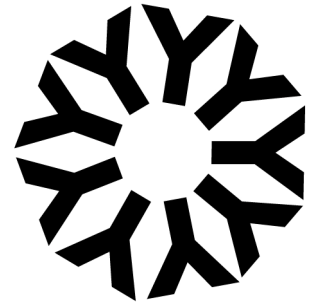


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Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Teams of England and Wales

Report on:
Luton
Youth Offending Service

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2008

Foreword

In the Luton YOS, we found a well led and motivated staff team committed to their work with children and young people who had offended or were at risk of offending. There was a high quality of work overall, underpinned by a learning culture with clear procedures for reviewing practice and performance. Work in the courts was of a good standard and was valued by sentencers. Although there were gaps in the service provided through the Youth Inclusion Programme, which had low levels of assessment and engagement, we noted that the YOS had developed an action plan to improve the programme. The YOS also had a Youth Inclusion and Support Panel, which had undertaken some excellent prevention work.

Some impressive outcomes had been achieved, particularly relating to the level of education and training undertaken by children and young people who had offended. There were examples of quality work with parents/carers and children and young people in custody. The level of contact with victims was high and community reparation was well integrated into all referral panel contracts, although direct victim reparation and attendance at referral panels were areas in development.

Management and leadership arrangements were excellent and staff reported high quality supervision and training. The YOS was integrated into both the crime reduction partnerships and children's services, with the Common Assessment Framework well embedded into its multi-agency working. This was a highly respected and high performing YOS with many examples of good practice in its work. This report and its recommendations to the YOS aim to support its continued improvement.

Andrew Bridges
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

March 2008

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We would particularly like to express our gratitude to Anita Briddon, Jon O'Byrne and Noreen Swiecicki for their commitment to the inspection.

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Glossary

ASBO	Antisocial Behaviour Order
Asset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CPN	Community psychiatric nurse
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
ESF	European Social Fund
ETE	Employment, training and education
GP	General Practitioner
HM	Her Majesty's
HMI Probation	HM Inspectorate of Probation
ISSP	Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme
IT	Information technology
KPI	Key performance indicator
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NSPIS	National Strategy for Police Information Systems
OLASS	Offender Learning and Skills Service
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PPO	Prolific and other Priority Offender
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSR	Pre-sentence report
PYO	Persistent Young Offender
RESPECT	Multi-agency steering group responsible for implementing the government's respect agenda
RoH	Risk of Harm
RoSH	Risk of Serious Harm
SIFA	Screening Interview for Adolescents (Youth Justice Board approved mental health screening tool for specialist workers)
SLA	Service level agreement
SQIFA	Screening Questionnaire Interview for Adolescents (Youth Justice Board approved mental health screening tool for YOS workers)
YIG	Youth Intervention Group
YIP	Youth Inclusion Programme
YISP	Youth Inclusion Support Panel
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOI	Young Offender Institution
YOIS	Youth Offending Information System
YOS	Youth Offending Service

Summary

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Judgement	Descriptor
4	Excellent – performs strongly, well above minimum requirements with outstanding features
3	Good – performs well, consistently above minimum requirements with no important shortcomings
2	Adequate – only meets minimum requirements
1	Inadequate – does not deliver minimum requirements, with many important shortcomings

Work in the courts

- ◆ The YOS had direct access to Bedfordshire police's computerised custody system. This enabled it to track all children and young people held in police custody and ensured that the case managers were informed, even when they were outside Luton or Bedfordshire. This assisted YOS staff in court to offer appropriate bail packages.
- ◆ A small group of dedicated staff within the YOS undertook court duty on a rota basis. The court duty officer met with the youth court legal advisor and Crown Prosecution Service, prior to each youth court, to ensure that they provided sentencers with the most appropriate assistance.
- ◆ Pre-sentence reports were generally of good quality and based on relevant Asset assessments. They were free from discriminatory language and stereotyping. Some further work was needed to make the reports more concise and improve the offence analysis content.
- ◆ Each pre-sentence report was accompanied by a sentencer satisfaction survey. There was a high level of response to these questionnaires and a very high degree of sentencer satisfaction was expressed.

Work with children and young people in the community

- ◆ The YOS operated two prevention schemes - a Youth Inclusion Support Panel and a Youth Inclusion Programme. The quality of the initial Onset assessments and work to promote engagement with children and young people at risk of offending was generally good. However, there were delays from referral to assessment in the Youth Inclusion Programme cases inspected, leading to a low level of engagement. This was in contrast to some excellent case management work undertaken by the Youth Inclusion Support Panel through its Project Turnaround.
- ◆ A number of groups and projects were in operation specifically aimed at addressing the diverse needs of children and young people who had offended or were at risk of offending. These included projects for children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities and groups for girls and young women.
- ◆ The process of checking the health status of all children and young people at sentence or referral had contributed to a high proportion of children and young people accessing health services. The YOS also promoted the positive health of children and young people. However, the failure to fill two health worker posts had impacted on the YOS's ability to develop ongoing health arrangements for children and young people.
- ◆ Considerable work with partner agencies had ensured that a high proportion of the children and young people who had offended were in full-time education or training. A lack of specialist expertise in basic skills assessment and in school education and welfare support had hindered the development of this work.

- ◆ The assessment and management of cases was generally good, but extra work was needed in relation to the quality of Risk of Serious Harm assessment.
- ◆ There had been some excellent development of parenting services, which were valued by parents/carers who believed they had helped them to address their children's antisocial and offending behaviour.

Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences

- ◆ The assessment of children and young people subject to custodial sentences and the communication with secure establishments was generally good, with case managers attending training plan meetings, often accompanied by other YOS and partnership workers. Diversity, vulnerability and other individual needs were actively assessed and relayed to the establishments at the earliest possible stage.
- ◆ The YOS had a resettlement panel that reviewed all custody cases prior to release. This had both contributed to the management of risk, and addressed the children and young people's safeguarding issues on their return to the community.
- ◆ The quality of interventions delivered and the overall quality of practice in relation to promoting compliance during the community phase was good.

Victims and restorative justice

- ◆ There was a clear process in place to ensure that victims were contacted, and their opinions sought, in relation to any reparation carried out by the child or young person. In all but one of the cases inspected where there was a direct victim this process took place.
- ◆ Only limited evidence was available of any direct reparation or victims participating in the restorative justice process. In only 50% of cases inspected had any reparation been undertaken.
- ◆ Victim and reparation work was in general deemed to be sufficient, with an appropriate level of victim awareness work being undertaken. Letters of apology to victims were being written and were valued by victims. Although the YOS had a large number of community reparation projects available, in the vast majority of cases inspected where reparation work had been undertaken, it was of a general gardening nature.

Management and leadership

- ◆ A strong multi-agency representation was apparent on the Management Board, with well informed Board members who ensured that the work of the YOS was integrated into other community safety and children and young people's plans.
- ◆ There was a strong management team within the YOS, which was seen by staff as providing positive and professional leadership. There were

appropriate levels of supervision, which was described by almost half of all staff interviewed as being of excellent quality.

- ◆ In the vast majority of cases inspected, resources had been identified and deployed effectively to meet the assessed need.
- ◆ There was a high level of morale and motivation among staff who were committed to improving effective practice and their own professional development.

Recommendations

Changes are necessary to ensure that (*primary responsibility is indicated in brackets*):

- (1) children and young people appearing before court are sentenced with the most up-to-date and relevant pre-sentence report that reflects their present situation and includes an analysis of the offences (*YOS Manager*)
- (2) the YOS Youth Inclusion Programme provides the same high level of assessment and service as those involved in the Youth Inclusion Support Panel's Project Turnaround (*YOS Management Board*)
- (3) a full range of physical and mental health provision is available from dedicated health service staff based within the YOS (*YOS Management Board*)
- (4) risk management plans and vulnerability action plans are completed in all appropriate cases (*YOS Manager*)
- (5) asset assessment and review of Risk of Serious Harm are completed in all relevant cases (*YOS Manager*)
- (6) there are education staff within the YOS who can undertake systematic assessments of literacy and numeracy skills (*YOS Management Board*)
- (7) offence-related programmes are delivered during the custody phase at Huntercombe Young Offender Institution (*Youth Justice Board*)
- (8) reparation work is started in a timely manner and the range of work is increased to take account of the diverse needs of children and young people who have offended (*YOS Manager*)
- (9) more victims attend referral panels (*YOS Manager*)
- (10) the YOS Strategic Management Board reflects Luton's diverse community (*YOS Management Board*).

Next steps

An improvement plan addressing the recommendations should be submitted to HM Inspectorate of Probation for approval four weeks after the publication of this inspection report. Once agreed, the plan will be forwarded to the Youth Justice Board to monitor its implementation.

Service users' perspective

Children and young people

Thirty-two children and young people completed a questionnaire for the inspection, of which 24 questionnaires were interactive on computer software. The remainder were completed on paper, either independently or during an interview with an inspector.

- ◆ The vast majority of children and young people who attended interviews and completed questionnaires were positive about their contact with the YOS and the benefits to them: "*my behaviour and my lifestyle has changed*", "*got in to college doing what I wanted to do*", "*bullying; I stopped bullying, hanging, getting in trouble,*" and "*helped me get my FA coaching badge,*" were some of the comments made.
- ◆ All children and young people interviewed felt they had been treated fairly and with respect by YOS staff.
- ◆ The majority of children and young people reported having been helped with schooling, training or getting a job.

