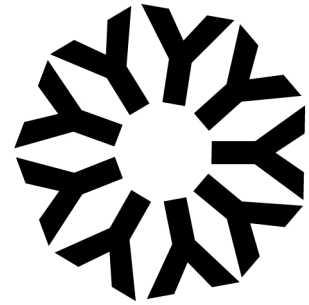


*Audit Commission  
Commission for Social Care Inspection  
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Healthcare Commission  
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HM Inspectorate of Probation  
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# Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Teams of England and Wales

Report on:  
Oxfordshire  
Youth Offending Service

2004

## Foreword

The Oxfordshire Youth Offending Service operates across a large county and has three main offices plus an administrative headquarters. The latter includes some of the specialist services and is based in central Oxford. It is one of the largest youth offending services we have inspected in the first phase of the inspection programme. We were pleased to see a Steering Group that was well respected by partner agencies, functioned well at a high strategic level and was working proactively with both local and national criminal justice agendas and priorities. Team members were dedicated, hard working and equally committed to the work of the Youth Offending Service.

We found some very good work. The Youth Offending Service provided a range of complex services in a wide geographical area with multiple bases. These services included innovative work with young asylum seekers who come before the criminal justice system; close working links with HM Young Offenders Institution Huntercombe through the appointment of a manager based in the Youth Offending Service; and some excellent training materials developed by the Victim, Restorative Justice and Reparation Team. Risk assessments were, for the most part, undertaken appropriately and there was a strong commitment to internal quality processes, which served to validate electronic data.

However, we found some areas for improvement. Further attention needs to be given to ensure that enforcement measures are compatible throughout the service and that initial referral panel meetings take place in accordance with Youth Justice Board guidance. We found a high level of service being provided to some victims, which needs to be extended to ensure that all victims have the choice of involvement with the Youth Offending Service.

Our overall assessment of the Oxfordshire Youth Offending Service was that it was good. We are very aware that the Steering Group has already begun to make improvements on some of the areas for development identified in this report. This report contains recommendations that we believe will assist them in this process.

*Andrew Bridges*  
*HM Chief Inspector of Probation*

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We would particularly like to express our gratitude to Mike Simm Head of Youth Offending Services and Community Safety, Steve Crocker Deputy Head of Youth Offending Service, and Adam Griffiths Senior Practitioner for their commitment to the inspection.

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## Glossary

ASSET	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPN	Community Psychiatric Nurse
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection
DAAT	Drug Action Team
DTO	Detention and Training Order
ESOL	English as a Second Language
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
HMYOI	HM Young Offenders Institution
ISSP	Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme
IT	Information Technology
National Standards	National Standards for Youth Justice Services
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
OXYAP	Oxfordshire Young Abusers Project
PAYP	Positive Activities for Young People
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PSR	Pre-Sentence Report
Restorative Justice Team	Victim, Restorative Justice and Reparation Team
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bounded
SSIW	Social Services Inspectorate for Wales
STOP	Supporting Together Offenders Parents
Shuttle mediation	An exchange of information between the victim and the person who has offended through a third party (the mediator)
UMIS	Universal Management Information Systems
YISP	Youth Inclusion and Support Programme
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOIS	Youth Offending Information System
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YOS Deputy Manager	Deputy Head of Youth Offending Service
YOS Head of Service	Head of Youth Offending Services and Community Safety
YOT	Youth Offending Team

## Introduction

The past four years, from the implementation of the national youth justice reforms in April 2000, have seen significant change. YOTs have been established across England and Wales. New orders and interventions have been introduced, a common assessment system developed and greater emphasis given to a range of approaches, including prevention work, restorative justice and the needs of victims. Much has been achieved.

This is the first full inspection programme to examine this new area of work. It is accepted that YOTs will have evolved at varying rates, reflecting local circumstances and need. As far as possible, the inspection methodology and scoring have been designed to take account of their different stages of development.

Emphasis has been placed on two core areas:

- ◆ the management and partnership arrangements, including the role and functioning of the local board
- ◆ work with children and young people who offend.

These sections are essential to satisfactory and sustainable performance. Other areas covered by the inspection are the prevention of offending, work with parents/carers and work with victims.

At this stage we expect only few YOTs to be performing satisfactorily across each of the five sections covered by the inspection, but that most will have sound management arrangements and established good working practices with children and young people who offend.

## **Key findings**

### ***Management and partnership arrangements***

- ◆ The inspection team found a YOS that was strategically well placed in Children's Services, community safety and criminal justice.
- ◆ The health economy did not meet its statutory responsibilities in relation to funding.
- ◆ Oxfordshire YOS was contributing to the funding of a Mental Health Team, which provided the basis for a core forensic CAMHS to both the YOS and HMYOI Huntercombe.
- ◆ There was a strong emphasis on training and development, with many staff on external qualification courses and programmed internal training. The YOS acted as a student unit for the Oxford Practice Learning Centre.
- ◆ There was commitment to internal quality assurance processes, which served to validate electronic data.
- ◆ The YOS provided complex services in a wide geographical area with multiple bases.
- ◆ Some office premises were unsuited to working with children and young people, and the large number of bases sometimes stretched administrative support.

### ***Children and young people at risk of offending***

- ◆ The YOS was involved in the prevention agenda at strategic and operational levels.
- ◆ The YOS was actively involved at council, strategic and operational levels in the crime reduction agenda.
- ◆ There was an excellent joint initiative between the YOS and the Social and Health Care Asylum Team who worked with young unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- ◆ The YOS had successfully developed and implemented a child protection policy within the HMYOI Huntercombe.

### ***Children and young people who offend***

- ◆ The establishment of a YOS team within the local HMYOI had helped prepare children and young people in custody for their release to the community.
- ◆ Restorative justice was being embedded throughout the YOS.
- ◆ Initial referral panel meetings were not taking place in accordance with relevant guidance from the YJB.

- ◆ Greater consistency was required throughout the YOS in the enforcement of orders.
- ◆ There had been improvements in the level of ASSET completion and in the quality of assessments following training initiatives by the YOS.
- ◆ The quality of risk assessment was good, although better communication about the completion of risk of harm forms by case managers and the ISSP team was required.

#### **Work with parents/carers**

- ◆ The YOS had developed some positive collaborative parenting work with the Family Nurturing Network.
- ◆ The parenting strategy required further development to address the specific needs of a diverse group of parents/carers.

#### **Work with victims**

- ◆ The police did not routinely forward details of victims to the YOS within 24 hours of a final warning or charging a child or young person.
- ◆ The YOS made contact with victims, but prioritised orders.
- ◆ Victims who had engaged with the YOS were satisfied with their experiences.

