Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Teams of England and Wales

Report on:
Medway Youth Offending Team

2005
Foreword

This is one of the first reports to be published in phase two of the inspection of Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales. We were pleased to find a well-resourced team that worked with its partners to develop and deliver a range of services to children and young people at risk of offending.

The Medway Youth Offending Team had been very successful in raising its profile in the prevention of offending by children and young people. Although partner agencies spoke highly of its work, we were concerned at the low levels of attendance and limited levels of understanding about its role evidenced by some partners on the Strategic Executive Group. This, we felt, was manifested in a loss of strategic direction and meant that the team was not achieving its full potential.

We saw some good examples of work with children and young people who offend. However, these were not consistent across the range of orders or interventions and we found many areas requiring improvement. In particular the Youth Offending Team needed to give more regard to its high risk of harm cases, work with parents/carers and develop further its work with victims.

Hence, our overall assessment is that improvements are required. This report contains a number of recommendations, which we believe will assist the Medway Youth Offending Team in taking this agenda forward.

Andrew Bridges
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Fieldwork for this inspection was undertaken in 2004.

- The file reading took place week commencing 6 September.
- The second week commenced on 4 October.
Contents

Acknowledgements 3
Glossary 4
Introduction 5
Key findings 6
Overview 10
1. MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS 11
2. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS/CARERS 20
3. VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE 34
   The joint inspection of YOTs 38
   Inspection arrangements 40
   Scoring approach 42
   Next steps 44

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the staff from the Youth Offending Team, members of the Management Board and partner organisations for their assistance in ensuring the smooth running of this inspection.

We would particularly like to express our gratitude to Ian Sparling, Ellen Byrne and Toby Clark for their commitment to the inspection.

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Glossary

ASBO Anti-Social Behaviour Order
Asset Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board
ACPC Area Child Protection Committee
Caldicott principles Caldicott guardian a senior healthcare professional in each National Health Service organisation who is responsible for safeguarding the confidentiality of patient information.
CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CEO Chief Executive Officer
CJS Criminal Justice System
CPA Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CRB Criminal Records Bureau
CSCI Commission for Social Care Inspection
DAT Drug Action Team
DTO Detention and Training Order
DUST Drugs Use Screening Tool
Estyn HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
ETE Employment, Training and Education
HMIC HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HMI Prisons HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HMI Probation HM Inspectorate of Probation
ISSP Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme
LEA Local education authority
LSC Learning and Skills Council
MAPPA Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MAPPP Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel
NACRO National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
National Standards National Standards for Youth Justice Services
NHS National Health Service
Ofsted Office for Standards in Education
PCT Primary Care Trust
PRU Pupil Referral Unit
PSR Pre-sentence report
PYO Persistent Young Offender
SEG Strategic Executive Group
SMART Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bounded
SQUIFA Screening Questionnaire Interview for Adolescents
SSIW Social Services Inspectorate for Wales
STC Secure Training Centre
VLO Victim liaison officer
YJB Youth Justice Board
YOI Young Offender Institution
YOT Youth Offending Team
YPSG Young People's Steering Group
Introduction

The joint YOT inspection programme commenced in September 2003 and is the first full inspection to examine the work of YOTs, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The programme is being implemented in three phases, the first of which was completed in July 2004 and focused on establishing benchmarks for the later phases of the inspection.

This, the second phase of the inspection, started in September 2004 and builds on the findings from the first. Few changes have been made. Emphasis has continued to be placed on two core areas:

- the management and partnership arrangements, including the role and functioning of the local Management Board
- work with children and young people, which now encompasses prevention of offending, work with children and young people who have offended and work with their parents/carers.

The third core area to be covered by the inspection is work with victims and restorative justice. Whilst these issues are seen as no less important, it is acknowledged that YOTs may be at different stages of development in this area of work. We do, however, expect a high level of engagement with victims to be demonstrated, with appropriate arrangements for restorative justice.
Key findings

Management and partnership arrangements

◈ The SEG did not provide the YOT with the required strategic vision and direction.
◈ The impact of restructuring children and young people’s services in Medway had meant that the focus on the YOT had not been adequately prioritised.
◈ Not all statutory partners attended the SEG meetings.
◈ The YOT was said to be well resourced by partner agencies.
◈ The YOT engaged well with local agendas, and partner agencies spoke highly of its work.
◈ Further attention needed to be given to the supervision and appraisal of staff, as well as their training, in particular in relation to diversity, risk assessment and risk management.

