



Inspection of
Youth
Offending

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Arolygiad ar y Cyd Cyfiawnder Troseddol

Core Case Inspection of youth offending work in England and Wales

Report on youth offending
work in:

Sefton

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Foreword

This Core Case Inspection of youth offending work in Sefton took place as part of the Inspection of Youth Offending programme. We have examined a representative sample of youth offending cases from the area, and we have judged how often the Public Protection and the Safeguarding aspects of the work were done to a sufficiently high level of quality. Our findings will also feed into the wider annual Comprehensive Area Assessment process.

We judged that the Safeguarding aspects of the work were done well enough 38% of the time. With the Public Protection aspects, work to keep to a minimum each individual's *Risk of Harm to others* was done well enough 36% of the time, and the work to make each individual less likely to reoffend was done well enough 50% of the time. A more detailed analysis of our findings is provided in the main body of this report, and summarised in a table in Appendix 1.

Overall, we consider this an extremely disappointing set of findings. Seven of the eight inspection criteria require substantial or drastic improvement, and we found very little evidence of effective management oversight of practice.

At the time of the inspection there was no YOT Manager active in post. A deputy manager post had been vacant for some time. The most senior member of the management team remaining was an operational manager for one of the three sites.

Although there was an awareness of the shortcomings of the YOT within the Management Board, there were, as yet, no clear proposals for change. It was not clear how the necessary improvements would be achieved. Therefore, remedial work needs to be planned now, and then implemented. We will reinspect in a year's time.

Andrew Bridges
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

June 2009

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Scoring – and Summary Table

This report provides percentage scores for each of the 'practice criteria' – essentially indicating how often each aspect of work met the level of quality we were looking for. In these inspections we focus principally on the Public Protection and Safeguarding aspects of the work in each case sample.

Accordingly, we are able to provide a score that represents how often the *Public Protection* and *Safeguarding* aspects of the cases we assessed met the level of quality we were looking for, which we summarise here.

We also provide a headline 'Comment' by each score, to indicate whether we consider that this aspect of work now requires either **MINIMUM**, **MODERATE**, **SUBSTANTIAL** or **DRASTIC** improvement in the immediate future.

Safeguarding score:	
This score indicates the percentage of <i>Safeguarding</i> work that we judged to have met a sufficiently high level of quality. This score is substantial in helping us to decide whether an early further inspection is needed.	
Score: 38%	Comment: DRASTIC improvement required

Public Protection – Risk of Harm score:	
This score indicates the percentage of <i>Risk of Harm</i> work that we judged to have met a sufficiently high level of quality. This score is substantial in helping us to decide whether an early further inspection is needed.	
Score: 36%	Comment: DRASTIC improvement required

Public Protection - Likelihood of Reoffending score:	
This score indicates the percentage of <i>Likelihood of Reoffending</i> work that we judged to have met a sufficiently high level of quality.	
Score: 50%	Comment: SUBSTANTIAL improvement required

We advise readers of reports not to attempt close comparisons of scores between areas. Such comparisons are not necessarily valid as the sizes of samples vary slightly, as does the profile of cases included in each area's sample. We believe the scoring is best seen as a headline summary of what we have found in an individual area, and providing a focus for future improvement work within that area.

Recommendations (primary responsibility is indicated in brackets)

Changes are necessary to ensure that, in a much higher proportion of cases:

- (1) a timely and good quality assessment and plan, using Asset, is completed when the case starts (YOT Manager, when appointed)
- (2) specifically, a timely and good quality assessment of the individual's vulnerability and *Risk of Harm to others* is completed, as appropriate to the specific case, liaising with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and children's services as necessary (YOT Manager)
- (3) as a consequence of the assessment, the intervention plan is specific about what will now be done in order to safeguard the young person's wellbeing, to make him/her less likely to reoffend, and to minimise any identified *Risk of Harm to others* (YOT Manager)
- (4) the plan of work with the case is regularly reviewed with a frequency consistent with national standards for youth offending services (YOT Manager)
- (5) the case manager clearly retains the active role of managing the case even when interventions are being provided by others (YOT Manager)
- (6) there is evidence in the file of regular quality assurance by management, as appropriate to the specific case (YOT Manager)

