



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

EMBARGOED UNTIL 28 September 2006

**PUBLICATION OF THE THIRD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM INSPECTION PROGRAMME**

Today sees the publication of the third annual report for the Youth Offending Team (YOT) Inspection programme. The programme is conducted by representatives of nine inspectorates and regulatory bodies, and is being led by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

Andrew Bridges, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, said:

"Once more I am delighted to present this annual report on behalf of the nine inspectorates and regulatory bodies undertaking the programme to inspect the 155 Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) of England and Wales. This report represents what has been achieved by all the staff working on this inspection programme, which is now well into its third phase. By working together, we ensure we assess both aspects of YOT work: their need to safeguard the welfare and development of the children and young people they supervise and, critically, to prevent them from offending and from being of *risk of harm* to the public.

Some key points to note are:

- 1) This is an example of joint inspection working well, and is carefully coordinated with the Joint Area Reviews (JARs) of children's services, led by Ofsted, in order to keep to a minimum the additional work created for local authorities and others by inspections.
- 2) If YOTs look at the performance standards set by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and our inspection criteria – available on our website – they can be clear on what they are being expected to achieve.
- 3) There is a variety of strengths and of areas requiring improvement among the different YOTs, with few general patterns. However, the majority need to improve their assessment and management of the *risk of harm* to others presented by some of the children and young people under their supervision.
- 4) We commend the positive response to inspection by the YOTs and their Boards, ensuring that in most cases inspection becomes a springboard for their subsequent improvement.

This first round of YOT inspections will enter its fourth phase early in 2007, and is scheduled to be completed overall in the first half of 2008. Building on what we have learned to date, later this year we will be starting the long-term planning for the successor inspection programme.

Liz Calderbank, HM Assistant Chief Inspector of Probation, led the work of the multi-Inspectorate team.

The report's main findings are:

- The impact of the children's agenda on local authorities has been significant and both YOTs and local authorities have worked hard to focus on positive outcomes for children and young people. The majority of YOTs are now operating within a coherent strategic framework

which, in the best examples, is being implemented in the context of a wider community strategy.

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on performance management, both by Management Boards and operational teams, and on the increasing engagement of partner organisations.
- Whilst YOTs are generally providing a good service to their local courts, the quality of pre-sentence reports is often poor.
- Although the majority of YOTs have made progress, the divergence in performance between the individual teams is still too wide. Comparison of the findings over the two phases of the inspection suggested that whilst greater attention is being given to compliance and managing risk of harm to others, the poor quality of assessments is concerning. Equally worrying is the apparent drop in the priority afforded to safeguarding issues.
- Although concerns about children and young people's health are more likely to be addressed than previously, many of the health issues identified as needing improvement are indicative of a lack of strategic engagement between the YOT and local Primary Care Trust. These issues are explored at greater length in a thematic inspection, produced jointly with the Healthcare Commission, to be published on 25 September 2006.
- The inspection findings confirm the importance of education, training and employment for those children and young people known to the youth justice system. The findings highlight, in particular, the serious shortage of appropriate Employment, training and education provision for young people post-16, and particularly pre-Entry into Employment. in most areas.
- Although we saw many examples of good practice in work with children and young people serving custodial sentences, too often, it was not continued following their release. Particular attention is needed to ensure that children and young people are able to access mainstream educational services on their return to the community. However, significant progress appears to have been made in the provision of substance misuse services through the additional resources offered by the Resettlement and After Provision teams
- We were disappointed to find that, not only had the level of intervention with victims remained constant since the start of the inspection programme, but that work to raise awareness amongst children and young people who had offended about the impact of their crime had also remained largely unchanged. Whilst the lack of growth in work with victims may in part be due to resources, it is difficult to understand why greater attention has not been given to the development of victim empathy amongst children and young people who offend as an essential part of addressing their offending behaviour.
- All the three YOTs inspected in Wales needed to improve their strategic management arrangements and strengthen partnership between Management Boards and their Community Safety and Young People's Partnerships. Greater consistency around physical and mental health needs for children and young people was needed through partnership working. Similarly, too many children and young people under the supervision of YOTs in Wales did not take part in education and training. There were, however, some good examples of diversion and support services, with the YOTs working across a range of urban, rural and, in some instances, isolated communities.
- The annual report also highlights the findings from the two thematic reports, on safeguarding and health issues, published during 2005-06 and refers to a third thematic report, on attendance centres, currently being finalised.
- Aggregation of the inspection findings by gender and ethnicity reveals some interesting differences in the profiles of the respective groups, and emphasised the general vulnerability of girls and young women caught up in the criminal justice system, particularly those subject

to DTOs. It also demonstrates an overall need for greater understanding of, and engagement with, adolescents from black and minority ethnic groups who offend.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. For press enquiries, please contact Liz Calderbank, HM Assistant Chief Inspector of Probation, on 07973 384751
2. Nine inspectorates and regulatory bodies conduct the Youth Offending Team Inspections, led by HM Inspectorate of Probation. They are Audit Commission, Commission for Social Care Inspection, Estyn (HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in 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.
3. 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. The report of each inspection is published and is available on HMI Probation's website at <http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/>.
4. The inspection is being 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 the Joint Area Reviews of children's services.
 - takes account of YOTs' recent development as organisations.
5. Comprehensive standards and criteria have been developed to cover the second phase of the inspection, focusing on:
 - management and partnership arrangements
 - children and young
 - work with victims of crime.