Parents/carers

Eight questionnaires were completed by parents/carers, either independently or during an interview with an inspector.

- ◆ Parents/carers felt well informed and involved in the work their children were undertaking with the YOS.
- ◆ Those involved with the YOS parenting programmes felt that the parenting workers had helped them and found the experience useful, helpful and positive.
- ◆ All of the parents/carers interviewed reported improvements as a result of their, and their children's, contact with the YOS.

Victims

Seven questionnaires were completed by victims of offending by children and young people, either independently or during an interview with an inspector.

- ◆ All victims interviewed described the YOS and their victim support partners as being sensitive and responsive to their needs. They stated that the initial contact was helpful and informative.
- ◆ "*Myself and my daughter are very pleased with the help we have received from the YOS victim support worker. Every stage was fully explained,*" and

"Was nice to have someone to make calls and help us understand what was going on. Very good service," were among the comments received.

Sharing good practice

Below are examples of good practice we found in the YOS.

Work in the courts

General criterion: 1.2

A sentencer satisfaction form was attached to every report prepared for the court. The form asked the district judge or Chair of the youth panel to comment on: the quality of information about the defendant; the effectiveness of the offence analysis; sentencing options, and the proposal. The form was used by the YOS to improve PSR quality and to inform training.

Work with children and young people at risk of offending

General criterion: 2.1

John was referred to the YISP Project Turnaround as a result of his aggressive behaviour both at home and school. He had an autistic older brother and the case manager, Sally, played particular attention to John's position within the family. Both John and his younger sister were referred to a local project that provided activities to the families of autistic children. This led to an improvement in John's behaviour.

Work with children and young people who have offended

General criterion: 2.5

A 15 year old young person, Robert, lived in a children's home. He was placed on a referral order for assaulting a police officer while under the influence of alcohol. Children's services had assessed Robert as not being at risk of self-harm. However, when his case manager encouraged him to complete a *What do you think?* form, Robert highlighted 'thinking about killing themselves' as being 'just like me'. The case manager took this up with staff at the home and with Robert's social worker as a matter of urgency. Action was taken by the home to address this and prevent a serious incident.

Work with children and young people who have offended

Criterion: 2.6

A procedure was in place to ensure that all children and young people at sentence or referral had their health status assessed to ensure that they had access to a GP, dental health and ophthalmic services.

**Work with
parents/carers**

**General criterion:
2.9**

The YOS worked with parents/carers using a pro-forma that had the outcome built in from the start. This ensured that from the outset the parents/carers identified what they wanted to achieve and how they wanted to go about it – a simple and effective way of approaching outcome planning.

**Work with children
and young people
subject to custodial
sentences**

**General criterion:
3.1**

Leon had a history of serious drug abuse over a number of years. Following his remand into custody by magistrates, his case manager contacted the establishment's governor to make them aware of his drug issues. On discovering that the establishment did not have the health facilities to cope with Leon's detox, the case manager arranged, through the YJB, for Leon to be diverted to Feltham, which had the appropriate health facilities.

**Victims and
restorative justice**

**General criterion:
4.1**

Case managers used a Letter of Apology Programme with children and young people in cases where there was a direct victim. The pack used the production of a letter as the focus for undertaking general victim awareness work. It looked at the participant's own experiences and aimed at production of a meaningful letter of apology to the victim.

**Management and
leadership**

**General criterion:
5.1**

The YOS Management Board had representatives from all key agencies and was chaired by the council Chief Executive. The Board met on the same day as all other Management Boards in the town, enabling good attendance, efficient use of senior officers' time and joined up policies and procedures.

**Management and
leadership**

**General criterion:
5.3**

The YOS managers held a ten-minute meeting with all staff available first thing each morning. The meeting provided the opportunity to ensure, in the event of any staff absence, that essential work was covered, and allowed managers to update staff on any important recent developments.

1. WORK IN THE COURTS

1.1 General criterion:

Children and young people are safeguarded and the likelihood of their further offending reduced by the provision of an appropriate pre-sentence service, including bail supervision and support programmes.

Luton YOS had in place a remand strategy and guidance (dated 1 August 2006) and SLA with both the court services and Luton Borough Council's children's services. The strategy and SLAs underpinned the court work carried out by specialist staff from within the YOS who attended court on a rota basis. This included support from an accommodation officer shared with the children's service's 16+ team.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS court duty officer met with the youth court legal adviser and the CPS prosecutor prior to each weekly youth court. If a child or young person was deemed to be at risk of custody or remand the YOS bail officer would also attend the meeting.
- (2) Court officers were supported by a wide range of bail and accommodation packages, which had contributed to a fall in the number of children and young people remanded into the secure estate over the past three years from 56% in 2003/2004 to 35% in 2006/2007. However, this figure was still above the YJB target of 30%.
- (3) Clear procedures were in place to ensure that court duty officers were able to offer the court alternatives to remand into custody.
- (4) A custody panel, chaired by the operational manager and comprising staff from the ISSP, the court and remand teams and attended by the YOS information manager, met on a quarterly basis. The panel reviewed all aspects of the YOS's performance, in relation to those children and young people remanded into custody, and considered why alternative community-based disposals had not been used. This had led to an improvement in court practice and a reduction in the number of children and young people remanded into custody by the courts.
- (5) The YOS provided a 12-week bail supervision programme aimed at reducing the risk of reoffending during the pre-sentence period.
- (6) There was in place a procedure for sentencers to adjourn cases for up to 21 days where it was deemed appropriate for a YOS final warning panel to

consider issuing a final warning rather than the case proceeding through court. This was seen by both the sentencers and the YOS as diverting children and young people away from inappropriate referral orders. 60% of cases referred to the panel from court were subsequently dealt with by way of a final warning and were then withdrawn from court.

Area for improvement:

- (1) Although there had been a significant fall in the number of children and young people being remanded into the secure estate, the level in Luton was still above the YJB target.

1.2 General criterion:

Courts are assisted in making informed, timely and effective decisions by the provision of good quality reports and appropriate information from the YOT.

The YOS provided court duty cover for the weekly Luton youth court for plea and sentence and the Crown Court as required.

Strengths:

- (1) There were clear arrangements in place to ensure that the YOS covered the youth, Crown and magistrates' courts, and these were underpinned by protocols with all relevant stakeholders.
- (2) The services provided by the YOS were considered valuable by magistrates and legal advisors.
- (3) Weekend and bank holiday service for the youth court was provided by a Bedfordshire emergency duty team. This service was formalised in a SLA between Luton children's services and this team, and was reviewed on a regular basis.
- (4) Sentencers interviewed during the inspection, including Crown and district court judges, expressed complete satisfaction and confidence in the YOS, in particular in the YOS's contribution at first hearings and its enforcement of court orders.
- (5) In 86% of cases inspected proposals contained in the PSRs were followed fully.
- (6) A gatekeeping panel met three times a week to quality assure all court reports. The panel was made up of an operational manager, a YOS officer and the report writer. They assessed the report against a 26 element checklist.
- (7) Each court report had attached to it a PSR questionnaire seeking sentencers' views on the usefulness and overall satisfaction with the report. There was a high level of response to this form, which showed almost 100% satisfaction

with PSRs.

- (8) Information from the sentencer feedback forms was used by both the custody panel and the YOS management group to ensure that they were meeting the needs of the courts. The YOS also provided sentencers with a sentence completion report at the end of all orders.
- (9) The YOS had a 'completion of supervision' feedback form, which was filled in by the case manager with the child or young person at the end of the order and forwarded to the sentencers. This informed the original sentencer of the progress made by the child or young person during the course of their order.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Feedback to sentencers on compliance and the progress made by children and young people was considered too spasmodic and depended on the case manager.
- (2) Of the PSRs inspected, 54% provided an analysis of the offences as distinct from a description.
- (3) A number of the cases inspected involved children and young people who had been sentenced without a new PSR and therefore without an up-to-date written assessment of the child or young person's situation and level of risk. In 32% of cases inspected the child or young person had been sentenced without a PSR having been prepared for the current offences.
- (4) Of the cases inspected 31% were considered to be suitably concise.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **good**.

2. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Work with children and young people at risk of offending

2.1 General criterion:

The YOT (or others on its behalf) undertakes appropriate activities to prevent children and young people from offending.

The YOS had a wide range of interventions delivered through partnerships with NACRO, including the YISP Project Turnaround, and a YIP run in partnership with the Safer Luton Partnership. Project Turnaround provided a Luton-wide service for children and young people aged eight to 17. It signposted children and young people to other agencies that provided activities aimed at preventing them from offending. The YIP offered neighbourhood-based services to children and young people at risk of offending between the ages of 13-16.