Work with children and young people and their parents/carers

◈ There was a strong strategic lead in the development and delivery of a range of services for children and young people at risk of offending and the YOT was seen as a primary partner.
◈ The quality of Asset and supervision plans needed to be improved.
◈ High risk of harm cases were not properly assessed and there was no line management involvement.
◈ The principles of effective practice were not evident in the work of the YOT.
◈ Frequency of appointments offered and enforcement required more attention.
◈ The quality of case recording was poor.
◈ The YOT worked well with vulnerable children and young people.
◈ The LEA and the YOT were responding to the needs of children and young people who needed specific attention.
◈ There was some commendable work with children and young people serving DTO sentences.
◈ The YOT did not use an assessment tool appropriate to the needs of parents/carers of older children and young people.
◈ Only parents/carers subject to a parenting order received specific parenting intervention.
◈ Parents/carers interviewed spoke highly of the YOT.
**Victim and restorative justice**

- Only 35% of victims of crimes committed by children and young people were contacted and direct reparation took place in only 8% of cases.
- Victims interviewed were satisfied with the service they had received from the YOT.

**Overall assessment**

The inspection raised a number of concerns about the Medway YOT and, as a result, the overall assessment of its performance was that it **required improvement**. Whilst recognising that the council had taken a proactive and innovative stance in coordinating services to children and young people, we were concerned at the low attendance and levels of understanding of YOT business by some SEG members. This lack of commitment was manifested in the loss of strategic direction and oversight. As a result, the YOT was not achieving some of its basic targets and standards.

Although we assessed the work with children and young people at risk of offending and who have offended as acceptable, we had major concerns about certain aspects of the work. These included the quality of assessments and lack of management involvement with children and young people who presented a risk of harm to others, the low levels of home visits, the quality of supervision planning and enforcement of orders. We recognise that the YOT had undergone some recent changes in its operational management and we were concerned that staff supervision and appraisal were not consistent across the team. In our view, these issues contributed to the lack of structure in the team’s work, with inadequate attendance to core areas of practice, poor case recording, and an inward-looking approach to working with children and young people.

There were, however, good examples of practice, which illustrated that some members of the team were able to engage meaningfully with children and young people. We were impressed with the work with vulnerable children and young people, some of the work carried out on DTO cases and the strong commitment to developing and delivering services to those at risk of offending.
Recommendations

**The Chair of the Management Board should ensure that:**

- an action plan is devised to address the following recommendations and forwarded to the lead inspector within three months of the publication of this report
- a review of the SEG’s and YPSG’s composition and role is carried out and appropriate action taken to assist the groups in their strategic direction
- the role of the YOT Service Manager is reviewed in order that his contribution to the strategic functioning of the YOT as an entity with legislative responsibility is enhanced
- protocols with its partners are completed and their implementation monitored
- the technology provided to the YOT meets its need for the recording and processing of information and case records.

**The YOT Service Manager should ensure that:**

- all staff are regularly supervised and appraised and that training and development plans meet the needs of the team in delivering its core business and targets
- the Equality and Diversity Policy is implemented and staff are appropriately trained to deliver services to minority ethnic children and young people and their parents/carers
- risk of harm assessments are completed on all cases, regularly reviewed and endorsed by managers where appropriate
- work with children and young people who offend is in accordance with national standards, particularly in relation to assessments, supervision planning, enforcement and home visiting
- all victims are offered the opportunity to become involved and that this work is in line with YJB effective practice guidelines
- work with parents/carers is developed further in order that those needing a service are catered for
- health assessments form part of initial and review assessments of children and young people
- interventions, both on an individual basis and through group work, are developed to address offending behaviour in line with YJB effective practice guidelines
- there is a process for partner agencies to feed back information to the YOT on the children and young people they supervise.
The Kent Police should ensure that:

- its final warning policy and delivery is in line with Home Office/YJB guidance and national standards
- information on victims of crime committed by children and young people is provided to the YOT in a timely manner in line with YJB guidance
- it reviews the way it deals with juvenile sanctioned detections.

The Education Authority for Medway should ensure that:

- attendance at SEG meetings is given priority
- resources within the YOT are available throughout the year.

The Kent Probation Area should ensure that:

- attendance at SEG meetings is given priority
- resourcing of the YOT is regularly reviewed to ensure that the area’s input is appropriate to the needs of the team.
Overview

◈ The unitary authority of Medway is located in the south-east of England, 30 miles west of London and 40 miles east of Dover. It is one of the largest unitary authorities in England and has a total population of 249,488 as measured in the Census 2001. Medway has a high percentage of young residents, 25.3% of whom were aged 0-17 years. This figure was higher than the average for England and Wales of 22.7%.

◈ Medway incorporates a highly populated area around the River Medway estuary including the historic towns of Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham. The Medway YOT is based in Chatham.

◈ The area had a predominantly white population (94.6%); this was higher than the average for England of 90.9%. The percentage of Asian or Asian British residents (3.0%) was lower than the average for England (4.6%). As was the percentage of the Black or Black British residents at 0.7%, which was much lower than the English average of 2.1%.

◈ The level of employment in Medway was higher than the average for England and Wales, 64.5% and 60.6% respectively. The level of unemployment was 3.5%, which is close to the average for England and Wales (3.4%). 18% of those people who were unemployed in Medway were aged over 50 years, 8% had never worked and 29% were long-term unemployed.

