoH was insufficient in all custody cases.
- (4) There had been insufficient management oversight in the two cases assessed as presenting a high RoSH.

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.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS had checked the status of every child subject to a DTO with children's services at the commencement of the order, or in relation to an earlier sentence.
- (2) There was appropriate liaison between the YOS and children's services in nearly all cases. In the one case where a referral was made by the YOS, there was evidence of joint work being undertaken in a timely manner.
- (3) The overall assessment of the work of the YOS in helping children and young people stay safe during the custodial part of the sentence was sufficient in four of the six cases.

Area for improvement:

- (1) Vulnerability action plans had not been produced in those cases where such issues had been identified.

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) In all cases the YOS provided a timely induction for children and young people released from custody.
- (2) The frequency of appointments in the community phase of the order met the requirements of the national standard. Where appropriate, additional contacts to meet the needs of the individual were undertaken in nearly all cases.
- (3) Home visits had been carried out and repeated as necessary in nearly all cases. Where possible, parents/carers had been fully engaged with the work of the YOS to reintegrate the child or young person into the family and community.
- (4) In all cases the case manager monitored attendance across all interventions delivered with the child or young person. In nearly all cases judgements about absences were made in a consistent manner. Where necessary, breach action was commenced in a timely fashion. Overall, action to ensure compliance with the terms of the order was sufficient in all cases.
- (5) Specialist services in relation to substance misuse, mental and physical health had been delivered in nearly all relevant cases.
- (6) In nearly all cases there was evidence that the YOS worker had motivated and supported the child or young person throughout their sentence, and demonstrated a strong commitment to working with the child or young person.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) The intervention plans were not always reviewed within ten days of release. Only one-third of cases had been subsequently reviewed in accordance with the national standard.
- (2) In only one case had the child or young person's individual learning plan been continued after release.
- (3) Overall, the quality of the interventions delivered in the community phase of supervision was sufficient in only half of the cases.

3.4 General criterion:

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

Strengths:

- (1) Asset assessments had been rescored in all cases where a child or young person was supervised in the community following release.
- (2) There was evidence of some progress against the first priority criminogenic factor in four of the six cases. There was no change in one case.
- (3) Resources had been used efficiently to achieve planned outcomes in nearly all cases, with full attention being paid to long-term reintegration issues.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Since the start of the community phase, half of the children and young people had been convicted of a further offence.
- (2) Only one-third of the children and young people had complied with the requirements of their order.
- (3) There was evidence that learning outcomes or skills had been applied in only two cases. There was no evidence of any change in behaviour in three cases, with only one showing an improvement in attitude towards offending.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **adequate**.

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.

Bracknell Forest employed a victim project worker (0.75 FTE) and a reparation coordinator (0.5 FTE). These staff had been in post for 12 months. During this time they had been engaged in policy development, increasing the amount of face-to-face victim work and integrating their work with that of the rest of the team.

Strengths:

- (1) Victim workers within the YOS were enthusiastic and were developing good practice concerning victim work.
- (2) The police had informed the YOS of victim contact details in accordance with the national standard in nearly three-quarters of cases.
- (3) Where a victim was contacted by the YOS, there was evidence that good efforts were made to engage with them. Once contact had been established, a restorative process was undertaken in nearly a third of cases.
- (4) Where community reparation was undertaken, it was commenced within three months of the start of the order in three-quarters of cases.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Victims had been invited to participate in a restorative justice process in slightly under half of the cases where there was an identified victim. The reasons for not contacting victims was not recorded in over half of relevant cases.
- (2) There were only two small community reparation projects, and as a consequence not all offenders could be considered for reparation. The lack of choice of reparation projects meant it was not possible to offer children and young people a sufficient diversity of tasks to match their needs.

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

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 YOS was part of the Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department. The Head of the YOS reported to an Assistant Director in that department.