Strengths:

- (1) Both the YISP and the YIP had robust referral systems that included the wide use of CAF. In all of the prevention cases inspected the referral was deemed to be appropriate and linked to the scheme's criteria.
- (2) In all inspected cases, Onset assessments had been informed by interviews with children and young people and their parents/carers.
- (3) Self-assessments were completed by all but two of the children and young people.
- (4) In all Project Turnaround cases inspected, assessments were carried out within the required timescale and planned interventions were delivered.
- (5) All cases assessed had intervention plans that were sensitive to the diversity needs of the children and young people.
- (6) In Project Turnaround, diversity issues were assessed well at an early stage of the engagement, and there were a number of projects aimed at addressing the diversity needs of children and young people. These included the ESF funded RESPECT group, one of a number of groups for girls and young women, and projects for children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities.
- (7) In all of the cases inspected, RoSH assessments were considered to have been appropriate, and interventions were sensitive to those assessments.

- (8) The Social Behaviour Unit led a multi-agency YIG. This group considered young people aged eight to 17 who had come to their notice, due mainly to antisocial behaviour. Case discussion examined the causes of the behaviour and outcomes included referral to preventative projects.
- (9) Referrals to the YOS's prevention programmes (including YISP and YIP) of children and young people at risk of offending came via multi-agency panel meetings. There were three panels across Luton, chaired by senior representatives from the local authority's social care and education departments and the PCT. The panels made use of the CAF in making their referrals. They took referrals from a variety of agencies and developed packages of interventions to meet identified needs.
- (10) Project Turnaround staff demonstrated a strong commitment to their work with children and young people at risk of offending or antisocial behaviour. This was evidenced through good quality engagement, motivation and support, and reinforced through positive behaviour.
- (11) Since Project Turnaround had been commissioned in 2005 only 10% of the children and young people it had worked with had gone on to offend. During the same period 95% of Onset exit assessments showed a reduced score.
- (12) The YOS had secured funding from RESPECT to employ a family therapist who worked full-time with families engaged with the YIP and YISP as well as families known to the Social Behaviour Unit.
- (13) We found strong evidence that the service did positive work in the community to prevent children and young people from offending. Figures submitted to the YJB indicated that there had been an 11% reduction in new entrants to the criminal justice system for the year 2006/2007 against a YJB target of 5%.
- (14) In all but one case, home visits were conducted and repeated as necessary.
- (15) The YOS Strategic Management Board had developed a plan of action to improve the performance and services delivered by the YIP to include monthly reports to the Board.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) There were delays, in some cases up to six months, from referral to assessment in all of the YIP cases inspected.
- (2) There was limited sequencing of plans in both the YISP and YIP cases.
- (3) In the YIP, we found very little use of outcome-orientated objectives with children and young people. There was also little evidence that planned interventions were time-limited or had clear exit strategies.

2.2 General criterion:

The health of children and young people who are at risk of offending is promoted by the work of the YOT and its partners.

All children and young people at risk of offending who were referred to both the YIP and YISP had full access to the mental health and physical health screening and advice available through the YOS. This included a full-time drugs advisor and mental health and health workers provided by CAMHS and the PCT.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS had in place a procedure to ensure that all children and young people at risk of offending had their health needs assessed to include registration with a GP and access, as necessary, to dental and ophthalmic services.
- (2) Project Turnaround worked with RESPECT parenting practitioners and the families of children and young people at risk of offending. Their work included a workshop to help families look at communication, dealing with anger and discipline.
- (3) The YOS was involved in the *Stay in Line Year 9* initiative in which trained staff went into secondary schools to deliver a programme that covered drugs, alcohol and personal safety.
- (4) YOS case managers had developed impressive contacts and skills to alleviate any effect that gaps in the provision of health services within the YOS might have had.

Area for improvement:

- (1) The YOS had, for almost a year, vacancies for a health worker and a CPN. The failure to fill these posts had had an adverse affect on the YOS's ability to grow its services and develop links with other services.

2.3 General criterion:

Children and young people who are at risk of offending are safeguarded through the work of the YOT and its partners, to contribute to the promotion of their welfare and, where applicable, their protection.

The YOS was represented on the LSCB by the YOS Manager and there were effective links between the YOS and wider children's services.

Strengths:

- (1) In the cases inspected there was a process in place to identify and record

whether a child or young person was known to children's services, the name of any allocated social worker, and the sharing of information and resources.

- (2) We found that the CAF was well integrated into the work of the YOS, with referrals to the YIP and YISP being made using the framework and the YOS using the CAF to inform other professionals working with the child or young person.
- (3) *Stay in Line Year 9*, the programme delivered to year nine school students, provided children and young people at risk of offending with the information they needed to both avoid offending and stay safe.
- (4) There were clear links between the YOS prevention projects and school family workers. These included referrals of children and young people at risk to the YIP and YISP, and joint working between the YISP parenting and family therapists and the family workers.

2.4 General criterion:

Children and young people who are at risk of offending are enabled and encouraged to achieve their potential.

ETE was integrated into the YOS's prevention work. The YOS liaised closely with the schools to identify children and young people who were at risk of offending and who had been excluded. There were direct links with learning mentors accessed through local schools.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS supported a pilot restorative justice project in a local school that aimed to reduce school exclusions and improve behaviour between peers. The direct work by the YOS involved training peer mentors who could mediate in disputes between pupils.
- (2) The YOS was a member of a pupil placement panel that ensured that suitable alternative provision was made for children and young people who had been permanently excluded from school. This had a positive impact on children and young people at risk of offending, who made up a significant proportion of excluded young people.
- (3) There was evidence from the cases inspected that children and young people at risk of offending were offered interventions to meet their assessed ETE needs.
- (4) In all Project Turnaround cases inspected the initial Onset assessment had been informed by direct contact with the child or young person's education or training provider.
- (5) We found a close working relationship between the YOS and the PRU. This contributed to the high level of children and young people, under the

supervision of the YOS, in full education and training.

- (6) There was evidence that the Connexions worker and the senior education officer at the YOS had developed strong links with ETE 16-18 training providers locally to promote training for young people in need.

Area for improvement:

- (1) The YOS had no specialist expertise in basic skills assessment or school education and welfare support, as a result of not recruiting against the vacant advisor teacher post.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **good**.

Work with children and young people who have offended

2.5 General criterion:

The YOT (or others on its behalf) undertake appropriate activities to prevent children and young people from reoffending.

The YOS had a wide range of constructive interventions and services available for children and young people who had offended. It had projects aimed at meeting the specific needs of girls and young women and those for children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities. The YOS offered a number of offence and victim awareness programmes aimed at reducing the risk of reoffending.

Strengths:

- (1) In all but one of the cases assessed, an initial Asset assessment had been completed in accordance with the national standards timescale. The great majority were of sufficient quality, with positive, supportive and pro-social factors being identified and clearly recorded.
- (2) Initial assessments were based on at least one interview with the child or young person and in the vast majority of cases they had been informed by the direct involvement of the parent/carer.
- (3) There were processes in place to ensure that children and young people completed a self-assessment *What do you think?* form. Case managers were proactive in encouraging children and young people to undertake this task. Of the cases inspected, most children and young people who had been invited to complete them had done so.
- (4) There was evidence of an understanding by case managers of the benefit of using external providers where appropriate. An example of this was the provision of anger management work by an outside agency, along with

appropriate signposting for the children and young people, so that when they were no longer under supervision they were still able to access community-based facilities.

- (5) In all cases race and ethnicity had been clearly recorded. In the vast majority of cases assessments had been made in relation to potentially discriminatory factors at an early stage. Where these factors had been assessed, arrangements had been made to minimise their impact. We found some very good examples of this practice.
- (6) Case managers worked in a consistent and yet creative and individual way, drawing upon both programmes available within the YOS and developing packages to meet the child or young person's offending needs. They had a good understanding of the children and young people's learning styles and other issues that could stand in the way of effective offence-related work. Methods used included a learning style questionnaire and regular reviews of diversity issues.
- (7) Home visits were carried out and repeated in most of the cases assessed.
- (8) The majority of case managers had an understanding of RoSH as opposed to an assessment of the likelihood of reoffending.
- (9) In all of the cases assessed as low RoSH, the case manager recognised and acted upon the need for planning to address the risk and demonstrated an understanding of the importance of this planning.
- (10) Quality of intervention planning was good and work was undertaken based on Asset assessment in the majority of cases. In all cases the plans were completed within the appropriate timescale. In the vast majority of cases, the intervention plans were outcome-oriented and outlined clearly who would undertake the work.
- (11) Most intervention plans had been seen and signed by the children and young people and in all but two cases the plans had been seen and signed by the parent/carer.
- (12) Intervention plans were, in 100% of cases, sensitive to the diverse needs of children and young people. The YOS had a number of programmes available for children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities. These included Project X Factor, which provided mentoring for young black people, and the Asian Drugs Information Befriending Outreach Project.
- (13) YOS case managers were able to refer girls and young women into a number of projects. These included the RESPECT girls' group, aimed at raising self-esteem and aspiration levels, and Clean Break's Miss Spent programme, a 30 hour art-based personal development course. All young women who had attended this programme had achieved a *Working With Others* award. This was a nationally recognised award for girls and young women who had successfully completed the course.