#### **Overall assessment**

The YOS was created in October 1999 and was originally given pathway status. Although it had recently encountered resourcing difficulties, these were being addressed.

The senior management arrangements within the YOS had undergone some changes. This revised system had provided good leadership and direction and the YOS was well respected by Oxfordshire County Council and partner agencies.

Good practice was apparent in core assessments and interventions with children and young people who had offended. There was evidence of work with parents/carers and victims that required further development.

Overall we found a YOS which was functioning well, with a proactive approach to the youth justice agenda and a committed staff group who worked hard to achieve national priorities. Our assessment was therefore, that the overall performance of the Oxfordshire YOS was **good**.

## Recommendations

*The Chair of the Steering Group should ensure that:*

- ◆ an action plan is devised to address the following recommendations, except the one for the YJB, and forwarded to the lead inspector within three months of the publication of this report
- ◆ the health and safety features of the YOS premises are reviewed and, where necessary, improved to meet the needs of the service, its staff and the children and young people who use them
- ◆ the sustainability of future funding for the Mental Health Team should be considered.

*The YOS Head of Service should ensure that:*

- ◆ referral panel meetings are held in accordance with the national standard and YJB effective practice guidelines
- ◆ orders are enforced consistently across the YOS in accordance with the national standard
- ◆ risk assessments are communicated effectively to all relevant staff and appropriate action taken to minimise or contain the level of harm
- ◆ work with parents/carers is developed to address the specific needs of those from minority groups.

*The Oxfordshire PCTs should ensure that:*

- ◆ the direct health budget contribution to the YOS is reconsidered.

*The Education Department for Oxfordshire should:*

- ◆ monitor, assess and make adequate provision to meet the needs of children and young people referred to the YOS who are excluded from school.

*Thames Valley Police should ensure that:*

- ◆ early contact with victims is facilitated by the timely exchange of victim information with the YOS, in accordance with the national standard.

*The YJB should:*

- ◆ address issues of victim information and PSRs.



## Overview

- ◆ Oxfordshire is a county in the south east of England. It incorporates the five local authorities of Cherwell, Oxford, South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire. The total population measured in the Census 2001 was 547,584. Of this population, 21.9% were aged 0-17 years. This figure was lower than the average for England and Wales of 22.7%.
- ◆ The area had a predominantly white population at 95.4%, which was much higher than the average for England of 90.9%. There was a very low percentage of Asian and Asian British residents (1.6%), far less than the average for England and Wales (4.6%). The same was true of the percentage of the Black or Black British residents (0.8%), which was lower than the national average (2.1%).
- ◆ The level of employment in Oxfordshire was higher than the average for England and Wales, 67% and 60.6% respectively. The level of unemployment was lower than the national average for England and Wales (3.4%), being 2.4%. There were fewer retired residents in Oxfordshire (11.5%) than the national average (13.6%), and more students were resident in Oxfordshire (7.3%) than nationally at the time of the census (7.3%).
- ◆ The YJB summary of YOT performance against the key performance indicators for January to March 2004 ranked Oxfordshire YOS in 124th position.
- ◆ YJB figures for youth offending between April 2002 and March 2003 (shown below) are displayed for the area covered by the Oxfordshire YOS. Theft and handling were the most common crimes. The least common crime was death or injury by reckless driving.

	<b>No. offences in Oxfordshire</b>	<b>Average per YOT for England and Wales</b>
Violence against person	283	222
Racially aggravated offences	14	9
Sexual offences	14	11
Death or injury by reckless driving	2	0.8
Motoring offences	391	394
Robbery	52	30
Domestic burglary	57	50
Non-domestic burglary	40	36
Vehicle theft	117	97
Theft and handling	502	305
Fraud and forgery	22	19
Arson	9	9
Criminal damage	217	175
Drugs offences	87	85
Public order	132	113
Other	49	61
Breach of conditional discharge	3	9
Breach of statutory order	22	52
Breach of bail	24	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,037</b>	<b>1,708.8</b>

# 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.*

The Steering Group functioned well at a strategic level. It mainly comprised of strategic heads of service for each of the statutory partner agencies, with the additional membership of the magistrates' court Deputy Chief Officer. There was no Connexions representative and attendance by the PCT representative at steering group meetings was sometimes irregular. We also questioned whether the most appropriate PCT was represented on the Steering Group, as other PCTs appeared to have greater working involvement with the YOS.

The Steering Group met quarterly. The Chief Fire Officer, who was the Council's Director of Community Safety, had been appointed from 2003 to chair its meetings and usually followed up any non-attendance. Following a restructure, the YOS Head of Service's role had been extended to link in strategically with community safety, and he now reported directly to the Chair of the Steering Group. Under the revised management arrangements, operational management of the YOS had been devolved to the YOS Deputy Manager, who also held strategic responsibility for information and technology.

The YOS Head of Service usually set the agenda for the Steering Group meetings, but the group effectively contributed to and steered its strategic direction. Minutes from Steering Group meetings indicated that discussions were well focused on analysing robust data, reviewing the YOS's YJB performance and ensuring the delivery of appropriate services to children and young people. From interviews and documentation, we were confident that the local Youth Justice Plan provided the appropriate strategic direction to the YOS.

The YOS was actively involved with the crime reduction and prevention agendas, at both a national and local level. The YOS Head of Service was a member of the DAAT, the Young Person's Strategy Group and each of the five CDRPs in Oxfordshire. He also sat on the Boards of both the Children's Fund and Surestart, while the YOS Deputy Manager represented the YOS in a variety of partnership arenas. Other forums included the HMYOI Huntercombe, Connexions, the Children in Need, Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being sub-groups of the Children's Programme Board, local Antisocial Behaviour Groups and the CAMHS Strategy Group. Partners informed us that information from the Local Criminal Justice Board fed into the CDRPs and that this information was shared with the Steering Group.

From interviews with members of the Council Executive and the YOS Steering Group and partners, it was clear that both the YOS Head Services and the YOS Deputy Manager were greatly respected. Their roles were considered to be complementary and described by staff as 'transactional and transformational'. We were informed that their contribution had raised the profile of youth offending services in Oxfordshire and provided excellent leadership and strategic direction for the YOS. However, we expressed some concern about their workloads in the light of the YOS Head of Service's broader council community safety responsibilities. We were advised that measures were being considered to try and ensure better work/lifestyle balance.

