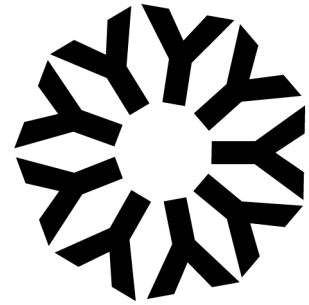


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Social Services Inspectorate for Wales*



Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Teams of England and Wales

Report on:
Bristol
Youth Offending Team

2005

Foreword

This inspection was undertaken during the second phase of the inspection programme for Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales. Difficulties in the performance of the Bristol Youth Offending Team had been identified in early 2004 and action taken to tackle the various areas of concern.

Our judgement, that the performance of the Bristol Youth Offending Team still required improvement, is therefore a reflection of the action taken over the past six months to address the poor overall performance and an indication that it is moving in the right direction. To the team's credit, it has worked with partners to achieve a 5% decrease in overall youth crime, for the last two years.

The new Management Board is showing positive signs of providing a strong strategic lead to the team since its reorganisation and although the inspection highlights a number of areas of concern within working practices, it also identifies examples of good practice. We were impressed by the dedication shown by staff, but it will be important for the Youth Offending Team's future that both managers and staff ensure standards are consistently implemented across all areas of work, particularly around Asset and risk of harm.

This report contains a number of recommendations that we believe will assist the Bristol Youth Offending Team in continuing its progress.

Andrew Bridges
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

April 2005

Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in 2004/2005.

- ◆ The file reading took place week commencing 13 December.
- ◆ The second week commenced on 8 February.

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Glossary

Asset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
CAHMS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CPN	Community Psychiatric Nurse
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection
DTO	Detention and Training Order
EPQA	Effective Practice Quality Assurance
Estyn	HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
ETE	Employment, Training and Education
HMIC	HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HMI Prisons	HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HMI Probation	HM Inspectorate of Probation
ISSP	Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme
KPI	Key performance indicator
National Standards	National Standards for Youth Justice Services
NSF	National Social Fund
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
Onset	YJB tool for assessing children and young people at risk of offending
PSR	Pre-sentence report
SLA	Service level agreement
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bounded
SSIW	Social Services Inspectorate for Wales
YIP	Youth Inclusion Programme
YISP	Youth Inclusion Support Panel
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Introduction

The joint YOT inspection programme commenced in September 2003 and is the first full inspection to examine the work of YOTs, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The programme is being implemented in three phases, the first of which was completed in July 2004 and focused on establishing benchmarks for the later phases of the inspection.

This, the second phase of the inspection, started in September 2004 and builds on the findings from the first. Few changes have been made. Emphasis has continued to be placed on two core areas:

- ◆ the management and partnership arrangements, including the role and functioning of the local Management Board
- ◆ work with children and young people, which now encompasses prevention of offending, work with children and young people who have offended and work with their parents/carers.

The third core area to be covered by the inspection is work with victims and restorative justice. Whilst these issues are seen as no less important, it is acknowledged that YOTs may be at different stages of development in this area of work. We do, however, expect a high level of engagement with victims to be demonstrated, with appropriate arrangements for restorative justice.

Key findings

Management and partnership arrangements

- ◆ Until recently, the YOT had been managed through a steering group that was found to be ineffective, giving the manager little support and direction.
- ◆ A new Management Board had been constituted, chaired by the Chief Executive, which appeared to be providing direction and an effective strategic lead.
- ◆ Terms of reference had still to be developed for the Management Board and its membership required review.
- ◆ Action was being taken to clarify the funding arrangements for the YOT, some of which dated back to 1999.
- ◆ All partners had seconded staff to the YOT.
- ◆ Although protocols and SLAs were in place with partner organisations, some had not been implemented effectively and all required updating and reviewing.
- ◆ Staff received regular documented supervision from their managers and all had recently been appraised. The appraisals did not, however, contain objectives linked to the Youth Justice Plan 2002-2005 or address training needs.
- ◆ The YOT needed to develop a specific induction programme for new staff and Management Board members.
- ◆ All staff and volunteers had received enhanced CRB checks, but none had had a three year renewal check.

Work with children and young people and their parents/carers

- ◆ The YOT had seen a 5% yearly reduction in youth crime over the past two years.
- ◆ All prevention schemes had a well documented referral process, supported by formal assessment procedures.
- ◆ The standard of Asset completion varied considerably.
- ◆ The assessment and management of cases posing a risk of harm to others required immediate attention.
- ◆ Supervision plans did not contain SMART objectives.
- ◆ The number of appointments offered did not meet the national standard and attendance was poor.
- ◆ The enforcement of orders required attention.
- ◆ The YOT had good access to specialist staff for all children and young people, including voluntary groups to work with children and young

people and parents/carers from minority ethnic groups. However, within education the range of specialist opportunities was limited.

- ◆ Too many children and young people under the age of 16 were excluded from mainstream education.
- ◆ There were unacceptable delays in mental health assessments and identified gaps in the services provided to meet the general health needs of children and young people seen by the YOT.
- ◆ The police had not adopted the Home Office/YJB guidance (2002), but despite this the YOT was preventing reoffending in 70% of cases.
- ◆ Reintegration into mainstream education was poor, but the YOT had developed a positive initiative working with children and young people excluded from education.
- ◆ Liaison with social services needed to improve, particularly with regard to Looked After Children.
- ◆ The provision of appropriate accommodation for children and young people needed to be reviewed through reference to the Supporting People agenda.
- ◆ Inspectors received positive feedback from children and young people and parents/carers about their interaction with the YOT.
- ◆ A parenting policy had still to be developed, but a parenting coordinator had recently been appointed.

Victims and restorative justice

- ◆ The YOT had just appointed a victim liaison officer.
- ◆ The YOT did not use a formal tool to assess victims' needs and not all victims were contacted.
- ◆ There was a comprehensive range of restorative interventions.
- ◆ The YOT did not appear to have sought victims' views about the service provided to them.
- ◆ Inspectors received positive feedback from the victims spoken to, about their interaction with the YOT.

Overall assessment

The overall performance of the Bristol YOT was assessed as **requiring improvement**. The need to address performance had been recognised by the new Chief Executive and steps had been taken to strengthen the Management Board, which was now beginning to provide the requisite guidance and strategic direction to the YOT. The funding arrangements for the YOT were in the process of being clarified and the YOT Manger had been provided with additional support. Further action was now required to consolidate these positive changes and develop the performance management culture that was emerging.

We were impressed overall with the staff's commitment to the children and young people with whom they worked. We found some very good prevention work being carried out across the city, with initiatives to deal with local issues, including education, drugs and mental health. The interventions delivered met the diverse needs of the community through links to voluntary organisations. However, attention needed to be given to the quality of both Asset completion and supervision plans, and most particularly to the assessment and management of high risk of harm cases. The amount of contact with children and young people subject to statutory orders and interventions needed to increase, with enforcement action being taken as appropriate.