- (14) We found effective joint working between the YOS and local children's services and relevant other agencies to facilitate information-sharing in almost all cases. This had been delivered to plan and achieved within a reasonable timescale in all cases. Joint working was particularly strong with those children and young people who were in the care of the local authority.
- (15) Case workers used a five session programme of victim awareness and related activity, working towards the practical output of a letter of apology.
- (16) The overall quality of intervention planning was assessed as being sufficient in all cases inspected.
- (17) The YOS final warning panel met each Wednesday. This was attended by key members of the YOS including the seconded police officer, the parenting coordinator, an ISSP worker, the operational or deputy manager, a victim worker and a case manager. The panel reviewed cases where a final warning assessment had been undertaken, and those that had been referred to the YOS from the court. Through discussion, the panel decided the appropriate level of intervention for the child or young person and how this would be best delivered. Occasionally the panel recommended the use of a different disposal to the arresting officer. All staff present played an active role and contributed to the discussion. The decision-making process was clearly recorded.
- (18) The seconded police officer administered all final warnings within the team and on behalf of Bedfordshire police. He had a generic role within the YOS, although at the time of the inspection he only supervised final warning cases. In addition, he dealt with all prolific young offenders whom he saw once a week to review their status.
- (19) Luton YOS, Bedfordshire YOS and Bedfordshire police had a joint protocol for reducing the offending and entry into the criminal justice system of children and young people in the care of the local authority. This was dated October 2007, with a review date of October 2008.
- (20) The YOS, through the seconded police officer, was represented at a monthly multi-agency meeting (of the YOS, police and probation) to discuss those children and young people who were designated as PYO/PPOs.
- (21) In 100% of cases inspected there was evidence of work being done to ensure that children and young people understood who benefited from the reparation work they did and how that benefit was derived.
- (22) In all but three cases inspected, the first appointment with the child or young person, following sentence, took place in accordance with the national standards timescale. In all cases the inductions provided to those about to commence their community orders were timely and comprehensive.
- (23) The frequency of appointments conformed to national standards in all cases. In all but one case the frequency of appointments supported the achievement of intervention plan objectives, and in almost three-quarters of cases the frequency of appointments met any RoH considerations.

- (24) The YOS shared the services of an accommodation worker with the 16+ team of the local children's services. His position within both teams clearly assisted children and young people to access and improve their accommodation. In all cases we found that action, where necessary, had been taken to address accommodation needs.
- (25) The YOS staff demonstrated enormous commitment to their work. There was good evidence in the majority of cases that they had worked hard to motivate and support the child or young person and understood the importance of reinforcing positive behaviour.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) The YOS had only recently introduced vulnerability and risk management plans. The absence of this planning in the cases inspected had impacted on the case managers' work with children and young people. Although training had taken place there was still confusion among some case managers as to when plans, including RoSH assessments and reviews, should be completed. This was particularly the case in two areas of Luton where there was concern over the possible development of gangs. Case managers had rightly reviewed the RoH and RoSH of the children and young people in these areas. However, they had raised the level of risk based on concerns over the area, rather than any evidence of an increase in risk posed by the particular child or young person.
- (2) Asset assessment of RoSH to others had only been completed in half of all relevant cases inspected. There was also a low level of reviews undertaken in these cases.

2.6 General criterion:

The health of children and young people who have offended is promoted by the work of the YOT.

A full-time substance misuse worker was based in the PCT young people's drug & alcohol team, but was dedicated to the YOS. However, further health worker posts remained unfilled for a number of months, despite efforts on the part of the PCT and YOS Strategic Management Board to recruit against them. The YOS received some support from the PCT, which provided a health worker to undertake assessments on a referral basis and from a part-time forensic CPN.

Strengths:

- (1) A strong feature of the YOS was the effort put in to ensure that all children and young people engaged with it were registered with a GP and also had access as necessary to dental and ophthalmic services. There was a procedure for administrators to undertake Carefirst and health checks when cases were opened, and to record any respective findings on YOIS.

- (2) The local CAMHS met the YJB targets in respect of timescales for dealing with referrals and undertaking assessments as required.
- (3) We judged that YOS case managers had developed impressive contacts and skills to alleviate any effect that gaps in the provision of health services within the YOS might have had.
- (4) In all cases inspected, a SQIFA and SIFA had been completed where there was an indicated need.
- (5) The YOS substance misuse worker assisted children and young people with assessed needs to have access to medical services for substance misuse via the Shared Drugs Service.
- (6) Although the need for Tier 4 mental health services was rare, commissioning and funding arrangements existed for fast-tracking admissions where necessary.

Area for improvement:

- (1) The lack of dedicated mental and physical health workers within the YOS had hindered the YOS in developing its services to children and young people.

2.7 General criterion:

Children and young people who have offended are safeguarded through the work of the YOT to contribute to the promotion of their welfare and, where applicable, their protection.

Strengths:

- (1) Clear lines of responsibility in relation to safeguarding and child protection assessments existed within the YOS. This was demonstrated by the overall quality of the work to help children and young people who had offended to stay safe. In all cases the YOS had checked the social care status of the children and young people with children's services, either during a recent previous order or at the outset of the order being inspected, and this was clearly recorded.
- (2) In all but one of the relevant cases, the YOS had liaised with the local authority's children's social and care services to reduce issues of vulnerability and share safeguarding issues.
- (3) The YOS had a protocol with children's services to undertake joint working with children and young people in the care of the local authority. We found evidence of this working relationship during the inspection. This included joint working between YOS and residential social care staff, aimed at reducing the criminalisation of behaviour that, within a family, would have been dealt with without police involvement. This was achieved through a mediation scheme within the residential care home.

- (4) There was a good understanding of the CAF among case managers and a positive attitude to using the framework in order to share information and assessments with colleagues in children's services.
- (5) All staff had undergone Level 1 safeguarding training and further training was planned.

2.8 General criterion:

Children and young people who have offended are enabled and encouraged to achieve their potential.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS's achievements in relation to ETE targets set by the YJB were outstanding. During the inspection we saw evidence that 87% of those who had offended were in full-time ETE of 25 hours or more per week. The service was particularly effective in dealing with children of school age to ensure that they were quickly placed in alternative provision if excluded from school. The case workers worked closely with schools to ensure that pupils referred to the service and remaining at school were well supported throughout their orders.
- (2) The YOS had undertaken some impressive work to increase the number of children and young people in full-time education or training. Although performance was still below the YJB target of 90%, the level of ETE evidenced during the inspection was among the highest in England and Wales.
- (3) Children and young people who had offended, and who were of school age but not in school, were soon placed in alternative settings such as the PRU run by the education department. The local education authority had a very good record on inclusion. The number of school exclusions was very low and there was a wide range of alternative provision. For example, every secondary school had a Learning Support Unit for pupils with additional learning needs. Case managers liaised very closely and effectively with these units.
- (4) Children and young people with ETE needs were well supported. In the majority of cases these needs were recorded and identified in the Asset scores. The YOS had a good record of ensuring that needs were met through a wide range of networks and training provision accessed across Luton.
- (5) There was a Connexions worker based within the YOS. The senior education and employment officer had developed strong links with ETE providers for 16-18 year olds locally, which enabled children and young people in contact with the YOS to access training and employment provision.
- (6) The senior education and employment officer had worked hard to maintain links with ETE providers and to ensure that the assessment of educational need through Asset was matched with dedicated resources. This was evidence by every child or young person in the inspection file sample being

offered ETE-related interventions, which promoted learning opportunities in relation to their assessed needs.

Area for improvement:

- (1) The YOS had no access to specialist expertise in basic skills assessment, or school education and welfare support. There were plans to fill these gaps through a joint appointment with the local authority's behaviour and support services but the failure to fill this post for several months had hindered the YOS in developing these services.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **good**.

Work with parents/carers

2.9 General criterion:

Parents/carers are supported in addressing their children's antisocial and offending behaviour.

The YOS had a dedicated parenting coordinator and two further parenting workers who undertook assessments and developed parenting programmes and parenting involvement across the range of programmes. These included one-to-one work, group work and systemic family therapy. The YISP had a further two parenting workers funded via the Respect Task Force, who also worked with families of those known to the YIP. Volunteer parent mentors were trained by the YOS. The YOS parenting work was linked to the council's parenting strategy within the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

Strengths:

- (1) All parents/carers of children and young people who had offended or were at risk of offending were involved in their child's assessment and their views were reflected in these. All parents/carers had also signed the intervention plans.
- (2) We found that the YOS actively engaged with parents/carers during the supervision of their children, which encouraged and developed open and honest relationships.
- (3) All parents/carers in the cases inspected were made aware of the requirements of the interventions being undertaken by their children, and were kept informed of progress during the course of supervision.
- (4) The YOS routinely made assessments of parenting needs within the families of those children and young people it had contact with. Where parents/carers expressed an interest in engaging with the YOS, the parenting coordinator contacted them to establish their specific needs.

- (5) Parenting was fully integrated into the overall approach of the YOS with all case managers aware both of the value of engaging with parents/carers, and of the parenting interventions available.
- (6) The YOS ran a parenting group to enable them to work with a high number of parents/carers. There was also a father's group - Eat and Talk (EAT), which met on a monthly basis, and focused around food to engage them.
- (7) The YOS employed two family workers and contracted with three family therapists from an external organisation. This arrangement had been in place for some five years. There was a system within the YOS of automatic referrals to the parenting worker for any child or young person whose Asset assessment scored two or more on family issues. Referrals could also be made if the worker was concerned, irrespective of the score. A full assessment supported by a home visit was conducted and the parent/carer was then allocated either to the group work programme or to a family therapist.
- (8) The family therapists, although self-employed, provided written information to the parenting worker for appropriate inclusion in the overall record. This could include family dynamic charts as well as written records. We found evidence of the effectiveness of this work during the inspection.
- (9) The parenting worker had established links with other parenting provisions within Luton, and information about those provisions was made available to parents/carers with whom the YOS engaged. This contributed to their work being focused and time-limited, and did not suffer from delay.
- (10) The YOS made good use of parenting volunteers who provided mentoring and support to parents/carers. Many of these volunteers were drawn from parents/carers who had themselves been through the YOS parenting programme. All volunteers, parenting workers and family therapists were CRB cleared.
- (11) It was our assessment that overall the quality of the work to support parents/carers in addressing their child's antisocial and offending behaviour was good and in one case excellent.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **excellent**.