#### ***Strengths:***

- ◆ The Steering Group provided good leadership and support to the YOS.
- ◆ The YOS had high credibility with Oxfordshire County Council, stakeholders and the courts.
- ◆ The Steering Group received regular reports from both the YOS Head of Service and the YOS Deputy Manager.
- ◆ Statistical data was carefully and regularly scrutinised by the Steering Group.
- ◆ The appointment of the YOS Deputy Manager to support the YOS Head of Service's council strategic role complemented, and was welcomed by, the Steering Group and partners.

#### ***Areas for improvement:***

- ◆ The Steering Group needed to monitor the demanding workloads of both the YOS Head of Service and YOS Deputy Manager.
- ◆ Consideration should be given as to whether an alternative PCT should be represented on the Steering Group.

## 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 offend 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.*

The YOS provided a wide range of interventions for children and young people who were at risk of offending, as well as those who had offended. Due to the large size of the county and the geographical distances involved, it had developed a number of innovative partnership arrangements with both statutory and voluntary agencies which effectively reflected the strategy outlined in the Youth Justice Plan. Most interventions were undertaken on a one-to-one basis, often in collaboration with outside agencies, funded by the YOS. We found these organisations to be as equally committed as the YOS to work with children and young people.

The YOS had identified resource difficulties following the curtailment of its pathway status. As a consequence, the Steering Group had commissioned a zero-based budget exercise, which established the need for a pooled budget and increased core funding and while all agencies agreed in principle to this, only the County Council, and from 2004/2005, the National Probation Service had provided additional resources. Because of this a lower proportion of YOS staff were seconded and the YOS had instead embraced external-funding opportunities directly (through PAYP, Children's Fund and Learning and Skills Council), rather than via partner agencies.

As a result, most staff were directly employed by the YOS. We were informed that there were both advantages and disadvantages to this approach. The main advantage identified was clearer lines of accountability within the YOS organisation. We were concerned that staff who were directly employed might feel and become isolated from their specialist area and professional background. However, as the YOS placed a very high value on development and training, we felt confident that these staff would retain contact with their subject areas.

There were approximately 100 staff in the YOS, with 7% of the workforce represented from black and minority ethnic communities. We were aware that overall Oxfordshire had a smaller than national average multi-ethnic

population and so this figure was perhaps not unreasonable. We were impressed that staff reported that they were happy to remain employed for several years in the YOS, as it was 'a good place to work'. While many staff clearly expressed their career aspirations, it was noteworthy that several staff had worked in the YOS since its inception and planned to continue doing so.

Due to the high cost of living in the area, recruitment of new staff was generally regarded as difficult. There were good professional links with some of the University of Oxford colleges, facilitating work placements. Operational managers were carrying large caseloads where there were gaps in service provision. We were concerned about this and felt it should be addressed. Some staff reported that they would benefit from an additional YOS officer to assist with PSR work and high-risk cases. At the time of the inspection, a large recruitment campaign was under way to address some of these needs.

The health care arrangements within the YOS differed from others we had seen. Since its inception, the YOS had contributed to the funding of a Mental Health Team. This had recently been restructured and now provided the services of a Consultant Psychiatrist, CPN and Psychologist to the core CAMHS, HMYOI Huntercombe and the YOS. While we highly commended and praised this positive initiative, we had concerns about the continued, long-term sustainability and financial implications for the YOS of these arrangements in the absence of consistent core-funding from the health economy.

An Education Manager had replaced the previous Education Social Worker input into the three area teams. He was supported by a Connexions Personal Adviser, who was subcontracted to the YOS, and a small Literacy and Numeracy Team based in the South Team.

There were some good quality protocols and service level agreements between the YOS and partner agencies including the police, courts and OXYAP, a small specialist team who supported children and young people who had been sexually abused. There was also a multi-agency protocol for information exchange between partners. Where services were delivered by a voluntary agency on behalf of the YOS, these were in accordance with contractual arrangements that had been secured through the YOS's own procurement processes. Further work was required in monitoring and evaluating some of these contracts.

***Strengths:***

- ◆ Partner agencies praised the work of the YOS.
- ◆ Joint information sharing protocol.

***Area for improvement:***

- ◆ The funding arrangements for the Mental Health Team placed a heavy responsibility on the YOS.

Data produced by the YOS were carefully interrogated by the Steering Group. As acknowledged by a partner organisation, "They have their finger on the pulse – and a good collation system".

### **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 criminal record check.*
- ◆ *Volunteers are appropriately trained, available for YOT activities and have had a criminal record check.*
- ◆ *Joint agreements are in place for the management of disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures.*
- ◆ *Complaints are properly managed.*

The YOS had well-defined staff development processes linked to supervision, assessment and training. During the last year the YOS had introduced staff appraisal and all managers had received training. We were advised that all appraisals were to be completed by September 2004. Most staff were appraised using the County Council scheme, which, in the case of secondees, could be linked back into parent agencies' systems. The majority of staff reported that they received regular supervision. The exception, which needed to be addressed, were administrative staff. Team meetings were held at least every two weeks in all the YOS offices.

There were good training and development opportunities, although there was no specific training officer. The YOS Deputy Manager was undertaking this work, and plans were being made to appoint someone to work with him.

Induction of new staff members varied. A number of staff who had worked for some time in the YOS stated that they had not had an induction. Newly appointed staff reported satisfaction with their induction programmes. Training appropriate to roles and responsibilities was provided for staff across the YOS, and most staff had participated in recent inputs on victim awareness, reparation and child protection. A significant number had undertaken restorative justice training and a conference was being planned for 2005 by the Restorative Justice Team. Many had attained the YJB's Professional Certificate in Effective Practice and other staff interviewed had

already been assigned to the course. The YOS held an annual staff conference, although some staff reported that they were unable to attend due to other work priorities.

**Good practice**

Administrative staff had established good working relationships with the County Council's IT department, as well as the YOS's own IT services.

**Good practice**

The Restorative Justice Team had provided training, including a training video, newsletters and annual conferences.

At the time of inspection, there were approximately 40 referral order volunteers. Training for panel members was delivered by the YOS, with supervision and training updates provided by the Referral Order Coordinator.

Enhanced CRB checks had been undertaken on all staff and volunteers prior to their commencement of work with children and young people, and had been updated in accordance with local guidance. We were impressed by the way the YOS had diligently taken on board the importance of vetting and updating checks on all staff and volunteers following the establishment of the CRB on 1 April 2002.

The YOS had developed guidance for staff with regard to health and safety at work. There was a comprehensive risk management strategy that followed a traffic light scheme to identify risk. It had adopted the County Council's complaints procedure, and provided guidance and leaflets for staff and members of the general public, regarding both complaints and compliments. Several information leaflets had been translated into different languages to describe the services provided by the YOS. It appeared that these processes encouraged feedback from those who used the service.

