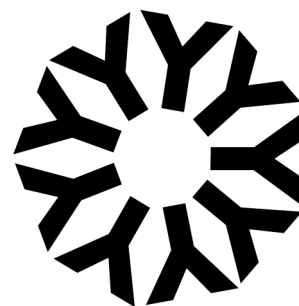


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# Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Teams of England and Wales

Report on:  
Cheshire  
Youth Offending Team

2007

## Foreword

This report is published during phase three of the youth offending team inspection programme for England and Wales. In Cheshire we found an extremely well managed youth offending team with a supportive Management Board, respected by its partners, and fully integrated and active within partnerships across districts and the county.

Performance management was a strong feature and this was evident from the high quality of work we saw. Staff were heavily involved in the structures that were driving improvement in all areas. There was some work to do in assessment and supervision planning, and improvements in the latter had already taken place. Attention also needed to be paid to safeguarding issues. The youth offending team was planning to further develop its work with parents/carers and victims.

The management team showed itself to be open and receptive to feedback, and keen to use the findings of this inspection to further develop the work of the youth offending team. This report contains a number of recommendations that we believe will assist Cheshire Youth Offending Team in consolidating the high quality services it provides.

*Andrew Bridges*  
*HM Chief Inspector of Probation*

*January 2007*

Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in September and October 2006.

## Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	3
Glossary	4
Introduction	5
Overview of the area	6
Scoring summary	7
Diversity issues	8
Key statistics	9
Key findings	10
1. MANAGEMENT	12
2. WORK IN THE COURTS	18
3. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY	21
4. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SUBJECT TO DTOs	28
5. VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	32
The joint inspection of YOTs	34
Inspection arrangements	35
Code of practice	36
Scoring approach	37
Next steps	38
Inspection criteria for YOTs in England	39

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## Glossary

ACPC	Area Child Protection Committee
Asset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
APA	Annual Performance Assessment
APIS	Assessment, Planning, Interventions and Supervision
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CHAWREC	Cheshire and Halton and Warrington Race Equality Council
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection
CYPSP	Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DTO	Detention and Training Order
EPQA	Effective Practice Quality Assurance
Estyn	HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
ETE	Employment, Training and Education
E2E	Entry to Employment
GP	General Practitioner
HMIC	HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HMI Prisons	HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HMI Probation	HM Inspectorate of Probation
ISP	Initial Supervision Plan
ISSP	Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme
JAR	Joint Area Review
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
National Standards	National Standards for Youth Justice Services
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
Onset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PSR	Pre-sentence Report
RoH	Risk of Harm
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bounded
SQUIFA	Screening Questionnaire Interview for Adolescents
SSIW	Social Services Inspectorate for Wales
SSR	Specific Sentence Report
WPI	Wales Programme for Improvement
YIP	Youth Inclusion Programme
YISP	Youth Inclusion Support Panel
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOI	Young Offenders Institution
YOT	Youth Offending Team

## Introduction

The joint YOT inspection programme began in September 2003 and is the first full inspection programme to examine the work of the YOTs. The programme is being implemented in three phases and covers all 155 YOTs in England and Wales over a five year cycle.

This, the third phase of the inspection, started in September 2005 and includes all YOTs not previously inspected in phases one and two. Its methodology has been developed to complement that of the JARs of Children's Services in England, and inspections undertaken as part of the WPI, and of Youth Support Services under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 in Wales. Although the YOT programme remains a separate process in both England and Wales, inspections are conducted within a similar timeframe as these other inspection arrangements wherever possible, so that any areas of potential overlap or duplication can be rationalised and reduced.

The YOT inspection covers five core areas of work:

- ◆ management, including the role and functioning of the local Board
- ◆ work in the courts
- ◆ work with children and young people in the community
- ◆ work with children and young people subject to DTOs
- ◆ victims and restorative justice.

Findings from the YOT inspection inform not only the JAR but also the Corporate Assessment, APA and CPA in England, and in Wales inspections undertaken as part of the WPI and of Youth Support Services.

On conclusion of the inspection, the YOT is asked to prepare an action plan responding to the recommendations. Once agreed, the action plan is forwarded to the YJB to monitor its implementation.

## Overview of the area

- ◆ The Cheshire YOT is located in the North West of England.
- ◆ Cheshire had a total population of 673,788, measured in the Census 2001. Of this population, 22.2% were aged 0-17 years at the time of the census. This figure was lower than the average for England, which was 22.7%.
- ◆ Cheshire had a predominantly white population, 98.4% and this was higher than the average for England of 90.9%. The percentage of Asian or Asian British residents, 0.5%, was lower than the average for England of 4.6%. The percentage of Black or Black British residents, at 0.2%, was also lower than the English average of 2.3%.
- ◆ The level of employment in Cheshire at 62.9%, was higher than the average for England of 60.9%. The level of unemployment, 2.5%, was correspondingly lower than the average for England of 3.4%.
- ◆ There was a lower percentage of students resident in Cheshire than nationally at the time of the census, both economically active and inactive, at 6% compared to 7.3% in England. There was also a lower percentage of permanently sick or disabled residents, 4.9% compared to 5.3% in England.
- ◆ Cheshire Council was classified as a three star council in the Audit Commission's CPA 2005.
- ◆ The YJB figures for youth offending for the period April 2004 to March 2005 show that 3,121 (38.9%) offences were committed per 1000 children and young people aged 0-17 years in Cheshire.
- ◆ The YJB summary of overall YOT performance for April 2005 to March 2006 awarded Cheshire YOT a performance level of 4.

## Scoring summary

**4: Excellent; 3: Good; 2: Adequate; 1: Inadequate.**

	Section score
Management	<b>4</b>
Work in the courts	<b>3</b>
Work with children and young people in the community	<b>3</b>
Work with children and young people subject to DTOs	<b>4</b>
Victims and restorative justice	<b>2</b>
<b>Overall assessment</b>	

Overall we found Cheshire YOT to be very well organised and managed. We encountered committed and enthusiastic staff delivering high quality services and constantly driving improvement forward through involvement in policy and performance groups. The Management Board was engaged, knowledgeable and supportive. The YOT was at the heart of partnership work in Cheshire and very active, straddling the children's and criminal justice arenas effectively.

Specialist services within the YOT were also of a high standard and operational links to outside agencies were good.

Court work was well organised and delivered. There was some work to do on assessment and supervision planning, although improvements in the latter had already taken place. Risk of Harm assessment had been the subject of hard work within the team and was generally good. The work with those subject to custodial sentences was excellent, with evidence of real commitment to maintaining contact with children or young people wherever they were placed.

Victim work was being developed and regularly reviewed. The YOT already had good levels of contact with victims.

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## Diversity issues

Cheshire YOT had already made significant progress in integrating diversity into its structures, policies and procedures. A representative from CHAWREC sat on the Management Board and the YOT's relationship with this organisation also allowed access to specialist services. Specific training events had been developed and a joint consultation event had taken place to disseminate the Youth Justice Plan and to discuss the Race Audit and Action Plan with members of the black and minority ethnic community. A policy and performance group had been established to promote and develop diversity work. Efforts were continuing to address the staff profile of the YOT and a specific diversity learning strategy for staff was in place.

There was some work to do to collate and use information about diversity outcomes. The YOT was not able to report on the impact of its diversity training programme and related practice guidelines on service delivery. Improvements also needed to be made to the information available to the Management Board.

Case file audits were embedded in YOT practice. There was an additional check on all children and young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds to ensure that their diverse needs were being met. A version of the Youth Justice Plan specifically for children and young people had been produced and was included in the induction pack.

The YOT used a learning style assessment for children and young people and had introduced a Cultural Considerations Questionnaire. However, diverse needs had not been taken into account in some assessments and supervision plans.