Strengths:

- (1) The structural position of the YOS had been reviewed in 2005. Under the revised structure a PMG was established to oversee more directly the performance of the YOS. This group contained members of sufficient authority from the partner agencies. The PMG reported to the CDRP, which was chaired by the Chief Executive.
- (2) The YOS was appropriately placed within the local authority, with good linkages to the main strategic partnerships for both children's services and criminal justice. The work of the YOS was embedded in the local authority's Performance Plan.
- (3) The Head of the YOS was an influential member of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, the CDRP and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The YOS also contributed to a wide range of other multi-agency initiatives such as those relating to CAHMS, MAPPA, police tasking and antisocial behaviour.
- (4) The PMG scrutinised the performance returns to the YJB on a line-by-line basis. It had a good awareness of the work of the YOS and the way its own agencies' policies impinged on this work.
- (5) The PMG had taken a close interest in the detailed work of the YOS. Staff members and secondees to the YOS were regularly invited to make presentations to the PMG. These presentations had the purposes of ensuring the PMG understood the day-to-day issues affecting staff, how its policy decisions were implemented and to help staff understand the governance arrangements for the YOS.
- (6) The PMG had made considerable efforts to assist in dealing with a small group of entrenched offenders. The YOS was able to bring individual cases to a

special meeting to establish what services could be brought to bear on these individuals, and to clarify what actions could be taken.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Despite the re-focusing of the PMG, one of the previous four meetings was cancelled. This meant there was no meeting for six months. There was insufficient time to review the implementation of the Youth Justice Plan.
- (2) Not all significant decisions about the management of the YOS and resources appeared to have been taken in the PMG, or referenced in the minutes of the meeting.

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.

Recently reviewed, comprehensive protocols, describing the provision of funding, existed in relation to the statutory partners of the YOS.

Strengths:

- (1) All statutory partners provided funding to the YOS. With the exception of the probation area, all statutory partners seconded staff. An agreement that met the needs of both the probation area and the YOS had been negotiated. Although this was not ideal, it was a practical way forward to an ongoing problem, to which there was no obvious solution.
- (2) The YOS had been successful in securing resources from the Safer Stronger Communities Fund to ensure that work that had been previously fully paid for by the Children's Fund could continue. Funding had also been secured from the Offender Learning and Skills Service to enhance provision for 14 to 18 year olds not in education, employment or training.
- (3) The YOS provided a venue for the local Community Safety Department to run a group in the evenings for perpetrators of domestic violence. This enabled an important crime reduction programme to go ahead. The group was kept entirely separate from other activities in the YOS.
- (4) The police had found appropriate ways to cover for the long-term sickness absence of the seconded PC to facilitate the continuity of services to the YOS. As soon as was possible, a replacement PC was appointed.
- (5) Arrangements had been made for members of YOS staff to access the children's services database 'Swift'. This had enabled staff to have ready

access to appropriate information.

- (6) The Head of the YOS had demonstrated an ability to work in partnership with others and find ways to deliver new services. Examples of this included the preventative work with LAC and support for those subject to ASBOs and ABCs, the securing of extra funding for work with children and young people who were not in education training and employment, and information sharing and interventions for those of particular interest to the police.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) The contribution of the PCT to the YOS was approximately 4.9% of the base budget; this was slightly below the 5.8% recommended by the YJB.
- (2) Funding for the psychologist who provided services to children and young people known to the YOS was short-term with no clear plan to maintain the service. There were no arrangements in place for the psychologist to receive either clinical supervision or line management within the YOS. These issues should be addressed as a matter of priority.
- (3) The substance misuse worker was unable to meet all the demands placed on her in a timely manner due to the volume of work she was allocated.
- (4) The Connexions manager was not represented at a senior level and there was little evidence of ETE matters being discussed in the PMG.