Whilst there was still much to do, we felt the YOT and the Management Board were in a position to take forward the inspection recommendations and build on the work already done to improve performance.

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
- ◆ new Board members are properly inducted and prepared for their role
- ◆ funding issues continue to be addressed at the highest possible level
- ◆ the Board membership is reviewed along with its terms of reference.

The YOT Manager should ensure that:

- ◆ an analysis of training needs is undertaken and addressed within the next 12 months to meet any significant skills deficit
- ◆ staff are supervised and appraised within a performance improvement framework
- ◆ the quality of Asset reviews, initial supervision plans and their reviews are improved to meet the requirements of national standards
- ◆ risk of harm assessments are completed on all relevant cases and management decisions, in respect of risk concern and risk aware cases, are recorded on the case files
- ◆ appointments and enforcement procedures are consistently applied in accordance with national standards
- ◆ work with victims is developed in line with the YJB effective practice guidelines and includes a wider range of restorative justice venues/facilities
- ◆ the needs of parents/carers are consistently assessed and, where relevant, addressed.

Avon and Somerset Police should ensure that:

- ◆ final warnings are delivered in accordance with the Home Office/YJB guidance (2002)
- ◆ early contact with victims is facilitated by the timely exchange of victim information in accordance the national standard.

The Bristol primary care trusts should ensure that:

- ◆ arrangements are in place to meet the general health needs of children and young people referred by the YOT
- ◆ arrangements are in place for the timely assessment of the mental health needs of children and young people referred by the YOT.

The Education Department should:

- ◆ monitor, assess and make adequate provision to meet the needs of children and young people who have offended experiencing difficulties with their education.

Overview

- ◆ The city of Bristol is in the south west of England and is located within the largest urban area of the region. It is bordered by the Cotswold Hills and Bath to the east, the Mendip Hills to the south and the River Severn flowing into the Bristol Channel to the west. The River Avon runs through Bristol within a steep gorge.
- ◆ Bristol had a total population of 380,615, measured in the Census 2001. Of this population, 21.4% were aged 0-17 years at the time of the census. This figure was slightly lower than the average for England and Wales of 22.7%.
- ◆ Bristol had a predominantly white population, 91.8%, and this was just higher than the average for England of 90.9%. The percentage of Asian or Asian British residents, 2.6%, was half the average for England (4.6%). The percentage of Black or Black British residents, at 2.3%, was slightly higher than the English average of 2.1%.
- ◆ The level of employment in Bristol, 60.1%, was similar to the average for England and Wales of 60.6%. The level of unemployment was 3.1%, again close to the average for England and Wales at 3.4%. 16% of those unemployed in Bristol were aged 50 and over, 8% had never worked and 26% were long-term unemployed. There was a higher percentage of students (both economically active and inactive) resident in Bristol at the time of the census, 11.8% compared to 7.3% in England and Wales.
- ◆ Bristol City Council was classified as 'fair' in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2004.
- ◆ The YJB figures for youth offending for the period April 2003 to March 2004 showed that 70.8 offences were committed per 1000 children and young people aged 0-17 years in Bristol.
- ◆ The YJB summary of YOT performance against the key performance indicators for 2003/2004 ranked Bristol YOT in 154th position.

1. MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

1.1 Leadership

Inspection criteria

The Management Board:

- ◇ *provides strategic oversight and direction and coordinates the provision of youth justice services by the YOT and partner organisations*
- ◇ *is made up of appropriate representatives who attend and participate actively in meetings*
- ◇ *ensures the provision of accurate and timely data returns, both for its own use and that of the YJB*
- ◇ *gives support and guidance to the YOT Manager, ensuring that they engage with local and national priorities*
- ◇ *ensures that the Youth Justice Plan is implemented.*

Before 2004, the YOT had had a steering group that was chaired by the Director of Social Services. Its membership was not consistent because although most partners sent a representative to meetings, it was often not the same person. The only two regular attendees were the Director of Social Services and the YOT Manager. Apart from them, there had been a total of 43 attendees at 20 meetings, representing 13 different organisations. The YOT Manager was consequently reporting back to an ever-changing group who had difficulty making management decisions and failed to provide the necessary strategic direction. There was a feeling amongst partners that any problems would be sorted out by the social services department, due to its role as Chair and the strong representation within the YOT staff.

The Chair had approached the new Chief Executive (appointed 12 months previously) in the second half of 2004, with the request that he take over the chair of the group, to which he agreed. At the time of the inspection, both the steering group and the YOT management structure were undergoing a number of changes. These events had been triggered by the YOT receiving a zero score in the parenting EPQA assessment.

We were impressed by the positive approach adopted by the Chief Executive. One of his first actions was to reconstitute the group as a Management Board. The changes had an immediate effect. From the interviews carried out during the inspection, we found that partners were far more positive about the future and we could see a more professional group developing with consistent representation and the ability to make decisions. Meetings were planned in advance and members were notified of the decisions to be made. Attendees thus came properly briefed and in a

position to contribute positively to the decision-making process. Many partners commented on the changes, remarking that the steering group had been too 'cosy', but now they were expected to work to a common aim. These changes now needed to be consolidated by new terms of reference for the Management Board and a review of its membership.

The YOT Manager was line managed by the Service Manager for social services who, in May 2004, was briefed to devote additional time (two days a week) to the management of the YOT due to the poor KPI outcomes. In November, on the advice of the YJB Regional Manager, the Management Board brought in another YOT manager from the region who had had good performance results, to act as a consultant to the Bristol YOT for two days a week. This manager remained with the YOT till January 2005.

Although we were aware that an agreement between the partners had been reached in 1999 about the funding of the YOT, we did not find any documentation detailing either the previous, current or future arrangements. This lack of clarity had led the steering group to sanction the recruitment of additional staff without determining the funding source. As a result, the YOT had a projected overspend for 2004/2005 of £226,000. On becoming chair of the Management Board, the Chief Executive had taken immediate steps to reorganise the budget and, through negotiations with partners, fund the overspend. We would now expect the newly formed Board to draw up an agreement addressing the future funding and stability of the YOT.

The previous steering group had received performance figures, which were presented using the traffic light system. However, it was only on learning of the zero score in the parenting EPQA assessment that the group had fully appreciated the YOT's poor performance. Since instigating changes within the YOT management structure the steering group and, more latterly, the Management Board had continued to receive performance results which it scrutinised actively and used to inform its role in determining the YOT's future direction. As a result, there had been a marked improvement in the YOT's performance in the KPIs, and the Management Board had set a target of a top third placing within 2005.

Strengths:

- ◆ A new Management Board had been established with the Chief Executive as chair.
- ◆ A service manager had been appointed to support the work of the YOT Manager.

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ Terms of reference had still to be developed for the Management Board and its membership required review.
- ◆ The emergent development of a performance management culture required the continuing attention of the Management Board.
- ◆ Further action was required to clarify the future funding arrangements for the YOT.