## Key statistics

File reading statistic	YOT file read score	Average for phase 3.1 YOTs	Range for phase 3.1 YOTs	YJB targets <sup>(1)</sup>
	(% cases)			
Initial assessment completed in accordance with national standards requirements:				
– timeliness	89%	79%	41-100%	100%
– adequate quality	76%	68%	36-93%	
Full Risk of Harm to others completed on relevant cases	75%	62%	0-100%	
Evidence of management oversight in Risk of Harm cases	88%	40%	0-100%	
Initial supervision plan meets the content requirements of national standards and contain SMART objectives	23%	27%	0-100%	100% <sup>(2)</sup>
Frequency of appointments arranged broadly conform to national standards, to the requirements of order/licence, and to any Risk of Harm considerations	88%	79%	45-100%	
Judgements about acceptability/unacceptability of absences are appropriate	76%	74%	40-100%	
Breach/recall action has taken place, if required, within the national standards timescale	80%	56%	0-100%	
No evidence of any criminal activity during the course of the order	67%	70%	52-94%	
Action taken for children considered vulnerable to harm from self and others was appropriate	67%	82%	20-100%	
Effective action is taken where there is evidence of educational difficulties	74%	66%	33-81%	90% <sup>(3)</sup>
Appropriate referrals are made in cases of:				
– physical health	63%	70%	0-100%	
– mental/emotional health	89%	70%	33-100%	100% <sup>(4)</sup>
– substance misuse	90%	73%	33-100%	100% <sup>(5)</sup>
Victim was consulted about restorative/reparative justice work with child or young person	77%	53%	13-84%	
Assessment of overall quality of pre-sentence reports	79%	50%	0-76%	

- (1) If appropriate.
- (2) Relates to detention and training plans.
- (3) In full time employment, training and education.
- (4) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services referrals.
- (5) Screening and referrals.

## Key findings

- ◆ **Management** – The inspection team found a particularly well-embedded YOT with strong leadership and a fully engaged and knowledgeable Management Board. Respected by its partners, the YOT occupied a pivotal position in connecting the criminal justice and children’s agendas in Cheshire. The YOT had strong relationships with most of its partners, although links with the Youth Service and the Supporting People agenda needed to improve. There was a strong emphasis on performance and good use of Asset data. Information on outcomes from a diversity perspective needed to improve. Staff were well inducted, trained and supported and fully involved in driving the development and improvement of service delivery. This was underpinned by clear, up-to-date policies and the establishment of themed policy and performance groups.
- ◆ **Work in the courts** – Relationships, at all levels, with the magistrates’ court were very positive. Court work was well organised and carried out by dedicated staff with the support of the rest of the team. Attention was needed, however, to improve the quality of PSRs.
- ◆ **Work with children and young people in the community** – Prevention work with children and young people was strong, with good information sharing, excellent assessments and exit strategies. Work to reduce reoffending was good overall, although some areas needed attention such as the quality of assessment. Risk assessment was satisfactory, reflecting the hard work that managers and staff had given to this area of work. The YOT had already tackled the problem of the quality of supervision plans through the introduction of planning meetings. Health and education services within the YOT were good, as was parenting although it had yet to become fully established. Safeguarding work needed attention as action had not always been taken where vulnerability had been identified. Additionally it was unclear whether the hostel provision used by the YOT was wholly appropriate.
- ◆ **Work with children and young people subject to DTOs** – There was a clear commitment to working with children and young people in custody. Contact levels were good, including attendance at meetings by all relevant staff. There was good communication with parents/carers and between key personnel, and there was evidence that action had been taken to further improve information sharing. The quality of training plans needed to improve.
- ◆ **Victims and restorative justice** – Work with victims had undergone a number of changes and was being reviewed with the advent of new staff. There was evidence that progress had been made with significant levels of contact with victims. Reparation work remained underdeveloped, but plans were in hand to expand its use.

## Recommendations

*The Chair of the Management Board should ensure that:*

- ◆ an action plan is devised to address the following recommendations and forwarded to the lead inspector within three months of the publication of this report
- ◆ the YOT collates information on outcomes from a diversity perspective
- ◆ the YOT is supported by partners in improving the ETE outcomes for children and young people.

*The Head of Youth Offending Services should ensure that:*

- ◆ there are arrangements in place for liaising with representatives on the Commissioning Body of Supporting People so that the needs of children and young people who have offended are properly taken into account
- ◆ links with the Youth Service are improved and formalised to maximise the benefits to children and young people, with particular reference to alternative education packages
- ◆ information on the complaints procedure is consistently brought to the attention of all children and young people and their parents/carers
- ◆ the practice of offering bail support programmes to children and young people at the point of an 'All Options' PSR request is reviewed
- ◆ information on the number of children and young people held in police cells overnight is used proactively so that they are not held unnecessarily and alternative arrangements are considered
- ◆ work is carried out to improve the overall quality of PSRs with particular reference to vulnerability and safeguarding issues
- ◆ assessments are of good quality, take diverse needs into account and are reviewed in line with the national standard
- ◆ supervision plans are timely, outcome focused, take diversity into account and include restorative processes
- ◆ literacy and numeracy are reassessed at the end of a custodial period and individual learning plans are updated
- ◆ the suitability of all hostel accommodation to which the YOT refers young people is formally assessed.

*The Local Authority should ensure that:*

- ◆ appropriate safeguarding and/or child protection training is regularly available to the YOT
- ◆ provision and support is available to enable children and young people who are of compulsory school age and involved with the YOT to access 25 hours of education per week.

# 1. MANAGEMENT

## 1.1 Leadership

### ***Key judgement:***

- ◆ *The Management Board provides strategic oversight and direction, and coordinates the provision of youth justice services by the YOT and partner organisations.*

The Cheshire YOT operated within the complex environment of a two-tier local government. It worked to Cheshire County Council, within which there were six district councils each operating its own CDRP and CYPSP. The YOT had recently moved to the Children's Services directorate from Social Services.

### ***Strengths:***

- ◆ The Management Board was chaired by the Chief Executive of Cheshire County Council, who attended all its meetings. The six district councils were represented by the Chief Executive of Congleton Borough Council. The Chair and the Head of Youth Offending Services met prior to each Board meeting to agree the agenda.
- ◆ The Youth Justice Plan was fully integrated into the wider plans of the county council and local councils through the representation of the YOT at key partnership fora.
- ◆ Key partnerships were represented on the Management Board at the appropriate level, and members attended regularly and participated fully. The representation of four PCTs had proved particularly challenging, however it had been managed and maintained.
- ◆ It was clear that the Head of Youth Offending Services had the trust and support of the Management Board and was held in high regard. As a result, he was fully engaged in the planning and delivery of services to children and young people, both in the criminal justice and wider children's services arenas.
- ◆ The Management Board had representation from CHAWREC to assist in engaging with the needs and views of the black and minority ethnic community. It was felt by the CHAWREC representative that the Chair of the Management Board and the Head of Youth Offending Services had provided leadership in this respect within the YOT and in the wider inter-agency and strategic partnerships. The YOT was seen as making a positive contribution to raising the profile of black and minority ethnic children and young people in the local community.

- ◇ As part of an 'excellent' Local Authority the YOT was not required to produce a Youth Justice Plan. The Management Board had considered that a plan would be appropriate however, structured around the needs of *Every Child Matters* and the work of the LCJB. Minutes of Management Board meetings evidenced the monitoring of the Youth Justice Plan and Race Audit and Action Plan.
- ◇ There was a strong emphasis on performance and YJB information was reviewed at each Management Board meeting along with a number of locally determined targets. The Chair was clear that the Management Board had a scrutinising role. Where there had been improvements, the Management Board had sought to understand what had driven the change in order to capitalise on each success.
- ◇ Asset data had also been presented to the Management Board. It had been used to decide which areas should have a particular focus in the Youth Justice Plan and to link with other initiatives and activity within the partnership. There was evidence that Board members had followed-up data where necessary within their parent organisations. For example, the police representative had investigated an increase in the number of first time entrants in a particular locality.

**Areas for improvement:**

- ◇ The YOT did not have a well-developed system to provide the Management Board with regular reports, from a diversity perspective, on the service outcomes for victims, parents/carers, children and young people. The needs of the travelling community had not been discussed.
- ◇ Performance in ETE had been declining over the last six quarters and had been identified as a priority. Whilst the YOT had consistently brought this to the attention of the Management Board there had been no systematic investigation into where exactly the problems lay. This was requested by the Chair at a meeting of the Management Board during inspection.

## 1.2 Partnership and resources

**Key judgement:**

- ◇ *Partner organisations and the YOT work together to deter children and young people from offending.*

**Strengths:**

- ◇ There was YOT representation in all six CDRPs in the Cheshire area and on the county-wide Safer, Stronger Communities group. The Head of Youth Offending Services chaired the board of Cheshire DAAT, as well as the training subgroup of the local Safeguarding Children Board and was a member of the county CYPSP. As such, he

had contributed to the writing of the Children and Young People's Plan. He also served on the boards of the Children's Fund, MAPPA, CAMHS and Connexions. The Youth Justice Plan reflected the strategies of the YOT's partners.

