



News Release

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Arolygiad ar y Cyd Cyfiawnder Troseddol

6 February 2013

EMBARGOED: NOT FOR USE UNTIL 00:01, THURSDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2013

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY OFFEND: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO PREVENT REOFFENDING

Reoffending by children and young people who commit sexual offences can be prevented, but opportunities to intervene early were often missed by professionals, according to independent inspectors. Today they published the report of a joint inspection on children and young people who sexually offend.

The report, *Examining Multi-agency Responses to Children and Young People who Sexually Offend*, reflects the findings of HM Inspectorate of Probation, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, Estyn and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales. Inspectors focused on the quality of the work undertaken with these young people and its outcomes, how the different agencies worked together and what had been achieved. These children form a very small proportion of those who offend, but their behaviour is estimated to account for more than a tenth of all sexual offending and the impact can be extremely damaging.

Inspectors found that most children and young people complied with their order, engaged well with work undertaken to address their offending and the majority had not reoffended at all. However, interventions could have taken place earlier.

Inspectors also found that:

- cases were slow to get to court, and took an average eight months between disclosure and sentence, resulting in lengthy periods when little or no work was done with the young person;
- despite some examples of good practice, much work was characterised by poor communication between the relevant agencies, with inadequate assessment and joint planning;
- many young people had complex and multiple needs and positive examples of holistic interventions to address these delivered by a range of agencies were rare;
- once these children had been picked up by the justice system, their chances for rehabilitation improved and they clearly benefitted from the child-focused approach by YOT workers; and
- despite some successful outcomes, there was little evidence of routine evaluation at a strategic level of the quality of effectiveness of multi-agency work.

Chief Inspector of Probation, Liz Calderbank, said on behalf of all inspectorates:

“The behaviour of this small but significant group of children and young people can be extremely damaging, often involving other children as victims. Yet the evidence from our inspection is that these children and young people do respond to intervention from the youth offending teams and can be prevented from reoffending before developing entrenched patterns of behaviour.

“We were therefore very concerned to find that a sizeable number of these children had been referred on previous occasions to children’s services but the significance of their sexual behaviour was either not recognised or dismissed. This, to us, represented a lost opportunity, both for the children themselves and their potential victims.”

Inspectors made a number of recommendations to criminal justice agencies, children's services and social services.

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For further information, please contact Jane Parsons, HMI Probation press office on 020 7035 2123 or 07880 787452.

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Probation website from 7 February 2013 at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-probation/inspection-reports-thematic>.
2. Inspectors visited seven youth offending teams (YOTs) and examined 24 cases in depth. The youth offending teams visited were: Bolton, Tower Hamlets, Sheffield, Cornwall/Plymouth, Birmingham, Lancashire and Vale of Glamorgan.
3. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is an independent inspectorate, sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, and reporting directly to the Secretary of State on the effectiveness of work with individual adults, children and young people who offend, aimed at reducing reoffending and protecting the public.
4. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces and authorities to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence. HMIC inspects and regulates all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the British Transport Police and HMRC.
5. Ofsted regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.
6. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent inspectorate, inspecting places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.
7. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. The CQC makes sure that care in hospitals, dental practices, ambulances, care homes, people's own homes and elsewhere meets government standards of quality and safety. The CQC also protects the interests of vulnerable people, including those whose rights are restricted under the Mental Health Act.
8. Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) is the independent inspectorate and regulator of all healthcare in Wales. HIW's primary focus is on: making a significant contribution to improving the safety and quality of healthcare services in Wales, improving citizens' experience of healthcare in Wales whether as a patient, service user, carer, relative or employee, strengthening the voice of patients and the public in the way health services are reviewed and ensuring that timely, useful, accessible and relevant information about the safety and quality of healthcare in Wales is made available to all.

9. Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) encourages the improvement of social care, early years and social services by regulating, inspecting, reviewing and providing professional advice to Ministers and policy makers. CSSIW carries out its functions on behalf of Welsh Ministers, and although it is part of the department of Local Government and Communities (LGC) within the Welsh Government, there are a number of safeguards in place to ensure its operational independence. Its vision and values are geared towards ensuring that service users' experiences are at the heart of its work. Its duty is to assure the citizens of Wales of the quality and safety of social care services through inspections. CSSIW inspections provide accountability for the public and learning for stakeholders through exemplars and sustained service improvements. For further information please visit the website www.cssiw.org.uk.
10. Estyn is the Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales. Its aim is to achieve excellence for all in learning in Wales. It does this by providing an independent, high-quality inspection and advice service. Its vision is to be recognised through the expertise of its staff as an authoritative voice on learning in Wales. It is independent from, but funded by, the Welsh Assembly Government (under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998). For further information please visit the website, www.estyn.gov.uk.