

<i>To:</i>	David Hall, Chair of North Lincolnshire Youth Offending Team Management Board
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<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 North Lincolnshire

The inspection was conducted from 12-14 September 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 14 cases of children and young people who had recently offended and were supervised by North Lincolnshire Youth Offending Team (YOT). Wherever possible, this was undertaken in conjunction with the allocated case manager, thereby offering a learning opportunity for staff. The published reoffending rate¹ for North Lincolnshire was 32.6% compared to 37.8% for all England and Wales.

Summary

Overall, we found that the welfare and safety of children and young people was the core principle underpinning practice at North Lincolnshire YOT. Case managers were motivated, committed and enthusiastic. Detailed assessments, including learning styles, speech and language screenings and health screenings, were carried out on all cases. Staff worked hard to support children and young people to respond to crisis and instability in their lives. Managers worked closely with staff to make decisions and quality assure their work. A variety of local resources and agencies were available to case managers who could refer cases to mental health services, substance misuse provision, education and much more. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) were robust and effective. There was insufficient detail in intervention plans to outline the work being carried out to address reoffending. While the YOT had substantially lowered its reoffending rates, work directly focusing on offending behaviour was often delayed or not completed. Managers were actively involved in a range of internal forums; these could be reviewed and strengthened to enhance internal leadership.

¹ The reoffending rate that was available during the fieldwork was published July 2016, and was based on binary reoffending rates after 12 months for the October 2013 to September 2014 cohort. Source: Ministry of Justice.

Commentary on the inspection in North Lincolnshire:

1. Reducing reoffending

- 1.1. We found case managers had good insight into the children and young people they were working with, which was transferred into initial assessments. Pre-sentence reports detailed the current circumstances of the children and young people, and provided sufficient information relating to offences and factors linked to the likelihood of reoffending. Case managers were clear why children and young people had offended.
- 1.2. Case managers reviewed assessments when changes had occurred in the cases we inspected. We saw a number of cases where the structure of reviews was clear and succinct. One inspector found: *"Regular contact while in custody allowed the case manager to update the assessment. Following referral to MAPPA and changes in custody, the case manager updated assessments, which were concise, detailed and informative"*.
- 1.3. We found objectives were not always linked to the likelihood of reoffending in the cases inspected. The intervention plans were not sufficiently clear on what specifically the children and young people needed to do to reduce their likelihood of reoffending. We found that the work planned was not offence-related. Case managers knew what contributed towards offending in the cases inspected, but that was not translated in to the intervention plans.
- 1.4. Reviews of initial intervention plans were not completed in all cases. Initial objectives remained unchanged despite changes evident in case records, although we did see progress being made with their individual needs. Progress made by children and young people against the objectives was not measured and recorded. Case managers were making use of services available to assist children and young people with general lifestyle needs and less use of resources that were available for offending behaviour interventions. As a result, we did not see sufficient examples of offence-focused work being carried out.
- 1.5. The use of custodial sentencing reduced during the last two years; from a rate markedly above the national average to one which is very slightly above the figure of 0.37 (0.40 for North Lincolnshire) per 1,000 of the 10 to 17 year old population. This reflects the growing credibility of North Lincolnshire YOT in presenting good quality pre-sentence reports and plans to sentencing courts.

2. Protecting the public

- 2.1. Sufficient effort was made to understand and explain the risk of harm to others posed by children and young people. Case managers were experienced in analysing offending behaviour and assessing the impact on actual and potential victims. In one case we inspected we found that the risk of harm was assessed too high. The assessment of risk of harm was validated by managers through a countersigning process and through attending a multi-agency risk, safety and well-being meeting. In eight cases, the multi-agency risk meeting added no additional value to the initial assessment.
- 2.2. Risk management plans were comprehensive. We saw sufficient focus on victim safety and involvement of the victim liaison officer. The YOT was making efforts to arrange restorative justice conferences and was working with the police to protect repeat victims.
- 2.3. Timely reviews of risk management plans were being completed. We were pleased to see new information from other agencies being used by case managers when conducting reviews and updating plans to manage the risk of harm. Case managers did what they needed to manage risk of harm in custody. They involved custodial staff in the planning to manage the risk of harm, but interventions were not always completed due to the

secure establishment not being able to undertake them. This resulted in the child or young person remaining in custody with no offending behaviour work planned until after release.

- 2.4. MAPPA are designed to protect the public, requiring local criminal justice agencies and other bodies to work in partnership in dealing with children and young people who offend. In North Lincolnshire we found referrals to MAPPA were timely and effective. We saw that where MAPPA was involved, the management of the case was significantly enhanced. Clear direction was provided and actions were completed by those responsible; this helped to maximise public protection. Case managers found involvement from MAPPA was supportive and enhanced their work.