**Good practice**

The Head of Youth Offending Services was a member of the LCJB and chaired the Confidence sub-group. These links were particularly strong and the YOT was regarded as occupying a pivotal position in connecting a number of criminal justice and social care agendas in the county. These links had promoted effective partnership work and put the YOT at the heart of the criminal justice system in Cheshire, resulting in more cohesive working. The Head of Youth Offending Services also represented the criminal justice agencies at the CYPSP.

- ◆ The YOT was well resourced and appropriately staffed by partners through secondments and funding. Protocols, service level agreements and information-sharing protocols were in place and all had planned dates for review.
- ◆ The YOT was fully integrated at the strategic level within MAPPA. The Head of Youth Offending Services had been an active and regular contributor to the MAPPA Strategic Management Board business.
- ◆ The YOT had used its connection with CHAWREC to consult with a broad range of community organisations about YOT policies. Through this link the YOT was able to connect with a variety of community-based groups on a number of issues, e.g. requests for the provision of mentors from specific faith or race/ethnic groups.
- ◆ A very good partnership has been developed between the YOT and the Connexions service at both strategic and operational level. This has resulted in a range of innovative initiatives being developed.
- ◆ The YOT used a range of interventions and services, provided both internally and using partner agencies, to meet the diverse needs of children and young people.
- ◆ The YOT was engaged in work towards reducing anti-social behaviour at both a strategic level through the various partnership bodies and at an operational level through participation in local multi-agency groups.

**Good practice**

The Head of Youth Offending Services had attended a number of senior management team meetings of the Cheshire Probation Board and had been a key-note speaker at the probation area's annual conference.

## Good practice

A draft transitions protocol between the YOT and Cheshire Probation had been produced to cover the transfer of cases between them. It included monitoring processes for individual cases, in particular those judged to be vulnerable or to pose a high RoH, and provision for a more strategic review of joint processes at regular intervals through meetings between nominated managers from both the YOT and probation.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ The YOT had been represented on the Core Strategy Group of Supporting People since 2004, however there were no formal arrangements for the representation of the needs of children and young people who had offended at the Commissioning Body.
- ◆ The YOT was not represented on the MAPPA sub-groups. These groups addressed MAPPA training, research and evaluation and communications. This had limited the focus on the development of MAPPA in relation to issues concerning children and young people.
- ◆ Confusion between the LSC and training providers had resulted in children and young people in the court system who were awaiting sentence being ineligible for E2E programmes.
- ◆ Joint work between the YOT and the Youth Service was underdeveloped. The Youth Service was involved with some children and young people who were also working with the YOT, but a lack of more formal partnership working meant that the benefits of these links were not maximised.

## 1.3 Staff supervision, development and training

### **Key judgement:**

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

### **Strengths:**

- ◆ Comprehensive, clear and up-to-date policies, procedures and guidance were in place covering all areas of practice. All had review dates. The risk policy was particularly clear and user friendly, and incorporated practitioner guidance.
- ◆ Of the staff who responded to a questionnaire distributed as part of the inspection, 93% were receiving monthly supervision and had received an appraisal within the last 12 months. Additional clinical supervision for specialist drug and alcohol workers was being actively pursued. Appraisals were clearly linked to the Youth Justice Plan and the YJB performance framework.

- ◆ A comprehensive training policy and plan, informed by a training needs analysis, was in place. Training was recorded on a database that detailed the courses undertaken by both staff and volunteers and the professional qualifications of each. The majority of staff reported receiving adequate induction, sufficient training and continuing professional development. High priority was given to diversity training. The health workers contributed to the training of YOT workers by offering regular teaching on child development and mental health issues.
- ◆ A workload management tool was in place and had been used to monitor staff workloads across the different geographical units and to inform decisions about resource allocation across the YOT.
- ◆ CRB checks were in place for all staff and volunteers and were systematically reviewed.

### Good practice

Policy and performance groups, in relation to the YJB performance framework, had been developed. These groups covered most areas of performance and met on a quarterly basis. Membership comprised a lead manager and a number of staff responsible for the delivery of all aspects of the particular service, e.g. court work, ETE, APIS.

The purpose of the quarterly meetings was to confirm accurate performance data for YJB returns. The groups also identified and promoted good practice, highlighted diversity or training issues, and developed and implemented policy, procedure and practice. Strategic issues were identified and fed-back to the Head of Youth Offending Services to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of services.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ The developmental needs of those working as referral order panel members were not properly reviewed. They did not have access to a consistent process for receiving feedback on their work, nor were they clear on the arrangements for reviewing their practice and for identifying ongoing training needs. Some panel members felt marginalised and uninformed about information relating to their work.
- ◆ Whilst the YOT had a system to ensure that its staff were all trained in child protection and safeguarding, we were advised that the training could be significantly delayed by the lack of courses available through the Local Authority.
- ◆ A *Young Person's Induction Pack* (which included a complaint form) was given to all children and young people at the start of their order, however over 30% of the children and young people who responded to a questionnaire distributed as part of the inspection process said that they did not know how to make a complaint.

- ◆ Health and safety risk assessments of individual reparation projects were carried out by unit managers. However there was no system to ensure that these were reviewed and up dated.

### **OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF MANAGEMENT**

***This section is judged as excellent.***

## 2.

## WORK IN THE COURTS

### **Key judgement:**

- ◆ *Good working relationships exist between the YOT and the local court.*

Three designated court officers from the YOT, supported by administrative staff, provided a service to youth courts in four geographical areas. Remand managers and ISSP staff were available for support and assessment when required.

### **Strengths:**

- ◆ An up-to-date and comprehensive service level agreement was in place covering arrangements between the YOT and the youth courts.
- ◆ Courts were staffed by experienced workers and specific case managers who provided duty cover. Arrangements were in place to cover Saturday and bank holiday courts through a rota of staff from the YOT. There was written draft guidance for use by staff on the rota.
- ◆ Through a sub-group of the LCJB, a Youth Action Group had been established which acted as a strategic youth court user group and the Head of Youth Offending Services was a member. Court staff attended the more operational court user groups that continued to run in the individual courts.
- ◆ The YOT provided input to the youth panel twice a year. The agenda was agreed at a meeting prior to the panel and was considered to be a joint venture. YOT performance featured regularly on the agenda.

### **Area for improvement:**

- ◆ There was no protocol covering arrangements with the Crown Courts and there had been no training offered to Crown Court staff.

### **Key judgement:**

- ◆ *Effective practice with children and young people who have offended is promoted by the work of the YOT within the courts.*

### **Strengths:**

- ◆ Systems were in place to ensure that children and young people were seen at court following sentence and given appointments to see a duty worker on the following day.
- ◆ Of the eight custodial cases examined during the inspection, all had Assets sent to the custodial establishment immediately following sentence.

### **Key judgement:**

- ◆ *Children and young people are safeguarded and the likelihood of their further offending reduced by the provision of appropriate services, including bail supervision and support programmes.*

### **Strengths:**

- ◆ Arrangements were in place between the YOT and Children's Services for the provision of services to Saturday and bank holiday courts.
- ◆ Arrest referral staff were available daily to alert staff to children and young people held in cells overnight.
- ◆ Remands of children and young people were actively managed. Consideration was given to further bail applications and progressive packages of supervision and support were offered to the court.
- ◆ Remands had consistently reduced over a three-year period.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ The differentiated support/supervision programmes, which were offered to address objections to bail, were generally commensurate with the level of risk. There was, however, a practice of offering bail support programmes to the court at the point of an 'All Options' PSR request irrespective of previous bail status. This did not happen in all cases and was done with the consent of the child or young person, however we considered it to be an inefficient use of resources and an unnecessary and inappropriate proposal to courts.
- ◆ The number of children and young people held in police cells overnight was monitored, however the information was not used proactively to ensure that alternative arrangements had been considered and that they were not held unnecessarily.

***Key judgement:***

- ◇ *Courts are assisted in making informed decisions by the provision of good quality reports from the YOT.*

***Strengths:***

- ◇ 100% of the PSRs we inspected were completed within the YJB's recommended timeframe and all were based on Asset. 84% and 100% respectively were judged sufficient in addressing the RoH and the likelihood of reoffending.
- ◇ All reports had clear proposals for sentencing and 95% were considered commensurate with the seriousness of the offence. The YOT had established realistic targets for concordance and actively monitored these rates.
- ◇ Managers provided additional gatekeeping where a report was 'All Options' or where custody was proposed.