1.2

Partnership and resources

Inspection criteria

- ◇ *A range of interventions and services are provided to meet the needs of children and young people who have offended and those at risk of offending.*
- ◇ *YOTs are appropriately staffed by partners according to legislation and Home Office guidance.*
- ◇ *The Youth Justice Plan reflects partner strategies.*
- ◇ *Protocols have been agreed between the YOT, its statutory partners and other organisations, outlining the level of service, human resources issues and funding arrangements.*
- ◇ *Contracts are in place with other agencies to ensure the coordination of work and the appropriate delivery of services to meet the needs of children and young people.*

All partners had seconded staff to the YOT and some, such as health and the police, had recently increased their staffing contributions. According to the social services department policy, all case workers had to be either seconded staff or qualified social workers and the department had seconded some 20 qualified staff to the YOT.

Largely due to the work of the YOT Manager, rather than the active engagement of the former steering group, the Youth Justice Plans generally reflected the partners' strategies. The 2004/2005 update appeared to be the first real corporate plan the YOT had produced which was owned by the Board. The partners remained, however, more concerned about the technicalities rather than the aims of the plan. We hope that the Youth Justice Plan 2005-2008, currently being prepared, will be a true partnership document, reflecting joint partnership targets and strategies driven through the lead of the Management Board.

Until immediately prior to the inspection, the education provision to the YOT had not been managed. This was an unsatisfactory situation that had adversely affected the rate of placing children and young people in education and training provision. A new manager had now been appointed on a school-term arrangement contract. These arrangements needed to be carefully monitored by the Management Board.

There were protocols between some of the partners about funding and human resource issues that dated back to the inception of the YOT. One of the team managers had been tasked with reviewing all the policies and protocols with the partner organisations. This work had been started last year, but due to the drive on performance, had not been completed and needed to be reviewed urgently.

We did find some protocols in place to coordinate appropriate services to meet the needs of children and young people. These were not always implemented effectively. For instance, there was a very clearly written agreement about the process for transferring young people to probation on

their 18th birthday that, unfortunately, had not been properly communicated to probation staff. We found a number of similar examples, all of which emphasised the importance of ensuring that relevant staff within the different organisations were aware of policies and procedures.

We were pleased to see the wide range of organisations with which the YOT had developed SLAs, ensuring that it could meet the needs of a diverse group of children and young people within the Bristol City area. We were shown a number of SLAs that had been drawn up with different organisations. They were clearly written but some were out of date and needed to be reviewed, whilst others, such as the community penalty breach SLA that was in its fourth draft, had still to be agreed formally.

Strengths:

- ◆ Partners seconded appropriate resources; both staff and finance.
- ◆ SLAs were in place with a wide range of organisations.

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ Some protocols and SLAs had not been implemented and all required urgent review.
- ◆ The Youth Justice Plan 2005-2008 needs to reflect partner agency strategies.

1.3 Staff supervision, development and training

Inspection criteria

- ◆ *Staff are regularly supervised in accordance with their developmental needs and assessed level of competence.*
- ◆ *Annual appraisals contain objectives which are linked to local and national targets.*
- ◆ *All staff are provided with appropriate training opportunities to equip them to meet the requirements of the Youth Justice Plan.*
- ◆ *Staff are appropriately qualified and have had a satisfactory enhanced criminal record check within the past three years.*
- ◆ *Volunteers are appropriately trained, available for YOT activities and have had a satisfactory enhanced criminal record check within the past three years.*
- ◆ *Joint agreements are in place for the management of disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures.*
- ◆ *Complaints are properly managed.*

Staff received regular supervision from their managers, normally on a six-week cycle, but new members of staff were seen more frequently. Supervision sessions were documented and involved discussion of some cases. The volunteers were supervised, although the approach differed.

Referral panel members had the opportunity to discuss matters at the end of each panel meeting with the coordinator, who also met every four weeks with a representative group to discuss issues. The criminal justice support officers, who were also volunteers, received group supervision, but could approach their manager to discuss issues on an individual basis.

There was an appraisal system in operation within the YOT, although it appeared that it had not been in existence for very long. All the staff to whom we spoke had received an appraisal, but it did not contain objectives linked to the Youth Justice Plan 2002-2005, nor did it address the individual's training needs.

We had concerns about training provision. It was evident from the interviews with staff that training was available to them, but we were not convinced that it was appropriate to their needs. There was currently no YOT-specific induction programme for new staff or Management Board members and, although staff attended the local authority induction course, it did not help them with their role within the YOT. We could not find evidence of any formal Asset training being delivered and most new staff were advised on Asset completion by a more experienced colleague, an approach which may explain the variations in practice found during the inspection's file reading exercise. We raised our concerns about this approach with the management team and were informed that training was to be made available later in the year. Although pleased that the matter was in hand, we considered it required more urgent attention. Diversity training was another area that required immediate consideration to ensure all staff were fully conversant with the issues.

However, we were pleased to see that some training was ongoing. A number of staff had completed the YJB professional certificate in effective practice, and others were studying for this qualification, including some social workers. We were also informed that one of the managers had recently taken on the role of 'training manager' and planned to develop a formal training plan. This needed to be informed by a training needs analysis, linked to the staff appraisal system.

The social workers felt that they were disadvantaged in comparison to their social service colleagues, as they had not been included in any job evaluation. We were informed they had, in fact, been through the same evaluation, but there had been a delay in implementing the outcome for the YOT staff as other social work posts were dealt with first. As the YOT had a large number of fully qualified social workers, this issue needed to be addressed if it was not to impact on team morale. Specialist staff like health and drugs workers received mandatory training through their parent organisations.

The referral panel members were very complimentary about the training they had received, which had developed considerably since the inception of the order and now involved a six-weekly support meeting consisting of a combination of speakers, discussion and developmental training. The panel we attended reflected this good training.

We were aware that all staff and volunteers had received an enhanced CRB check, although there was some uncertainty about the police officers, which needed to be followed up. We found no evidence that any of the

checks had been reviewed where staff had been in post for more than three years. This needed to be addressed.

We saw a number of protocols around grievance and disciplinary proceedings for staff, and the staff were clear about the processes. There was no policy in place for dealing with a single complaint or grievance against different agency staff. The children and young people and parents/carers to whom we spoke were aware of the complaints procedure, as they had been told about it by staff, and we were informed that complaints leaflets were available at the reception.

One area of concern that was raised with us was the issue of children and young people wandering around the building unescorted. It appeared that once through the reception, they were allowed to wander freely around the different floors and staircases, although they were not able to access rooms. We had concerns for the safety of staff and other users within the building. Although the YOT had developed policy documents on panic alarms and security alarms, these did not appear to be fully observed by staff. This lack of knowledge of staff safety policies was echoed with the lone worker policy, which had recently been reviewed but the staff we interviewed were not aware of it. Greater attention needed to be given to the implementation of these policies by all staff.