Staff supervision, development and training

5.3 General criterion:

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

Strengths:

- (1) All of the staff interviewed as part of the inspection process felt that they were well informed about the policies and procedures of the YOS. Good use was made of electronic communication systems such as e-mail and the intranet.
- (2) Team meetings were said to be regular and a good source of information about policies and developing practice.
- (3) All staff reported having received an annual appraisal in the past 12 months. Nearly all thought that the appraisal was clearly linked to the YOS Business Plan.
- (4) Training and development needs were said by staff to be well met in nearly all cases. The YOS had a clear training plan and procedures were in place for

the induction of new staff.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Less than half of the staff interviewed by inspectors felt that their supervision was of a sufficient standard. Two members of staff thought their supervision was poor.
- (2) Only slightly more than half of the staff felt that managers in the YOS demonstrated professional management approaches and modelled positive leadership behaviour.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **good**.

Appendix 1: Contextual information

Area

Bracknell Forest YOS was located in the South East of England and, as a single YOS, covered the Bracknell Forest unitary authority.

The area had a population of 109,617 measured in the Census 2001, 11% of which were aged 10-17 years. This was slightly higher than the average for England, which was 10.4%.

The population of Bracknell Forest was predominantly white (95.1%). The population with a black and minority ethnic heritage (4.9%) was significantly below the average for England of 8.7%.

Reported crime levels for 10-17 year olds across the area, at 51 per 1,000, were below the average for England of 105.

YOS

The YOS boundaries were within those of the Thames Valley police and probation areas. The Berkshire East PCT covered the area.

The Youth Justice Plan 2007/2008 showed that the YOT had seven full-time and nine part-time staff. All but one member of staff was female and one had a black or minority ethnic heritage.

The work of the YOT was based in one main office located close to the centre of Bracknell.

YJB performance data

The YJB summary of overall YOT performance for the period 2006/2007 gave Bracknell Forest YOS a score of 4 on a scale where 5 was the maximum. This was above the national and regional performance and also above that of comparable YOTs.

Performance on reducing reoffending received a score of 3, which was above that of all comparators.

Appendix 2: Inspection data

Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in September 2007 and during a contribution to the Bracknell Forest Joint Area Review in October 2007.

The inspection consisted of:

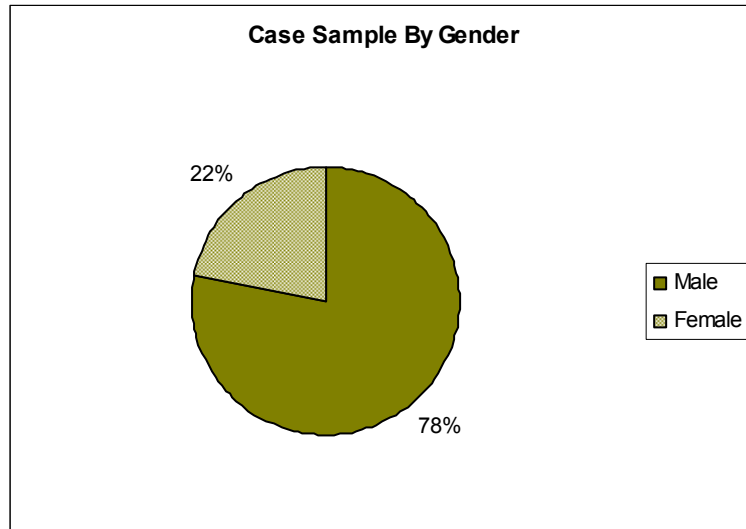
- ◇ evidence in advance
- ◇ examination of YJB performance data and assessments
- ◇ examination of practice in a sample of cases, normally in conjunction with the case manager or other representative, as follows:
 - 6 prevention files
 - 9 final warnings
 - 8 first tier penalties (referral orders, reparation orders)
 - 12 community sentences
 - 6 custodial cases

[This sample of cases was significantly smaller than would usually be inspected due to the size of the YOS. Bracknell Forest had the second lowest number of orders started in 2006/2007 of all YOTs in England.]