3. Protecting the child or young person

- 3.1. The YOT were effectively assessing and managing the safety and well-being of children and young people. In 13 cases we found a sufficient assessment and explanation of factors impacting on vulnerability. In one case where the YOT had recorded concerns in relation to child sexual exploitation, the information they had access to was not fully detailed and explained within the safety and well-being assessment.
- 3.2. North Lincolnshire YOT was fortunate to be co-located with a range of other agencies. This arrangement provided efficient and prompt access to services. We saw case managers going beyond expected standards to make sure children and young people and their families were safe by accessing relevant services. The relationship with children's social care services was good, leading to swift information sharing and a collaborative approach to working with children and young people and their families.
- 3.3. In all cases inspected, we found sufficient planning to address safeguarding and vulnerability. Vulnerability management plans were focused on both community and custodial periods. We saw an example where vulnerability management was high on the agenda for a case manager who monitored the well-being of a young person in custody through weekly visits being carried out. We found this case manager went the extra mile, maintaining contact with the young person while in the segregation unit.
- 3.4. Managers were responsive to the vulnerability needs of children and young people. We saw examples of cases being escalated to senior management to make sure appropriate accommodation was secured for a vulnerable child or young person. Managers were working in partnership with other agencies to make sure partners were carrying out their responsibilities to protect children and young people.

4. Making sure the sentence is served

- 4.1. The YOT carried out thorough initial assessments of all children and young people in the cases we saw. All cases had assessments of learning styles, medical screenings, speech and language screenings, self-assessments and barriers to engagement. We found, in some cases, the assessment of learning styles was not being applied during one-to-one contact with children and young people.
- 4.2. The YOT delivered a three week summer arts college with the aim of engaging children and young people in education, training and employment. We found that out of the seven who took part, all gained qualifications accredited by Unitas, a national charity. The YOT had access to an educational psychologist and a speech and language worker. Local induction material was reviewed in accordance with speech and language needs to devise child-friendly documentation.

- 4.3. Overall, children and young people were engaging with the sentence. Where compliance was deteriorating, case managers took sufficient action to return cases to court. Compliance panels were held, which in some cases improved future engagement and attendance. Children and young people were being supported to address their lifestyle difficulties, however, not enough offence-focused work was being carried out during the sentence to produce outcomes to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Operational management

The management team were respected by case managers, who valued their support. We were impressed to see that managers had been actively involved in all the cases that we inspected, something that case managers clearly found reassuring. Staff supervision made a positive contribution to case management, the quality of work to protect others from risk of harm, and work to address safeguarding and vulnerability. Case assessments were checked through quality assurance and gate keeping processes. Additionally, managers chaired a number of internal forums where all cases were discussed. These processes clearly added value in many cases, but in some cases duplicated the work while providing no additional direction on the management of the case. The approach was resource intensive and impacted on the time available to managers to provide effective leadership. Managers were supportive of staff development, providing access to training and regular formal and informal staff supervision.

Key strengths

- Case managers were skilled, experienced and highly dedicated to welfare and safeguarding.
- Initial assessments and pre-sentence reports were constructed effectively, containing detailed information.
- The YOT had a good focus on victim safety and the use of restorative justice.
- Partnership arrangements with children's social care services were strong, leading to good safeguarding measures.
- Case managers worked effectively with custodial and partner agencies.
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements were robust, providing effective direction.
- Educational pathways were positively promoted, particularly the summer arts college.
- Children and young people were supported by a range of agencies, whose co-location with case managers was seen as a significant benefit.
- Compliance panels were effectively improving engagement following deterioration.
- Managers were actively involved, providing regular management oversight and staff support.

Areas requiring improvement

- Intervention plans should contain specific reference to what work will be carried out, and reviewed to update new circumstances.
- Managers should use quality assurance methods to make sure all information gathered from other agencies is recorded and assessed within vulnerability management plans.
- Managers should make sure offence-focused work is being delivered, in line with learning styles identified and recorded in case records.

We are grateful for the support that we received from staff in the 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 Simi Badachha. She can be contacted at simi.badachha@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk or on 07979 690596.

Copy to:

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Lead Elected Member for Children's Services	<i>David Rose</i>
Lead Elected Member for Crime	<i>Richard Hannigan</i>
Elected Mayor	<i>Cllr Trevor Foster</i>
Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire	<i>Marc Jones</i>
Chair of Local Safeguarding Children Board	<i>Edwina Harrison</i>
Chair of Youth Court Bench	<i>Carl Thomas</i>
YJB Business Area Manager	<i>Gary Oscroft</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.