Strengths:

- ◆ Staff were regularly supervised and supervision was documented.
- ◆ Training for referral panel members was well developed.
- ◆ All staff, except police, had had enhanced CRB checks.

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ Appraisal needed to be linked to the Youth Justice Plan 2005-2008 and address training needs.
- ◆ A comprehensive training plan needed to be developed.
- ◆ There was no induction training for new staff and Management Board members.
- ◆ CRB checks were not reviewed after three years.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

This section is judged as partly met.

2. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS/CARERS

2.1 Assessment

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF OFFENDING

Inspection criteria

- ◇ *There is a mechanism to identify those children and young people within the area who are at risk of offending.*
- ◇ *There are arrangements to assess the needs of those individuals identified as being at risk of offending and these arrangements take account of cultural differences, diversity and safeguarding issues.*

The YOT had developed an extensive preventative agenda. It was currently operating three YISPs, four YIPs, a Project X and Positive Futures prevention programmes across the city of Bristol, and was also linked into other prevention programmes run through different groups. To help standardise the YOT-associated prevention programmes, it had acquired the Universal Management Information System database, available to all the YISPs, some YIPs and some Positive Futures programmes.

All the schemes had a well-documented referral process. We found evidence of good information-sharing protocols and were impressed with the amount of information supplied, particularly from education.

During the file reading exercise, we reviewed a selection of prevention files and found their content was of a high standard. The programmes were all utilising a well-applied assessment tool, Onset or an adapted form of the final warning Asset, and the entries were of a good quality. The recording process after assessment was also thorough and showed any progress made. The staff worked with individual children and young people, and were able to cater for their diverse needs. The YISPs set SMART action plans that were agreed for action with the child or young person, parents/carers and committed partner organisations.

Strengths:

- ◇ All schemes had a well-documented referral process, supported by good assessment procedures.
- ◇ Information exchange was addressed through thorough protocols.
- ◇ Projects were able to deal with the diverse needs of children and young people.

**Good
practice**

rightTRACK – This project was set up by the Children’s Society to offer advice and support to black and minority ethnic children and young people involved in the criminal justice system (or who were at risk of becoming involved in crime) and their families/carers. The project worked with children and young people aged between ten-17 years. It was able to offer advice and support, working on a one-to-one basis. rightTRACK also offered a mentoring scheme. Although child focused, it assisted parents/carers to improve the life chances of black and minority ethnic people. The exchange of practice and information was assisted by the fact that some of the social workers from the YOT also worked for the rightTRACK project.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE OFFENDED

Inspection criteria

- ◆ *An Asset assessment is satisfactorily completed at the beginning and end of all interventions which takes account of cultural differences, diversity and safeguarding issues.*
- ◆ *Risk of harm to others is fully assessed.*
- ◆ *Risk of harm, either to self or from others, is fully assessed.*
- ◆ *Specialist assessments are undertaken on those with specific needs or who are assessed as a risk of harm to others.*
- ◆ *Resources have been identified and capacity exists to meet assessed need.*

The YOT had worked hard in the past 12 months to raise the standard of the completion of start and end Assets. According to the EPQA, it had succeeded in increasing the proportion of start Assets completed satisfactorily from 67.7% in July-Sept 2003 to 95.7% in April-June 2004. Similarly the proportion of end Assets satisfactorily completed had risen from 75.5% to 94.2% over the same periods. However, these results were not supported by our file reading, which showed that only 75% of files met the national standard for timeliness and just 63% were of a sufficient quality. On further examination, we found that Asset completion was either of a very high standard with good evidence presented to support scores, or very poor. As already identified, this was an area which was indicative of the different training needs across the team and needed urgent attention.

**Good
practice**

We were impressed by the way that referral order reports were based on the initial Asset. Information was taken directly from Asset and expanded to form the body of the report.

We noted from the file reading exercise that only 47% of Assets involved a home visit, but accepted that this was due to the risk posed to staff in certain areas of the city. The threat of gun violence was particularly high and, at one stage police officers were required to be accompanied by a firearms officer in some districts, including that in which the YOT was located. This issue was dealt with through communication between the officers and their own force, but was an example of the considered risks within certain areas.

We were concerned at the apparent lack of liaison with social services in regards to safeguarding issues. Our file reading showed that social services was contacted by the YOT in only 55% of cases involving Looked After Children and in 17% of all other cases. According to various managers across the two departments, contact was made but not always recorded. This situation was not satisfactory and needed to be reviewed.

The file reading exercise identified serious concerns about the standard of risk of harm assessments. We found that the full risk of harm form had been completed in only 47% of relevant cases and that a further 15 cases (42% of those identified as requiring no further assessment) should also have been assessed. These were all cases involving violence towards people. In one instance, the young person had committed four previous offences of violence showing an escalating pattern of aggressive behaviour. Interviews with staff confirmed the need for further training in this area of work, covering not only the identification of risk concerns and their management, but also the role of managers and the importance of good recording practice in terms of agency accountability. Although we were told that cases were referred to managers during supervision, there was evidence of managerial oversight in only a third of the relevant cases examined. The practice of deferring discussion about these cases until supervision also needed to be reviewed as it introduced an inbuilt delay into the process.

We did, however, find good evidence of risk of harm to self or others being assessed and addressed. In almost all of the cases examined (92%), positive action had been taken to deal with the issues identified.

The YOT had set up a team of health and drugs workers called Project MAX who provided specialist assessment and, where appropriate, would refer cases on for further intervention. It was an example of the way the partners had identified resources to meet the assessed needs. The team included a clinical psychologist and psychiatrist from the forensic services, as well as CAHMS, health care, and drug and alcohol services for children and young people. Despite their intervention, accessing facilities for young people aged over 16 with mental health needs was very difficult. It was evident too, that the referral system developed between Project MAX and CAHMS needed to improve, as there were considerable variations in take-up times. We were informed of cases that took six to eight weeks when made by the court, and up to nine months when made by a CPN. This was not acceptable.

Good practice

Project MAX was a drug, alcohol and mental health service based within the YOT that worked with other professionals, alongside children and young people and their families/carers to maximise their strengths and resources, and address drug, alcohol and mental health issues. The project was able to offer one-to-one counselling, evidence-based psychological interventions, group work and family work, as well as education, prevention work and support for parents/carers.

We received positive comments from both the court and the CPS about the standard of reports received from the YOT. Both organisations described the team as professional, helpful at all times in court and quick to take action.

The YOT staff worked effectively with the specialist education workers to ensure that wherever possible suitable provision was made for children and young people.

The file reading exercise showed that a high percentage of children and young people had experienced difficulty with schooling. Some 50% were excluded from school, either temporarily or permanently, and 28% of those had refused to attend school or truanted frequently. There was evidence of positive action being taken in two thirds of cases identified as having problems with their schooling. Initial assessment of educational need was good. All children and young people were assessed for basic skills, literacy and numeracy and many were also assessed for dyslexia by the specialist workers. This information was then used by the case worker to enable appropriate provision to be made, where possible.