Inspectors met and observed a hard working and highly dedicated team, willing to learn and develop their practice, who were committed to contributing and safeguarding the interests of children and young people while developing the criminal justice agenda.

**Strengths:**

- ◆ Staff reported that they received regular and good quality supervision.
- ◆ Development and training for staff was well developed.
- ◆ Staff and volunteers had received enhanced CRB checks.
- ◆ The YOS had a comprehensive risk management strategy.



**Areas for improvement:**

- ◇ All staff should receive an annual appraisal.
- ◇ Managers should be enabled to attend the YJB's managers' training programme.
- ◇ Training records were not held centrally at the time of inspection.
- ◇ Training related to dealing with abusive visitors and electronic software updates was required.
- ◇ Appointment of a training officer.
- ◇ Administrative staff should be regularly supervised.

**Good  
practice**

We received the following comments from members of staff:

*"We enjoy the work this is why we stay so long – This is a personal choice."*

*"The YOS provides vision and style."*

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP  
ARRANGEMENTS**

***This section is judged as satisfactorily met.***

## 2.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF OFFENDING

### 2.1 Assessment of those 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.*

The Prevention Team had been established by the YOS in September 2003 to coordinate work with children and young people at risk of offending, but who were not subject to community orders. The team was largely funded by the Children's Fund and PAYP, but was managed by the YOS. It was developing links with many services both outside and within the YOS. The team operated similarly to a YISP, but their work prioritised the top 50 most at risk children and young people aged ten-13 years across the county.

Although still developing, at the time of the inspection, the team included two substance and misuse workers, who were funded by Oxfordshire DAAT, a recently appointed Fire Officer working on arson prevention, two part time PAYP link workers, a part time 'looked after children' specialist and the Prevention Manager. Further appointments to the team were planned.

Referrals were received from health and education specialists, case managers and parents/carers, and their needs assessed by the YOS using the YJB Onset tool.

#### **Strengths:**

- ◇ The YOS was actively involved in the prevention agenda at both strategic and operational levels.
- ◇ There was a mechanism for identifying and assessing children and young people for referral to the YOS.
- ◇ The YOS was engaged in several activities to reduce the risk of offending.

#### **Area for improvement:**

- ◇ Some members of the Prevention Team had still to be appointed.

## 2.2

### Interventions for those at risk of offending

#### ***Inspection criteria***

- ◇ *There are arrangements to provide interventions for those children and young people within the area who are assessed at risk of offending.*
- ◇ *The YOT has a methodology for measuring the effectiveness of preventative intervention programmes.*
- ◇ *Interventions are appropriate to the diverse needs of children and young people in the YOT area and take account of the need to safeguard children and young people.*
- ◇ *Interventions target the criminogenic needs of those at risk of offending.*

The YOS was a key partner in a wide range of children's strategic and operational activities. Preventative work was mainly offered on a one-to-one basis rather than through group work because of transport difficulties and the large geographical spread of the services throughout the county. The YOS had produced a draft diversity strategy and was engaged in the pan-Oxfordshire diversity strategy. The County Council had developed a prevention strategy which brought social, health care, learning and culture together in order to enhance responses to the safeguarding agenda and children in need. The YOS Head of Service was a member of the Children's Programme Board for the Preventative Strategy.

The YOS was the lead delivery agent for PAYP in the county. Over 1000 children and young people had participated in the scheme, which included a broad choice of leisure and arts activities. These had been developed with a wide range of statutory and voluntary partners. PAYP was closely linked to local antisocial behaviour initiatives and specifically targeted young people on acceptable behaviour contracts. The Children's Fund had provided resources for a Family Group Conference project to work with the YOS.

As a member of the Oxfordshire Cultural Forum, the YOS was closely involved with longer-term developments to raise the profile of the arts, while assisting the prevention of youth crime. A key component of the prevention strategy was partnership work with sports and arts providers to assist in the achievement of Department of Culture, Media and Sport inclusion targets. The YOS worked closely with Positive Futures and had solicited a bid to the Football Foundation. It had been successful in obtaining a three-year funding stream from Youth Music. ARK T, where the YOS had a base, also provided a range of arts-based reparation programmes and worked within the PAYP scheme. A number of these schemes were accredited.

#### ***Strength:***

- ◇ A range of interventions was developing, based on needs.

## 2.3

### Outcomes for those at risk of offending

#### ***Inspection criterion***

- ◆ *Those assessed as being at risk of offending and undertaking interventions are engaged in activity to reduce their risk of offending.*

During the course of the inspection, we read a sample of ten prevention files. Out of the ten, six contained onset ASSETs, but we only saw one intervention/action plan on file. Recording of contacts and documentation was limited in these files and would benefit from greater input.

The Children's Fund grant required the Prevention Team to report on their work with children and young people. The YOS retained records on the number of referrals to the Prevention Team.

Although in its infancy, we were pleased to see that the YOS was aware of the importance of evaluating this work. The YOS was using UMIS software for analysis, and feedback was being sought from children and young people and the staff with whom they worked.

#### ***Areas for improvement:***

- ◆ Further monitoring and evaluation of the Prevention Team's work.
- ◆ Further emphasis needed to be put on assessment, planning and recording.

### **OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF OFFENDING**

***This section is judged as satisfactorily met.***

## 3.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO OFFEND

### 3.1

### Assessment of children and young people who offend

#### *Inspection criteria*

- ◇ *Comprehensive assessments of the needs of children and young people who have offended, are made at the intervals required by national standards and effective practice guidelines.*
- ◇ *Risk of harm to others is fully assessed.*
- ◇ *Risk of harm, either to self or from others, is fully assessed.*
- ◇ *Supervision plans are written in accordance with national standards, emanate from ASSET and contain SMART objectives.*
- ◇ *Assessments to address criminogenic needs, such as health and ETE, and take account of cultural difference, diversity and safeguarding children and young people.*
- ◇ *ASSET is updated in accordance with national standards and effective practice guidelines at relevant times during contact with the child or young person.*
- ◇ *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 Oxfordshire YOS, with 100 staff, consisted of three area teams, in the North, South and the City of Oxford. Another team was established in HMYOI Huntercombe; the Prevention and Restorative Justice Teams were located in the management offices and an ISSP Team was based in a separate office. The North Team relocated to larger premises during the inspection. The Bail Support Team was based in the City Team. The administrative headquarters was based in Westgate Shopping Centre in Oxford. With the exception of the Mental Health Team, an operational team manager managed each team.