Furthermore:

- (7) the vacant YOT Manager post should be filled as soon as possible (Chair of Management Board)
- (8) the management arrangements and structure for the YOT should be reviewed and all identified posts filled as soon as possible (Chair of Management Board)

Next steps

An improvement plan addressing the recommendations should be submitted to HM Inspectorate of Probation four weeks after the publication of this inspection report. Once finalised, the plan will be forwarded to the Youth Justice Board to monitor its implementation.

We will undertake a reinspection in approximately twelve months time in view of these extremely disappointing inspection findings.

Service users' perspective

Children and young people

Two children and young people completed a questionnaire for the inspection.

- ◇ The YOT was unable to facilitate a sufficient level of questionnaire returns from children and young people for any judgements to be made.

Victims

Four questionnaires were completed by victims of offending by children and young people.

- ◇ The YOT was unable to facilitate a sufficient level of questionnaire returns from victims for any judgements to be made.

1. ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING

1.1 Risk of Harm to others:

General Criterion:

The assessment of RoH is comprehensive, accurate and timely, takes victims' issues into account and uses Asset and other relevant assessment tools. Plans are in place to manage RoH.

Score:

46%

Comment:

SUBSTANTIAL improvement required

Strengths:

- (9) A full RoSH assessment was carried out in each of the four cases where the need had been indicated by the screening process.
- (10) Where there had been a RoSH screening, inspectors agreed with the recorded *RoH* in nearly all cases.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) In 28% of cases, there had been no RoSH screening. Less than half of RoSH screenings were done on time, and only a fifth were of sufficient quality.
- (2) Of the four cases requiring a full RoSH assessment, only one had been completed to a sufficient standard and on time.
- (3) Risk management plans had not been completed in any of the three cases where they were required.
- (4) In the one case that had been (correctly) identified as a MAPPA case by another YOT, there had been no referral to the local MAPPP when Sefton commenced caretaking the case or when the case was accepted as a transfer. There had been no assessment of the case by Sefton Youth Offending Team.
- (5) There had been no effective management oversight of the RoSH assessments.

1.2 Likelihood of Reoffending:

General Criterion:

The assessment of the LoR is comprehensive, accurate and timely and uses Asset and other relevant assessment tools. Plans are in place to reduce LoR.

Score:

45%

Comment:

SUBSTANTIAL improvement required

Strengths:

- (1) There had been an initial assessment of the LoR in 85% of cases inspected.
- (2) In 74% of cases there was an intervention plan. The intervention had sufficiently addressed criminogenic and Safeguarding factors in 65% of these cases.
- (3) In 86% of relevant cases, attitudes to offending were appropriately addressed. Thinking and behaviour and drugs issues had been addressed in 82% and 81% of cases respectively.
- (4) Intervention plans reflected the sentencing purpose accurately in 94% of relevant cases.
- (5) In 83% of relevant cases the secure establishment had been actively and meaningfully engaged in the sentence planning process.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Where there had been an initial assessment of the LoR, we judged it to be sufficient in only 29% of cases. The main causes of the assessments being insufficient were unclear and/ or insufficient evidence, lack of timeliness and a failure to identify vulnerability issues.
- (2) In less than half of the relevant cases had there been sufficient engagement with the child or young person at the initial assessment stage. Very few initial assessments had been informed by use of the Asset "What do you think?" questionnaire. This tool was often used subsequently, but rarely used to inform the planning process.
- (3) The initial assessment had been informed by contact with children's social care services in only 22% of cases.
- (4) There had been sufficient active engagement with parents/ carers at the initial assessment in only 62% of relevant cases.