***Areas for improvement:***

- ◇ Only 68% of the PSRs we inspected included an analysis of the offence as opposed to a description. 21% of the PSRs were not considered to be of sufficient overall quality and 21% were judged not to be understandable to children and young people. 33% of the reports did not address safeguarding issues identified in Asset and in 53% attention had not been paid to vulnerability. In only 28% of PSRs had victims' issues been adequately addressed.
- ◇ In some cases, reports were not received by children and young people and parents/carers prior to the court hearing. The YOT had already recognised this and managers had made it clear that this practice needed to improve.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT FOR WORK IN THE COURTS**

***This section is judged as good.***

### **3. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY**

#### **3.1 Work with children and young people at risk of offending**

***Key judgement:***

- ◇ *Children and young people are prevented from offending.*

The system for identifying and assessing children and young people at risk of offending was carried out through multi-agency groups. These were essentially problem-solving groups where a number of initial, low-level strategies could be discussed and deployed to intervene. Where problems were more complex or long-standing, referrals were made to the YISP or YOT.

There were two YISPs in the county and one junior YIP commissioned from Crime Concern. The advent of a second YIP was imminent through the Children's Society. Their geographical location had been based on crime audit and deprivation indicators.

***Strengths:***

- ◇ Through the local multi-agency groups there was very strong information sharing, using a variety of information flows, ensuring that the correct children and young people were targeted. Good referral systems were in place so that all children and young people needing a service were targeted rather than just those within a specific postcode. Where children and young people lived outside the YISP/YIP areas they were referred to the YOT where they were assessed and interventions were delivered.
- ◇ YISPs were well attended by the core partners, with other partners, e.g. the fire service, attending when necessary.
- ◇ The quality of the Onset assessments we inspected was judged to be excellent.
- ◇ There was evidence of effective partnership working within support plans, and exit strategies and signposting were indicated in all the cases we reviewed. Safeguarding issues had also been identified.
- ◇ YJB statistics showed a significant reduction in first-time entrants into the criminal justice system in Cheshire and compared favourably with regional and national figures.

**Area for improvement:**

- ◆ The case files we inspected showed an over reliance on worksheets for interventions by sessional staff, particularly as the children and young people were generally younger.

**3.2 Work with children and young people who have offended**

**Key judgement:**

- ◆ *Children and young people who have offended are prevented from reoffending.*

**Strengths:**

- ◆ Initial assessments were carried out within the national standard timeframe in 89% of the cases we inspected.
- ◆ The inspection found that a full risk of serious harm assessment had been carried out in all cases where the YOT had identified an indicator. Where RoH was identified, interventions were appropriate in 92% of cases, resources were allocated in accordance with the risk in 100% of cases and there was a close fit between the assessed RoH and interventions in 86% of cases. The frequency of appointments met the national standard and RoH considerations in 88% of cases.
- ◆ There was good motivation by case managers in 88% of cases and where breach action was necessary it had been taken within the national standard timeframe in 80% of cases.
- ◆ The quality of supervision was overseen by a system of case file audits and individual findings were discussed in supervision. The information was also collated to identify key areas for improvement, which were then taken up by the APIS policy and performance group.
- ◆ Comparison of YJB recidivism rates for the cohorts in 2002 and 2003 showed a reduction in reoffending.

**Good practice**

All new orders were the subject of Intervention Planning Meetings. These meetings were chaired by a manager and held in the units within the YOT on a weekly basis. The purpose was to agree an intervention plan, to establish outcome focused objectives and engage input from the relevant specialist staff. Attendance by staff was a high priority and individual cases were allocated time slots. Reviews of supervision plans were subject to the same process.

**Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ In 24% of cases, initial assessments were not of adequate quality. Specific diversity needs were not taken into account in 27% of cases or in a subsequent assessment of RoH in 17% of cases and this was

also the case for 16% of children and young people whose parents had identified a specific need. HMI Probation disagreed with the ultimate risk classification in 24% of the cases seen during the inspection.

- ◇ Supervision plans were not completed within the national standard timeframe in 27% of cases, only 62% of the plans took diversity into account and only 23% met the content requirements of the national standard and were deemed to have SMART objectives. 54% of the cases did not include restorative processes. We saw evidence that this had already been addressed and that more recent supervision plans were significantly improved. However only 46% of Assets were reviewed at required intervals.
- ◇ Victim awareness work was only carried out in 44% of the cases and of the children and young people who responded to our questionnaire only 14% knew that making amends to the victim should form part of their supervision. This finding was known to the YOT and had been brought to the attention of the Management Board before the inspection.
- ◇ The number of looked after children and young people who were given a final warning/reprimand or convicted of an offence had increased year on year and for the year 2004/2005 was twice the national average. There was an action plan to address this and progress was being made.

***Key judgement:***

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

The health workers in the YOT had been in post for around three years. They were registered mental health nurses and had significant clinical experience, including training in counselling. Tier two and three services were provided by CAMHS, which offered speedy access to psychiatric assessment and treatment.

Substance misuse services were commissioned by the DAAT and included alcohol services. The YOT substance misuse service was a tier two service for children and young people aged 10-17 years, and was delivered by specialist workers in each unit. Tier three services were delivered by the local specialist Community Drug and Alcohol Services.

***Strengths:***

- ◇ Universal health screening was carried out by YOT workers. The screening tool SQIFA was triggered by an Asset score of two or more.
- ◇ A holistic health assessment used by the health workers was comprehensive and included physical, sexual and mental health. A number of screening tools were used.

- ◆ There was a health assessment agreement in use, which addressed confidentiality and sharing of information between partner agencies. This was signed by all parties prior to assessment.
- ◆ Health workers produced a care plan after the initial assessment, which was signed and agreed by all parties. A range of interventions was offered including one-to-one counselling, solution-focused therapy, work on self-esteem and self harm, sexual health awareness and drug awareness. Services were delivered in a range of venues to facilitate engagement, including in the children and young people's homes, GP surgeries, CAMHS and community clinics. Outcomes were measured by repeating the tools used at the initial assessment.
- ◆ A revised substance misuse screening and referral tool was launched in December 2005. Examination of case files showed that where a need had been identified referrals had been made in 90% of cases.
- ◆ The YOT substance misuse service delivered a range of interventions, including education, risk awareness, harm reduction, one-to-one support, motivational interviewing and drug awareness sessions. Parents/carers were able to self refer to the service for early prevention. There was an 'open door' policy for children and young people to re-refer in case of need. The service was responsive to diversity issues on gender, ethnicity, learning difficulties and physical disability.

**Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ Physical health need referrals were made in only 63% of the relevant cases.
- ◆ SQUIFA did not appear to be used systematically by YOT workers.
- ◆ Data was not available on the number of referrals to external agencies that were made but not taken up.

**Key judgement:**

- ◆ *Children and young people who have offended are safeguarded through the work of the YOT.*

**Strengths:**

- ◆ The RoH from self or others had been assessed in all the cases we inspected.
- ◆ The YOT had qualified social workers in each unit and links with Children's Services were good. YOT staff had access to information and referral systems, procedures and safeguarding guidance.
- ◆ In all cases involving looked after children and young people liaison with Children's Services was good.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ Where vulnerability had been identified and action taken, it was not considered appropriate by inspectors in 17% of cases. Additionally in 15% of cases vulnerability was identified but no action had been taken.
- ◆ Liaison with Children's Services for children and young people who were not looked after was less good.
- ◆ The YOT used the Probation Accommodation Service to access hostel accommodation for children and young people. There were no direct service level agreement with any of the hostels and YOT staff had not visited them to ensure they were suitable.

### **Key judgement:**

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

The local authority provided funding to the YOT to employ three staff. These staff were referred to as education advisors and their role was to support case managers to access suitable education for statutory school age children and young people. The education team also included four Connexions personal advisors who were included in all aspects of work, including assessment, intervention, brokering placements and review.

### **Strengths:**

- ◆ Good relationships existed between the education team and case managers. Education staff and personal advisors were involved in planning meetings and reviews. All new cases were referred to education staff at the allocation stage and schools/current education providers were contacted to inform assessments.
- ◆ Education staff were trained to carry out literacy and numeracy assessments if information was not up to date from schools.
- ◆ Case managers were trained to assess learning styles.
- ◆ Education targets were included in supervision plans and were regularly reviewed by both case managers and education staff.
- ◆ Good relationships existed between the education staff, the Education Welfare Service and school staff to monitor attendance/absenteeism.
- ◆ There was very effective monitoring of educational status and educational targets and good support/interventions by education staff and personal advisors for children and young people at both pre and post-16.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◇ Case files showed that where children and young people were having difficulties in education and action was taken, it was effective in only 74% of the cases.
- ◇ Performance in ETE has been declining over the last six quarters.