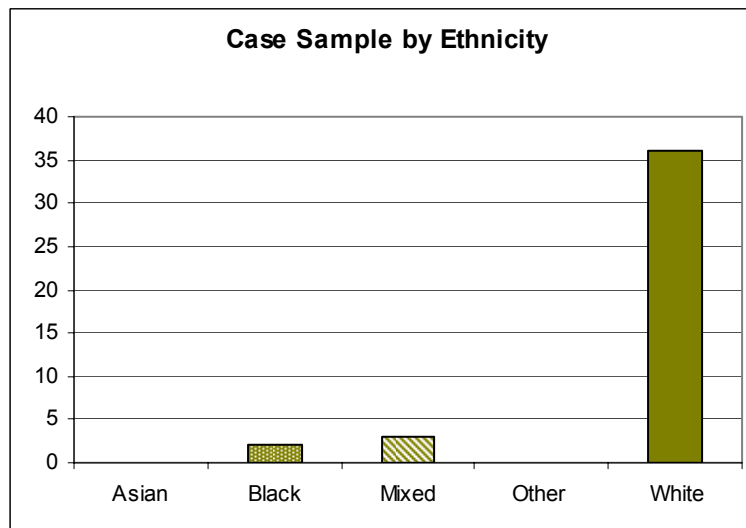
- ◇ interviews and questionnaire responses from children and young people, parents/carers, and victims
- ◇ interviews with children and young people in custody
- ◇ meetings with staff, managers and partners.

Data charts

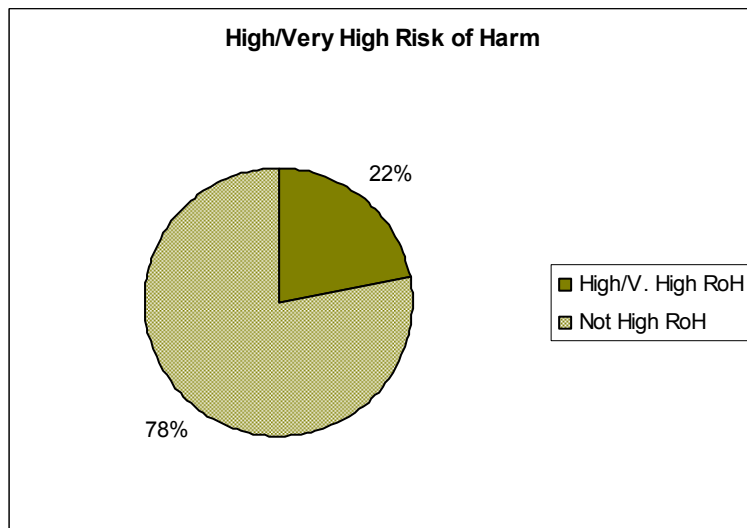
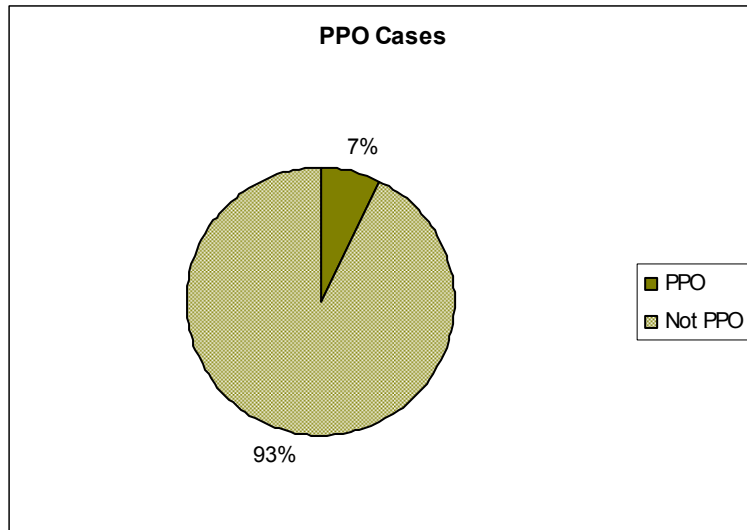
The chosen sample takes into consideration the percentage of girls or young women in contact with the YOS. A representative number is then included in the sample of cases.



