

INSPECTION OF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

1. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 In 2009, HMI Probation (HMIP) introduced a new 3 year independent inspection programme of Youth Offending Services (YOS). In response to national developments relating to public protection, youth crime and the safeguarding agenda, the new inspection regime focuses exclusively upon the delivery of case work and how this contributes to: managing risk of harm presented to others from children and young people; reducing the likelihood of offending; and the safeguarding of children and young people.
- 1.2 Stockton on Tees YOS received very positive feedback from inspectors during and following inspection. The inspection report was published 6th January 2010, with *minimum recommendations for improvement* in relation to all three areas of managing risk of harm; reducing likelihood of offending; and safeguarding. **The full inspection report is attached as Appendix A.**
- 1.3 Stockton's results compare very favourably in the North East region and places the YOS as the best performing YOS overall in the region. An improvement action plan has been prepared in response to the inspection's key recommendations to further strengthen service performance.

2. INFORMATION:

- 2.1 The HMIP inspection is conducted region by region and took place in the North East from September to October 2009. New findings terminology has been introduced, replacing terms such as 'good' and 'satisfactory' with a percentage scoring framework of how well aspects of case work met the quality inspectors are looking for, which then informs a recommended level of improvements: either *minimum*; *moderate*; *substantial*; or *drastic*. The greatest change however has been the exclusive focus upon service delivery on the ground by practitioners, and the impact this has upon service user experiences and behaviours.

3 Strengths

- Lots of progress since the last inspection in 2007. Recent practice development work was paying dividends and practitioner capacity and capability enhanced.
- Commitment by staff in supporting and developing children and young people.
- A good range of in house and external resources for YOS practitioners to draw upon, creative intervention programmes and joint working with other agencies.
- Capable leadership of the YOS Management Team.
- Strong performance in managing risk of harm, addressing likelihood of reoffending and in safeguarding children and young people.
- Children and young people's diversity issues were well addressed.
- Involvement of children and young people in their assessment and sentence planning.

- Active liaison with secure / custodial settings and good attention to community reintegration issues.
- Good progress made against actions linked to offending and activity to sustain positive outcomes.
- Appropriate responses to children and young people's non-compliance with their sentences.

4. Areas for Improvement:

- Greater consistency needed in the quality of risk and vulnerability management plans and better integration with overall intervention plans.
- Greater attention needed to victim's issues, in particularly victim safety considerations need to be more explicit in some risk management documentation.
- Whilst enforcement of court orders was a strength, enforcement was used in too many cases as only half of the children and young people complied with their requirements.
- Greater consistency in management oversight of risk of harm and safeguarding issues.
- More attention needed to *evidencing* impact of service upon young people's behaviour; practitioners often not recognising and recording when progress had been made in assessment, planning and review documentation.
- Systems to monitor and report on offending outcomes to assist in strategic planning were under-developed, in particular the ability of the YOS to access offending information from the police for children and young people.

5. Key Recommendations of Inspection (Primary responsibility is indicated in brackets):

- Good quality risk management plans are produced in all relevant cases, in order to minimise the *Risk of Harm to others*. These should specifically address victims issues and should be integrated into the intervention plan for the case (YOS Manager).
- Good quality vulnerability management plans are produced in all relevant cases, in order to minimise Safeguarding risks. These should be integrated into the intervention plan for the case (YOS Manager).
- A higher proportion of children and young people comply with the requirements of their sentences (YOS Manager).
- There is evidence in the file of regular and effective management oversight of *Risk of Harm* and Safeguarding issues (YOS Manager).
- Analysis of outcome data is used to inform the interventions offered by the YOS and its partners (Chair of the YOS Management Board).

6. Next Steps:

- 6.1 In response to these findings, the service has developed an Improvement Action Plan agreed with HMI Probation and work has already begun to secure further improvements in practice. The YOS Management Board will be responsible for overseeing the effective implementation of the Action Plan and the regional Youth Justice Board will monitor progress.

- 6.2 The service's approach to risk of harm and vulnerability management planning has been reviewed and staff have received updated training. The service had already amended its use of related documentation; new templates were introduced prior to the inspection taking place and positive feedback was received from the inspection team on their introduction and emerging impact upon practice.
- 6.3 Work is ongoing to monitor the impact of these developments and to revise management oversight processes. A review is about to start of how the service inducts and engages children and young people into the service. The monthly YOS performance clinic will lead on securing improvements in the analysis of outcome data with linkages with data from partners to improve understanding of offending patterns and reduce levels of youth crime.

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Background Papers

HMI Probation Core Case Inspection of Youth Offending Work in Stockton on Tees, 01.2010