A recent training initiative and subsequent evaluation had seen an improvement in ASSET recording by staff, and the YOS scored well in terms of its completion. Of the files we examined, 84% of initial assessments were completed within national standards timescales, 80% showed that children and young people contributed to the assessment and in 88% of cases the parents/carers were consulted.

The YOS had devised a comprehensive risk policy and strategy. It was therefore pleasing to note that a full risk of harm to others assessment had been completed in most relevant cases. However, it was difficult to find

electronic evidence of management oversight in cases that were identified as risk concern or risk aware. Managers reported difficulties in electronically signing the forms, but stated that this information was recorded in case diaries or supervision files. Our concerns about the level of management oversight were somewhat allayed by the reference to discussion about such individual cases at the weekly practice meetings. However, this was an area of work which needed to be prioritised. We also felt that the recording of risk of harm forms by both case and ISSP managers should be communicated more effectively as there was some duplication which could be confusing for staff using the software system.

Risk of harm to self and others were generally well assessed. 17% of files were assessed as at risk of self-harm and 18% at specific risk of harm to others. Recent restructuring of these services and changes in health personnel meant that case managers completed all ASSETs, including the health sections and some delay had occurred in carrying out assessments.

In supervision planning, 78% met the required standards, but only 52% were considered to be SMART in their objectives. We found a close link between planned interventions and the children and young person's risk of harm in 78% of the files. Diversity with regard to race, culture, language, disability, gender and other issues were considered in 80% of the cases examined, although we did identify a number of files where ethnicity was not recorded. We were impressed that children and young people were actively involved in the planning process and the requirements of the order or licence were fully explained to the child or young person in 96% of the files.

**Good practice**

Children and young people were involved in the planning process and requirements of the order or licence.

**Strengths:**

- ◆ Assessments of children and young people were completed in a timely manner.
- ◆ Children and young people and their parents/carers were involved in assessments.
- ◆ Good performance against the national standards for initial assessment.

**Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ Care should be taken to ensure risk of harm assessments are appropriately communicated between case managers and the ISSP Team.
- ◆ Systems for electronically recording management oversight of risk of harm and risk concern or risk aware cases need to be developed.
- ◆ Interventions were often provided by non-core YOS staff who did not have immediate access to YOIS recording systems.

## 3.2

### Interventions for children and young people who offend

#### ***Inspection criteria***

- ◇ *Interventions are:*
  - *targeted in areas of assessed need such as education, health and parental relationships, etc*
  - *provided that are specific to the needs and offending behaviour of girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities and take account of safeguarding children and young people*
  - *consistent with the principles of effective practice.*
- ◇ *Frequency of appointments 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).*
- ◇ *Enforcement follows non-compliance.*

Oxfordshire had a very similar demographic profile to that of the south east as a region but, compared to the national census, fewer people from minority ethnic groups. This pattern was only reversed in Oxford city where the number of people from minority ethnic backgrounds exceeded the national picture.

There were a significant number of asylum seekers based around the county, some of whom had come to the YOS's attention and received orders. A case worker had been jointly funded by the YOS and the Social and Health Care Asylum Team to work with children and young people both at risk of offending and who had offended. The work was based in the city, but provided advice and support to all the area teams. Through this work, the YOS had developed excellent links with the local asylum seeker centre, social services departments, ESOL and the Oxfordshire Probation Area.

Of the files read, 89% of the appointments arranged conformed with national standards. Children and young people had complied with the appointments in 83% of the cases, however, only 58% of those relevant were breached or recalled within national standards timescales. Staff reported some disparity between the area teams as to how enforcement measures were undertaken and this should be addressed.

Mental health provision within the YOS was being redesigned. The YOS had recently taken a national lead in creating a forensic Mental Health Team to work with the YOS and HMYOI Huntercombe, to assess and work with children and young people with mental health problems who had offended. This initiative had been developed with only minimal funding from the health economy, but with financial input from both the YOS and the HMYOI. The aim of the revised health service was to provide core CAMHS services within the community that both the YOS and HMYOI could access quickly.

The team provided a range of services appropriate to the training and roles of its members and worked collaboratively to ensure the most appropriate service to children and young people, for example where there might be an

issue of dual-diagnosis. We found that in 48% of the files reviewed, children and young people had emotional and mental health needs and 69% of these had been referred for treatment.

The Mental Health Team had improved access to tier three and four assessments, which could now be obtained at short notice. This team were aware of the disparity in mental health services for those aged 16-18 years who were not in full-time education and were trying to ensure that this age group could access their services. The YOS also recognised the lack of provision of sexual health and generic health services, and was considering measures to address this gap.

There were three drug and substance misuse workers, funded by the DAAT, based in each of the YOS offices. They mainly worked with children and young people with ASSET scores of two or above for substance misuse, but would see other children and young people if requested by specialists or case managers. The case managers worked with children and young people with ASSET scores of less than two. The drug and substance misuse workers recorded information onto the case diary section. They recognised that their roles had not previously been performance-target driven and were keen to liaise with the Mental Health Team. At the time of the inspection, there were plans with the DAAT to link CAMHS and the substance misuse services to work more collaboratively.

The approach to education was based on partnerships, prevention and project work, and as such reflected the policies and philosophy of the Council Executive and the YOS. Provision of education, training, work experience and reparation opportunities was a problem in Oxford once the child or young person was out of the school system and particularly for those aged 15-17 years. There were few home tutors and limited access to Pupil Referral Units. There were clear strategies in place to deliver education and training at appropriate venues for children and young people who had offended or those deemed to be at risk of offending. We were advised that by the end of our site visits all children and young people had an education placement. An Education Manager had been appointed to the YOS to generate learning and act as a conduit to learning and culture. The post had recently been permanently funded by education and the manager, who was based in the YOS administrative offices, had been in post for three years.

The number of permanent exclusions in schools was low by national norms. Children and young people who were not engaged in education or training were rigorously monitored through the monthly education panel. The panel received information on each individual and made recommendations. For example a young person known to the YOS with a statement for special learning needs had been carefully supervised and introduced to a specialist school, initially for one day a week but subsequently increasing to three days. This person had now settled and made new friends.

The county-wide literacy project offered individual diagnostic screening for all children and young people who had offended. Learning needs were



identified and an individual plan drawn up in collaboration with the YOS case worker.

ETE resources were provided for children and young people who had offended by the Literacy and Numeracy Team and a Connexions Personal Adviser, who was sub-contracted to the YOS by the regional Connexions Service. In addition to targeted individual work, the Connexions Personal Adviser helped children and young people complete application forms, assisted with interview and telephone skills, coping strategies and life skills. She also facilitated sessions in HMYOI Huntercombe and attended planning meetings to ensure that arrangements were in place following release. The Education Team also worked closely with the Council's Social Inclusion Team to ensure that provisions were made for the education of children and young people leaving custody.