- (5) The initial assessment had been reviewed at appropriate intervals in only 25% of cases. The intervention plan had been reviewed in only 18% of cases.
- (6) In only one relevant case had the RMP been integrated with the intervention plan. In only 52% of cases did the intervention plan give a clear structure to the order. In slightly less than half of the relevant cases had the plan accurately reflected national standards.
- (7) Children and young people had themselves been actively involved in the planning process in only 55% of cases.

1.3 Safeguarding:	
General Criterion: <i>The assessment of safeguarding needs is comprehensive, accurate and timely and uses Asset and other relevant assessment tools. Plans are in place to manage Safeguarding and reduce vulnerability.</i>	
Score: 28%	Comment: DRASTIC improvement required

Strengths:

- (1) 71% of cases contained an Asset vulnerability screening.
- (2) Vulnerability issues had been communicated to the secure establishment at the point of sentence as required in all but one relevant case.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Only 40% of the Asset vulnerability screenings had been completed on time.
- (2) The assessment of Safeguarding had been completed to a sufficient standard in only 13% of cases. The assessment of Safeguarding was reviewed as appropriate in only 10% of cases.
- (3) We judged that there should have been a vulnerability plan in nine of the cases inspected. Only one plan had been completed; this had been completed on time and to a sufficient standard.
- (4) In only two cases had there been effective management oversight of the vulnerability assessment.

**OVERALL SCORE for quality of Assessment and Sentence Planning work:
42%**

COMMENTARY on Assessment and Sentence Planning as a whole:

A timely and good quality assessment and plan, using Asset, must be completed for every YOT case to ensure that relevant needs are identified, and work is planned accordingly. Amongst other things, this assessment should cover the *RoH*, LoR and vulnerability for that child or young person at that time.

In a small number of cases there was no evidence that this had happened at all. In a further number of cases it was clear that, although an assessment had been undertaken, it had not been done at the appropriate time, and had not been used in the planning process.

In nine cases there had been no RoSH or vulnerability screening. In five cases there had been no assessment of the LoR. Where the assessment had been undertaken it was too often incomplete or of a poor quality. There was often insufficient evidence of engagement with children's social care, other services and parents/ carers in the assessment. Some case managers did not view the completion of an assessment as essential to the planning of an intervention.

The split between case management and interventions appeared to contribute to a lack of ownership from case managers, who often saw those delivering interventions as responsible for the case. Those delivering interventions would often oversee the completion of the "*What do you think?*" section of the assessment although there was little evidence that this information was used by the case manager.

The lack of initial assessments, the poor quality of some of the completed assessments, lack of reviews and of management oversight is reflected in the score for this section.

2. DELIVERY AND REVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS

2.1 Protecting the public by minimising Risk of Harm to others:

General Criterion:

All reasonable actions have been taken to protect the public by keeping to a minimum the child or young person's RoH to others.

Score:

29%

Comment:

DRASTIC improvement required

Strength:

- (1) Appropriate resources had been allocated consistent with the assessed *RoH* throughout the sentence in 72% of cases.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) *RoH to others* had been reviewed no later than three months from the start of the sentence in only 15% of cases. In no cases had the *RoH* been reviewed as a result of a substantial change in circumstances.
- (2) There was poor understanding of the MAPPA process leading to a lack of information sharing in the one relevant case.
- (3) In only 37% of relevant cases had a purposeful home visit been carried out throughout the course of the sentence to address Safeguarding issues.
- (4) A high priority had been given to victim safety in only one of the nine cases where this was an issue.

2.2 Reducing the Likelihood of Reoffending:

General Criterion:

The case manager coordinates and facilitates the structured delivery of all elements of the intervention plan.