Outcomes of work with children and young people in the community

2.10 General criterion:

The YOT promotes consultation with service users about the services they receive, and this information is used to improve outcomes.

The YOS carried out a wide range of consultations with children and young people, parents/carers, victims and sentencers. The YOS had set up a number of panels that used service user feedback to improve practice.

Strengths:

- (1) Children and young people were encouraged to complete *What do you think?* forms that informed the Asset assessments. They were involved in exit interviews at the end of their orders. The YOS had also introduced Viewpoint - an online system for gaining the views of children and young people in a user friendly way.
- (2) In all but one of the prevention cases inspected the child or young person had been encouraged to complete, and had completed, an *Over to you* form. Project Turnaround had a process in place for collecting feedback from children, young people and their parents/carers and forwarding them to the YOS.
- (3) A pro-forma was used by parenting workers, which demonstrated the thorough assessment and recording of parenting work undertaken, and provided information on the outcomes achieved.
- (4) All victims interviewed during the inspection reported having received requests for feedback and for their views in relation to the service they had received and the reparation undertaken by the children and young people who had offended against them.
- (5) Luton Borough Council conducted a Being Young in Luton survey in which children and young people expressed concerns about crime and sometimes feeling unsafe. As a result the YOS helped develop the *Stay in Line Year 9* programme.
- (6) We found in the YOS a culture of learning from service users' feedback.

Area for improvement:

- (1) Whilst the complaints procedure was displayed in all public areas, only slightly more than half of all children and young people who completed questionnaires for the inspection recalled having been told by the YOS that they had the right to complain or how to make a complaint.

2.11 General criterion:

The YOT demonstrates positive outcomes in its work with children and young people in the community.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS had seen a significant reduction in the number of children and young people going into custody. From a high in 2002 of 17% of cases receiving custody as a proportion of all sentences, this had fallen to 6% in 2006/2007.
- (2) YJB figures recorded an 11% reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system during the year 2006/2007.
- (3) All but three of the Onset assessments were re-scored. Improvements over the initial scores were seen in all but one of these cases.
- (4) In all prevention cases inspected, none of the children or young people had offended since the start of the preventative intervention.
- (5) Of all Asset assessments inspected, 87% had been re-scored. Improvements over the initial scores were seen in over 60% of the cases.
- (6) Most children and young people who had offended and were engaged with the YOS had complied with the requirements of their orders.
- (7) In two-thirds of all relevant cases of children and young people who had offended there was evidence of a reduction in factors linked to risk of safeguarding. In all but one of the remaining cases, safeguarding factors were managed effectively. Parents/carers interviewed during the inspection identified improvements in their relationships with their children as a result of their contact with the YOS.
- (8) Of those children and young people who had offended and been assessed as having accommodation needs, 80% were assessed as having improved their accommodation provision.
- (9) Of those children and young people who were interviewed or who had completed Viewpoint during the inspection, over 80% reported that things had got better as a result of their work with the YOS. Over 70% felt they were less likely to reoffend as a result.
- (10) During the last three-quarters of the year, the service supported around 87% of children and young people who had offended into full-time ETE of 25 hours or more per week.
- (11) The children and young people were very positive about their experience of YOS supervision. Their comments included:
 - *"Helped me get into college. Doing a bricklaying course."*

- *"YISP key worker is always there when I need them and they are happy to sort out problems."*
- *"YOS has been a big help - they put me towards a Football Association coaching badge."*
- *"My behaviour has changed and got better."*
- *"Starting to get out of trouble I do not get into as much trouble as I used or commit as much crime as before."*

Area for improvement:

- (1) Although reoffending had fallen, overall by 1.2%, the most recent YJB data showed an increase in three out of the four sub-groups. Of concern was the level of reoffending among children and young people who were under the care of the local authority.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **good**.

3. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SUBJECT TO CUSTODIAL SENTENCES

3.1 General criterion:

The YOT (or others on its behalf), undertake appropriate activities during the custodial phase of the sentence to prevent children and young people from reoffending.

The local secure establishments were at Huntercombe YOI or Oakhill Secure Training Centre. However, pressure on the secure estate had resulted in children and young people being held at establishments some considerable distance away.

Strengths:

- (1) In all but one of the cases subject to custodial sentences, initial Asset assessments were completed on time and were considered to have been of sufficient quality. Children and young people were involved in the process in all cases, and parents/carers were involved on all but two occasions. The involvement of parents/carers was reflected in the assessments in all those cases. Positive factors such as supportive and pro-social factors were identified, as well as risk factors in every case.
- (2) Close attention was paid to diversity issues. All cases assessed had a clear record of the child or young person's race and ethnicity. All had diversity and potentially discriminatory factors and other individual needs assessed at an early stage. We found that in all cases plans had been put in place to minimise the impact of discrimination.
- (3) A RoSH was completed in all but two of the cases inspected and, in all but one of the cases, the classifications were assessed to be correct.
- (4) Although only a small number of custody cases were managed within the MAPPA, we were pleased to find that case managers understood the importance of making this information available to all staff involved with the case, including the secure establishments.
- (5) Accommodation needs were adequately assessed and monitored in all relevant cases, and the YOS accommodation worker had actively engaged with others to secure appropriate provision. In every case an accommodation address and funding was in place prior to the child or young person being released.
- (6) All relevant assessments and information were sent to the secure

establishment within 24 hours of sentence, and any specific risk factors were communicated to the establishment immediately in all cases.

- (7) The YOS was proactive in requesting that children and young people serve their sentences closer to their homes.
- (8) Case managers were proactive in their work and liaison with the secure estate. In most cases specialist ETE or Connexions workers accompanied them on visits. Case managers were encouraged by the YOS to chair planning meetings and ETE reviews. There was attention to pre-release education and training planning.
- (9) Initial training plans were in all cases completed within the required timescale, and in all but one case had been seen and signed by the child or young person.
- (10) We found that all initial training plans were sensitive to diversity issues, where such factors existed.
- (11) There was clear evidence that joint working had taken place between the YOS case manager and staff at the secure establishment to address emotional and mental health needs. YOS and secure establishment staff worked together to ensure that plans were delivered and achieved within a reasonable timescale where substance misuse needs were identified.
- (12) In all cases inspected, the frequency of appointments with the child or young person during the custodial phase of the order conformed to the national standard and supported the achievements of the training plan objectives. Case managers were encouraged to see children and young people in secure establishments more regularly than the national standard specified, in order to support and engage with them in constructive interventions.
- (13) ETE joint working was given a priority with children and young people in custody, with particular attention paid to ensuring that children and young people returned to full-time education or training on their release. In one case, this included the Headteacher attending a review at the secure establishment to support the YOS in its work with the young person.
- (14) The overall quality of YOS communication with secure establishment staff was assessed as being generally good and in one case excellent.
- (15) The YOS actively encouraged contact between the parent/carer and their children in all cases. Parents/carers were assisted by the YOS to attend planning and review meetings during the custodial phase in all cases. YOS case managers took responsibility for making contact with parents/carers every day during the first week that their children or young people spent in the secure establishment. This supported the parent/carer in coming to terms with the order and helped to make sure that they understood the processes.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) We found no evidence that case managers maintained contact with the child or young person, by telephone, letter or other visits, during the custodial phase of the sentence. Such contact was not only valued by children and young people in custody but could lay the basis for closer working relationships on release.
- (2) Whilst there was evidence of YOS strategic intervention to encourage this, HMYOI Huntercombe did not deliver any offence-related programmes to the children and young people in the inspection sample.

3.2 General criterion:

Children and young people are safeguarded through the work of the YOT during the custodial phase of the sentence to contribute to the promotion of their welfare and, where applicable, their protection.

The YOS had a custody panel that met quarterly. It received performance information, including a race and ethnicity breakdown of custodial sentences and secure remands, and the influence reports had on sentencing. The panel agreed actions that aimed to reduce the use of custody and agreed feedback to the courts, YOS staff and other agencies.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS had a resettlement panel that met monthly to review all custody cases. This checked that all relevant safeguarding measures had been taken, and that the case manager maintained contact with other professionals involved through the CAF. The panel was formed following a serious case review in 2005, which looked into the suicide of a young person who had been released from a custodial sentence with no planned accommodation. The resettlement panel checked all cases due for discharge to ensure that no child or young person was released without a clear care package in place, including accommodation, funding, benefits and education.
- (2) The YOS paid particular attention to safeguarding the needs of children and young people at the point of custodial sentence. We found evidence in the cases inspected of case managers being proactive in contacting governors at secure establishments to ensure that they were aware of concerns regarding the child or young person's mental and physical health and any other issues. We also saw evidence that case managers contacted the YJB to request that children and young people served their sentences at local establishments.
- (3) The YOS had worked with HMYOI Feltham and Huntercombe to develop thorough procedures for the reception of vulnerable children and young people, and used special reception arrangements. These establishments had a positive attitude to contacting and updating the YOS as appropriate throughout the sentence.