◈ Medway Council was classified as good in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It scored three for core service and three for council ability.

1. MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

1.1 Leadership

**Inspection criteria**

The Management Board:

- provides strategic oversight and direction and coordinates the provision of youth justice services by the YOT and partner organisations
- is made up of appropriate representatives who attend and participate actively in meetings
- ensures the provision of accurate and timely data returns, both for its own use and that of the YJB
- gives support and guidance to the YOT Manager, ensuring that they engage with local and national priorities
- ensures that the Youth Justice Plan is implemented.

Historically, Medway had a multi-agency youth justice team that pre-dated the formation of the YOT. A number of the original staff from the youth justice team had been appointed to the YOT, including the current Service Manager. The YOT originally had its own steering group, which was chaired by the Director of Health and Community Services. Following a review in 2002, the decision was taken to restructure and combine a number of separate groups into one steering group that addressed children and young people’s issues. This decision was based on the need to have one coherent strategy and to maximise attendance at meetings. Restructuring took place in July 2003 and as a result the YOT, together with the Community Safety Team and the DAT, were located within the Medway Community Safety Partnership.

Responsibility for the strategic direction of the YOT rested with the Community Safety SEG, the management body of the Community Safety Partnership, which was chaired by the CEO of Medway Council. The annual Youth Justice Plan was approved by the SEG. It delegated responsibility for a number of functions to sub-groups that reported back to its quarterly meetings.

A sub-group of the SEG, the YPSG, chaired by the Head of Children and Families, became the lead partnership group for children and young people in Medway. The intention being to move towards a joint commissioning board that linked the offending agenda with the Children’s strategy. The YPSG was therefore the main body with operational responsibility for the YOT, Community Safety and DAT and we were told that the key objectives in each of the three teams' plans had been brought together into one
strategy. The YPSG, which met on a six-weekly basis, consisted of 23 members from various departments and operational levels of Medway Council and partner agencies. The Chair of this group, and the YOT Service Manager, attended the SEG meetings.

Both the SEG and YPSG listed representatives from each statutory partnership agency at the appropriate level among their membership. However, attendance by some of the main YOT partners at both the SEG and YPSG was infrequent, in particular the police, probation area and the LEA. The Drugs Education and Healthy Schools Liaison Manager represented the LEA on the YPSG.

We were pleased to hear that the three year Youth Justice Plan and the annual update had been approved at the relevant management and cabinet levels. We were particularly encouraged to find that, following the presentation of the current Youth Justice Plan to the Scrutiny Committee, a challenge from the group about the housing and other needs of children and young people had resulted in the formation of a task group. The work of this task group had brought about changes in the approach to addressing young people’s housing needs and a young people’s accommodation strategy had been developed.

The integration of the YOT into the wider community safety agenda was an appropriate step in ensuring that it linked well into national and local priorities. We understood that the next stage of integration was likely to be a joint plan with eight targets for all three units within the Community Safety Team, which would replace the current Youth Justice Plan. However, we were concerned that the effect of the new structure had meant that the YOT’s identity and focus had been eroded. We noted that the minutes of meetings of both the SEG and YPSG did not always mention the YOT and, where it was mentioned, this was often very brief. In addition, there was no indication from the minutes of meetings that the YJB data returns and performance measures were considered at either the SEG or YPSG, although we were told that it took place. Indeed, reports on the YOT’s performance were apparently presented verbally and the minutes did not indicate that the YOT had been the subject of any substantive discussion in either forum. Some SEG members did not often see YOT data and it was acknowledged that data collection was not one of the strengths of the YOT because there was an issue regarding processing information and the identification of resources to carry out this task. It was apparent that SEG members were not aware of the YOT’s position on the YJB’s performance league table.

We were concerned that the YOT did not appear to have a separate identity. It did not have its own letterhead but was referenced on the Community Safety Team’s letterhead as a section within that team. The ‘Service Manager’ for the YOT was treated as a Service Manager within Children and Families and was allocated responsibilities accordingly. For example, although the MAPPA guidance clearly stated that the YOT must be represented on the MAPPP, the Head of Children and Families was seen as the council’s representative and the Service Manager for the YOT only attended in her absence. Within this dual role, the YOT Service Manager
was a member of a number of strategic groups including the Kent Criminal Justice Board Action Group (full Board representation being taken by the Kent YOT Manager), and chaired the PYO sub-group. He also attended the CAMHS Commissioning Group and the Medway Children and Young Persons’ Strategic Partnership and was a member of the prevention sub-group. He was a Board member for Kent & Medway Connexions and Medway Children’s Fund and a member of the Medway Courts Local Performance Management Committee. The YOT was not represented on the ACPC at a management or strategic level; this responsibility was devolved to the YOT health worker instead.

It would appear that the merger had enabled the engagement of other stakeholders into the Children’s agenda, but that this had resulted in losing some of the criminal justice focus. In our view the current structure appeared to have over-accentuated the similarities but, in the process, had lost sight of the individual difference and needs of the YOT.