Score:

53%

Comment:

SUBSTANTIAL improvement required

Strengths:

- (1) Interventions delivered in the community had been designed to reduce the LoR in 78% of cases.
- (2) The YOT worker had actively engaged the parents/ carers of children and young people subject to custodial sentences in nearly all cases. Parents/ carers of children and young people subject to community orders had been actively engaged in 75% of cases.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Only a little over half of the interventions had been delivered in line with an intervention plan.
- (2) Delivered interventions in the community had incorporated all relevant diversity issues in only 41% of cases.
- (3) Reviews of community interventions had been carried out as required in only 11% of cases.

2.3 Safeguarding the child or young person:

General Criterion:

All reasonable actions have been taken to safeguard and reduce the vulnerability of the child or young person.

Score:

52%

Comment:

SUBSTANTIAL improvement required

Strengths:

- (1) In all relevant cases all necessary immediate action had been taken to safeguard and protect children and young people sentenced to custody.
- (2) For those sentenced to custody, all necessary immediate actions had been taken to safeguard and protect other affected children and young people in all relevant cases.
- (3) For those subject to community sentences, the YOT staff had worked with ETE staff to promote the safeguarding and the well-being of children and young people in 75% of cases. Where substance misuse was an issue, YOT staff had worked with the relevant service provider in 69% of cases.
- (4) The YOT had worked with ETE staff to promote the safeguarding and the well-being of children and young people in 86% of custody cases. Where substance misuse was an issue, YOT staff had worked with the relevant service provider in 69% of cases.
- (5) There had been good joint working to promote the safeguarding and the well-being of children and young people in custody between the YOT and the

secure establishment in nearly all relevant cases. Staff had supported and promoted the well-being of the child or young person throughout the custodial sentence in 80% of cases.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) All necessary immediate action had been taken to safeguard and protect children and young people sentenced in the community in only 56% of relevant cases.
- (2) All necessary immediate action to safeguard other affected children and young people in community cases had been taken in only 25% of relevant cases.
- (3) For those serving sentences in the community, YOT staff had worked together with children's services in only 20% of the relevant cases. Where there were physical health problems, there had been joint work with the relevant service provider in only 25% of cases. For emotional and mental health services the figure was 20%.
- (4) Specific interventions to promote Safeguarding in the community were identified in only 59% of relevant cases. None of these had been reviewed as required.
- (5) There had been sufficient management oversight of Safeguarding and vulnerability issues in only 28% of cases.

OVERALL SCORE for quality of Delivery and Review of Interventions work: 45%

COMMENTARY on Delivery and Review of Interventions as a whole:

Interventions were mainly delivered at the Hornby centre by staff in an interventions team. Generally, levels of contact were in accordance with national standards, and in the case of some Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme cases were very extensive. But in too many cases these interventions had been insufficiently guided by an appropriate initial assessment, and too frequently the case managers failed to maintain the active role of managing the case, with few examples of reviews. Furthermore there was little evidence of sufficient oversight by management, for quality assurance purposes.

3. OUTCOMES

3.1 Achievement of Outcomes:

General Criterion:

Outcomes are achieved in relation to RoH, LoR and Safeguarding.

Score:

41%

Comment:

DRASTIC improvement required

Strength:

- (1) In 70% of cases, the child or young person had complied with the requirements of the sentence.

Areas for Improvement:

- (1) Where children and young people had not complied with the requirements of the sentence, enforcement action had been taken sufficiently well in 67% of cases. Practice over the marking of absences as acceptable or unacceptable was not consistent. It was not always possible to tell from the case record whether an acceptable reason for an absence had been provided, or whether the absence had simply been overlooked.
- (2) We assessed that in just 29% of cases had the *RoH* been effectively managed.
- (3) There had been a reduction in criminogenic factors in only 31% of cases. The factors most frequently showing improvement were thinking and behaviour, attitude to offending and motivation to change. Often there were also improvements with regard to substance misuse and ETE.
- (4) There had been a reduction in risk factors linked to Safeguarding in only 28% of relevant cases.
- (5) In only half of the relevant cases had all reasonable action been taken to keep children and young people safe.