### **Good practice**

The Performance Manager had carried out a 'mini-EPQA' with the education team in April 2006. This involved a detailed analysis of targets set, interventions, quality outcomes and review. It also included an exercise on sharing good practice.

### **Key judgement:**

- ◇ *Outcomes for children and young people are improved by their involvement through consultation about the services provided by the YOT.*

### **Strength:**

- ◇ The YOT used Viewpoint to consult with children and young people. There was also good use of *What do you think?* in 76% of the case files we inspected. A consultation exercise with children and young people and parents/carers had been commissioned through Crime Concern in February 2006 and the findings were incorporated within the Youth Justice Plan.

### **Area for improvement:**

- ◇ There was a need to review and evaluate the comments, complaints and compliments of children and young people and their parents/carers more systematically and this had already been recognised by the YOT.

## **3.3 Work with parents/carers**

### **Key judgement:**

- ◇ *Parents/carers are supported in addressing their children's offending.*

Individual parenting programmes were carried out by the health workers in the YOT who were all trained in this work. Recruitment of specialist workers was underway.

### **Strengths:**

- ◆ The YOT parenting strategy employed a tiered approach to service delivery and all parents/carers were subject to screening. The strategy document was clear and included a useful matrix and guide to services.
- ◆ A full assessment and self assessment were used where the need for a parenting intervention was identified. Work was the subject of an intervention plan that was regularly reviewed.
- ◆ The health workers liaised closely with parents/carers and families. As a result of their dual role, there was evidence to indicate success in identifying unmet mental health needs of parents/carers, as well as the mental health needs of children and young people.
- ◆ A policy and performance group had been established for parenting work and all three health workers were involved, ensuring a consistent approach to development. Informal coaching took place alongside the formal training of case managers to encourage more widespread work with parents/carers.
- ◆ In all the appropriate cases, parents/carers were consulted during the preparation of the PSR. Home visits were made for 81% of the reports and parents/carers were kept informed of progress in 94% of the reports we inspected.

### **OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY**

***This section is judged as good.***

## 4.

### WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SUBJECT TO DTOs

#### **Key judgement:**

- ◆ *The likelihood of reoffending for children and young people who receive DTOs is minimised through the intervention of the YOT by assessment.*

#### **Strengths:**

- ◆ Of the eight DTO cases we examined, all had Asset completed within the national standard timeframe and all reflected individual need. Assets were of sufficient quality in seven of the eight cases. Children and young people, and their parents/carers where appropriate, were involved in all assessments.
- ◆ In all the cases, specific risk factors had been highlighted and communicated immediately. Full risk of serious harm assessments were carried out where there were indicators and there were no cases where indicators had been missed.
- ◆ Copies of all relevant assessments were forwarded to the secure establishment within 24 hours.
- ◆ YOT workers contributed to initial training plans, which were completed in accordance with the national standard, in all cases. The YOT had consistently met the target for staff attending initial DTO planning meetings. This target had been prioritised by management and systems had been put in place to ensure that it was achieved.
- ◆ Education staff attended all initial planning meetings and reviews at secure establishments. Education staff were encouraged to maintain good relationships with the secure estate and in particular with the teaching staff who were delivering the educational targets.
- ◆ The YOT had produced concise practice guidance detailing actions to be taken for custodial cases. This included attendance at all meetings, ensuring parents/carers were able to attend and, at the initial meeting, consideration of referral to open conditions and release on temporary licence.
- ◆ Accommodation needs were assessed and monitored in all cases.
- ◆ The YOT had links with Thorn Cross YOI, an open YOI, and participated in the new Direct Access from Court Scheme. A protocol had been agreed and the YOT had been making proportionately high levels of referrals to the scheme in comparison with other YOTs.

### **Area for improvement:**

- ◇ A *What do you think?* form had been completed in only half of the cases we inspected.

### **Key judgement:**

- ◇ *The likelihood of reoffending for children and young people who receive DTOs is minimised through the intervention of the YOT by contact with the child or young person and effective liaison with the secure establishment during the custodial period.*

### **Strengths:**

- ◇ Following the Resettlement EPQA the YOT had sought to engage a local YOI in consultation to improve the quality of communication and liaison between key personnel.
- ◇ Visits were carried out in accordance with the national standard and there was regular contact between YOT staff and key custodial personnel in seven of the eight cases.
- ◇ It was YOT practice for case managers to complete the Supervising Officers Report (T4), in addition to the Asset information, to inform the completion of the training plan. Case managers were actively involved in sentence planning and review meetings including the final meeting. There was a close fit between interventions and assessed RoH in seven out of eight training plans.
- ◇ Where vulnerability was identified, appropriate action had been taken. In four out of five cases where there were health needs, appropriate referrals were made and the home PCT provided services on release. The majority of children and young people post-16 had been engaged in ETE, and all had had contact with Connexions.
- ◇ The YOT maintained contact with parents/carers in seven out of eight cases and it was YOT policy to assist with attendance wherever possible.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◇ The views of the home education service and PCT were represented in only four out of the seven relevant cases.
- ◇ The quality of training plans was judged sufficient in only five out of eight cases.

**Key judgement:**

- ◇ *The likelihood of reoffending for children and young people who receive DTOs is minimised through the intervention of the YOT by reintegration into the community.*

**Strengths:**

- ◇ Progress against objectives was reviewed in six out of seven plans.
- ◇ In the majority of cases, arrangements to meet educational need were established prior to release and the home authority provided education in all relevant cases on release.
- ◇ Work commenced in custody was continued on release in the majority of cases. There was good motivation by case managers and close liaison with the other agencies involved.
- ◇ Home visits were made in six out of seven cases.
- ◇ In all cases, steps were taken to ensure that children and young people understood licence conditions and the frequency of appointments arranged conformed to both the national standard and RoH considerations.
- ◇ The number of appointments kept was judged to have met the national standard in the majority of cases. Judgements about acceptability of absences were considered sufficient and where necessary breach or recall was actioned within the national standard timeframe.

**Areas for improvement:**

- ◇ Reassessment of literacy/numeracy at the end of the custodial period had not taken place in the majority of cases and individual learning plans had been updated in only half the cases inspected.
- ◇ In only half of the cases had victim awareness work been carried out.

**Key judgement:**

- ◇ *The YOT demonstrates positive outcomes in its work with children and young people subject to DTOs.*

**Strengths:**

- ◇ Resettlement data about the outcomes for children and young people completing DTOs was collated on a quarterly basis at the resettlement policy and performance group and fed-back to the Management Board to inform service provision.
- ◇ YJB statistics indicated a reduction in recidivism rates for both the 2003 and 2004 cohorts and a reduction in the frequency and seriousness of offending.

***Areas for improvement:***

- ◆ Examination of the case files showed little improvement in most criminogenic factors with the exception of ETE.
- ◆ There was evidence of criminal activity in five out of the seven cases seen.
- ◆ Some children and young people returning to the community did not have access to a suitable educational placement of 25 hours or more a week.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SUBJECT TO DTOs**

***This section is judged as excellent.***

## 5.

## VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

### **Key judgement:**

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

At the time of the inspection, police officers in each unit within the YOT were acting as victim workers. Recruitment for three specialist workers seconded from Victim Support was underway.

### **Strengths:**

- ◆ The YOT had a clear process for working with victims, which was supported by guidance and involved both specialist victim workers and case managers. Victim workers took an active role in the weekly intervention planning meetings to ensure that restorative justice interventions were included in the intervention plan. In 77% of the cases we inspected, victims had been consulted.
- ◆ Where there was a decision not to contact a victim, the guidance required that it was discussed with managers.
- ◆ Where possible, initial contacts were made by telephone and followed up by a home visit. There was early liaison between victim workers and case managers to decide on the most appropriate person to initiate contact. The assessment tool used with victims was comprehensive, addressed diversity issues and explored the victim's needs with regard to reparation. In the work carried out with victims, account was taken of individual need in all cases. The response from victims to our questionnaire about the services provided by the YOT was overwhelmingly positive. Where victims were contacted under the final warning procedure 100% of files showed satisfaction with process.
- ◆ The relevant YOT manager attended the Victim Witness Care Group, a sub-group of the LCJB linked to an initiative aimed at ensuring that partner agencies were addressing their responsibilities under the new Victim Code of Practice.