The Connexions service worked with the specialist workers and case workers to assess and locate suitable provision for those aged over 16. However, only 55% of the relevant cases examined were in full-time provision and 30% were not engaged in any form of education or training.

Strengths:

- ◆ Specialist assessments were available from health and drugs workers and education workers.
- ◆ Attention was given to the child or young person's cultural and diverse needs during the assessment process.
- ◆ The team was well-regarded by the local courts.
- ◆ Case workers and specialist staff worked well together to ensure they made effective use of the available resources.

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ The quality of Asset completion varied considerably and some assessments lacked sufficient supporting evidence.
- ◆ Identification and assessment of risk of harm to others required urgent attention and training.

- ◆ There were considerable variations and delays in the assessment of children and young people with mental health needs.
- ◆ Liaison with social services needed to improve, particularly with regards to Looked After Children.
- ◆ Closer collaboration with schools to prevent exclusions and negotiate re-entry into mainstream education.
- ◆ A wider range of provision for pre- and post-16 children and young people for education and training opportunities.
- ◆ Support for case workers in locating appropriate education and training for pre- and post-16 children and young people.

PARENTS/CARERS

Inspection criteria

- ◆ *An assessment of the parenting skills and needs of the parents/carers of children and young people who have offended or are at risk of offending has been undertaken and is used to inform any intervention.*

Parenting work had been identified as a weak area for the YOT through the parenting EPQA assessment in early 2004. At the time of the file reading, there was no standard tool for assessing the needs of the parents/carers of both children and young people at risk of offending or those who had offended. We were informed that the YOT was currently developing a formal parenting policy that was to be finalised by the end of March 2005. It had recently appointed a parenting coordinator with the remit to develop an assessment tool and provide parenting programmes. Interim guidance had been issued, which stated that cases given a score of two or more in Asset should be referred to the coordinator. These were all positive steps to give parenting work greater focus.

Strength:

- ◆ A parenting coordinator had recently been appointed.

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ There was no parenting-needs assessment tool.
- ◆ The parenting policy had still to be developed.

2.2

Interventions

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF OFFENDING

Inspection criteria

- ◇ *There are arrangements in place to provide interventions for those children and young people who are assessed as at risk of offending.*

All the prevention programmes had access to interventions through their own structures or through contacts with other groups and partners. Most of the intervention work was carried out on a one-to-one basis with workers from the different schemes, including education workers and Project MAX for specialist interventions. The YOT was also able to access out-of-school activities run through the youth service and other groups, particularly during school holidays. During both our visits the school holiday activity programmes were openly displayed for all staff to see and we saw evidence of referrals being made in the files we read.

Strengths:

- ◇ There were a range of worthwhile prevention interventions.
- ◇ Good specialist support was available.
- ◇ Interventions met the needs of the diverse nature of the children and young people.

Area for improvement:

- ◇ Access to full-time schooling was limited.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE OFFENDED

Inspection criteria

- ◇ *Interventions with children and young people who have offended are targeted in areas of assessed need, such as education, health and parental relationships, etc.*
- ◇ *Interventions with children and young people who have offended are specific to the needs of girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities and take account of safeguarding issues.*
- ◇ *Supervision plans are written in accordance with national standards, emanate from Asset and contain SMART objectives.*
- ◇ *Interventions are structured, evaluated and consistent with the principles of effective practice.*
- ◇ *Frequency of appointments for children and young people who have offended is consistent with national standards and Home Office/YJB guidance for final warnings, referral orders, community penalties, DTOs (custody and post-custody) and ISSPs (where they exist).*
- ◇ *For those children and young people who have offended, enforcement follows non-compliance.*

Further attention needed to be given to supervision plans. During the file reading exercise, we found only 53% of files examined had supervision or training plans that met the content requirements of national standards. One of the main faults was that the plans were not SMART (with no timescales) and lacked specific detail. There was a good fit between the plan and the assessed risk of harm in the majority of cases (77% of those reviewed), except for referral orders where the proportion was only 57%. However, we saw evidence that the case worker motivated the child or young person by reinforcing the work undertaken by others in 69% of cases and steps were taken to ensure that the child or young person fully understood the requirements of the order in 89%. This was good.

The interventions arranged by the case workers were targeted at the needs of the child or young person, and required active liaison between the case worker, specialist workers and others as appropriate. Project MAX provided interventions addressing health, drug- and alcohol-related identified needs. There were, however, gaps in the services provided to meet the general health needs of children and young people, although specific nursing resources were available for Looked After Children. It was anticipated that the recently appointed worker for dual diagnosis, who had a general paediatric nursing background, would be active in addressing these issues.

There was very good education support offered within the YOT. This was important as Bristol had one of the highest school exclusion/absence rates in the country. The majority of the YOT workers endeavoured to place the child or young person in appropriate education and training placements. However, the lack of opportunities, and support for those children and

young people who had experienced difficulties, meant that 25% of those aged under 16 years with the YOT were not engaged in any form of education and training. In order to combat this problem, the YOT had developed its own in-house education scheme, and individual case workers had done their utmost to locate placements and liaise with schools in order to ensure that children and young people were provided with appropriate opportunities. From the file reading exercise, we found that actions taken by the case worker had had a positive result in 60% of cases where the child or young person was experiencing difficulty with their schooling. These results were commendable, particularly when considering that staff were undertaking this work without the benefit of a senior worker to provide the links in the community and to liaise with providers including schools and colleges. We hope that the new education manager will provide this facility in the future.

Good news

One young person had rarely attended school and left without any formal qualifications. One of the part-time literacy workers and the case worker set up a programme of one-to-one basic skill sessions, and arranged for a work experience placement at a garage. They had already identified that he was keen on motor mechanics so he was well motivated to study and was offered a full-time apprenticeship. At the time of the inspection he was in full-time employment and had not reoffended.

We found that 70% of young people aged over 16 had contact with a Connexions advisor through the YOT, and Connexions had committed three full-time workers to the YOT to help children and young people find placement in full-time ETE.

Good news

A young person who was excluded from school, worked with a Connexions advisor, YOT education worker and her school on a reintegration package. She and the school had been provided with ongoing support by the YOT, and she had settled back into school with a new friendship group.

The interventions were appropriate for the diverse needs of the children and young people, as the majority of interventions were offered on an individual basis. A recent YJB monitor report of the YIP showed that the interventions generally reflected the gender, ethnicity and cultural needs of the group. The YOT also had access to rightTRACK, who would continue to work with the child or young person after their order had expired.

Good practice

The YOT had developed an in-house education package, which utilised the education manager and two part-time education workers, offering supported education to the children and young people engaged with the YOT. This team continued to support the child or young person after their order had finished.