3.2 Sustaining Outcomes:

General Criterion:

Outcomes are sustained in relation to RoH, LoR and Safeguarding.

Score:

68 %

Comment:

MODERATE improvement required

Strengths:

- (1) Full attention had been given to community integration issues during the custodial phase of the sentence in 80% of relevant cases.
- (2) Action had been taken to ensure that positive outcomes during the custodial phase of the sentence were sustainable in 80% of cases.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Full attention had been given to community integration issues during community sentences in 65% of relevant cases.
- (2) Action had been taken to ensure that positive outcomes during community sentences were sustainable in 62% of cases.

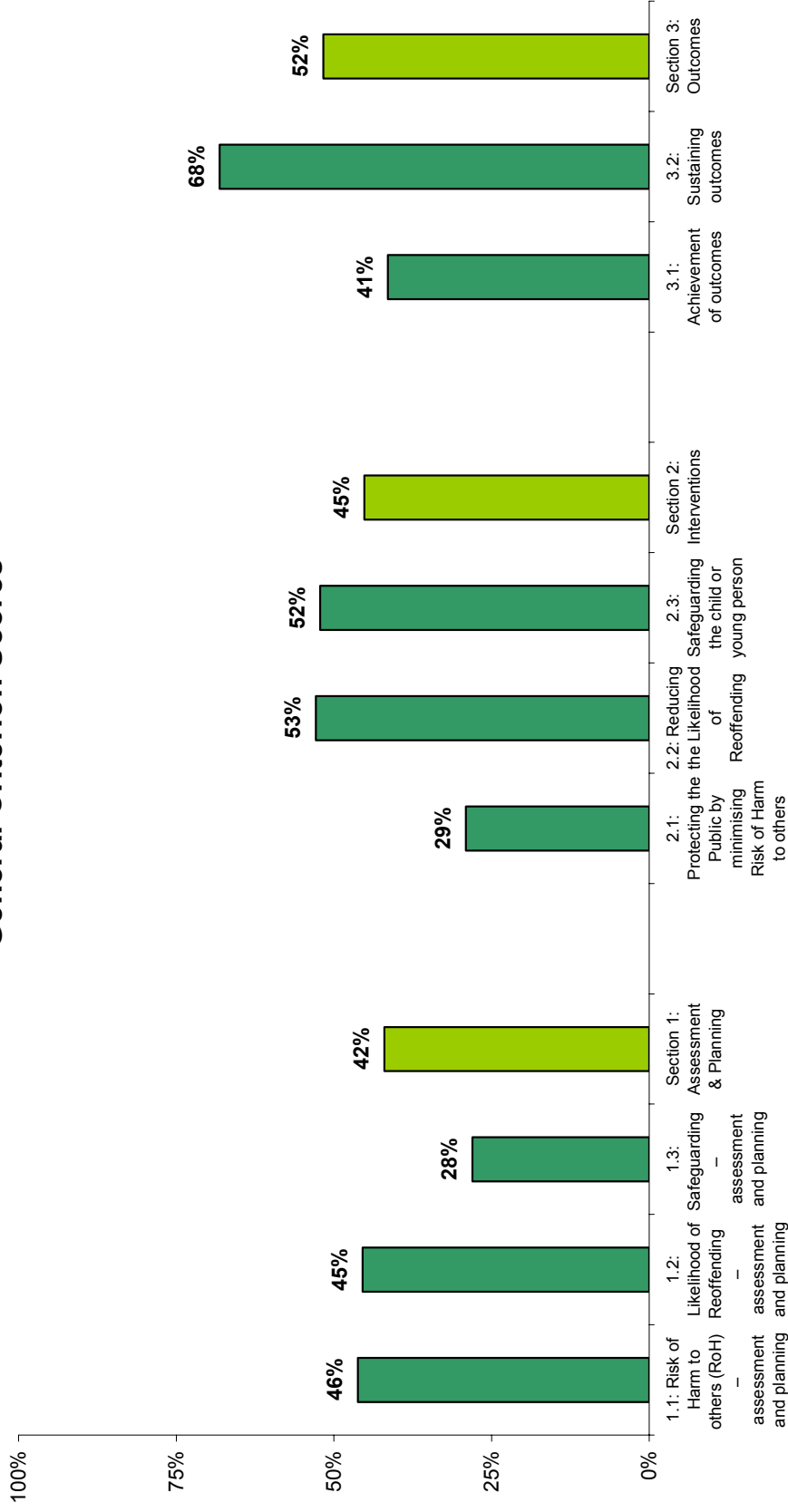
OVERALL SCORE for quality of Outcomes work: 52%