- (4) The YOS had developed a performance action plan, to monitor the level of children in the care of the local authority who came into contact with the criminal justice system and, in particular, the disproportionately high level who received custodial sentences. The YOS and children's services had, as a result, developed procedures to address this issue.
- (5) There was timely and effective intervention planning prior to release from the secure establishments. Individual learning plans took account of ETE work undertaken whilst in custody and this was continued where appropriate on release. There was evidence of home visiting and work with parents/carers to support reintegration.
- (6) A YOS representative sat on a pupil placement panel with the aim of increasing the number of children and young people returning to full-time education following discharge from secure establishments.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) Vulnerability action plans had only recently been introduced and we therefore found them in use in fewer than half of the cases we inspected. However, we did find that vulnerability issues had been addressed in the majority of cases.
- (2) There was a lack of an informed and systematic approach to key skills assessment, using YJB approved instruments, in post-custody plans and interventions.

3.3 General criterion:

The YOT (or others on its behalf), undertake appropriate activities during the community phase of the sentence, to prevent children and young people from reoffending.

The YOS resettlement panel reviewed all custody cases each month to ensure that plans were in place on release for the child or young person to build on the learning started during the custody phase, and to assist their safe reintegration back into their community.

Strengths:

- (1) In all cases the induction provided to children and young people released from secure establishments was timely, and in all but one case was comprehensive.
- (2) Intervention plans were reviewed within ten days of release in all cases and subsequently on a three monthly basis or at the end of the order, whichever was sooner.
- (3) The RoH to others was reviewed within ten days of release and subsequently reviewed every three months thereafter.

- (4) We found in all but one case (which went into breach soon after release) that the overall quality of interventions delivered in the community phase was good. In all relevant cases, specialist interventions took place in relation to physical health, including substance misuse and emotional and mental health.
- (5) In all cases work in the community built sufficiently on activities the child or young person had started during the custodial phase of their sentence. In all but two cases interventions successfully challenged the child or young person to accept responsibility for their offending behaviour.
- (6) Interventions delivered were in all cases sensitive to diversity issues.
- (7) Specialist ETE services were provided in statutory education and at 16+ following release from custody. There was also evidence that individual learning plans developed whilst in custody were continued where appropriate following release.
- (8) The frequency of appointments in the community phase of the order conformed to the national standard in all but one case. In cases where there were concerns regarding the child or young person's RoH or safety, case managers established more frequent contact. In all of these cases home visits were carried out and repeated as necessary.
- (9) In all cases inspected we found a high level of attention being paid by case managers in relation to promoting compliance during the community phase of the order. Effective action was taken when it was required, ensuring compliance, and there was a consistent approach amongst case managers in their decision-making about the acceptability of absences. Breach action, when necessary, was instigated quickly and appropriately, particularly in cases where there was concern over the level of risk. All breach action was resolved within the required timescale.
- (10) The overall quality of case managers' practice in relation to compliance during the community phase of the sentence was generally good and in one case it was assessed as excellent.

Area for improvement:

- (1) In only two of the five relevant cases where there had been significant changes during the community phase of the order, had the RoSH section of Asset assessment been reviewed.

3.4 General criterion:

The YOT demonstrates positive outcomes in its work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences.

Although there had been a drop in the percentage of cases in which custodial sentences were given to children and young people, the YOS Strategic Management Board had commissioned NACRO to undertake research into the

level of children and young people receiving custodial sentences. The research highlighted the disproportionately high number of young people from black and minority ethnic communities who were subject to custodial sentences.

Strengths:

- (1) There had been a substantial fall in the number of children and young people receiving custodial sentences as a percentage of children and young people receiving court sentences, from a high of 23% in 1998 to 6% in 2006/2007.
- (2) Asset assessments were routinely re-scored, providing evidence of real change in criminogenic factors over time. Improvements were seen in all but one case when recent scores were compared to initial Asset scores.
- (3) There were close working relationships between the YOS accommodation worker, case managers and the resettlement panel to ensure that children and young people had suitable accommodation on their release from custody. Children and young people were also supported in their accommodation by the accommodation worker and through funding from the local authority's Supporting People arrangements. Evidence of the value of this work was observed during the inspection. In all but one case the accommodation provision of the child or young person had improved during the course of the order.
- (4) In none of the cases inspected had the child or young person been convicted of any further offences during the community phase of the sentence.
- (5) We found, in all cases, that full attention had been given to the long-term community reintegration of the child or young person. Resources were allocated and efficiently used to achieve the assessed outcome.
- (6) In the majority of cases inspected, planned objectives had been efficiently achieved and were judged to have been good and in one case to have been excellent.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) In half of the cases inspected we found no evidence that learning and outcome/skills had been applied in the case manager's work with the child or young person.
- (2) There was evidence in only one case of demonstrable change in the child or young person's victim awareness.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **excellent**.

4. VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

4.1 General criterion:

Victims of children and young people who have offended feel that they have been assisted by the intervention of the YOT in feeling safer and achieving closure.

The YOS had a dedicated worker from Victim Support Bedfordshire with access to Victim Support volunteers to facilitate contact between the YOS and victims.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS had a protocol with Bedfordshire police to provide appropriate victim information to the YOS when a child or young person was arrested. The police sent form 280 to the YOS within 24 hours. In all but one of the cases where there was a direct victim, police had notified the YOS of the victim's details within the above timescale.
- (2) We found evidence that every case with an identifiable victim was referred to the victim liaison worker. There was a process in place to ensure that this took place, which included a system to ensure that cases were not missed. This involved checks of all cases on allocation and a proactive case manager who worked closely with the victim liaison worker.
- (3) In all but one case where there was a direct victim, restricted/prohibited conditions had been placed on the licence or order to ensure priority was accorded to the victim's safety.
- (4) All victims, individual and corporate, were contacted at the assessment stage by letter.
- (5) In the majority of cases we found that the victim had been invited to participate in the restorative justice process related to the offence.
- (6) The victim worker had been in post for seven months and over the past two months had begun a system of assertive contact whereby she initiated contact by telephone, offering a visit, rather than by a letter. There was evidence that this had begun to show an increase in take-up.
- (7) There were positive links with Bedfordshire Probation Area's Victim Liaison Unit regarding post-sentence contact with victims of children and young people who had received 12 months or more custodial sentences for sexual and/or violent offences. This was contained in the YOS/probation protocol.

- (8) There was evidence that all youth offender panel reports were gate-kept. This process had, we judged, added to the quality of reports. Referral panel volunteers commented positively on the quality of information provided to them by case managers.
- (9) Review panels were made up of the same volunteers as initial panels and dates were set for reviews at initial hearings. This provided consistency and clarity for the child or young person.
- (10) The panel coordinator had developed a series of prompt questions for panel members to assist them in developing a consistent approach to their engagement with children and young people. Panel members interviewed found this helpful.
- (11) There was a longstanding group of referral panel volunteers and a new group was to be inducted and trained early in 2008. Panel members commented that general arrangements had improved since the appointment of the coordinator. We found, in the volunteers interviewed, an enthusiastic and committed group who still enjoyed their role. They made many positive comments and identified potential improvements.
- (12) All volunteers were pleased with the arrangements whereby review panels were run by the same members as initial panels. This allowed them to detect, for example, changes in attitude on the part of the child or young person and differences in relationships with parents/carers. It also allowed them to remind the child or young person of the journey they had undertaken from initial to review panel; usually this had been a positive one.
- (13) There were quarterly support sessions available to volunteers to help with development and ongoing training issues.
- (14) The referral volunteers interviewed during the inspection were all long-serving and sat approximately once per fortnight, thus being very experienced. They were clear about their authority and responsibility and the line between the YOS staff and themselves as volunteers.
- (15) Reparation was a standard feature of referral order contracts. After each initial panel a copy of the contract was forwarded to the reparation worker.
- (16) There was a small group of supervisors who oversaw both groups and individual reparation work. One of their key responsibilities was to explain to the child or young person how the work they were doing was beneficial to the community or the individual.
- (17) Exit interviews were conducted with the child or young person at the end of reparation work and information shared with the case manager.

Areas for improvement:

- (1) In just over half of the cases where the child or young person was involved in reparation did the work commence within three months of the order starting.

The YOS was aware of this resource issue and had acted to involve volunteers in supervising reparation work.

- (2) We found that although the YOS had a wide range of reparation projects available, including those that led to children and young people gaining qualifications, the majority of cases involved only gardening work. There was little evidence of projects being developed or used to meet the individual diversity needs of the child or young person.
- (3) Referral panel volunteers expressed a desire to see examples of the actual work done by the child or young person on a more regular basis.
- (4) We found no evidence of direct reparation to victims.

Conclusion: This criterion is assessed as **good**.

5. MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership and planning

5.1 General criterion:

The Management Board works actively with others, including the YOT manager, in an integrated way to maximise the likelihood of improving outcomes for children and young people.