A recent audit of final warnings in the Thames Valley, by an external consultancy, confirmed that the previous overall poor performance in three of the four quarterly returns in 2003 had been almost entirely due to the lack of a police officer in the North Team. Since the appointment of a new Police Officer, there had been considerable improvement in the management of final warnings. We found that, in most cases, the YOS were notified that a final warning had been given. However, children and young people were not always bailed for assessment by the YOS prior to the delivery of the final warning and, in those cases, the YOS was not notified in a timely manner, nor was all relevant information given.

Referral panel meetings were held within the required 20 working days in only 43% of cases and, in a few cases where there was a delay, this was for a period of more than ten days. However, contracts agreed at the panel meetings were usually delivered. We were advised that some of the referral panel cancellations had been due to panel member sickness and this should be addressed.

There was a specialist ISSP Team, which had been established by the YOS to deal with the most prolific offenders, either on bail or a statutory court order. We were told that there had been 40 ISSPs in 2003 and that a number of the ISSP caseload had drug and alcohol related offences and that some had been sexually abused or were 'looked after children'. ISSP provided intensive programmes of interventions whilst making appropriate use of the specialist facilities within the YOS, such as the Mental Health, Education and Restorative Justice Teams and partners. Primarily working with about 15-18 high-risk offenders at any time, the ISSP Team also collaborated closely with the police and OXYAP. Our file reading noted that supervision objectives were reviewed in 95% of the cases of children and young people on ISSP.

Resettlement work within the YOS was delivered well by a manager supported by a small team. She was employed both in the YOS and HMYOI Huntercombe. She had ensured that there were systems in place for a supervising officer to be allocated to the child or young person within one working day of sentencing. The YOS had developed excellent partnership work with the HMYOI, carrying out one-to-one work, in particular in

relation to mental health. We considered this good practice and found that YOS officers based in the community participated in all the planning and supervision meetings. These arrangements with the HMYOI had enabled the development of other good initiatives, such as a child protection protocol, and in particular planning and review meetings, in which the YOS workers were actively involved. Of the case files reviewed we were pleased to find the quality of pre-release work to be good in most cases. Health provisions that started during the custodial part of the sentence were usually followed up by the same team following release into the community. The YOS's presence within the HMYOI seemed to have made a significant contribution.

Overall we found that there was a wide range of services available to children and young people who had offended and that in most cases appropriate interventions were delivered. We were also impressed to find that the ethos of joint working was well developed with partners.

**Good practice**

The joint appointment of a manager to work between HMYOI Huntercombe and the YOS had improved communication and outcomes for children and young people in custody.

***Strengths:***

- ◆ An integrated forensic Mental Health Team was available to the YOS, HMYOI Huntercombe and local community.
- ◆ The YOS had an Operational Manager who was based at the local HMYOI and the YOS.
- ◆ Systems were in place to manage children and young people who presented a risk of harm to others.
- ◆ YOS staff worked well with partners in delivering services to children and young people.

***Areas for improvement:***

- ◆ Referral panels needed to be convened according to national standards.
- ◆ ETE opportunities required further development.
- ◆ Development of the draft diversity strategy and training for all staff.
- ◆ Programmes of work which address the specific needs of minority groups should be developed.
- ◆ The Home Office/YJB guidance for final warnings with regard to notification to the YOS by the police and the provision of children and young people, and victim information to the YOS should be followed.

### 3.3

## Outcomes for work with children and young people who offend

### *Inspection criteria*

- ◇ *The area demonstrates a reduction in reoffending for all bands of penalties (pre-court, first tier, community penalties and custody).*
- ◇ *End ASSETs show a reduction in risk factors.*
- ◇ *Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons show positive outcomes.*
- ◇ *Supervision plan objectives are met in areas of assessed need.*

Cases reviewed showed an improvement in ASSET scores in 52% and a positive change in attitudes and behaviour in 53%. 31% of the children and young people in the cases we examined had reoffended during the YOS supervision period.

We found that the good structures and processes in the YOS ensured that resources were used effectively and efficiently. In 92% of cases where a risk of harm assessment was completed, the resources allocated were consistent with the risk that the child or young person presented to others; in 86% of cases, resources were appropriate to their likelihood of reoffending and were used efficiently in 92% of cases.

We interviewed 12 children and young people who generally spoke positively about the work of the YOS. Their involvement with the YOS varied from two weeks to three years and their age range was 13-18 years. All had received help to address the criminogenic factors in their lives. Examples of areas targeted included mental health, anger management and substance misuse. Most reported that their offending behaviour had, or was, being addressed, and that the YOS had engaged well with them.

We also interviewed three parents/carers who were generally supportive of the YOS's work. They found the YOS workers helpful and the interventions offered to children and young people appropriate. We observed two referral panels with parents/carers in attendance. They felt that the process provided them with practical assistance in addressing the effect their child's behaviour.

### **Strength:**

- ◇ Review ASSETs were being completed and showed positive changes.

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO OFFEND**

***This section is judged as satisfactorily met.***

## 4.

## WORK WITH PARENTS/CARERS

### 4.1

### Assessment of the needs of parents/carers of children and young people who offend or are at risk of offending

#### *Inspection criterion*

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

The assessment of a range of parenting needs and provisions had been developed in the YOS. A steering group had been set up in 2004 to increase the profile of parenting issues in Oxfordshire and had met on three occasions. At the time of the inspection, the YOS did not employ a parenting coordinator.

A Parenting Assessment Tool had recently been introduced to supplement ASSET and inform practitioners of the parenting resources available. The screening tool also aimed to identify protective factors.

In accordance with YJB requirements, the YOS operated a process where parenting needs were identified at the PSR or prevention stages. Where a group programme was not considered suitable, the parents/carers were offered some individual work, either from caseworkers or staff from the Mental Health or Prevention Teams.

There were few parenting orders made by the courts. Emphasis had instead been placed on engaging parents/carers voluntarily and assessing their individual needs. Referral panel chairs told us that /carers were involved in panel meetings and that they tried to engage them in parenting work where appropriate.

#### **Strength:**

- ◆ Parenting needs were identified in the early stages of the YOS's involvement.

#### **Area for improvement:**

- ◆ Not all parents/carers were offered a parenting programme.

**Good  
practice**

A quarterly newsletter produced by the YOS reported statistics and attendance by parents/carers at referral panel meetings.

