

<i>To:</i>	Stuart Ashley, Chair of Hampshire Youth Offending Team Management Board
<i>Copy to:</i>	See copy list at end
<i>From:</i>	Alan MacDonald, Assistant Chief Inspector (Youth Justice)
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Report of Short Quality Screening (SQS) of youth offending work in Hampshire

The inspection was conducted from 04-07 April 2016 as 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. Good quality assessment and planning at the start of a sentence is critical to increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes. We examined 47 cases of children and young people who had recently offended and were supervised by Hampshire Youth Offending Team (YOT). Wherever possible, this was undertaken in conjunction with the allocated case manager, thereby offering a learning opportunity for staff.

Summary

The published reoffending rate¹ for Hampshire was 37.7%. This was better than the previous year and better than the England and Wales average of 38.0%.

Overall, we found that Hampshire YOT was performing well in most areas of practice, in particular assessments. Case managers were engaging children and young people and their parents/carers and were using creative interventions to help them. The planning and management of the risk of harm posed to others was also a strength. Improvements were required, however, in the planning of interventions and the reviewing of both assessments and plans, in all areas of practice, needed to be carried out more consistently.

¹ The reoffending rate that was available during the fieldwork was published January 2016, and was based on binary reoffending rates after 12 months for the April 2013 – March 2014 cohort. Source: Ministry of Justice.

Commentary on the inspection in Hampshire:

1. Reducing reoffending

- 1.1. The assessment of factors leading children and young people to offend was carried out well in Hampshire. Case managers had made an effort to understand the reasons for offending in 41 out of 47 cases. The proportion of cases reviewed was not as high, however, and in eight cases, reviews had not been carried out either at all or well enough.
- 1.2. We looked at 25 pre-sentence reports and judged 20 to be of a sufficient quality. Where this was not the case, it was generally because the report was not concise enough or sufficiently analytical. The practice of considering all sentencing options led to overlong reports and, in some cases, a lack of clear proposals. In a proportion of cases (9 out of 47) we judged that insufficient advice had been supplied to courts to aid sentencing. Reports provided to referral order panels were judged sufficient in most cases.
- 1.3. Planning during the custodial phase was carried out well enough in the majority of cases, however, the proportion was not as high in the community; 5 out of 44 cases did not have plans. We saw some excellent planning using paper tools that were clearly understandable to children and young people and had promoted their involvement in the process. We also saw second, 'official' plans, however, which had been translated into more formal language and put on the electronic database. We could not understand the reason for this.
- 1.4. Reviews of plans were carried out sufficiently in the majority of cases.

2. Protecting the public

- 2.1. The assessment of the risk of harm that children and young people posed to others was carried out well enough in a high proportion of cases. The proportion that had been reviewed sufficiently well was lower; eight cases were not reviewed well enough or at all.
- 2.2. Custodial planning to manage the risk of harm posed to others was carried out sufficiently well in all cases and in all but one case in the community. The plans were reviewed well enough in most cases although two had not been reviewed at all.
- 2.3. We judged that case managers had effectively managed the risk of harm posed to others in 23 out of 26 cases.

3. Protecting the child or young person

- 3.1. The assessment of safeguarding and vulnerability needs was done well in the majority of cases, although the proportion reviewed sufficiently well was lower and was not carried out at all in a small number of cases. Three cases had not been reviewed at all.
- 3.2. Planning to safeguard children and young people was carried out satisfactorily in the vast majority of cases (41 out of 43) in the community and in all the custodial cases. Plans were sufficiently reviewed in a high proportion of cases.
- 3.3. Case managers paid attention to the well-being of children and young people. In the two cases where there were indicators of child sexual exploitation this had been recognised by the YOT. We saw several examples of complex cases, involving a number of agencies, where the information sharing and the coordination carried out by case managers was excellent. In one case of a young person approaching 18 years old and living in a secure children's home, the YOT case manager was coordinating the information sharing with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and working with the social worker, the

children's home staff, the restorative justice worker and the prospective probation officer. We judged that the young person had been very well supported and that transition into adult probation services and resettlement in the community were both on track.

4. Making sure the sentence is served

- 4.1. We met a committed, creative and thoughtful group of staff who made considerable efforts to understand, and work with, the individuality of the children and young people they supervised. We saw an excellent example of this being demonstrated. An inspector noted: *"Sharon was a 15 year old girl who struggled with new situations and found meeting new people difficult. She had expressed concern about attending her referral order panel and about meeting the members. Her case manager arranged for photographs of the panel members to be sent to Sharon prior to the panel to help to allay her concerns."*
- 4.2. Efforts were made to identify and understand diversity factors and, where relevant, these had been sufficiently incorporated into pre-sentence reports. Where diversity had not been recognised, it was usually the failure to address age/maturity, speech, language and communication needs, or learning styles.
- 4.3. Plans also gave sufficient attention to diversity factors in nearly three-quarters of cases, although less than two-thirds of children and young people and their parents/carers were sufficiently involved in planning.
- 4.4. We saw a number of examples of imaginative interventions which worked with the diverse needs of the child or young person. We also saw a good understanding of the need to work with parents/carers. In most instances case managers had engaged children and young people and their parents/carers well and the engagement was maintained throughout the order. Over three-quarters complied with their sentence. Where this was not the case, or where there was further offending, the response by the YOT had been appropriate in the majority of instances.

Operational management

We found that case managers understood the principles of effective practice, policies and procedures that they were working to. All case managers felt that their managers were knowledgeable and accessible and held them to account while supporting their work and development. The majority felt that they had good access to training and had received input on diversity needs and, in particular, speech, language and communication.

Management oversight of vulnerability and risk of harm work was effective in most cases. Where this was not the case, it was due to deficiencies in assessment or planning not being recognised. We were told that feedback was not always given to staff about their assessments and plans when countersigning was carried out.

Key strengths

- Committed and creative staff.
- Engagement of children and young people and their parents/carers.
- Assessment of factors contributing to reoffending.
- Assessment, planning and management of the risk of harm posed to others.
- Information sharing and joint working with other agencies.

Areas requiring improvement

- Review of assessment and planning.
- The consistency of intervention planning and the involvement of children and young people and their parents/carers in the process.
- Advice to courts to aid sentencing.

We are grateful for the support that we received from staff in Hampshire YOT to facilitate and engage with this inspection. Please pass on our thanks, and make sure 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 Jane Attwood. She can be contacted at jane.attwood@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk or on 07973 614573.

Copy to:

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Lead Elected Member for Children's Services and Crime	<i>Keith Mans</i>
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Chair of Youth Court Bench	<i>Fran Thornton</i>
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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.