The YOS Strategic Management Board was chaired by the Chief Executive of Luton Borough Council. All agencies were represented at a strategic and senior level.

Strengths:

- (1) The Chief Executive of Luton Borough Council, who was also the Chair of the YOS Strategic Management Board, paid close attention to his responsibilities and had a clear and detailed understanding of the YOS Criminal Justice Plan and its routine activities. He met regularly with YOS managers and staff, and actively encouraged the lead member for children's services to take an interest in the YOS. This included a recent visit to meet YOS managers and case managers.
- (2) All agencies who were members of the YOS Strategic Management Board were represented at a strategic level and attendance was good. Members of the Board had sufficient authority to commit to decisions and influence their own organisation. There was a good breadth of representation, including the voluntary sector, and several members of the group were also members of the MAPPA Management Board, the LCJB, and the responsible authority's groups of the CDRP, the LSCB and the Children & Young People's Management Board, ensuring a strategic link was developed and maintained with the YOS.
- (3) The YOS Manager was line managed through the Children & Learning Department and was a member of the LCJB, the CDRP Responsible Authorities Group, the MAPPA Management Board, the Tasking & Commissioning Group of the CDRP, the LCSB, the Partnership Management Group, the delivery group of Children & Young People's Management Board and the Integrated Youth Service Planning Group. YOS operational managers were members of various sub-groups of these boards.
- (4) The YOS Youth Justice Plan had been integrated into other plans including the Children & Young People's Plan and LAA.
- (5) The YOS information manager was directly line managed by the YOS

Manager. As well as the core function of completing data returns and performance information reports for the Strategic Management Board and YOS Management Group, the information team undertook additional analysis and research as requested by YOS staff and managers, in particular for a number of panels that met regularly to review practice and performance. The YOS manager demonstrated commitment to gaining an understanding of local trends and patterns in the data, in order to prioritise resources and improve the services delivered to users.

- (6) There was evidence that the YOS was fully committed to the development and use of the CAF and the notion of the lead professional, and that it was determined to improve key outcomes for children and young people. During the inspection we found many examples of the CAF being used to improve the flow of information and assessment to and from the YOS and other social care agencies.
- (7) The local authority was committed to the full deployment of the CAF and had introduced CAF support clinics that were held three times a term to support the lead professional in making better use of the framework. YOS staff had full access to these clinics.
- (8) Diversity was a priority for both the Management Board and the YOS management group. It was a standard item on all agendas, and lead members of the Board and management team took responsibility for moving this work forwards. This was evidenced from notes of meetings and the current Youth Justice Plan.
- (9) We found a performance management culture at all levels within the YOS which had resulted in a significant improvement in performance, sustained over the past three years. Evidence was provided, in the form of notes of Board meetings and strategic plans, that the YOS Strategic Management Board had focused on the improvement of KPIs, national standards and effective practice with the service reaching a Level 4 (YJB Performance Framework) in 2005/2006 and 2006/2007.
- (10) The YOS Strategic Management Board had identified key areas for improvement, including levels of ETE, sentencing of children and young people to the secure estate and reducing the over-representation of certain ethnic groups, particularly young black men, in the system. It had commissioned a number of research programmes including studies on: the use of the secure estate (NACRO); levels of recidivism (University of Bedfordshire); the treatment of young people from black and minority ethnic communities within the youth justice system (Institute for Criminal Policy Research) and improving ETE provision to children and young people who had offended (Sheffield Hallam University).

Area for improvement:

- (1) The membership of the Management Board did not reflect the wider community in terms of ethnicity and cultural diversity.

Partnership and resources

5.2 General criterion:

Partner organisations and the YOT work together effectively to protect the public, reduce antisocial and offending behaviour and deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS was well-supported and resourced by its partner organisations and in particular by the local authority. The YOS Strategic Management Board was committed to better commissioning, and protocols existed with a wide range of partners with whom the YOS engaged.
- (2) The YOS was well staffed and its partnership agencies were committed to supporting its work by way of protocols and SLAs. There was a seconded member of staff from Bedfordshire police and the probation area. Additional resources had been utilised to enhance service provision including a Connexions worker, seconded youth worker and funding from the Children's Fund/LAA and OLASS Community ETE.
- (3) Of the cases inspected the services used with children and young people in respect of drugs and alcohol, ETE, mental/physical health and leisure were in most cases judged to have been good, and in some cases excellent.
- (4) The YOS was a full member of the Bedfordshire MAPPA Strategic Management Board and contributed fully to the arrangements.
- (5) Luton YOS had good partnership arrangements and agreements in place. The relationship with Victim Support had been in existence for several years and had a number of innovative elements, including a contingency arrangement to cover sickness absence of the victim support worker.
- (6) There was a memorandum of understanding between the YOS and Victim Support, which was reviewed and renewed every year.
- (7) The head of family support services was also manager of the Children's Fund and had been involved in resourcing a range of projects across Luton aimed at supporting families and preventing offending. He was able to describe the YOS involvement in positive and active terms.
- (8) During our interviews, partnership agencies described a number of difficulties in terms of the general development within such an ethnically diverse community of support and preventative work. However, throughout all these interviews, the YOS and its management was described as positive and helpful.
- (9) There was an effective process for identifying children and young people at risk of antisocial behaviour and offending through the use of the CAF and

referral to the Area Multi-Agency Family Panels and/or the YIG.

- (10) The YOS Manager was a full member of the LSCB. Local child protection procedures were adhered to, and there were protocols stipulating the working arrangements between children's services and the YOS, as well as the CAF and the YOS, and information sharing between agencies. This was evidenced through interviews with internal and external partners during the inspection.
- (11) We found some very effective liaison arrangements in place with the police and other partners to attempt to maximise the use of reprimands and final warnings to divert children and young people from prosecution. Of particular note was the final warning panel, which was chaired by the seconded police officer; police notification of victim details through form 280; and the YOS's ability to access Bedfordshire police's custody IT system, NSPIS.
- (12) The YOS's YISP Project Turnaround, commissioned from NACRO, had raised its upper age limit to 17 and was now part of the children's block of the LAA, which should guarantee the funding of this project in the future.
- (13) There was a strong partnership and good working relationships between the YOS and local education services. This had contributed to the high level of children and young people who had offended and were at risk of offending being in full-time education and training.
- (14) The YOS was a key member of the YIG multi-agency meeting. Case discussion at the meetings examined the causes of their behaviour. Outcomes included referral to preventative projects, use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and the decision to convene case conferences to discuss possible ASBOs. The YIG also monitored youth disorder hotspots to concentrate resources in areas of most need. This including utilising the YOS youth worker in these areas with the detached youth team from the Safer Luton Partnership. Following concerns over the development of gangs, the YOS led an initiative with the police which involved the youth worker undertaking community work on two estates to reduce risks and alleviate community concerns.

Area for improvement:

- (1) Whilst not a statutory partner, the YOS was represented on the Supporting People commissioning body by Bedfordshire Probation Area. This had limited the YOS's ability to directly influence Supporting People strategy.

Staff supervision, development and training

5.3 General criterion:

Positive outcomes for children and young people are enhanced by effective staff.

Strengths:

- (1) The YOS had a system of short daily business meetings each morning, which staff were very positive about, as well as frequent business and development/training meetings throughout the year.
- (2) There was a monthly practitioner-led case discussion meeting, which enabled staff to discuss challenging cases, good practice, resources and case studies. Staff roles were clearly defined and there were comprehensive operational procedures as well as protocols and SLAs with partners.
- (3) Administrative staff and the case manager teams were exceptionally positive about their work. Both groups of staff described a sense of interdependence and mutual support. Importantly, the administrators felt very much part of the organisation as a whole, and felt that their role was as recognised and valued as that of the case managers.
- (4) The administrative staff had a series of procedural lists or flow charts that were copied to everybody and which contributed to cover arrangements should a member of staff's day-to-day work need attention.
- (5) All staff, both during case file interviews and interviewed groups, described very regular supervision, mostly monthly, and considered it to be of good quality.
- (6) All YOS staff described a positive approach to training and good access to a wide range of opportunities. Staff talked about managers seeking training opportunities for them, as well as supporting their own efforts to find opportunities for development.
- (7) Staff were clearly happy with the general structure of the organisation. Case managers worked generically, each holding a full range of case types.
- (8) Administrative staff were clear about their role to support the work of the case managers and were able to cover for each other.
- (9) All staff reported having received an annual appraisal, and performance objectives for the year were linked to the Business Plan.
- (10) All seconded staff interviewed during the inspection reported that they had good contacts with their own organisation and received supervision and support from their parent agency on an appropriate basis. Staff seconded from probation and the police also had access to their agencies' intranet and email, as well as full access to all YOS systems.

- (11) The YOS had introduced a youth justice officer progression scheme that had relieved a recruitment problem. A staff recruitment and retention scheme had also been adopted for those positions where recruitment had historically been problematic. This had significantly improved the level of recruitment and retention within the YOS.
- (12) All staff had been CRB checked and cleared prior to taking up their posts. The YOS also had a procedure for ensuring that all staff were CRB checked every three years.

Conclusion: These criteria are assessed as **excellent**.

Appendix 1: Contextual information

Area

Luton YOS was located in the east of England and, as a single YOS, covered the Luton unitary authority.

The area had a population of 184,371 as measured in the Census 2001, 11.8% of which were aged 10-17 years old. This was slightly higher than the average for England, which was 10.4%.

The population of Luton was predominantly white (71.9%), the population with a black and minority ethnic heritage (28.1%) was significantly above the average for England of 8.7%.

Reported crime levels for children and young people aged 10-17 years old across the area at 50.3 per 1,000, were below the average for England of 53.

The proportion of Looked After Children aged ten and over sanctioned for an offence committed whilst Looked After was 5% in Luton, which was below the average for England of 9%.

YOS

The YOS boundaries placed it within those of Bedfordshire Probation Area and Bedfordshire Police Force. One PCT - Luton PCT - covered the Luton area.

The Youth Justice Plan 2007/2008 showed that the YOS had 76 staff and 29 volunteers. 65% of staff were female and 37% had a black or minority ethnic heritage.

The work of the YOS was based in two main offices located in Luton.

YJB performance data

The YJB summary of overall YOS performance available at the time of the inspection for the period to September 2007 gave Luton a score of 4 on a scale where 5 was the maximum. This was above the national and regional performance, but slightly above that of comparable YOS's.

Performance on reducing reoffending received a score of 2, which was below the national average and below the average of the YOS family group comparators.

Appendix 2: Inspection data

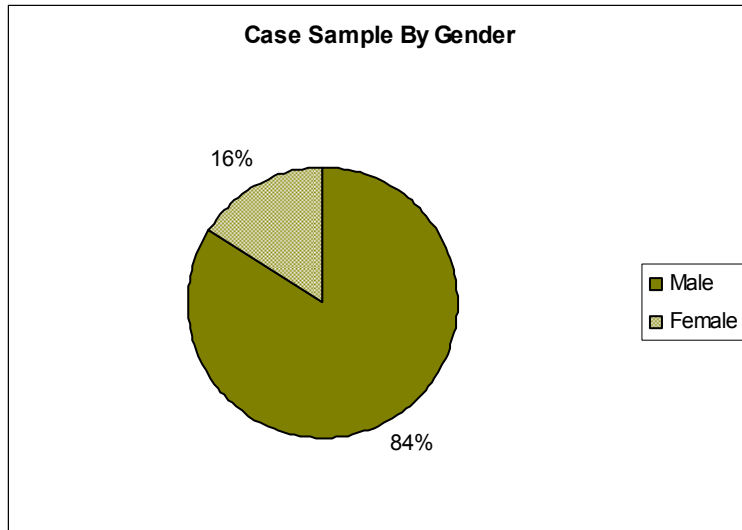
Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in November 2007 and during a contribution to the Luton Joint Area Review in December 2007.

The inspection consisted of:

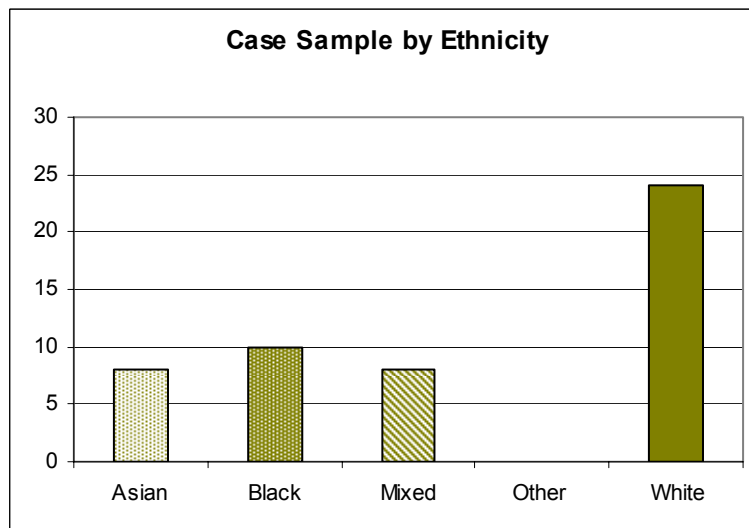
- ◇ evidence in advance
- ◇ examination of YJB performance data and assessments
- ◇ examination of practice in a sample of cases, normally in conjunction with the case manager or other representative, as follows:
 - 10 prevention files
 - 10 final warnings
 - 10 first tier penalties (referral orders, reparation orders)
 - 12 community sentences
 - 10 custodial cases
- ◇ interviews and questionnaire responses from children and young people, parents/carers, and victims
- ◇ interviews with children and young people in custody
- ◇ meetings with staff, managers and partners.

Data charts

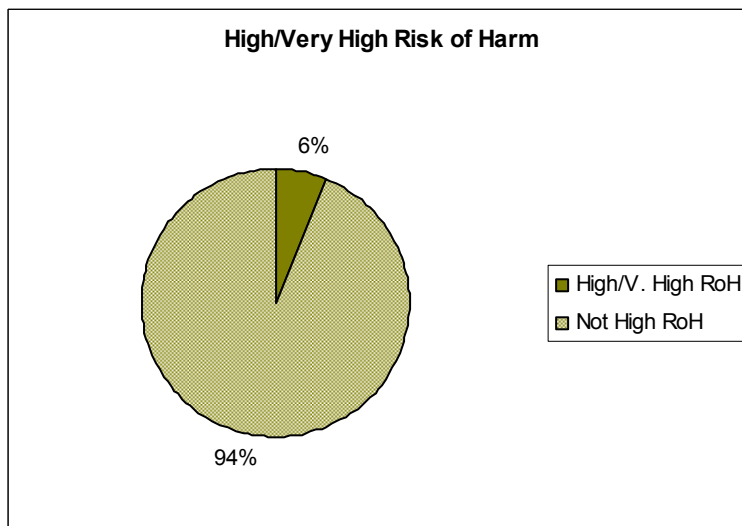
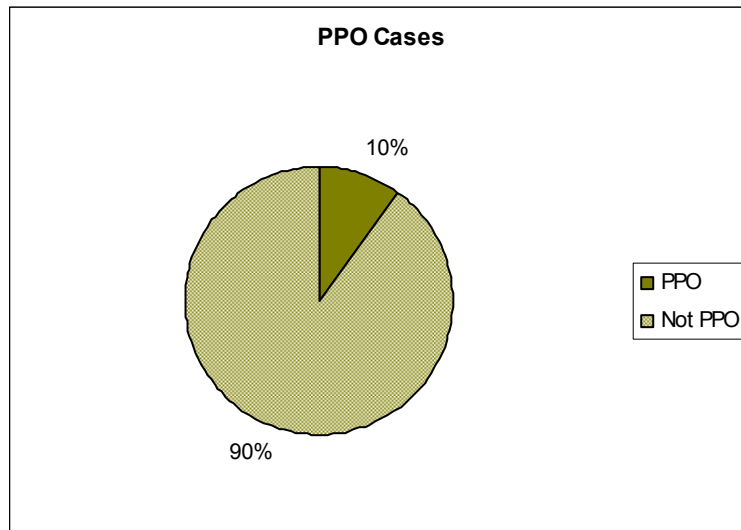
The chosen sample takes into consideration the percentage of girls or young women in contact with the YOT. A representative number is then included in the sample of cases.



The chosen sample takes into consideration the percentage of black and minority ethnic children or young people in contact with the YOT. A representative number is then included in the sample of cases.



The chosen sample includes a number of high RoH cases and ISSP/PPO cases. The numbers included depend on the size of the YOT/YOS involved, and range from 6-12 cases per sample.



Appendix 3: Joint inspection arrangements

The joint YOT inspection programme began in September 2003 and is the first full inspection programme to examine the work of the YOTs. It has been implemented over four phases, covering all YOTs in England and Wales over a five year period. From September 2005, the findings in England have contributed to the Joint Area Reviews of children's services (led by Ofsted) and the Corporate Assessment of local authority services (led by the Audit Commission).

Appendix 4: Role of HMI Probation and code of practice

HMI Probation is an independent Inspectorate, funded by the Ministry of Justice and reporting directly to the Secretary of State. Our purpose is to:

- report to the Secretary of State on the effectiveness of work with individual offenders, children and young people aimed at reducing reoffending and protecting the public, whoever undertakes this work under the auspices of the National Offender Management Service or the Youth Justice Board
- report on the effectiveness of the arrangements for this work, working with other Inspectorates as necessary
- contribute to improved performance by the organisations we inspect
- contribute to sound policy and effective service delivery, especially in public protection, by providing advice and disseminating good practice, based on inspection findings, to Ministers, officials, managers and practitioners
- promote actively race equality and wider diversity issues, especially in the organisations we inspect
- contribute to the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system, particularly through joint work with other inspectorates.

HMI Probation aims to achieve its purpose and to meet the Government's principles for inspection in the public sector by:

- working in an honest, professional, fair and polite way
- reporting and publishing inspection findings and recommendations for improvement in good time and to a good standard
- promoting race equality and wider attention to diversity in all aspects of its work, including within its own employment practices and organisational processes
- minimising the amount of extra work arising for probation areas or youth offending teams [those inspected] as a result of the inspection process.

The Inspectorate is a public body. Anyone wishing to comment on an inspection, a report or any other matter falling within its remit should write to:

*HM Chief Inspector of Probation
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