## 4.2

### Interventions with the parents/carers of children and young people who offend or are at risk of offending

#### **Inspection criteria**

- ◇ *Interventions are provided for and taken up by the parents/carers of children and young people who either offend or are at risk of offending in accordance with assessed need.*
- ◇ *Parenting interventions are provided that are appropriate to the background, culture, ethnicity, language needs, literacy levels and gender of parents/carers.*

Much of the work with parents/carers was carried out by case workers supported by voluntary groups engaged by the YOS. The YOS had funded and had recently helped establish STOP, a cognitive skills based programme for parents/carers. This project was run by Family Nurturing Network, a local voluntary organisation which provided welfare-type family support to parents/carers referred by the YOS. At the time of the inspection, the YOS was also developing 'drop in facilities' and parent support groups in all three area offices. These were to include the services of a family therapist as well as parenting advice. A family therapist was also being recruited to the Mental Health Team.

Interventions offered to parents/carers included financial and substance misuse counselling, and support from the Mental Health Team. We observed one group work parenting programme. We found there was good planning and preparation, effective tutoring and valid application of learning. From our file reviews and interviews with parents/carers, there was evidence of practical and emotional support being offered to parents/carers of children and young people both in custody and in the community.

We were informed that the parent/carer support groups had initially been set up in the areas of highest need, these being Oxford City, Banbury and South Abingdon, and that other groups were being organised in other parts of Oxfordshire.

Staff reported that key barriers to engaging parents/carers in parenting group work were the absence of childcare and transport provision to attend such programmes. In order to encourage parents/carers to attend STOP, funding had been provided by the YOS for this purpose.

Leaflets and materials had been developed for both the STOP programme and drop-in facilities. A leaflet had also been updated by the YOS about parenting orders.

Practitioners acknowledged that black and minority ethnic parents/carers were not engaged in parenting interventions. They recognised that there was a need to develop practice to meet the needs of parents/carers from ethnic minority communities and with specific needs such as sensory disabilities or children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

#### **Strength:**

- ◇ The Family Nurturing Network programme was of a good standard and well delivered.

**Areas for improvement:**

- ◇ Parenting provisions did not always cater for the diverse range of parents/carers and required development.
- ◇ Further development of the parenting work was required in the YOS.

**4.3 Outcomes for parents/carers of children and young people who offend or are at risk of offending**

**Inspection criterion**

- ◇ *Interventions for parents/carers have the desired outcomes.*

Previously the YOS had engaged the services of Parent Talk, who ran the STOP programme, to assist case workers. At the time of the inspection, this service was being evaluated by the Institute of Public Care in conjunction with a review of CAMHS and Mental Health Services in Oxfordshire. They had examined a range of parenting provision carried out within Oxfordshire on behalf of social services, education, health and the YOS.

During the inspection, we interviewed three parents/carers. We also observed and spoke to two parents/carers at the Family Nurturing Network parenting programme. Normally, ten to 15 people attended this session and the reduced attendance was attributed to the fact it was half-term. The two parents/carers we observed said that they had found the intervention useful and had benefited from being in a group with other people in similar circumstances.

The few parents/carers to whom we spoke, either individually or within the group, were positive about the way they were listened to, how the YOS had involved them in the work undertaken with their children and the level of support they received. They also felt they had been treated with respect.

Although we were surprised that none of the parents/carers interviewed outside of the group had been offered a parenting programme, a YOS survey in April 2004 of 100 parents'/carers' views, acknowledged that the majority of parents/carers preferred a 'drop-in facility' and one-to-one work rather than structured programmes.

**Strength:**

- ◇ Parents/carers interviewed felt that they had benefited from the YOS's involvement.

**Area for improvement:**

- ◇ Further development and evaluation of parenting work is required.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT FOR WORK WITH PARENTS/CARERS**

***This section is judged as satisfactorily met.***

## 5.

## WORK WITH VICTIMS

### 5.1 Assessment of the needs of victims of children and young people who offend

#### *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 offend and are supported in doing so.*

In keeping with its mission statement, Oxfordshire YOS aimed at all times to raise sensitivity and awareness about the criminal justice system and the needs of victims. Work with victims was developing within the YOS following the reconstruction of the Victim, Restorative Justice and Reparation Team. The team coordinated and managed all forms of restorative practice and victim contact across Oxfordshire including referral and reparation orders, community and direct reparation, victim contact and restorative practices. They had also developed a family group conference project for the families of children and young people who had offended.

In 2003, a Unit Manager for Restorative Justice had been appointed to the YOS having previously worked as a reparation officer within the team. A small team including three reparation coordinators and a victim liaison worker supported the unit manager.

Previously, victim information from the police to the YOS had not been consistently supplied. As a result, the YOS's ability to engage with victims at both pre- and post-court levels had been affected. Work had since been undertaken with the Thames Valley Police to address this issue and had had some success.

The YOS had established systems within their computer software to provide statistics around victim contact and involvement. However, due to limited resources at the time of the inspection, work with victims had been prioritised. Although there was a combined victim contact and assessment form, it was difficult and not always possible to establish contact with all victims. We read some files and found the content of victim record documentation was limited and required more information.

#### **Strength:**

- ◇ Victims, where appropriate, were contacted and offered support.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ◆ The police should ensure that victims' information is routinely sent to the YOS.
- ◆ There were sometimes delays in contacting victims and this should be addressed.
- ◆ Victim files would benefit from more detailed recording.

## **5.2 Interventions with the victims of children and young people who offend**

### **Inspection criteria**

- ◆ *Victims either have access to support provided directly by the YOT or are informed of relevant service providers.*
- ◆ *Victims are offered the opportunity to specify any restorative element of the child's or young person's supervision plan and to be informed of their progress.*
- ◆ *Interventions with victims are provided that are appropriate to their age, vulnerability, culture, ethnicity, language needs, literacy levels and gender.*

Of the files we reviewed, we were pleased to see that 60% of victims had been consulted or invited to participate in restorative justice with the child or young person. 40% had been invited to participate or were consulted on other work.

Victims of children and young people on referral orders were routinely invited to attend referral panel meetings. We were told that generally, few attended the meetings. However, we observed two referral panels where the victim did so.

In the YOS's own case sample of twenty eight victims who had been contacted over a three-month period, twenty victims had responded to an intervention. Of these, six had requested reparation while the others had requested an apology letter and two had been engaged in shuttle mediation.

