

<i>To:</i>	Tony Forbes, Chair of North East Lincolnshire YOS Management Board
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<i>From:</i>	Julie Fox, HM Assistant Chief Inspector
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## **Report of Short Quality Screening (SQS) of youth offending work in North East Lincolnshire**

This report outlines the findings of the recent SQS inspection, conducted from 9th – 11th June 2014. We carried this out as part of our programme of inspection of youth offending work. This report will be published on the HMI Probation website. A copy will be provided to partner inspectorates to inform their inspections, and to the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

### **Context**

As an independent inspectorate, HMI Probation provides assurance to Ministers and the public on the effectiveness of work with those who have offended or are likely to offend, promotes continuous improvement by the organisations that we inspect and contributes to the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Good quality assessment and planning at the start of a sentence is critical to increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes. The purpose of this inspection was to assess the quality and effectiveness of recent casework with children and young people who had offended. In order to do this, we examined 20 cases supervised by North East Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service (YOS). Wherever possible this was undertaken in conjunction with the allocated case manager, thereby increasing the effectiveness as a learning opportunity for staff.

We gather evidence against the SQS criteria, which are available on the HMI Probation website - <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/>

### **Summary**

Overall, we found a very positive picture in North East Lincolnshire. There had been a considerable improvement in performance from the strong position identified in our last inspection. Staff were producing high quality assessments and plans, and providing an effective service for children and young people, and the community. Management oversight was good and staff felt supported. There is room for improvement in ensuring that reviews are completed quickly in response to significant changes.

## **Commentary on the inspection in North East Lincolnshire:**

### **1. Reducing the likelihood of reoffending**

- 1.1. There was a timely and sufficient assessment of the likelihood of reoffending in 18 of the 20 cases inspected. In one case the assessment was not timely, in the other it was of insufficient quality.
- 1.2. Pre-sentence reports (PSR's) were completed in 12 of the cases. All were of good quality and contained a thorough assessment of the likelihood of reoffending. An inspector commented: *"The PSR was comprehensive in every aspect. The sources of information listed no fewer than 18 different agencies and individuals. The effort put in is most commendable"*. Sentencing proposals were clear, and constructive arguments were made for interventions and alternatives to custody in every relevant case.
- 1.3. We were pleased to find that all 20 cases had good quality plans to address the likelihood of reoffending. One inspector noted: *"The intervention plan was comprehensive and addressed all the required areas of support needed and work planned to address the young person's risk, vulnerability and offending."*
- 1.4. Reviews of plans were sufficient in 13 out of the 15 relevant cases. In one case the review had not been done, in the other it was of insufficient quality.
- 1.5. The staff had a good understanding of the principles of effective practice which allowed them to formulate focused and appropriate sentence plans to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

### **2. Protecting the public**

- 2.1. We found some good quality risk assessment and management work. There was a clear and thorough assessment of the risk of harm to others in all 12 cases where there had been a PSR. A good quality assessment of risk of harm to others was seen in 18 out of the 20 cases.
- 2.2. Risk of harm to others assessments were adequately reviewed in 14 of the 16 relevant cases. In both of those cases where they were not, a review should have been done in response to significant changes to the circumstances of the child or young person.
- 2.3. Planning to address the risk of harm to others was done well in 17 out of the 19 relevant cases. All five custodial cases had good quality assessments. One inspector stated: *"This case had a high quality assessment leading on to good plans to manage risk of harm and vulnerability that clearly assessed the young person's behaviour to others and themselves and identified specific and achievable objectives to address those risks and vulnerabilities."*
- 2.4. We were pleased to find that the risk of harm to identifiable victims had been effectively managed in all 17 relevant cases.
- 2.5. Management oversight was usually effective in ensuring good quality risk of harm assessments and risk management plans. However, a small number of assessments and plans of insufficient quality were not identified and addressed by the quality assurance process in place.