In the case of DTOs, we found some good work being done on transfer from custody to the community, with an 80% follow-through on education and health issues. One area of concern was the preponderance of children and young people who were homeless on discharge and therefore released into, what many considered, inappropriate accommodation, such as bed and breakfasts or even hotels. This issue needed to be addressed at both an operational and a strategic level through the involvement of the Management Board and reference to the Supporting People agenda through the probation representative.

Good practice

Bristol had three remand carers who offered four placements between them. They worked with 11-17 year olds, regardless of the offence. The work involved close cooperation with the local social services, but these beds were ring-fenced for children and young people who had offended. One of the carers had received a National Youth Justice Award for their work. It was planned to recruit a further carer for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

The YOT had recently purchased Teen Talk, and all staff were now trained in its use. Although the YOT had made relatively little use of such interventions in the past, apart from the group sessions run by the ISSP and in Project MAX, there was evidence, from the file reading, of this increasing.

At the time of the inspection, the YJB carried out an assurance review of the Bristol ISSP and scored it as a 'good scheme'. The review team was impressed by much of its delivery, both in terms of the programme content and the underpinning structures.

During the file reading, we found frequent examples of staff either not knowing or ignoring the national standard for contact. Many files showed that contact had been offered on a weekly, rather than a twice weekly basis. Only 59% of the cases examined conformed to the national standard for the number of appointments offered and only 45% for those kept.

Breach processes also required attention. Only 61% of judgements about acceptability/unacceptability of absences were considered appropriate and breach/recall action took place within the national standard timescale in just 29% of all cases. Many children and young people were allowed five or more missed appointments before action was instigated. This issue was identified as a concern by both the Youth Bench and the CPS who considered that, whilst the situation was improving, the YOT did not enforce attendance with sufficient rigour. Enforcement clearly needed to be addressed if the YOT was not to lose the confidence of its partners in the criminal justice system and, ultimately, the public.

The police had not yet fully adopted the Home Office/YJB guidance (2002) for final warnings and the procedure needed to be reviewed. Although children and young people were bailed to a final warning clinic (held every Tuesday) the bail period rarely exceeded 14 days, not the 28 days

recommended by the Home Office/YJB guidance (2002) and was not sufficient for the YOT to carry out an assessment. The time available was further shortened by local police procedure which required the police to submit the necessary forms to their criminal justice department who would then notify the YOT, but not within the required 24 hours. As a result, the YOT often only found the numbers of children and young people attending a clinic, not their names, and never the victim details. It was unclear who actually delivered the final warning – suggestions ranged from the local inspector to the school liaison police officer, but not the YOT police officer. This meant the process lacked consistency.

Despite these difficulties the YOT, to its credit, was still able to engage with 64% of children and young people who had received a final warning in an assessment and intervention, post-clinic, and was achieving a 70% non-reoffending rate.

We were aware that a new police officer had been appointed at the time of the inspection to take on the role of victim liaison, and we welcomed this development.

Strengths:

- ◆ Case workers reinforced the work undertaken by others and worked hard to encourage and motivate the children and young people they supervised.
- ◆ Most children and young people understood the requirements of their order.

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ Supervision plans were weak.
- ◆ The level of contact with children and young people needed to be increased.
- ◆ Orders were not enforced in accordance with the national standard.
- ◆ The police had not adopted the Home Office/YJB guidance (2002) for final warnings.
- ◆ The general health needs of children and young people needed greater attention.
- ◆ Accommodation issues needed to be raised at a strategic level through Supporting People.

PARENTS/CARERS

Inspection criteria

- ◇ *Parents/carers (where appropriate) are made aware of the requirements of the interventions and are kept informed about progress during the course of the intervention.*
- ◇ *Interventions which are appropriate to the diverse needs of parents/carers are provided for, and taken up by parents/carers of children and young people who either have offended or are at risk of offending in accordance with assessed need.*

We could find no evidence that parents/carers were formally updated of their child's progress or the requirements of orders, except for final warnings and referral orders. We were aware, from talking to staff, that there was a significant amount of informal contact with the parents/carers, but this was not recorded.

Although no formal parenting programme was run by the YOT, we were informed that the new coordinator was linking with Parentline Plus (currently used by the prevention programmes) to deliver a programme for the YOT. The YOT was also able to refer parents/carers from black and minority ethnic groups to rightTRACK, who delivered a parenting programme on a voluntary basis.

Strengths:

- ◇ The prevention programmes were able to offer a parenting programme.
- ◇ A good parenting programme was available to black and minority ethnic parents/carers.

Area for improvement:

- ◇ A parenting programme needed to be developed by the YOT for both voluntary and court orders.

2.3

Outcomes

Inspection criterion

- ◆ *Those assessed as being at risk of offending and undertaking interventions are engaged in activity to reduce their risk of offending and address their needs.*
- ◆ *For those children and young people who have offended examination of the case file provides evidence of progress and a reduction of risk factors.*
- ◆ *The YOT demonstrates a reduction in reoffending for all bands of penalties (pre-court, first tier, community penalties and custody).*
- ◆ *Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons show positive outcomes.*
- ◆ *For those children and young people who have offended, supervision plan objectives are met in areas of assessed need.*
- ◆ *Interventions for parents/carers promote effective parenting.*

Offending behaviour

For the past two years there has been an annual decrease in youth crime of 5%, for which the Bristol YOT, despite the concerns expressed within the report, must take some credit. The positive work done by the YOT staff, particularly with those at risk of offending, had clearly had an impact. The evaluation work conducted independently on the prevention programmes, indicated that the schemes helped to prevent children and young people becoming involved in crime. We also found an overall reduction in the Asset score over the course of orders, showing a reduced risk of offending.

We saw and heard good evidence to show that the YOT's prevention work was being successful. The YOT had undertaken comprehensive internal monitoring and evaluation of the YISPs. It had developed a procedure, which was to be launched at a forthcoming training day, based around data supplied by both the police and the YOT for checking reoffending at the six-month stage, post-closure. The YOT had also commissioned a consultancy firm to evaluate the YISPs and the YIPs, and the reports provided so far were positive.

We received some very positive comments about the staff and the work undertaken by the YOT and other service suppliers from our contact with the children and young people and their parents/carers. Many said that without the intervention of the YOT they would have committed further crime. We also received good feedback from the children and young people involved in the prevention programmes and were told numerous times how the YOT had turned children and young people around.

The parents/carers to whom we spoke were very complimentary about the support that they had received from the YOT staff. We did not speak to any involved in parenting programmes, partly due to the fact that the work was only just starting.

Education

Arrangements with education providers needed to be reviewed. Time and energy needed to put into establishing contacts and opportunities with a range of suppliers in order to create appropriate partnerships, which at present were underdeveloped. Although the case workers and Connexions advisors had endeavoured to set up links with providers, support at senior management level was needed to expand and augment such opportunities. The education representative on the Management Board recognised that the mainstream educational provision needed to be more responsive. Plans were underway for the reorganisation of the pupil referral units, whereby children and young people with emotional and/or learning difficulties could receive specialist support.

