



**JOINT INSPECTION OF YOUTH OFFENDING TEAMS
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**Press
Notice**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 18 OCTOBER 2006

**FLINTSHIRE YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE –
PUBLICATION OF INSPECTION REPORT**

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

Andrew Bridges, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, said:

“During this third phase inspection of youth offending teams in England and Wales we found a team that had a number of strengths. Strong and purposeful leadership was provided by the Youth Offending Team Manager, supported by the operational managers and a committed and enthusiastic staff. Operationally the Youth Offending Team was strong, but strategically there were significant weaknesses in the functioning of the Management Board. This was partly due to its status and relationship with the Corporate Centre and also its location and status within the Education, Children’s Services and Recreation Department. We were informed that this had already been identified as an issue and was being addressed by the Chief Executive of Flintshire County Council as part of a restructuring exercise.

We found some excellent work in the courts and very good work with children and young people in the community, those subject to detention and training orders and also work with victims and restorative justice. Positive use was being made of restorative justice conferences that included final warnings, and the joint training of panel members and magistrates was a significant and important development. The parents/carers, children and young people, and victims that we interviewed were generally very complimentary of the work of the Youth Offending Team.

Some areas required improvement. Assessments were generally conducted well, but greater attention needed to be given to individual plans and to children and young people at risk of harm, either to themselves or from others. The final warning scheme operated within the Home Office/Youth Justice Board guidance, but required review to improve its effectiveness. More should also be done for children and young people with mental health, education and training, and accommodation needs.

Our overall assessment of the performance of the Flintshire Youth Offending Team was that it had a good basis for development. The report contains a number of recommendations that we believe will assist the team to move forward and we are confident that it will make significant progress.”

The report’s main findings are:

Management

- We found a well-managed YOT with a strong and effective YOT Manager, ably supported by committed and innovative operation managers and staff, with good potential for further development.
- Staff supervision was generally satisfactory. However, the Management Board needed to give greater attention to the development of a more strategic focus.
- Links with partner agencies, through protocols and service level agreements, required review and updating.

Work in the courts

- Relationships between the YOT and the courts were good, and structures were in place to review working arrangements on an ongoing basis through the various court user groups.
- The quality of pre sentence reports examined was excellent as a result of a very effective gate-keeping process, which was rigorously applied, with very high standards being achieved in the offence analysis and impact on the victim sections.
- The court team had a clear remit that was understood by everyone involved in the court process. It worked effectively with magistrates, providing relevant information before sentencing, and also with children and young people and their parents/carers, supporting them during adjournments and following sentence.
- Due to the lack of available accommodation, a small number of children and young people were sometimes bailed to unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation. However, the YOT Manager was seeking to address this through the Management Board and various accommodation and housing forums.

Work with children and young people in the community

- The YOT, in partnership with a range of agencies, had arrangements in place to divert children and young people from offending.
- Although we found some very good work with regard to assessment, supervision planning and individual work with children and young people on offending behaviour, the assessment and management of risk of harm needed work, as did the oversight of such cases.
- Safeguarding issues required attention and the YOT needed to develop its approach to final warnings.
- Education also required attention as the percentage of school age pupils who did not get their full education entitlement was 29%, and the percentage of young people aged 16 or over who were not in employment, training and education was 49%. Both categories were too high.
- More should also be done for children and young people with mental health needs.
- Feedback from children and young people, parents/carers and victims was collected, but was not always used consistently to inform practice.
- Work with parents/carers formed a significant part of the work of individual members of staff, within a clear policy and practice framework and led by the YOT Parenting Coordinator.

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

- The YOT worked effectively with children and young people before, during and following their sentence.
- Appropriate arrangements were in place to inform the custodial establishment immediately of the background and risks relating to the child or young person.
- Contact levels with children and young people during the custodial part of their sentence were good and the YOT supported parents/carers during this period.
- Generally the work started in custody continued in the community following discharge, but the training plans did not meet the national standards in 80% of the cases examined.

Victims and restorative justice

- We found that victim work was well established within the YOT. A high percentage of victims were contacted and assessed with their consent.
- Victims were also invited to attend the referral order panel, but required more feedback on the outcome of restorative justice initiatives.
- Restorative justice arrangements were in place and the referral panel met regularly to establish and review contracts.
- The panel accessed a range of activities in the community, including the development of personal skills, participation in sport and reparation through environmental and community projects.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The inspection of Flintshire YOT took place between February and May 2006.
2. The Unitary Authority of Flintshire is located in North Wales, and shares a border with Cheshire in England. Flintshire had a total population of 148,594, measured in the Census 2001. Of this population, 23.2% were aged 0-17 years at the time of the census. This figure was higher than the average for Wales of 22.8%.
3. Nine Inspectorates conduct the Youth Offending Team Inspections. They are Commission for Social Care Inspection, Estyn (HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation, Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.
4. The YOT inspection programme started in June 2003. All 155 YOTs within England and Wales are being inspected over a five to six year cycle.
5. The inspection will be carried out in line with the Government's commitment to proportionate and coordinated inspection in local government, informed by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment results and the Wales Programme for Improvement. A programme has therefore been developed that:
 - is proportionate to risk and only inspects those areas of work where a team is performing well in order to disseminate good practice
 - complements, and is coordinated with, other inspection programmes, including those currently being developed following the publication of the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (2003)
 - takes account of YOTs' recent development as organisations.
6. Comprehensive standards and criteria have been developed to cover the first phase of the inspection, focusing on:
 - management and partnership arrangements
 - children and young people considered at risk of offending
 - children and young people who offend
 - parents/carers of children and young people who are at risk of offending or who offend
 - work with victims of crime.