



# News Release

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Arolygiad ar y Cyd Cyfiawnder Troseddol

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## **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUTH OFFENDING: MOVES CAN HAMPER REHABILITATION**

Children in care who are placed away from their home area and who have also offended are ill-equipped to lead productive and law-abiding lives and this must change, said independent inspectors. Today they publish a report of a joint inspection on the work of youth offending teams with this group of children and young people.

The report, *Looked After Children: An inspection of the work of Youth Offending Teams with children and young people who are Looked After and placed away from home*, reflects the findings of HM Inspectorate of Probation, Ofsted and Estyn. Inspectors sought to find out how effectively youth offending teams worked with this small yet highly vulnerable group and how well they planned and co-ordinated their work with colleagues in other agencies.

Despite the hard work and effort of many YOT staff, the overall outcomes and future life chances for these children and young people are extremely poor. The fact that they were away from their home areas and were moved frequently militated against their chances of rehabilitation. The fact of being looked after could escalate a child into the criminal justice system.

Inspectors found that:

- although YOT staff worked hard to develop good relationships with these children and young people to deliver constructive interventions, many

failed to appreciate fully the emotional impact of being looked after and in residential care;

- it was often difficult to see from the assessments why many were placed away from their home locality;
- being in care often meant that young people were brought into the criminal justice system at an earlier point than those who were not looked after;
- the aspirations that many workers, across all services, had for looked after children were often woefully low;
- the lives of looked after children were fragmented and links with family and friends were often disrupted, as were education and training opportunities; and
- information-sharing between children's services and youth offending teams needed to improve.

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

"This very specific group of children and young people are among the most damaged in the care system. By the time they are placed out of area it is likely that most will have had a number of placements fail. They are vulnerable and, in some cases, potentially dangerous. They need both protection and work to help them stop offending. At the same time, others may need to be protected from them. Work to engage, help and support them is difficult and is made significantly more so when they are moved around. While there is much commitment and hard work accorded them by YOT staff and others, agencies do not always work effectively together in the best interests of the child or young person. Despite the allocation of significant resources, they have poor initial and longer term outcomes."

- Ends -

**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 18 December 2012 at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-probation/inspection-reports-thematic>.
2. Inspectors visited six areas where youth offending teams (YOTs) were asked to identify, where possible, ten cases, five of which they were supervising on behalf of other local authorities and five of their own cases being supervised by other YOTs. Inspectors then assessed the quality of the work carried out by the agencies involved. The data was supplemented by information gathered from a number of YOTs which were not part of the main fieldwork. The six areas visited were: Blackpool, Halton & Warrington, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Somerset, West London and Wrexham. The choice of sites was informed by the number of children's homes in the area. Five of these had a concentration of children and young people who were placed in the area by outside local authorities. The sixth, London, had very few children and young people placed there from outside of the area. Fieldwork was undertaken between January and March 2012.
3. HM 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. 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.
5. Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. It is independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales.