

The Work of Youth Offending Teams to Protect the Public



An inspection by HMI Probation

In this inspection we found YOTs protecting the public well, and also doing good work to change young people's lives for the better. However with some specific changes and help, they could do better still. Notably, more YOTs should adopt what is known as trauma informed practice to better respond to those challenging young people who have had disturbing and traumatic experiences themselves. There is also not enough relevant and up to the minute social media advice and information available for practitioners. There is a strong case for monitoring the social media output of young people who pose a risk to others, so as to protect the public sufficiently well.

HM Chief Inspector of Probation Dame Glenys Stacey
September 2017

CONTEXT

Youth Offending Teams have seen significant changes to the profile of their workload in recent years.

The number of new offenders on statutory orders, has fallen by 84% over the last ten years



84%



At the same time the number of young people in custody at any one time has fallen by 71%



71%

As lower risk young people are diverted away from court and statutory YOT supervision, so practitioners are working with fewer young people, but the proportion of those with complex needs (including those with vulnerabilities or posing a risk of harm) is higher than previously.

INSPECTED CASES

115 young people's cases

across **6** youth offending teams



YOTs used their powers to **keep victims safe** in **87%** of cases.



43% of our sample failed to fully comply with the court order, however in **ALL** cases the YOT took appropriate action.

TRAUMA

Most young people who commit serious crimes have had disturbing and traumatic experiences themselves.



81% of the young people in our sample had experienced trauma or other adverse events in their lives

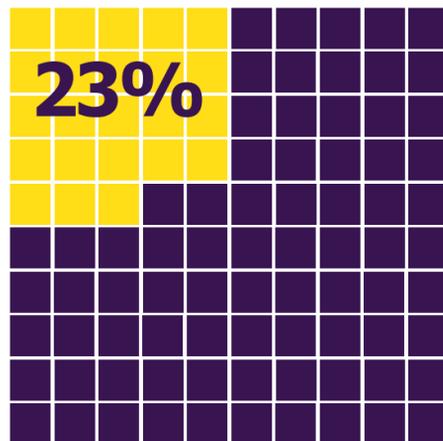


31% of the young people had been brought up in households where there was a record of domestic abuse

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a large part of young people's lives, and we found it was a factor in the build up to the offence in approximately one quarter of the cases examined.

23%



Recommendations

For YOTs

- More YOTs should adopt what is known as trauma informed practice
- There is a strong case for monitoring the social media output of young people who pose a risk to others

For the YJB

- provide practical guidance to YOTs that enables them to take proper account of the impact of trauma in young people's lives

For YOT management boards

- review their understanding of social media and young people and establish if there is sufficient local policy and practice guidance for staff to operate effectively and legally when monitoring young people's social media activity