The YOS had produced victims' leaflets, a quarterly newsletter and an excellent video, which showed the positive aspects of reparation and restorative justice work. The YOS had also produced comprehensive good-practice guidance and an excellent supervision booklet for staff working in reparation and restorative justice. They had established family group conferences where members could set the agenda and discuss issues about victim awareness and restorative justice, as well as any relevant family matters.

The YOS had developed a number of reparation projects and letters of apology were also available as an intervention. However, some staff



considered that the limited availability and variety of reparation projects sometimes hampered their work with children and young people. Work had been undertaken by the YOS to address this.

**Strengths:**

- ◆ Restorative justice was being embedded within the YOS.
- ◆ Restorative justice and reparation, for example family group conferences, newsletters, supervision and good guidance manuals.

**Area for improvement:**

- ◆ Children and young people could not easily access reparation sites and these needed to be widened to meet the diverse population needs.

**Good practice**

We were impressed by the video developed by the YOS addressing victim awareness and restorative justice. This had been used for training staff.

### 5.3 Outcomes for victims of children and young people who offend

**Inspection criterion**

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

Victim reports used a standard format and completed within five working days of receipt and checked by a senior practitioner or manager before being forwarded to the referral panel. The YOS had recently undertaken an audit of contracts to examine their quality and was beginning to audit the quality of their reports.

Five victims were interviewed during the course of the inspection. Most felt that they were treated with respect by YOS staff and paid particular tribute to the work of the Restorative Justice Team leader. Although they described the standard of service as high, one person stated they he had been contacted late. Similarly, whilst staff reported that they provided feedback, some victims we interviewed stated that they had not always been informed of progress and that this would be welcomed.

Of the 12 children and young people we interviewed, most reported either having completed some form of victim awareness work or that there was reference to this in their supervision plan.

During our file reading, we noted that there was no reference to victims in PSRs. We were advised by the YOS that this was following a court ruling which had raised some concerns regarding confidentiality and disclosure in PSRs. At the time of this publication we have been advised that the YJB is undertaking policy work regarding the use of victim information in PSRs.

***Strengths:***

- ◆ Victims interviewed felt respected and supported.
- ◆ Children and young people are being made aware of the impact of their behaviour on victims.

***Areas for improvement:***

- ◆ Victim satisfaction should be routinely monitored.
- ◆ The YOS should develop a system to ensure that victims who request feedback receive it.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT FOR WORK WITH VICTIMS**

***This section is judged as satisfactorily 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 the Audit Commission, CSCI, Estyn, Healthcare Commission, HMIC, HMI Prisons, HMI Probation, Ofsted, and SSIW. The joint inspection team is located within HMI Probation and is funded by the Home Office.

### Home Office aims

The joint inspection contributes primarily to the achievement of Home Office Aims 3 and 4 to:

- ◆ 'ensure the effective delivery of justice, avoiding unnecessary delay, through efficient investigation, detection, prosecution and court procedures. To minimise the threat to and intimidation of witnesses and to engage with and support victims'
- ◆ 'deliver effective custodial and community sentences to reduce reoffending and protect the public, through the prison and probation services, in partnership with the Youth Justice Board'.

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  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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 is a long inspection programme, we decided to break it down into three phases in order to retain its relevance and ensure that it continues to consider local and national concerns. The three phases are:
  - **from September 2003 to July 2004**, when the inspection will concentrate on key issues, with emphasis placed on establishing benchmarks and the dissemination of good practice. YOTs are being asked to volunteer for this stage of the process
  - **up to September 2006**, during which time the inspections will be individually tailored to each YOT, based on an examination of the data available and the findings from other inspection programmes
  - **from September 2006 onwards**, where the inspection will focus on achievement against targets met, particularly on increasing overall performance and ensuring consistency of practice.
- ◇ The inspection will be carried out in line with the Government's commitment to proportionate and coordinated inspection in local government, informed by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment results and the Wales Programme for Improvement. We have therefore developed a programme that:
  - is proportionate to risk and only inspects those areas of work where a team is performing well in order to disseminate good practice
  - complements, and is coordinated with, other inspection programmes, including those currently being developed following the publication of the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (2003)
  - takes account of YOTs' recent development as organisations.
- ◇ Comprehensive standards and criteria have been developed to cover the first phase of the inspection, focusing on:
  - **management and partnership arrangements**
  - **children and young people considered at risk of offending**
  - **children and young people who offend**
  - **parents/carers of children and young people who are at risk of offending or who offend**
  - **victims.**
- ◇ Each site visit during the first phase will take place over two weeks, about two to three weeks apart. The YOT will be asked to identify a random, but statistically representative sample of between 50 and 120 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.

- ◇ During the first week of the site visit, we will examine all these case files in detail. We will also, in half the cases selected, 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 believe that this can be a positive way of developing mutual understanding and helps to strengthen the links between inspection and practice.
- ◇ The second week of the inspection will involve meetings with the CEO, 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>

Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in 2004.

- ◇ The file reading took place week commencing 31 May.
- ◇ The second week commenced on 28 June.

## Scoring approach

The five sections of the inspection are individually assessed against the relevant standards, using the supporting criteria. Judgements are based on:

- ◆ information supplied by the YOT
- ◆ interviews with chief officers, managers and staff both from the YOT and other partner organisations
- ◆ reading 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.

The judgements are defined as:

- ◆ **Fully met** – denoting exceptional performance beyond the requirements of national standards and other relevant guidelines
- ◆ **Satisfactorily met** – strong performance on the majority of items and at least satisfactory on the remainder, meeting the requirements of national standards and other relevant guidelines
- ◆ **Partly met** – less than satisfactory 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. No score or grading will be given during this first phase of the inspection process, but instead a general categorisation highlighting particular achievements as well as areas for improvement. This approach has been adopted as it was 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 performance of the YOS will be assessed as:

- ◆ **Commendable** – there is strong management performance and exemplary work with children and young people who offend, supported by satisfactory or better performance in other areas of work
- ◆ **Good** – there is satisfactory performance across all five sections
- ◆ **Satisfactory with good basis for development** – where, at least, both sections relating to management arrangements and work with children and young people who offend, are assessed as satisfactorily met, although others may be considered to only have been partly or not met
- ◆ **Unsatisfactory requiring improvement** – although some sections may be satisfactorily met, either the section on management arrangements or work with children and young people who offend, is assessed as partly or not met
- ◆ **Poor requiring significant improvement** – where neither the section on management arrangements or work with children and young people who offend is considered to have been satisfactorily met.

## Next steps

- ◆ The YOS 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 are normally addressed within 12 months of publication to allow sufficient time for integration within existing developments.
- ◆ Implementation of the recommendations is to 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 Oxfordshire YOS 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.