

<i>To:</i>	Andrew Bunyan, Chair of YOS Management Board and Director of Children Services
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<i>From:</i>	Julie Fox, HM Assistant Chief Inspector
<i>Publication date:</i>	29th October 2014

Report of Short Quality Screening (SQS) of youth offending work in Derby City

The inspection was conducted from 29th September to 1st October 2014. It is part of our programme of inspection of youth offending work. This report is 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

The aim of the youth justice system is to prevent offending by children and young people. As good quality assessment and planning at the start of a sentence is critical to increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes, we examined 20 cases of children and young people who had offended and were being supervised by Derby City Youth Offending Service (YOS). Wherever possible this was undertaken in conjunction with the allocated case manager, thereby offering a learning opportunity for staff.

Summary

Over the past year, Derby City YOS has achieved a continuing and substantial reduction in proven reoffending by children and young people. The published rate¹ was 33.3%, a decrease on the previous year and lower than the England and Wales average of 35.4%.

Overall, we found that staff engaged well with children, young people and their parents/carers to develop the initial assessments and plans to help stop reoffending, and used this information effectively to inform decisions in courts. Work to manage the risk of harm to others resulted in victims being protected. Work to protect children and young people was also done well. Management oversight needed to be more effective and better recorded but it is clear that Derby City YOS have worked hard and successfully to address the areas for improvement from our previous inspection in 2012.

Commentary on the inspection in Derby City YOS:

1. Reducing reoffending

- 1.1. Courts receive pre-sentence reports (PSRs) to aid sentencing. All of these were of good quality, as were the majority of reports provided to the Youth Offender Panel.

¹ Published by the Ministry of Justice on 31st July 2014 and based on binary reoffending rates after 12 months for the October 2011 – September 2012 cohort.

- 1.2. The initial assessment of the child or young person's likelihood of reoffending was carried out well in the great majority of the cases in the sample. Most were thorough and provided a full picture of the child or young person's circumstances, including how factors such as their education and substance misuse might impact on reoffending. An inspector commented: *"The case manager has completed a very detailed assessment; it is clear that he has taken the time to get to know Dave and his family. After the initial panel the case manager checked with Dave and his father that they understood the requirements of the contract. Purposeful joint Police/YOS home visits had been completed and the case manager requested a police check on Dave's father due to a gut instinct, which showed previous similar offences to his son's. This will be addressed by the specialist Social Worker from the sex abuse unit."*
- 1.3. There had been a good enough review of the assessments in almost three-quarters of relevant cases. Where there were gaps, this was because a review had not taken place or there was an insufficient update of the child or young person's circumstances, particularly where there had been a significant change.
- 1.4. Following on from the assessment, we look to see if there is a plan of work to help reduce reoffending. This was in place, and of sufficient quality, in all but one of the custodial cases and in the great majority of community cases. Staff have clearly benefited from the work they have undertaken to improve planning.
- 1.5. Where reviews of plans were not always good enough, this was usually because they had not taken place, or had not been revised as required. However, in a positive example, an inspector commented that: *"Simon was given a 12 month Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO) with restraining order to protect the victim. Commendably, the case manager undertook the review of the sentence plan during a home visit, jointly with Simon and his father, giving each the opportunity to identify whether progress was sufficient and any future plans. The objectives were balanced between reducing reoffending, management of risk of harm and other relevant issues. Simon is now doing well at college and the case manager is considering early termination of the order for good progress."*
- 1.6. We were pleased to find a good level of contact with children and young people during the custodial phase of sentences, both in formal planning meetings and outside of these.
- 1.7. We inspected two cases that needed, due to the serious nature of the offence, to be subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs). We were very pleased to find that engagement with MAPPAs in those cases was good, as was partnership working generally.
- 1.8. Overall we found that case managers had a sound level of understanding of what was likely to be effective in working with children and young people to help them stop offending and improve the quality of their lives.

2. Protecting the public

- 2.1. We expect to see a detailed assessment of the risk of harm a child or young person poses to others, and plans to manage that risk, whether in the community or in custody. This should cover all relevant information, including past offending and behaviour, as well as the impact on victims. We found that this had been done well in all but one of the cases in the sample. An inspector noted that: *"Whilst Alvin met the criteria for Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) the case manager had a clear rationale regarding why he was not put forward for this, whilst at the same time not compromising the plan to manage his risk of harm to others. He had heavily entrenched views due to his family's pro-criminal attitudes and behaviours and a protracted history of acquisitive offending. Instead, the case manager 'mirrored' ISS licence conditions and secured compliance and*

effective management of risk of harm to others in voluntary way thus testing Alvin's motivation to cooperate."