**Strengths:**

◈ The YOT was engaging in community safety and other local agendas.

◈ Council members were interested in the YOT’s ability to respond to the accommodation needs of the children and young people it supervised.

◈ The Youth Justice Plan was approved at appropriate management levels.

**Areas for improvement:**

◈ The SEG and/or YPSG did not hold the YOT accountable for its performance.

◈ The SEG and/or YPSG did not give enough strategic direction and vision to the YOT.

### 1.2 Partnership and resources

**Inspection criteria**

◈ *A range of interventions and services are provided to meet the needs of children and young people who have offended and those at risk of offending.*

◈ *YOTs are appropriately staffed by partners according to legislation and Home Office guidance.*

◈ *The Youth Justice Plan reflects partner strategies.*

◈ *Protocols have been agreed between the YOT, its statutory partners and other organisations, outlining the level of service, human resources issues and funding arrangements.*

◈ *Contracts are in place with other agencies to ensure the coordination of work and the appropriate delivery of services to meet the needs of children and young people.*
During the previous year the YOT had lost both its operational and audit manager, which presented it with the opportunity to restructure. The lengthy restructuring process and appointment of replacement staff was nearly completed. During the inspection, two team managers and a senior practitioner had been successfully appointed, whilst the remaining senior practitioner post was currently being readvertised.

As a unit within the Community Safety Partnership and Children and Families Department, the YOT contributed to the community safety agenda across Medway and the Youth Justice Plan reflected this, particularly contributing to the prevention agenda. The voluntary sector contributed to this work through the provision of mentors, appropriate adults and a motor project. We found a lack of coordination of work performed by partnership agencies on the YOT’s behalf. This was reflected in what appeared to be a low level of feedback with regard to the work undertaken with the children and young people in the files we inspected.

All the statutory agencies seconded staff to the YOT but only two had written staff secondment agreements. We found that a number of protocols were still in draft form, but were pleased to see that a joint protocol between all statutory partners had been agreed during the inspection period. This protocol addressed such issues as services to be provided by the YOT, how the Youth Justice Plan linked to all partners’ plans, roles, responsibilities and management arrangements, resourcing and arrangements for appointing the YOT Service Manager.

The probation area had seconded two probation service officers to the YOT. We understood that these secondments were agreed following an unsuccessful attempt to recruit a qualified probation officer. The agreement between the probation area and the YOT stated that work should be allocated “within the competency level of the seconded staff”. It may be significant that both these secondees were located in the YOT’s Early Intervention Team and not working with the more serious offenders.

Although the greater proportion of the YOT’s staffing and funding came from Social Services, we were told that the YOT was more than adequately resourced and that funding was not an issue. We understood that Social Services staff, both administrative and social workers, were permanently seconded to the YOT. In addition, there were a number of bail support staff employed by Medway Council on a part-time basis to deliver a variety of one-to-one support, other than bail support, to children and young people known to the YOT and Social Services. The YOT and Social Services had developed good information sharing processes with each being able to access the other’s IT systems.
Good practice

At the beginning of each case the YOT administrative worker checked ‘Genesis’, the Social Services database, to see if the child/young person was known to Social Services. This information was then passed on to the allocated YOT worker.

The Medway Housing Department had provided the YOT with a homelessness liaison officer to work directly with young people supervised by the YOT. This resource was particularly helpful for young people serving custodial sentences who were sometimes referred prior to their release. We observed, however, that at the time of the inspection there were small numbers of young people being referred by YOT staff to the homelessness liaison officer.

Clear targets had been set out in the Youth Justice Plan for engaging children and young people in ETE. The YOT worked with a range of agencies and providers to achieve those targets, including the Medway Behaviour Support Service, the Kent & Medway Connexions Partnership, the LSC funded NACRO Life Skills Programme, local PRUs and the Education Welfare Service. A teacher was seconded to the YOT but, in accordance with their terms of employment, did not work during the school holidays. This clearly left a gap in the provision of services particularly during the summer holidays. We were pleased to find that during our inspection the Assistant Director of Education offered non-teaching cover for the school holiday period. A Connexions worker was also seconded to the YOT.

Health provisions within the YOT consisted of a seconded health liaison officer who carried a wide range of responsibilities including parenting interventions, supervising children and young people on court orders and representing the YOT on the ACPC. We found that services available to children and young people varied. A CAMHS tier two service for children and young people with emotional behavioural problems was under development. The manager had been appointed and was in the process of recruiting other staff to the team. The waiting list for CAMHS tiers three and four was approximately six weeks but we were pleased to learn that where there was urgent need, services could be obtained within 24 hours. We were also pleased to find that the issue of post 16 year olds access to CAMHS had been addressed by the PCT and YOT and that services for this age group were improving. However, an issue requiring immediate attention was that the current referral policy to the CAMHS stated that “no further action” was necessary if a child or young person did not attend two or more appointments. Given the vulnerability and complex needs of the children and young people with whom the YOT worked, this procedure created an unacceptable risk both to the child/young person and the wider community. The policy must be amended to ensure that some form of follow-up arrangement was included. An information sharing protocol, which embraced the Caldicott principles, had also been agreed between the PCT and the YOT.