COMMENTARY on Outcomes as a whole:

In the relatively small number of cases sentenced to imprisonment, full attention had been paid to community integration issues in most cases. However, overall, there had been very limited reductions in *RoH*, *LoR* and risk factors linked to Safeguarding. Practice with regard to enforcement was not found to be consistent.

Appendix 1: Summary

Sefton CCI April 2009 General Criterion Scores



Appendix 2: Contextual information

Area

Sefton YOT was located in the North West region of England.

The area had a population of 283,000 as measured in the Census 2001, 11.2% of which were aged ten to 17 years old. This was slightly higher than the average for England/ Wales, which was 10.4%.

The population of Sefton was predominantly white British. The population with a black and minority ethnic heritage (1.6%) was below the average for England/ Wales of 8.7%.

Reported crime levels in 2008/09 for children and young people aged 10 to 17 years old across the area, at 38 per 1,000, were below the average for England/ Wales of 46.

YOT

The YOT boundaries were within those of the Merseyside police and probation areas.

The YOT was located within the children's services team of the local authority and was managed by the YOT Manager.

The YOT Management Board was chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's Services.

The YOT headquarters was located in Bootle Police station. The operational work of the YOT was based in an adjacent office, with most interventions delivered from the Hornby resource centre elsewhere in the borough.

YJB Performance Data

The YJB summary of national indicators available at the time of the inspection was for the period April 2008 to March 2009.