## Good practice

A church had been subjected to criminal damage through stone throwing by three children and young people. All three had received a final warning and had cooperated with an intervention. A church warden agreed to meet all three separately in face-to-face victim/offender mediation meetings and it was agreed by all parties that this should take place at the church. The children and young people and their parents/carers were able to view the damage and the church warden expressed satisfaction with the process and felt that it had had a positive impact on the children and young people.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ There was some confusion about who had responsibility for the initial contact with victims. The guidance described this as being a collaborative process between case managers and victim workers, however not all staff were working to this model.
- ◆ Operational staff reported some lack of confidence in victim work, in particular the first contact, which was described as being like “cold calling”. The training provided was described as over-emphasising restorative justice rather than victim support.
- ◆ Only 30% of victims had been invited to participate in referral panel meetings. The YOT had already recognised this problem and had commenced work to improve attendance. Some victims indicated that they would have liked more preparation time for the panel to help them identify the most appropriate reparative work to be done.
- ◆ Case managers reported that victim impact statements did not always arrive and in the final warning cases we examined there were a number (18% of cases) where victims’ details had not been received from the police.
- ◆ Victim satisfaction questionnaires were given to all victims participating in a restorative justice intervention, however they were not formally evaluated. The implementation of a process to monitor and evaluate victim satisfaction questionnaires had been planned by the YOT.
- ◆ The links with Victim Support had been limited and the organisation was not represented on the Management Board. With the recruitment of seconded workers this was set to improve.
- ◆ Although the protocol with Cheshire Probation detailed the arrangements for contact with the victims of children and young people who had received a custodial sentence for a sexual or violent offence, the victim workers were unaware of the requirements.

### **OVERALL ASSESSMENT FOR WORK WITH VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

***This section is judged as adequate.***

## The joint inspection of YOTs

The joint inspection of YOTs is an independent programme, funded by the Home Office and reporting to the Secretary of State. Inspections are conducted jointly, involving CSCI, Estyn, the Healthcare Commission, the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, HMIC, HMI Prisons, HMI Probation, Ofsted and SSIW as appropriate. The joint inspection team is located within and led by HMI Probation.

### Home Office objectives

The joint inspection contributes primarily to the achievement of Home Office Objective II – 'more offenders are caught, punished and stop offending and victims are better supported', and to the requirement to ensure that custodial and community sentences are more effective at stopping offending.

It also contributes to the achievement of Objective III, through the scrutiny of work to address drug and other substance misuse, and to other relevant criminal justice system and Children's Services' objectives in England and Extending Entitlement objectives in Wales.

The **purpose** of the joint inspection is to report to the Secretary of State and, through him Parliament and the public, on the effectiveness of the YOTs in fulfilling their statutory duties to prevent offending by children and young people, and thereby protect the public, whilst still safeguarding their rights and promoting their welfare.

The **aims** of the programme are to:

- ◆ assess the impact made by YOTs and partner organisations on the prevention of offending by children and young people through effective supervision
- ◆ appraise the work undertaken by YOTs and partner organisations to meet the needs of children and young people at risk of offending and enable them to lead law-abiding and constructive lives
- ◆ evaluate the role of the YOTs in safeguarding the rights and promoting the welfare of children and young people
- ◆ assess the extent to which the YOTs are meeting the required standards and targets set by the YJB
- ◆ promote good practice in the management arrangements of YOTs and service delivery to the courts and community
- ◆ identify underperformance and make recommendations to promote improvements
- ◆ evaluate the effective use of resources
- ◆ actively promote race equality and diversity as an integral part of the inspection process
- ◆ produce timely reports which contribute to improved performance by informing policy and practice.

## Inspection arrangements

- ◆ The joint YOT inspection is conducted in line with the Government's commitment to proportionate and coordinated inspection in local government. It:
  - is proportionate to risk, with fieldwork adapted to the circumstances of the YOT and only carried out to identify findings or to disseminate good practice
  - complements, and is coordinated with, other inspection programmes, including the JARs in England, and inspections undertaken as part of the WPI and of Youth Support Services in Wales
  - informs judgements made in the APA and CPA in England.
- ◆ The criteria for the third phase of the inspection focus on:
  - management
  - work in the courts
  - work with children and young people in the community
  - work with children and young people subject to DTOs
  - victims and restorative justice.
- ◆ Prior to the inspection, each YOT is asked to submit selected advance information and complete a self-assessment, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- ◆ In England, fieldwork for each individual inspection takes place over one week, prior to the JAR. It consists of:
  - an assessment of a representative sample of individual case files
  - meetings with relevant managers, representatives of partner organisations and members of the YOT staff
  - contact with children and young people, their parents/carers and the victims of offences committed by children and young people supervised by the YOT.
- ◆ Fieldwork in Wales includes the same elements but is linked to inspections undertaken as part of the WPI and of Youth Support Services. The assessment of case files may, therefore, be conducted in advance of the meetings with managers and staff. However, the total amount of inspection time spent within the YOT remains the same as in England.
- ◆ The assessment of case files consists of a representative sample of between 30 and 80 children and young people (dependent on the YOT's workload) who have been subject to some form of intervention in the previous months. The cases cover most orders, including licences and are examined in detail. The case manager and any other person significantly involved in delivering the intervention are interviewed as part of the file reading exercise and, where possible, the child or young person themselves and their parents/carers.

- ◆ In order to encourage self-assessment and increase ownership of the inspection findings, we are inviting YOTs to second a member of their staff, usually an experienced practitioner, as a representative accompanying the inspection team, for the fieldwork week. We consider this to be a positive way of developing mutual understanding and strengthening the links between inspection and practice.
- ◆ The inspection findings will be compiled in a report which includes recommendations for improvement. These recommendations will be designed to encourage the YOT in its work, to support good practice and to promote improvements.
- ◆ The report is submitted to the Home Secretary, as the Secretary of State responsible for youth justice, with simultaneous copies to the Education and Health Secretaries. In Wales, reports are also submitted to the Ministers for Social Care and Regeneration, Lifelong Learning, Health and Social Care as well as the Minister for Children.
- ◆ Reports on YOTs in Wales are published in both Welsh and English. We also aim to fulfil our other responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act 1993 in accordance with the central principle of equality embodied in the Act.
- ◆ A copy is sent to the YJB. Copies are also made available to the press and placed on the website of HMI Probation at:  
<http://www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation>

## Code of practice

Each inspection will:

- ◆ be undertaken with integrity in a professional, impartial and courteous manner
- ◆ enable the development of independent judgements, based on evidence
- ◆ seek to energise and engage with staff
- ◆ promote race equality and diversity throughout its processes
- ◆ be concluded with the timely publication of a report containing findings and recommendations for improvement.

Anyone wishing to comment on an inspection, a report or any other matter falling within the remit of this inspection programme should write to:

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

## Scoring approach

The scoring approach has been significantly changed in phase three of the inspection programme to ensure compatibility with that of the JAR and Corporate Assessment in England, and the similar judgements used in inspections undertaken as part of the WPI and of Youth Support Services in Wales.

**In phase three, each of the five sections of the inspection** are individually assessed against the relevant criteria. Assessments are based on:

- ◇ information supplied by the YOT
- ◇ interviews with chief officers, managers and staff both from the YOT and other partner organisations
- ◇ examination of case files
- ◇ discussions with case managers and other people significantly involved in the supervisory process
- ◇ the perspectives of the children and young people, their parents/carers and, where possible, their victims, contacted during the course of the inspection
- ◇ information supplied by the JAR, Corporate Assessment and other relevant inspection findings in England and inspections as part of the WPI and of Youth Support Services in Wales.

The judgements and their descriptors are given in the table below:

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

We summarise the judgements of the five sections in an overall assessment. We have decided that in phase three we will not give a general categorisation of the performance as a whole, as we wish each YOT to focus attention on its own specific areas for improvement.

## Next steps

- ◆ The YOT will be asked to send a response to the recommendations, to the lead inspector, together with an action plan within three months of the publication of the report. It is anticipated that the recommendations will normally be addressed within 12 months of publication to allow sufficient time for integration within existing developments.
- ◆ Once the action plan has been agreed by the lead inspector, it will be passed to the YJB who will monitor the recommendations' implementation.
- ◆ The joint inspection programme does not normally include any follow-up action unless issues were to emerge during the course of the programme that were of such serious concern to require immediate attention. The inspection of the Cheshire YOT has not revealed any such concerns.
- ◆ In addition to the reports on individual YOTs, the joint inspection team also publishes periodic reports on findings across a number of teams. Such reports include comments on race equality and diversity issues and other trend information. They also include comparisons between the performance of YOTs with similar characteristics.