Similarly the learning support service and the behaviour support service were being reviewed in order that they too could provide a more flexible and responsive contribution.

School exclusions were decreasing due to the increase in professional support for schools. Attendance rates were improving and the local education authority had begun to target provision and support for children and young people and their families.

Health issues

The YOT was well supported to address the mental health and substance misuse problems of children and young people through specialist workers seconded to the team. The model of working, through Project MAX, had facilitated an integrated approach. The project's specialist nurses and drugs workers had contributed to developing the skills and capacity of the case workers, through continuing professional development sessions on topics such as anger management and by co-working with colleagues to meet the needs of individual children and young people. The integration of the Project MAX team with the other streams of work in the YOT, needed to be continually reviewed so that effective matrix-working continued to be developed.

The Project MAX staff provided tier 2/3 level CAMHS work. Priority was given to those aged 16-18 years because of the lack of any other appropriate services for adolescents and the need to manage their transition into adult services (as recommended in Adult Mental Health NSF and now Children's NSF). Access to specialist forensic CAMHS was assisted through monthly meetings with a liaison psychiatrist. There were, however, long waiting times for the general CAMHS and particular problems with access to assessment for children and young people with possible autistic spectrum disorders.

Services to meet the general health needs of children and young people who had offended required attention. It was apparent that the high level of need of some of these children and young people and the work of the YOT had not been well understood within the health care organisations in the area. There had been continuity of senior input from the health sector on the YOT steering group and now the Management Board. The intention to

align services for vulnerable children and young people and families more effectively, in line with the requirements of the green paper *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* (2004), should assist the better integration with mainstream health services.

Safeguarding

We had concerns about the interaction between the YOT and the social services department, despite the strategic involvement at Management Board level and the high number of social workers in the YOT. We found little evidence of initial contact between the YOT and social services when a case was allocated to the YOT, even for many Looked After Children. A number of staff spoke of their difficulties in liaising with social services, reflecting a lack of common understanding about the threshold criteria for referral and allocation of cases. This issue needed to be discussed at a strategic level, and guidance passed to staff in both services.

We did, however, find evidence of positive practice by the YOT. Our file reading showed that a child or young person was considered at risk of self harm in 21% of the cases examined and at risk of harm from others in 15%. Appropriate action had been taken in 92% of these cases.

Strengths:

- ◆ The Youth Justice Plan 2002-2005 showed a year-on-year reduction in youth crime.
- ◆ The independent evaluation of the prevention work was positive.
- ◆ Children and young people and parents/carers gave positive feedback of the work undertaken by the YOT.
- ◆ Strategic development at senior management level in order to provide a coherent service in education.

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ A wider range of education provision needed to be developed.
- ◆ Schools needed support in maintaining children and young people in education or moving them into appropriate provision in order to avoid exclusion.
- ◆ Interaction between the YOT and social services was inconsistent.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS/CARERS

This section is judged as satisfactorily met.

3.

VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

3.1 Assessment of the needs of victims of children and young people who have offended

Inspection criteria

- ◇ *An assessment of victims' needs should be made and used to inform planned interventions.*
- ◇ *All victims are given the opportunity to make informed decisions about their involvement in cases of children and young people who have offended and are supported in doing so.*

The YOT did not have a formal assessment tool to assess the needs of the victim, nor did it contact all victims. Our file reading exercise showed that about half of all victims were contacted in final warning cases and a third in all others. This was not satisfactory.

At present, all victims in final warning cases were contacted by one of the three police officers who dealt with final warnings within the YOT. However, this contact only took place after the final warning had been delivered as the police did not supply victim information to the YOT within 24 hours as required. The process would be improved if police within the YOT had access to victim information held by the force, via the police computer in the YOT office.

The police had recently seconded another officer to the YOT (making five in total) to act as the victim liaison officer. This person was not available during the inspection, but we were informed that he was currently responsible for only contacting victims associated with referral orders and PSRs. Our file reading showed that 50% of victims in the cases examined were invited to attend the referral panel meeting, but none actually did so.

Strength:

- ◇ A victim liaison officer had been recently appointed to the YOT by the police.

Areas for improvement:

- ◇ Not all victims were contacted and offered the same level of support.
- ◇ The YOT did not use a formal tool to assess victims' needs.
- ◇ The police did not supply the victim information within 24 hours in all cases.

3.2

Restorative interventions with the victims of children and young people who have offended

Inspection criteria

- ◇ *Victims have access to a restorative intervention tailored to their needs.*
- ◇ *Victims are offered the opportunity to specify any reparative element of the child's or young person's supervision plan and to be informed of their progress.*
- ◇ *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.*

We found limited evidence of victims' views being sought about reparation projects, but we were aware that many did ask for a letter of apology and this was provided. Referral panel members informed us that they considered the previous lack of a victim liaison officer as the prime factor in low victim involvement in the panels. They were also critical of the limited list of available reparation projects available, stating that insurance was often given as the reason.

We were informed that the restorative justice team had trained all YOT staff in restorative justice and victim/offender mediation, as well as staff working in children's homes and beat officers, so they could deal with conflicts in care homes, thereby reducing the number of criminal complaints received from children's homes.

Working within the schemes available, the YOT tried to ensure that it could meet the diverse needs of both children and young people and their victims. Reparation schemes available included litter and graffiti cleaning, delivering mail drops for community groups, as well as carpentry and art groups. The YOT also had access to a farm project in another area outside Bristol and was looking to expand its reparation programme to include, amongst other initiatives, an allotment with the produce being supplied to the elderly.

Good practice

The seconded social workers were utilising their own personal skills to help develop appropriate interventions. One had an interest in art and took children and young people to an art group where they were involved in designing and preparing leaflets about crime prevention for different community groups. The children and young people then helped to deliver posters/leaflets as part of their pay-back to the community.

Strengths:

- ◇ Case workers demonstrated imagination and commitment in developing reparation opportunities for children and young people.

- ◆ Letters of apology were sent.

Area for improvement:

- ◆ Victims needed to have more say in the type of reparation work undertaken.

3.3 Restorative outcomes for victims of children and young people who have offended

Inspection criterion

- ◆ *Victims are satisfied with the work undertaken by the YOT.*

Feedback from victims was positive and those spoken, to during the inspection, were grateful for the intervention of the YOT. We did not see any evidence of victim satisfaction surveys and their results.

Strength:

- ◆ Positive victim feedback to inspectors.

Area for improvement:

- ◆ The YOT did not appear to have sought victims' views about the service provided to them.

3.4 Restorative and reparative outcomes for children and young people who have offended

Inspection criteria

- ◆ *Children and young people involved in restorative interventions make a positive contribution to the victim and community.*

There appeared to be a comprehensive range of reparation schemes available. Those that operated in the Bristol area made a positive contribution through graffiti and litter clearing, and a number of other schemes enabled children and young people to work within their community. The mail-drop scheme, for example, allowed the delivery of material to large areas that community groups would not have been able to achieve easily.