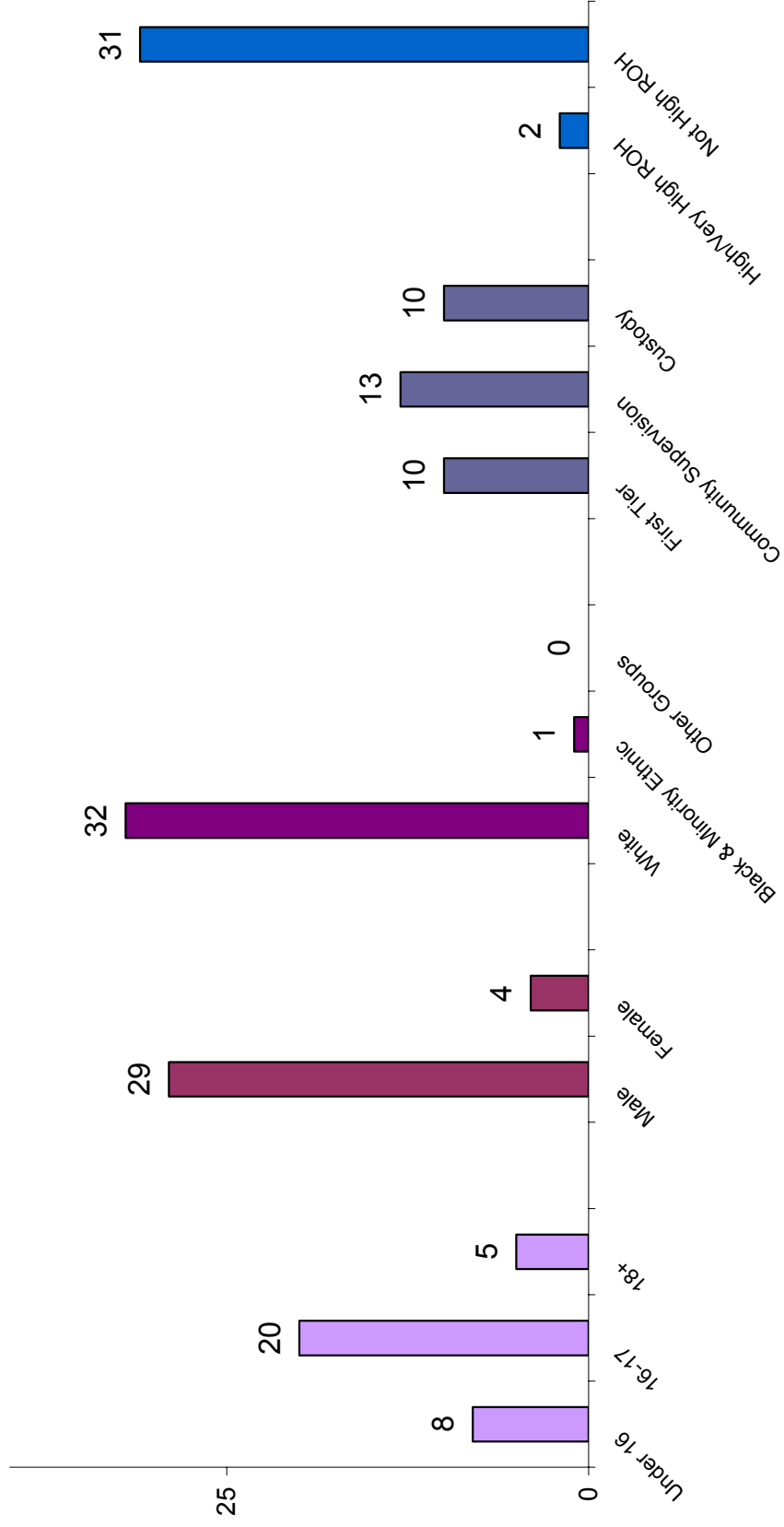
Sefton's performance on ensuring children and young people known to the YOT were in suitable education, training or employment was 88%. This was worse than in the previous year, but above the England average of 72%.

Performance on ensuring suitable accommodation by the end of the sentence was 97%. This was worse than on the previous year and better than the England average of 95%.

The "Reoffending rate after 9 months" was 64%, which was better than the England average of 85% (See Glossary).

Appendix 3a: Inspection Data Chart

Case sample information: Sefton



Appendix 3b: Inspection data

Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in April 2009.

The inspection consisted of:

- ◇ examination of practice in a sample of cases, normally in conjunction with the case manager or other representative
- ◇ evidence in advance
- ◇ questionnaire responses from children and young people, and victims.

We have also seen YJB performance data and assessments relating to this YOT.

Appendix 4: Role of HMI Probation and Code of Practice

Information on the Role of HMI Probation and Code of Practice can be found on our website:

<http://www.inspectorates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprobation>

The Inspectorate is a public body. Anyone wishing to comment on an inspection, a report or any other matter falling within its remit should write to:

*HM Chief Inspector of Probation
2nd Floor, Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London, SW1P 2BQ*