In addition, the YOT had access to a drugs worker employed by the West Kent Mental Health NHS Trust. Although a drug and substance misuse protocol had not yet been agreed, its absence did not seem to affect the
provision of services to children and young people at the time of this inspection.

A police officer, who had been seconded to the YOT and was located in the Early Intervention Team, had responsibility for final warning assessment and interventions and contacting victims. However, despite the recommendations of the recent report by the Audit Commission *Youth Justice 2004*, a police computer was not located within the YOT as, we were told, a decision was made by Kent Police that its equipment would only be placed in its own premises. As no alternative arrangements were in place to expedite information to the YOT, the targets set for final warnings and victim contact were not being met.

We were pleased to find that, as part of developing greater awareness of youth justice, the YOT provided a week’s observation placement for probationer police officers. The trainees were then required to take information back to colleagues on their training course and to cascade their learning.

**Good practice**

A protocol existed between the YOT and the police that enabled the passing on of information that could lead to solving crime in the area. An example of this included a YOT worker’s concern about a young person who arrived at the YOT offices with blood on his clothing and was reported to the police officer within the team. A check with the local station revealed that a woman had been seriously assaulted the previous night. This resulted in a further six assaults on female students in Sussex being solved.

**Good practice**

The Police Intelligence Section attended weekly YOT staff meetings to share information on the targeting of PYOs. They also liaised over children and young people who were reported to be missing from home as most were likely to be known to the YOT. The joint efforts of both agencies had resulted in locating a number of the missing children and young people.

**Strengths:**

- There were some information sharing protocols in place and information flow between some partner agencies was good.
- The YOT was staffed by all statutory agencies.
- Financial resources were said to be adequate to the YOT’s need.
- CAMHS was available for post 16 year olds.
Areas for improvement:

◈ The YOT did not receive timely information on children and young people and their victims from the police.
◈ Education resources in the YOT were restricted to academic terms only.
◈ Not all protocols between the YOT and partner agencies were agreed.
◈ The YOT/CAMHS must amend the current referral policy so that a form of follow-up takes place for those children and young people who do not attend appointments.
◈ There was no process for partner agencies to feedback information to the YOT on work they had undertaken with children and young people.

1.3 Staff supervision, development and training

**Inspection criteria**

◈ Staff are regularly supervised in accordance with their developmental needs and assessed level of competence.
◈ Annual appraisals contain objectives which are linked to local and national targets.
◈ All staff are provided with appropriate training opportunities to equip them to meet the requirements of the Youth Justice Plan.
◈ Staff are appropriately qualified and have had a satisfactory enhanced criminal record check within the past three years.
◈ Volunteers are appropriately trained, available for YOT activities and have had a satisfactory enhanced criminal record check within the past three years.
◈ Joint agreements are in place for the management of disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures.
◈ Complaints are properly managed.

The quality and regularity of supervision and appraisal varied across the YOT. Supervision was supposed to take place monthly. The YOT had agreed with seconding agencies that managers and staff would be subject to the appraisal processes of their parent organisation. This involved a three-way process between the YOT supervisor, individual staff member and a manager from the seconding agency, and would be informed by the monthly supervision meetings. Despite this arrangement, the Staff Supervision Protocol was undated and unsigned and we found that not all staff had received regular supervision and appraisal. It was hoped that this situation would be remedied once the newly appointed managers had had the opportunity to attend a training event on staff supervision.
The health worker receives clinical supervision within the PCT, managerial supervision within the YOT and supervision for the parenting work from an adult psychologist and psychiatrist. She also enjoys regular contact with the Director of Nursing.

The management of disciplinary, capability and grievance was similarly dealt with under each partner agency’s procedure. Nevertheless, managers were unsure about the processes, what action they were likely to take in a given circumstance and at what point they should contact the seconding agency.

The YOT’s Induction Guide was updated in July of this year and provided a list of people within the YOT and partner agencies who should be contacted to form part of the induction process for each student, work experience placement and new employee of the YOT. We were told that each new member of the team would be introduced to the Induction Pack and given clear guidance with regard to its use; progress would be monitored in supervision sessions.