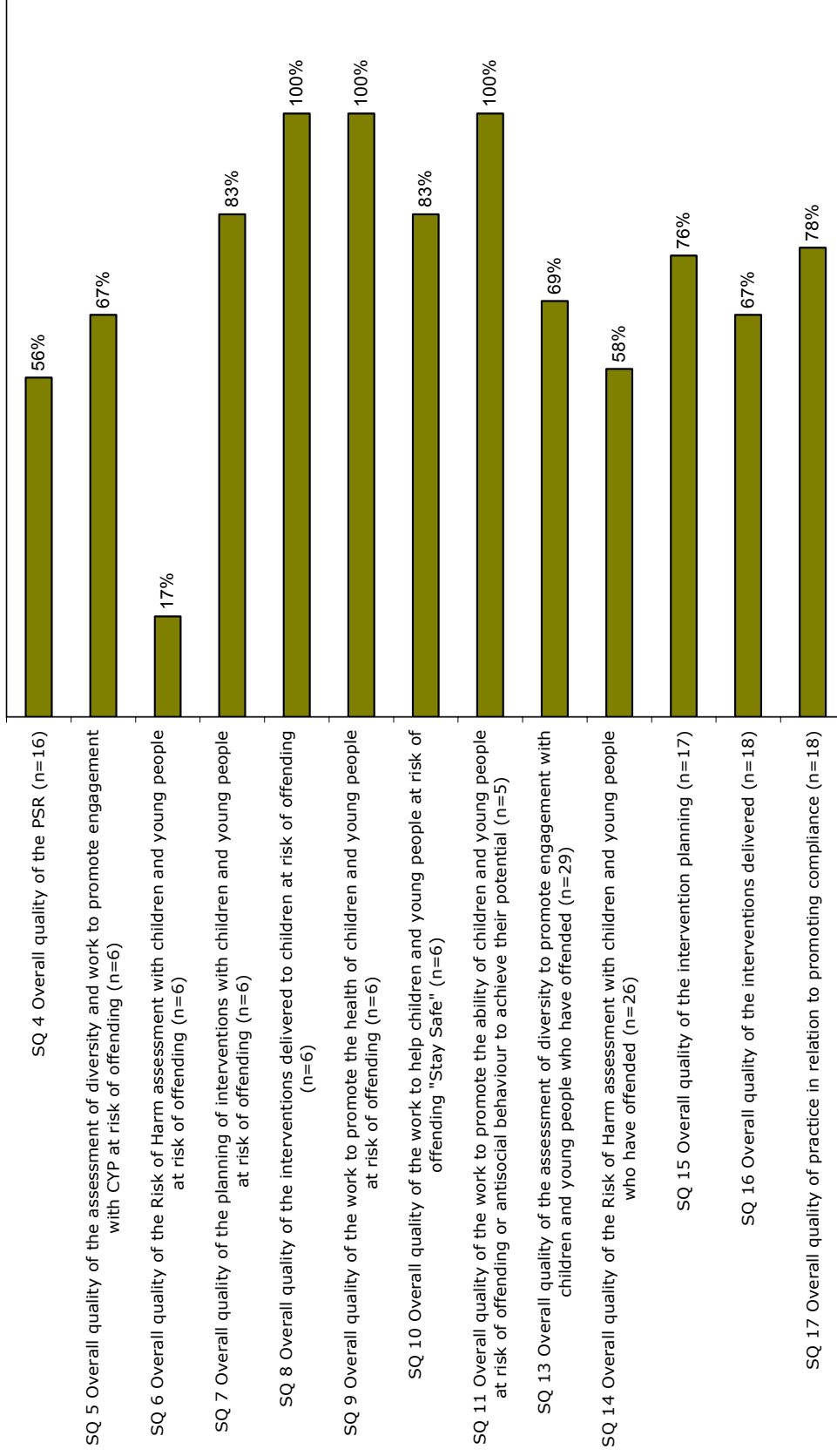
The chosen sample takes into consideration the percentage of black and minority ethnic children or young people in contact with the YOS. A representative number is then included in the sample of cases.