Appendix 5: Glossary

ASB / ASBO	Antisocial behaviour / Antisocial Behaviour Order
Asset	A structured assessment tool based on research and developed by the Youth Justice Board looking at the young person's offence, personal circumstances, attitudes and beliefs which have contributed to their offending behaviour
CAF	Common Assessment Framework: A standardised assessment of a child or young person's needs, and of how those needs can be met. It is undertaken by the lead professional in a case, with contributions from all others involved with that individual.
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services: part of the National Health Service, providing specialist mental health and behavioural services to children and young people up to at least 16 years of age.
Careworks	One of the two electronic case management systems for Youth Offending work currently in use in England & Wales. See also YOIS+
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
DTO	Detention & Training Order, a custodial sentence for the young
Estyn	HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
ETE	Employment, training and education. Work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HM	Her Majesty's
HMIC	HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HMI Prisons	HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HMI Probation	HM Inspectorate of Probation
Interventions; <i>constructive</i> and <i>restrictive</i> interventions	<p>Work with an individual that is designed to change their offending behaviour and/or to support public protection.</p> <p>A <i>constructive</i> intervention is where the primary purpose is to reduce Likelihood of Reoffending.</p> <p>A <i>restrictive</i> intervention is where the primary purpose is to keep to a minimum the individual's <i>Risk of Harm to others</i>.</p> <p>Example: with a sex offender, a <i>constructive intervention</i> might be to put them through an accredited sex offender programme; a <i>restrictive intervention</i> (to minimise their <i>Risk of Harm</i>) might be to monitor regularly and meticulously their accommodation, their employment and the places they frequent, imposing and enforcing clear restrictions as appropriate to each case.</p> <p>NB Both types of intervention are important.</p>
ISSP	Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme – this intervention is attached to the start of some orders and licenses and provides initially at least 25 hours programme contact including a significant proportion of ETE
LoR	Likelihood of Reoffending. See also <i>constructive</i> Interventions
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board – set up in each local authority (as a result of the Children Act 2004) to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of the multiagency work to

	safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality.
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements: where probation, police, prison and other agencies work together locally to manage offenders who are of a higher <i>Risk of Harm to others</i> .
MAPPP	Multi-agency Public Protection Panel.
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services & Skills – the Inspectorate for those services in England (not Wales, for which see Estyn)
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PPO	'Prolific and other Priority Offender' – designated offenders, adult or young, who receive extra attention from the CJS agencies.
Pre-CAF	This is a simple 'Request for Service' in those instances when a CAF may not be required. It can be used for requesting one or two additional services, e.g. health, social care or educational.
PSR	Pre-Sentence report - for a Court
"Reoffending after 9 months"	A measure used by the YJB. It indicates how many further offences are recorded as having been committed in a 9-month period by individuals under current supervision of the relevant YOT, and it can be either more or less than 100%. "110%" would therefore mean that exactly 110 further offences have been counted as having been committed 'per 100 individuals under supervision' in that period. The quoted national average rate for England in early 2009 was 85%
RMP	Risk management plan. A plan to minimise the individual's <i>RoH</i>
RoH	<i>Risk of Harm to others</i> . See also <i>restrictive Interventions</i>
'RoH work', or 'Risk of Harm work'	This is the term generally used by HMI Probation to describe work to protect the public, primarily using <i>restrictive interventions</i> , to keep to a minimum the individual's opportunity to behave in a way that is a <i>Risk of Harm to others</i> .
RoSH	"Risk of Serious Harm", a term used in Asset. HMI Probation prefers not to use this term as it does not help to clarify the distinction between the <i>probability</i> of an event occurring and the <i>impact/severity</i> of the event. The term <i>Risk of Serious Harm</i> only incorporates "serious" impact, whereas using 'RoH' enables the necessary attention to be given to those individuals for whom lower <i>impact/severity</i> harmful behaviour is <i>probable</i> .
SIFA	Screening Interview for Adolescents (Youth Justice Board approved mental health screening tool for specialist workers)
SQIFA	Screening Questionnaire Interview for Adolescents (Youth Justice Board approved mental health screening tool for YOT workers)
VMP	Vulnerability management plan. A plan to safeguard the wellbeing of the individual under supervision.
YJB	Youth Justice Board for England & Wales
YOI	Young Offenders Institution. A Prison Service institution for young people remanded in custody or sentenced to custody.
YOIS+	Youth Offending Information System: One of the two electronic case management systems for Youth Offending work currently in use in England & Wales. See also Careworks.
YOS/T	Youth Offending Service / Team