The YOT did not have its own training budget and staff training needs were met through the Medway Council’s central training budget. The Youth Court and Supervision Manager within the YOT led on training issues for the team and, on a half-yearly basis, the YOT Service Manager took forward proposals of the team’s training needs to the Children and Families Management Group. We were pleased to find that some YOT staff had undertaken the Professional Certificate in Effective Practice. Although staff reported that they had received all the training they had asked for, it became clear to us during the file reading process that there was a lack of both training and supervision of staff in core areas of practice. This included assessment (although we were told that a significant training programme on assessment had been run in 2003/2004), supervision planning, effective practice, national standards and risk assessment and management. Whilst some YOT staff had attended workshops facilitated by the computer software providers, not all staff had received appropriate training in its use. Some staff identified the need for a champion within the YOT who could keep abreast of developments in the software and take responsibility for updating team members’ skills. Some staff were also concerned that there were not enough computers to meet their recording and information sharing needs.

The YOT administrative staff were particularly disturbed about the lack of sufficient resources to cover the work of the team, access to updated IT training and support and infrequent supervision. It seemed to us that the absence of a manager with overall responsibility for administration had left this group of staff feeling isolated.

The YOT had developed a comprehensive Equality and Diversity Policy which covered all areas relating to its staffing and service delivery responsibilities. We found little evidence, however, that managers and staff were clear about what the policy actually meant in practice. This was evidently an area for learning and development.
We were pleased to find that all staff and volunteers had been subject to enhanced CRB checks, which were regularly updated. However, not all staff in the agencies that provided services to the YOT had been checked.

Although the YOT used the Social Services complaints procedure and copies were said to be available for children and young people, the majority of children and young people interviewed during the inspection did not know how to complain.

**Strengths:**

- Staff and volunteers had enhanced CRB checks.
- YOT staff had access to training and development opportunities.
- There was an Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Some staff received supervision and appraisal.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Managers had not received training in supervision and appraisal methods and all staff were not regularly supervised and appraised.
- Not all staff in partner agencies, who were in contact with children and young people supervised by the YOT, were CRB checked.
- Managers should conduct regular performance management reviews to ensure that core areas of practice are of the appropriate standard.
- Managers and staff were not aware of the complaints, disciplinary, capability and grievance processes.
- Some service users were not aware of the complaints process.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS**

This section is judged as partly met.
2. WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS/CARERS

2.1 Assessment

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE AT RISK OF OFFENDING

_Inspection criteria_

- There is a mechanism to identify those children and young people within the area who are at risk of offending.
- There are arrangements to assess the needs of individuals identified as being at risk of offending and these arrangements take account of cultural differences, diversity and safeguarding issues.

The YOT’s duty to children and young people at risk of offending was primarily discharged through membership of a number of partnership groups responsible for delivering a range of services. Their input included project planning, case reviews, expert advice on working with children and young people who offend and offering one-to-one intervention as appropriate. These partnerships included:

- The Children and Young Persons’ Strategic Partnership whose work was primarily delivered by the Community Safety Team and covered the:
  - _Safer Schools/Schools Watch Programme_ that encouraged the community in identifying schools that might be targeted by vandals
  - _Reducing Race Hate Crimes Education Project_ that delivered awareness training to schools in Medway
  - _Reducing Domestic Violence_, an awareness raising and early identification programme
  - _Restorative Justice in Schools_, delivered by Medway Mediation and utilised funding from the YJB, Children’s Fund and Kent and Medway Connexions
  - other school-based initiatives including breakfast clubs and counselling facilities.

- The Medway Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy Group shared responsibility for identifying and responding to children and young people whose behaviour was too challenging for a single agency. The group had been in existence for two years and the Chair expressed the view that its work would not have been possible or sustainable without the YOT’s involvement.
The third area appeared to be a developing partnership between Social Services, Health, the Children’s Fund, Connexions and the voluntary sector, to address the needs of children and young people, already known to be presenting challenging behaviour, and their parents/carers. We were told that they were in the process of recruiting a co-ordinator for parenting services across Medway, and a project manager had already been recruited for the tier two CAMHS service they were developing.

We inspected a range of files held by the YOT where they had been involved with some children and young people as part of a ‘Support Order’ for an ASBO and a pilot intervention programme between the YOT and local schools. There did not appear to be a formal referral form/process or assessment tool, although in two cases there was a partially completed final warning Asset. It was therefore difficult to identify how or why the children and young people were referred and whether there was an assessment of their needs and a plan of work based on the assessment had been developed.

**Strengths:**
- The YOT worked in partnership with others to identify children and young people at risk of offending.
- A range of responses were either developed or under development.

**Area for improvement:**
- An assessment tool should be used to assess the individual needs of children and young people.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE OFFENDED**

**Inspection criteria**
- An Asset assessment is satisfactorily completed at the beginning and end of all interventions which takes account of cultural differences, diversity and safeguarding issues.
- Risk of harm to others is fully assessed.
- Risk of harm, either to self or from others, is fully assessed.
- Specialist assessments are undertaken on those with specific needs or who are assessed as a risk of harm to others.
- Resources have been identified and capacity exists to meet assessed need.