## Inspection criteria for YOTs in England

### 1. Management

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#### 1.1: Leadership

##### Key judgement

1.1.1: The Management Board provides strategic oversight and direction, and coordinates the provision of youth justice services by the YOT and partner organisations.

##### Evidence

- 1.1.1.1 There is a clear line of accountability for the YOT to the local authority Chief Executive and YOT plans are integrated with those of the wider council.
  - 1.1.1.2 The Management Board is made up of representatives of partner organisations who attend and participate actively in meetings.
  - 1.1.1.3 Members of the Management Board represent the needs of the YOT to their parent organisations.
  - 1.1.1.4 The Management Board gives support and guidance to the YOT Manager to ensure that they engage with local and national priorities and promote race equality and wider diversity issues.
  - 1.1.1.5 The Management Board ensures that the Youth Justice Plan is implemented.
  - 1.1.1.6 The Management Board ensures the provision of accurate and timely data returns, both for its own use and that of the YJB.
  - 1.1.1.7 Partners regularly and collectively review, monitor and evaluate service information to ensure that the YOT is contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people.
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#### 1.2 Partnership and resources

##### Key judgement

1.2.1: Partner organisations and the YOT work together to deter children and young people from offending.

##### Evidence

- 1.2.1.1 The Youth Justice Plan reflects partner strategies.
  - 1.2.1.2 Resources have been identified and capacity exists to meet assessed need.
  - 1.2.1.3 YOTs are appropriately staffed by partners according to legislation and Home Office/YJB guidance.
  - 1.2.1.4 Protocols, contracts and SLAs have been agreed between the YOT, its statutory partners and other relevant organisations to address the coordination of work, delivery of services, information sharing, human resources and funding arrangements. They are regularly reviewed and updated.
  - 1.2.1.5 The YOT is a member of the ACPC/Local Children's Safeguarding Board, and operates according to local child protection procedures.
  - 1.2.1.6 The YOT contributes to a joint-agency approach to the management of high-risk offenders in the community, including MAPPA and registration with the police.
  - 1.2.1.7 There are secure arrangements for the recording and sharing of information on children and young people at risk, including those moving across service boundaries.
  - 1.2.1.8 A range of interventions and services, including health and education, are provided across the authority to meet the needs of children and young people who have offended and those at risk of offending.
  - 1.2.1.9 The YOT contributes to community regeneration initiatives that are targeted at the most needy areas and address the broad range of family needs in an integrated way.
  - 1.2.1.10 The YOT contributes to successful outcomes in reducing anti-social behaviour, in particular through effective partnership working.
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### **1.3 Staff supervision, development and training**

#### **Key judgement**

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

#### **Evidence**

- 1.3.1.1 Practice is defined by written policies and procedures.
  - 1.3.1.2 Staff are regularly supervised within a performance management framework, in accordance with their developmental needs and assessed level of competence.
  - 1.3.1.3 Annual appraisals contain objectives that are linked to local and national targets.
  - 1.3.1.4 All staff are appropriately qualified and provided with training opportunities to equip them to meet the requirements of the Youth Justice Plan to identify and manage risks and to raise safeguarding concerns.
  - 1.3.1.5 Training needs are regularly reviewed.
  - 1.3.1.6 Volunteers are appropriately trained and are available for YOT activities.
  - 1.3.1.7 CRB checks are undertaken on all staff and volunteers who have access to children and young people or their case files, and are updated at least every three years.
  - 1.3.1.8 Joint agreements are in place for the management of disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures.
  - 1.3.1.9 There is a written complaints procedure, which is well publicised and easily accessible. Complaints are properly managed against the procedure.
  - 1.3.1.10 Health and safety assessments of facilities and activities are undertaken, acted on and updated regularly.
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## **2. Work in the courts**

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#### **Key judgement**

2.1: Good working relationships exist between the YOT and the local court.

#### **Evidence**

- 2.1.1 An agreement is in place between the YOT, justices' clerk or his/her nominated senior lawyer and the local Crown Court covering arrangements for court services.
  - 2.1.2 The YOT provides trained and knowledgeable staff to ensure adequate representation in any courts within its geographical area, including Saturday/bank holiday cover and the Crown Courts.
  - 2.1.3 The YOT attends and contributes to a Youth Court User Group, which meets regularly and whose purpose is detailed in the national standard.
  - 2.1.4 The YOT provides regular inputs to magistrates' court and Crown Court staff about a range of programmes and sentencing options.
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#### **Key judgement**

2.2: Effective practice with children and young people who have offended is promoted by the work of the YOT within the courts.

#### **Evidence**

- 2.2.1 Information and first appointments are provided to all children and young people who are made the subject of community sentences or bail supervision and support programmes.
  - 2.2.2 All children and young people remanded or sentenced to secure or custodial detention are interviewed, assessed for vulnerability, and the information is passed to the establishment within the national standard timescale.
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**Key judgement**

2.3: Children and young people are safeguarded and the likelihood of their further offending reduced by the provision of appropriate services, including bail supervision and support programmes.

**Evidence**

- 2.3.1 Arrangements are in place between the YOT and the appropriate local Children Service's Department regarding the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984), remands from Saturday/bank holiday courts and the completion of the appropriate paperwork for children and young people remanded to the care of the local authority.
  - 2.3.2 There are arrangements in place, to which the YOT has agreed, to identify and alert the YOT of all children and young people who are at risk of secure or custodial remand.
  - 2.3.3 Differentiated support/supervision services are offered, commensurate with likelihood of remand, to address objections to bail.
  - 2.3.4 Follow-up services are provided to securely remanded children and young people to ensure that, where appropriate, further bail applications are made and accompanied by commensurate support packages.
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**Key judgement**

2.4: Courts are assisted in making informed decisions by the provision of good quality reports from the YOT.

**Evidence**

- 2.4.1 PSRs are produced in accordance with the relevant national standards, of a good quality, to time and in the agreed format.
  - 2.4.2 PSRs are impartial, free from discriminatory language and stereotypes.
  - 2.4.3 Proposals are appropriate and commensurate.
  - 2.4.4 A copy of the PSR is provided to the child or young person and their parents/carers, where appropriate, and in good time.
  - 2.4.5 SSRs and stand-down reports are available and assist the court in timely decision-making.
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### **3. Work with children and young people in the community**

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#### **3.1: Work with children and young people at risk of offending**

**Key judgement**

3.1.1: Children and young people are prevented from offending.

**Evidence**

- 3.1.1.1 The YOT contributes to the provision of services in the local authority to divert children and young people from offending.
  - 3.1.1.2 A process has been agreed by the YOT and its partners to identify and assess children and young people at risk of offending.
  - 3.1.1.3 Assessments are sensitive to cultural difference and diversity, and linked to criminogenic needs.
  - 3.1.1.4 Interventions are inclusive and address the specific needs of girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities.
  - 3.1.1.5 Attention is given to safeguarding children and young people.
  - 3.1.1.6 Interventions demonstrate effectiveness in reducing offending and promoting positive outcomes.
  - 3.1.1.7 There is a reduction in the number of children and young people who are first-time entrants into the criminal justice system.
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### **3.2: Work with children and young people who have offended**

#### **Key judgement**

3.2.1: Children and young people who have offended are prevented from reoffending.

#### **Evidence**

- 3.2.1.1 An Asset form is fully completed at the beginning of all interventions and reviewed as appropriate. It is informed by contact with social services and the self-assessment, and takes account of cultural difference, diversity and safeguarding issues.
- 3.2.1.2 Risk of harm to others is fully assessed in all cases identified as posing a potential risk, through the initial Asset form or alternative accepted tool.
- 3.2.1.3 Supervision plans are written in accordance with national standards, with a victim restorative process, emanate from Asset and contain SMART objectives.
- 3.2.1.4 Interventions address offending behaviour, are targeted in areas of assessed need and are evaluated and consistent with the principles of effective practice.
- 3.2.1.5 Interventions are inclusive and address the specific needs of girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities.
- 3.2.1.6 Contact with children and young people is consistent with national standards and Home Office/YJB guidance.
- 3.2.1.7 Enforcement activity follows non-compliance within the national standard timescale.
- 3.2.1.8 Action is taken to challenge and reduce discrimination and harassment by children and young people.
- 3.2.1.9 Examination of the case file provides evidence of progress.
- 3.2.1.10 The YOT demonstrates a reduction in offending in the pre-court, first tier and community bands of penalties.
- 3.2.1.11 Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons asked, show improvements in behaviour, attitude and family relationships.