Strength:

- ◆ The existing projects made a positive contribution to the community.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT FOR WORK WITH VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

This section is judged as partly met.

The joint inspection of YOTs

The Government announced the establishment of an independent inspection of YOTs in December 2002. The inspection programme is to be conducted jointly by CSCI, Estyn, the Healthcare Commission, HMIC, HMI Prisons, HMI Probation, Ofsted and SSIW. The joint inspection team is located within and led by HMI Probation, and is funded by the Home Office.

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 our scrutiny of work to address drug and other substance misuse, and to other relevant CJS and Children's Services' objectives.

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.

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*

Inspection arrangements

- ◇ The joint inspection programme started in September 2003, following two pilot inspections. All 155 YOTs in England and Wales are to be inspected over a five to six year cycle. As this was a long programme, we decided from the outset to break it down into three phases in order to ensure that the inspection retained its relevance and continued to address local and national concerns.
- ◇ The three phases are:
 - **from September 2003 to July 2004**, when the inspection concentrated on key issues, with emphasis placed on establishing benchmarks and the dissemination of good practice. Fifteen YOTs were inspected during this phase of the programme, all of whom were volunteers
 - **the current phase, up to September 2005**, when the inspection process will be based on the methodology established in the first phase. In so far as possible, fieldwork will be individually tailored to each YOT, informed by examination of the data available and the findings from other inspection programmes
 - **from September 2005 onwards**, when the YOT inspection methodology will be congruent with the five outcomes in the Children's Services inspection framework and complement that of the Joint Area Reviews in England. Although the YOT inspection will remain a separate process, inspections will run within a similar timeframe as the Joint Area Reviews where possible, so that areas of potential overlap and duplication can be reduced and rationalised. Findings from the YOT inspection will, therefore, inform not only the Joint Area Review but also the Annual Performance Assessment and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Work is currently being undertaken to ensure that this process is compatible with the different governance arrangements in Wales.
- ◇ The inspection will be carried out in line with the Government's commitment to proportionate and coordinated inspection in local government. It will:
 - be proportionate to risk, and fieldwork will only be undertaken where necessary to support findings or to disseminate good practice
 - complement, and be coordinated with other inspection programmes, including the Joint Area Reviews and comparable inspection processes in Wales
 - take account of YOTs' recent development as organisations.
- ◇ The standards and criteria developed for the first phase of the inspection have been slightly modified and focus on:
 - management and partnership arrangements
 - work with children and young people and their parents/carers
 - victims and restorative justice.

- ◆ The fieldwork for each individual inspection will take place over two weeks, about two to three weeks apart. The first week will consist of a file reading exercise for which the YOT will be asked to identify a random sample of between 30 and 80 children and young people (dependent on the workload) who have been subject to some form of intervention in the previous months. The cases will cover most orders, including licences.
- ◆ These case files will be examined in detail. In half the cases selected, we will also undertake in-depth interviews with the case manager, any other person significantly involved in delivering the intervention and, where possible, the child or young person themselves and their parents/carers. Where appropriate, we also hope to meet and hear from victims of crimes by children and young people supervised by the YOT.
- ◆ 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, to the inspection team for the duration of the file reading week. We have found this to be a positive way of developing mutual understanding and strengthening the links between inspection and practice.
- ◆ As before, the second week of the inspection will involve meetings with the Chief Executive, Management Board members, YOT Manager and staff. It will cover the management of the YOT, its performance and the contribution made by its partner organisations. Discussions will be informed by the findings of the examination of case files conducted in the first week of inspection.
- ◆ The inspection findings will be compiled in a report which will include 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 will be submitted to the Home Secretary, as the Secretary of State responsible for youth justice, with simultaneous copies to the Education and Health Secretaries, and where relevant, the Ministers for Education & Lifelong Learning, Finance, Local Government & Communities, and Health & Social Services in Wales. A copy will be sent to the YJB. Copies will also be made available to the press and placed on the website of HMI Probation at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/probation/inspprob>

Scoring approach

We have decided to continue a similar approach to scoring in phase two as in phase one, in order to allow some broad comparisons of performance, but with certain provisos. First of all, it should be noted that this second phase of the inspection covers only three core areas, rather than five as in the first phase. In addition, as part of our aim of continually improving performance, two of the categorisations, 'good' and 'good basis for development' (formerly described as 'satisfactory with good basis for development'), have been amended, and whilst exacting a more rigorous standard of performance from the YOT also, we believe, allow for better representation of their actual achievements.

The three sections of the inspection will be individually assessed against the relevant standards, using the supporting criteria. Judgements will be 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
- ◆ other relevant inspection findings.

The judgements are defined as:

- ◆ **Fully met** – exceptional performance beyond the requirements of national standards and other relevant guidelines
- ◆ **Satisfactorily met** – a sufficient level of performance to assure the joint inspection team that the YOT is progressing satisfactorily
- ◆ **Partly met** – less than sufficient performance on the majority of items
- ◆ **Not met** – inadequate performance on most items.

Some discretion is allowed to lead inspectors for scores to be adjusted if this seems appropriate due to other findings or contextual evidence.

The overall assessment will be determined by the judgements of the individual sections. As in the first phase of the inspection process, no score or grading will be given during this second phase, but instead a general categorisation highlighting particular achievements as well as areas for improvement. This approach was initially adopted as we felt that a more rigid scoring mechanism would be inappropriate given the developmental nature of much of the work of the YOTs and their relatively recent inauguration as organisations.

The overall performance of the YOT will be assessed as:

- ◆ **Commendable** – there is strong management performance and exemplary work with both children and young people and in relation to victims and restorative justice. These YOTs will be setting a standard of excellence which will act as an example to others.
- ◆ **Good** – either the section relating to management or work with children and young people is fully met and the other sections are at least satisfactorily met. YOTs within this category will have addressed most, if not all, key areas of work and be achieving a high standard of performance.
- ◆ **Good basis for development** – the sections relating to management arrangements and work with children and young people are both assessed as satisfactorily met and work with victims and restorative justice is being taken forward. Although some key areas will still require attention, these YOTs will have demonstrated good potential and their work will be sufficient to promote confidence in their future development.
- ◆ **Requiring improvement** – either the section on management arrangements or work with children and young people is assessed as partly or not met. In these instances, the inspection will have revealed concerns about key aspects of the YOT's performance which need to be addressed.
- ◆ **Requiring significant improvement** – neither the section on management arrangements or work with children and young people is considered to have been satisfactorily met. YOTs within this category will need to take immediate action to address major concerns about core areas of work.

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.
- ◆ Implementation of the recommendations will be monitored by the YJB. 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 Bristol YOT has not revealed any such concerns.
- ◆ In addition to the reports on individual YOTs, the joint inspection team will also publish periodic reports on findings across a number of teams. Such reports will include comments on race equality and diversity issues and other trend information. These reports will also include comparisons between the performance of YOTs with similar characteristics.