There was no evidence from the files read to suggest that YOT staff viewed and used the Asset as an assessment tool. We found that initial assessments were completed in accordance with the national standard timescales in only 75% (42 out of 56) of cases and only 45% (24 out of 54) met the quality requirements. Rather than the Asset informing the PSR
and other reports, it was evident that the PSR was often seen as the real assessment and supervision plan document. We also found that Assets were not always reviewed in accordance with the national standard requirements and were often not fully completed. Managers within the YOT were aware of this issue and were beginning to address it.

We were concerned about the low priority given to assessing risk of harm to others. Of the cases, which should have triggered a full risk of harm assessment, only 20% (five out of 25) contained an assessment and a significant number of others, that should have been risk assessed, had been missed. Moreover, we found no evidence that those cases identified as posing a risk to others had been referred to or reviewed by a manager.

Although 25% (14) of the children and young people were identified as having physical health needs, 50% (28) with emotional and mental health needs and 35% had learning difficulty, the health worker was not involved in the assessments of all children and young people with whom the YOT was working. Instead, reliance was placed on the individual YOT worker's skills in assessing the child's or young person's health. Only if there was serious concern, or if the YOT worker did not have the relevant skill required, would a referral be made to the health worker. Such referrals were usually undertaken if there was a score of two or more on the Asset or following an assessment using the YJB assessment tool, SQUIFA. The health worker held the remit for court order work and parenting interventions and we were concerned that the scarce resource they provided was being spread so thinly that core areas like assessments were marginalised. The health worker also used her own health files within the YOT. However, it was unclear whether these files were the property of the PCT or the YOT and, therefore, whether they should be regarded as confidential. This issue must be clarified.

Assessments contained in the files read showed that 69% (31) of the children and young people had experienced difficulty with their schooling and 33% had at some time been permanently excluded. Clear targets had been set out in the Youth Justice Plan in relation to ETE and the LEA had responded by revising its targets for reducing exclusions whilst developing joint strategies. Structures had been put in place to manage transfers between cluster groups of primary schools, whilst Medway LEA had convened crisis conferences to advise secondary schools on pupils at risk of exclusion and to identify specialist outreach services or manage transfers. The YOT contributed to this through a joint protocol with the LEA, which enabled schools to refer children and young people who they considered to be at risk of offending.

**Strengths:**

- Specialist assessments by the health worker were available.
- The LEA and YOT were responding to the needs of children and young people who were assessed as needing specific attention.
- The YOT played a significant role in safeguarding children and young people.
Areas for improvement:

◈ Assessments were not carried out in line with national standards requirements for timeliness and quality and were not reviewed as required.
◈ The YOT health worker did not contribute to all relevant Asset assessments.
◈ Risk of harm assessments were not robustly conducted and there was no management oversight.
◈ The YOT and PCT needed to clarify ownership of the files kept by the health worker.

PARENTS/CARERS

Inspection criteria

◈ An assessment of the parenting skills and needs of the parents/carers of children and young people who have offended or are at risk of offending has been undertaken and is used to inform any intervention.

The YOT received an average of ten parenting orders per year and a trained member of the team was primarily responsible for delivering services to these parents/carers. The worker had not been provided with an appropriate assessment tool, and relied on a tool she used as a health visitor with the parents of younger children. Nevertheless, this had enabled the worker to identify areas of need which contributed to the supervision plan.

Of the cases we examined, we found that 63% of parents/carers were involved in the assessments of their child and in some cases parenting skills was identified as one of the issues affecting the child/young person’s behaviour. But we found no process for assessing the skills and needs of these parents/carers, either at the PSR/initial contact stages or throughout the period of the YOT’s contact.

The future approach to work with the parents/carers of children and young people supervised by the YOT was planned to be set in the context of an innovative strategy involving a number of partner organisations. This new arrangement was part of a strategy to enable the YOT and partner agencies to respond to needs and the issues associated with ASBO legislation, in that parents/carers would access services on the basis of voluntary contact via parenting contracts or parenting orders.

Strengths:

◈ An assessment tool was used by the specialist worker.
◈ A committed multi-agency strategy was in place for addressing the needs of parents/carers and children and young people subject to YOT supervision.
Areas for improvement:

◈ There should be an appropriate tool for assessing the skills and needs of all parents/carers who come in contact with the YOT.
◈ All parents/carers should be assessed during the very earliest stage of contact with the YOT.
◈ YOT staff should be trained to initially assess parental needs and there should be a process for referring on for specialist assessment.