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#### **Key judgement**

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

#### **Evidence**

- 3.2.2.1 Staff working with children and young people are advised and supported in identifying possible physical and mental health problems and in making appropriate referrals.
  - 3.2.2.2 Specialist assessments are undertaken on those with health needs.
  - 3.2.2.3 Children and young people who have offended are discouraged from substance misuse.
  - 3.2.2.4 Children and young people with health problems are supported in accessing services that address their assessed needs.
  - 3.2.2.5 Examination of the case file shows evidence of improved health outcomes.
  - 3.2.2.6 Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons asked, suggest an improvement in physical and mental health.
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**Key judgement**

3.2.3: Children and young people who have offended are safeguarded through the work of the YOT.

**Evidence**

- 3.2.3.1 Risk of harm, either to self or to/from others (vulnerability), is fully assessed in all cases.
  - 3.2.3.2 The YOT refers cases where safeguarding concerns have been identified, to the local Children's Services and contributes to child protection plans on a case-by-case basis.
  - 3.2.3.3 Threshold criteria for making and responding to safeguarding referrals are clear and widely understood by staff from both the YOT and Children's Services.
  - 3.2.3.4 Interventions take account of safeguarding children and young people.
  - 3.2.3.5 There is evidence of joint working and the sharing of information and plans with the allocated social worker, particularly in the cases of Looked After Children.
  - 3.2.3.6 Looked After Children who have offended receive specific guidance and support.
  - 3.2.3.7 The YOT contributes to the reviews of Looked After Children who have offended.
  - 3.2.3.8 Examination of the case file reveals a reduction of risk factors.
  - 3.2.3.9 Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons asked, show a reduction in vulnerability.
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**Key judgement**

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

**Evidence**

- 3.2.4.1 Specialist assessments are undertaken on those with specific educational needs.
  - 3.2.4.2 Interventions promote attainment and are targeted in areas of assessed educational need.
  - 3.2.4.3 Support is given to children and young people who have offended and their parents/carers, to promote good behaviour, attendance at school and educational attainment.
  - 3.2.4.4 Action is taken to ensure that children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school attend alternative settings aimed at securing reintegration into mainstream education.
  - 3.2.4.5 Children and young people who have offended are supported in securing further education, training or employment.
  - 3.2.4.6 Examination of the case file provides evidence of improved achievement and/or attainment.
  - 3.2.4.7 Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons asked, show improved achievement and/or attainment.
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**Key judgement**

3.2.5: Outcomes for children and young people are improved by their involvement through consultation about the services provided by the YOT.

**Evidence**

- 3.2.5.1 The YOT involves children and young people in consultations about the services they receive.
  - 3.2.5.2 Proactive measures are taken to ensure that children and young people in minority groups, younger children and those with communication problems are able to give their views.
  - 3.2.5.3 Consultation with children and young people makes a significant difference to the quality of service provision.
  - 3.2.5.4 Staff give effective feedback on action following consultation, or on issues raised by individual children and young people, including reasons for not acting on particular issues.
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### **3.3: Work with parents/carers**

#### **Key judgement**

3.3.1: Parents/carers are supported in addressing their children's offending.

#### **Evidence**

- 3.3.1.1 Assessments of parenting skills are carried out in a timely manner, in accordance with YJB effective practice guidelines and are used to inform interventions.
  - 3.3.1.2 Parents/carers are made aware of the requirements of the interventions and are kept informed about progress during the course of the intervention.
  - 3.3.1.3 Parents/carers are referred to interventions that are sensitive to the diverse needs of parents/carers from a range of cultural backgrounds and are available on a voluntary and statutory basis.
  - 3.3.1.4 Parents/carers are supported in addressing their children's behaviour.
  - 3.3.1.5 Interventions promote effective parenting in relation to the parents'/carers' ability to care, control and safeguard the child or young person.
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### **4. Work with children and young people subject to DTOs**

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#### **Key judgement**

4.1: The likelihood of reoffending for children and young people who receive DTOs is minimised through the intervention of the YOT by assessment.

#### **Evidence**

- 4.1.1 An initial Asset form is completed that takes account of cultural difference, diversity, health, education, safeguarding and family issues, and forwarded immediately to the secure establishment.
  - 4.1.2 Specific risk factors (e.g. risk of harm, either to self or to/from others, health or substance misuse) are assessed and communicated to the secure establishment immediately.
  - 4.1.3 The YOT worker forwards copies of all relevant assessments, including care plans, PSRs, previous convictions, health and educational plans, to the secure establishment within 24 hours of the court appearance.
  - 4.1.4 The YOT worker contributes to the initial training plan and ensures that it is informed by Asset.
  - 4.1.5 The YOT works proactively with the secure establishment to ensure that the child's or young person's educational, training and health needs are assessed and addressed.
  - 4.1.6 Action is taken to identify and address the specific needs of Looked After, or otherwise vulnerable children and young people, girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities.
  - 4.1.7 The child's or young person's housing needs on release are assessed and action taken, where relevant, to prevent the loss of existing accommodation or to secure new settled arrangements.
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**Key judgement**

- 4.2: The likelihood of reoffending for children and young people who receive DTOs is minimised through the intervention of the YOT by contact with the child or young person and effective liaison with the secure establishment during the custodial period.

**Evidence**

- 4.2.1 The YOT communicates regularly with key people in secure establishments.
- 4.2.2 The YOT worker contributes effectively to sentence planning and review meetings and to reviews of the training plan.
- 4.2.3 The YOT facilitates contact with all service providers who are relevant to the needs of the child or young person and the risk they present.
- 4.2.4 Arrangements to meet the child's or young person's assessed needs, particularly in relation to health, education and accommodation, are established in preparation for their release.
- 4.2.5 Provision is made to address the specific needs of Looked After or otherwise vulnerable children, girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups and those who are disabled.
- 4.2.6 The YOT worker contributes actively to the final review meeting, in accordance with the national standard.
- 4.2.7 Parents/carers are encouraged to attend sentence planning and review meetings, in particular, the final review meeting.
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**Key judgement**

- 4.3: The likelihood of reoffending for children and young people who receive DTOs is minimised through the intervention of the YOT by reintegration into the community.

**Evidence**

- 4.3.1 The training plan is reviewed within ten working days and subsequently on a three-month basis or at the end of the order, whichever is soonest.
- 4.3.2 The YOT worker assesses and monitors the child's or young person's housing needs.
- 4.3.3 The YOT worker monitors the provision of health and education services, and the Management Board is informed where these services are not provided, in accordance with the national standard.
- 4.3.4 The child's or young person's individual learning plan continues following release and is regularly reviewed, updated and shared with relevant providers and organisations, particularly Connexions.
- 4.3.5 Interventions commenced in custody to address offending behaviour, health, safeguarding and education are continued on release, where appropriate.
- 4.3.6 Interventions are inclusive and address the specific needs of girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities.
- 4.3.7 YOT contact with children and young people released from custody is consistent with the national standard and Home Office/YJB guidance.
- 4.3.8 Enforcement activity follows non-compliance within the national standard timescale.
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**Key judgement**

- 4.4: The YOT demonstrates positive outcomes in its work with children and young people subject to DTOs.

**Evidence**

- 4.4.1 Examination of the case file provides evidence of progress, demonstrated, for example, by attitude to offending, improved family relationships, health outcomes, educational attainment and reduced vulnerability.
- 4.4.2 The YOT demonstrates a reduction in reoffending for the custody band of penalties.
- 4.4.3 Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons asked, show improvements in behaviour and attitude.
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## **5. Victims and restorative justice**

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### **Key judgement**

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

### **Evidence**

- 5.1.1 Assessments of victims' needs are consistently carried out in a timely manner, in accordance with effective practice guidelines.
  - 5.1.2 All victims are given the opportunity to make informed decisions about their involvement in direct/indirect restorative processes with children and young people who have offended and are supported in doing so.
  - 5.1.3 Communications are undertaken in a sensitive manner, responsive to individual needs, circumstances, preference and diversity.
  - 5.1.4 Victims are offered the opportunity to influence any reparative element of the child's or young person's supervision plan and to be informed of their progress.
  - 5.1.5 Victims have access to a restorative intervention tailored to their needs.
  - 5.1.6 Restorative and reparative interventions are provided that are appropriate to the age, vulnerability, culture, ethnicity, language needs, literacy levels and gender of the victims and children and young people who have offended.
  - 5.1.7 All victims are offered the opportunity to give feedback that is used to inform the work of the YOT.
  - 5.1.8 Children and young people involved in restorative interventions make a positive contribution to the victim and community.
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