### **3. Protecting the child or young person**

- 3.1. The YOS was performing well in this area. We found sufficient assessments of vulnerability and safeguarding in 18 out of the 20 cases. An area of particular strength

was PSR's, where we found that all 12 in the sample had good quality assessments of vulnerability and safeguarding. Assessments were reviewed to the required standard in 14 out of the 16 relevant cases. Where they were not, both had not been reviewed in response to significant changes in circumstances.

- 3.2. Planning to address vulnerability and safeguarding was done well in 18 out of the 20 cases. All five custodial cases had good quality plans in place. An inspector noted: *"The vulnerability management plan contained a good assessment of the child sexual exploitation issues with clear and robust proposals for addressing them."*
- 3.3. Reviews of plans were sufficient in 12 out of the 15 relevant cases. One was not undertaken when necessary, one was of insufficient quality and another was not revised as required.
- 3.4. Management oversight was effective in the vast majority of cases. There was an effective process to ensure case managers were regularly quality assessed, coupled with a well established management countersigning procedure. This approach was well received by staff who felt supported by the management team.
- 3.5. The staff had a good understanding of safeguarding and vulnerability issues. They were able to apply this knowledge to produce accurate assessments that allowed the effective management of safeguarding and vulnerability. We were particularly pleased to see a robust partnership approach to child sexual exploitation. There was good evidence of effective planning to address this area of work.

#### **4. Ensuring that the sentence is served**

- 4.1. We found that staff had an excellent knowledge of diversity issues and applied this effectively. Almost all of the cases inspected had a sufficient assessment of diversity and barriers to engagement. In all of the cases inspected, staff engaged with the Child or young person and parents/carers effectively in order to produce an assessment. All 12 PSR's had explored diversity and barriers to engagement. This is an area of strength for the YOS. In one case: *"There was a thorough assessment and accommodation of his diversity needs. The case manager drew both the young person and his parents into the process and this has provided the foundation for change. All were fully involved in the assessment and planning process. Both parents were encouraged to attend the assessment interview and were consulted in the planning process."*
- 4.2. In almost all cases, the child or young person and parents/carers were sufficiently involved in the planning process. Plans contained sufficient assessment of health issues in all 19 relevant cases.
- 4.3. The staff impressed us with their enthusiasm and energy. They were committed to ensuring compliance. Procedures in place, such as compliance panels, were effectively used by staff. In all 12 cases where action was needed to promote compliance, the response of YOS staff was proportionate.

#### **Operational management**

We also found that North East Lincolnshire YOS had responded well to recommendations made in their last inspection in 2011. There have been improvements in the quality of vulnerability assessments, intervention planning for safeguarding, the frequency and quality of reviews, and victim work.

The staff were well trained and felt equipped to do the work. The principles of effective practice were understood and evident in the work which we saw.

Arrangements for management oversight were proportionate and effective in the great majority of cases. Processes and procedures for quality assurance were well established and valued by all workers. We saw evidence of regular oversight in all cases and staff felt that their managers had the skills and knowledge to assist them to develop the quality of their work further.

### **Key strengths**

The best aspects of the work that we found in North East Lincolnshire were:

- good quality pre-sentence reports
- high quality assessments of the likelihood of reoffending and vulnerability both at report and initial assessment stage
- an excellent understanding of the challenges of diversity and barriers to engagement and the application of creative solutions for these.

### **Areas requiring improvement**

Two areas for improvement are:

- assessments and plans must be reviewed in response to significant changes in the circumstances of a child or young person
- management oversight should ensure that all risk of harm assessments and plans are of sufficient quality.

We are grateful for the support that we received from staff in the YOS to facilitate and engage with this inspection. Please pass on our thanks, and ensure that they are made fully aware of these inspection findings.

If you have any further questions about the inspection please contact the lead inspector, who was Jonathan Nason. He can be contacted at [jonathan.nason@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.nason@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk) or on 07768073286.

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