- 2.2. One third of reviews (of both assessments and plans) to manage the risk of harm to others had not taken place, or did not ensure plans were revised as required.
- 2.3. The risk of harm to victims who had been identified was managed well in the great majority of the inspected cases. Generally, case managers had prioritised their assessments and plans to include victim work.
- 2.4. Effective management oversight of risk of harm work could be improved. There was evidence of action, but it did not always ensure that the deficits in assessments and plans were addressed.

3. Protecting the child or young person

- 3.1. Positively, the initial assessment of safeguarding and vulnerability had been completed sufficiently well in all but one case. Plans were sufficient in the great majority of cases, although on one occasion there was no plan to manage safeguarding and vulnerability and in another case there was not enough about emotional or mental health needs. However, some plans were very good indeed. An inspector commented that: *"Plans to manage vulnerability and risk contained information about what an increase or decrease would look like and how this would impact on the current plan."*
- 3.2. Again the reviews of assessments and planning relating to safeguarding and vulnerability were not always good enough. Children and young people's lives can change very rapidly. New and relevant information should trigger an update. In one third of cases, reviews had not taken place, or did not ensure plans were revised as required.
- 3.3. The effectiveness of management oversight could be more robust. Some managers provided skilful oversight, scrutinising work thoroughly and providing clear direction as to how the deficits could be addressed. However, this was not evidenced in a number of cases.

4. Ensuring that the sentence is served

- 4.1. We found a high level of engagement in all but one case between case managers, children and young people and their parents/carers. It was particularly pleasing to note that service users were appropriately involved in the development of assessments and reports. This was a clear strength in the YOS. An inspector noted that: *"This case manager has demonstrated excellent perception in relation to his own assessment with that of the young person's assessment of themselves, their risks and needs. The PSR contains clear and discernable insight 'through the eyes of the child' and this is incorporated fully in the overall assessment. Excellent recording practice was evident. The case manager has highlighted factual and contextual risks and needs and then separated these from a section headed 'analysis' which he then uses to analyse behaviours in the light of his own management of the case."*
- 4.2. Case managers gave appropriate attention to barriers to engagement and other diversity or potential discriminatory factors at the start of sentences in all but one case. We were pleased to see that diversity issues and other potential barriers had been assessed well in most cases. Case managers also gave sufficient attention to health and well-being outcomes in almost all relevant cases.
- 4.3. In well over three-quarters of cases, the child or young person had complied with the requirements of their sentence, some after initial difficulties. This showed the dedication of case managers and their commitment to holding children and young people to account.

Staff had good ideas to support compliance. One inspector noted: *"Consistent home visits were made as a response to poor compliance from the outset of the YRO. The case manager secured support to the YOS from the family and this fed into the compliance management process. Inclusion of a calendar wall reminder chart for Theo as a reminder for appointments with YOS Officers and offering appointments in the morning as he requested, to support his forgetfulness. The case manager also referred to 'tasking' Theo with completing goals like getting a bank account, thus supporting autonomy and ensuring support in place to do this without letting him get reliant on her."*

- 4.4. We were pleased to find that where the child or young person had not complied with the requirements of the sentence, the response of the case manager was appropriate and robust. Case managers had a good understanding of the expectations of the YOS when dealing with this and there was an effective Compliance Panel in place, encouraging children and young people to complete their orders.

Operational management

We found that staff had a good understanding of local policies and procedures and the principles of effective practice with children and young people who have offended. Staff spoke positively about the countersigning and management oversight process but we found evidence to suggest it was not always effective. However, in one case in particular an inspector noted that there had been particularly good management oversight: *"there were clear supervision records, evidence of discussing the various plans and more recently the manager had observed the review panel, recording very thorough notes of how the panel went, the work completed to date, outstanding work and planned future work required"*.

It was encouraging to find that all case managers interviewed reported that they understood how the organisation's priorities affected their role in reducing reoffending. The majority felt that there was a positive and supportive learning and development culture in the organisation, but some identified the need for more current training in speech, language and communication needs.

Key strengths

- PSRs were of a very high standard.
- Case managers knew children and young people and could accurately and concisely describe why they had offended and planned well to reduce reoffending.
- Children and young people, along with their parents/carers, were actively involved in their assessments.
- There was an effective and appropriate response to non-compliance. The YOS' Compliance Panel was effective in helping children and young people to cooperate with their court order and complete the work required of them.

Areas requiring improvement

- Case managers should be more receptive to changes in circumstances so that reviews and plans are undertaken when required.
- Management oversight should ensure the timeliness and quality of reviews.

We are grateful for the support that we received from staff in the Derby City 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 Caroline Nicklin. She can be contacted at caroline.nicklin@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk or on 07766290969.

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Note 1: 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.

Note 2: We gather evidence against the SQS criteria, which are available on the HMI Probation website - <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation>

Note 3: to request a paper copy of this report, please contact HMI Probation Communications at communications@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk or on 0161 240 5336.