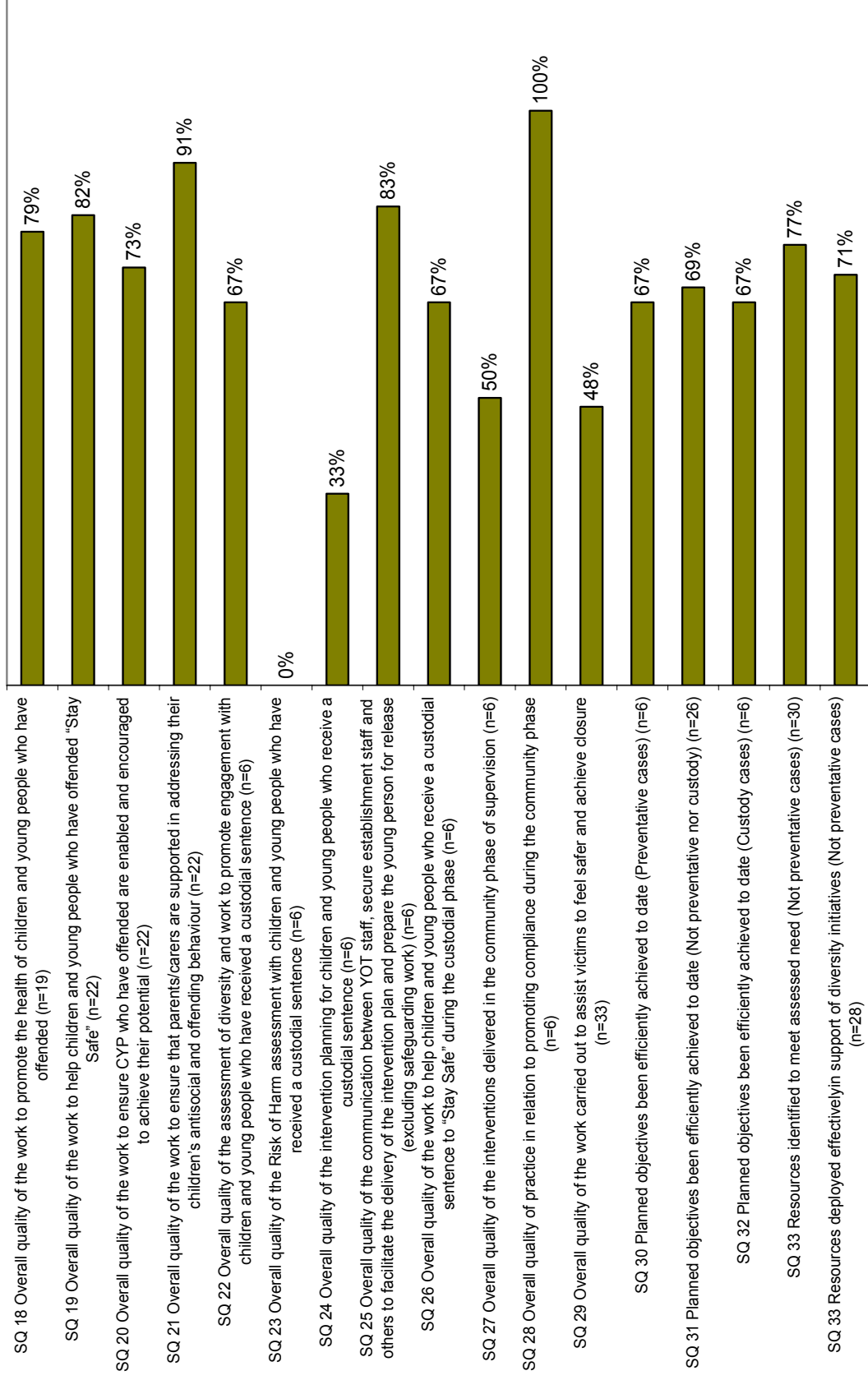


The chosen sample includes a number of high RoH cases and ISSP/PPO cases. The numbers included depend on the size of the YOT/YOS involved, and range from 6-12 cases per sample.



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:

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