2.2 Interventions for children and young people who are at risk of offending or who have offended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>◈ There are arrangements in place to provide interventions for those children and young people who are assessed as at risk of offending.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ Interventions with children and young people who have offended are targeted in areas of assessed need, such as education, health and parental relationships, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ Interventions with children and young people who have offended are specific to the needs of girls and young women, children and young people from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities and take account of safeguarding issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ Supervision plans are written in accordance with national standards, emanate from Asset and contain SMART objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ Interventions are structured, evaluated and consistent with the principles of effective practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ Frequency of appointments for children and young people who have offended is consistent with national standards and Home Office/YJB guidance for final warnings, referral orders, community penalties, DTOs (custody and post-custody) and ISSPs (where they exist).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ For those children and young people who have offended, enforcement follows non-compliance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ Parents/carers (where appropriate) are made aware of the requirements of the interventions and are kept informed about progress during the course of the intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◈ Interventions which are appropriate to the diverse needs of parents/carers are provided for, and taken up by the parents/carers of children and young people who either offend or are at risk of offending in accordance with assessed need.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE AT RISK OF OFFENDING

The YOT was not directly involved in delivering services to a significant number of children and young people at risk of offending. As described above, its role had been more of expert advice in assessment, planning and delivery of services.
The YOT tended to direct its attention to the more difficult cases, although the records held within the YOT did not generally give a clear indication of work undertaken. Bail support workers carried out some work with children and young people referred by the local Social Service teams. We found that on one high profile ASBO case, the YOT had committed a significant amount of resources in providing supervision and support to two girls who were identified as having learning difficulties and their mother who was also subject to a parenting order. In engaging with the girls, the bail support workers made a range of activities available to them and the YOT health worker provided health assessments and advice. The YOT also actively liaised with Social Services and the LEA with regard to the provision of appropriate support and learning opportunities for the girls. It was evident from this work that YOT workers were able to respond to the diverse needs of some of the children and young people they worked with, particularly where there were safeguarding issues.

It may be that because the YOT was not directly responsible for all the work with this group, there was no evidence of a method for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of work carried out. We were told that the Restorative Justice in Schools project was regularly monitored and was being evaluated and that the ASBO cases were usually reviewed at the joint meeting chaired by the police.

**Strengths:**

- The YOT’s role was integral to developing and delivering services.
- All partners, both statutory and voluntary, were involved in developing a wide range of services to children and young people at risk of offending.
- There was a process for ensuring that the YOT’s resources were reserved for children and young people with the more challenging behaviour.
- Children and young people with diverse needs were catered for.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Recording of YOT intervention was sparse.
- Intervention programmes were not regularly monitored and evaluated.
- There was no specific programme aimed at minority ethnic children and young people.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE OFFENDED**

In our interviews with YOT staff, and from evidence gathered in reading files, it was clear that the principles of effective practice were not applied to the work undertaken with children and young people and that there was a lack of a coordinated or targeted approach. We found that YOT staff were, in the main, working on an individual basis and only occasionally referring
to specialist services. There were no group work programmes available, as YOT staff were under the impression that the YJB had said that they were inappropriate for all children and young people. Moreover, although the YOT’s library contained a number of resource packs of planned interventions for working with children and young people, there was little evidence that they were used.

We were disappointed to find that supervision planning did not receive a high priority within the team. Only 57% (16 out of 28) of initial supervision plans were prepared within the national standard timescales and only a third were assessed as SMART or meeting the national standard content requirements. Just 49% took account of the specific needs of children and young people identified in the Asset assessments. Where there were supervision plans, we found little evidence that the plans were followed or reviewed. Although some of this might be due to the difficulty that staff had raised with accessing computers for recording purposes, we felt that there was also a training and supervision issue across the staff team.

The YOT’s caseload contained 6% minority ethnic children and young people some of whom were asylum seekers. There was comprehensive Equality and Diversity Guidance and some written material that gave background information on people from diverse communities. Despite this, the YOT had not developed any specific programme or method for working with black or minority ethnic children and young people, either on an individual basis or in groups. Work with asylum seekers was seen as a purely language issue. Generally, we felt staff lacked confidence in their ability to deliver good quality appropriate services to black or minority ethnic children and young people and their parents/carers. There was, however, a working group involved in devising activities for girls and young women.

Final warnings were not delivered in accordance with the Home Office and YJB guidance, as the police were not bailing children and young people for prior assessment by the YOT, or notifying the YOT within one working day of issuing the final warning. They were also not providing the YOT with details of the victims involved. However, we were impressed to find that, in spite of these problems, the YOT was contacting and assessing 75% of the children and young people within the required timescale following notification. We did have concerns that two files read showed that in order to record sanctioned detections, the police had issued reprimands after the children/young people had received final warnings, instead of prosecuting them in accordance with the legislative requirements contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Referral orders appeared to be the most successful area of the YOT’s practice. We were pleased to see that panel meetings took place within the national standard timescales in 88% of cases, that contracts were appropriately delivered in 93% of cases and the interventions were assessed to be relevant to the risks presented by the children and young people.
Interventions used for community sentences depended very much on the skills and style of the individual case manager, and we did not find a consistent approach to involving partner agencies or referrals to specialists within the team. Resources, such as the motor project and mentoring services, were underused. We were also disappointed to find that home visits were made in accordance with the national standard requirements in only 47% of cases.

The YOT, Social Services and CAMHS in association with the Chilston Project had adopted a joint approach to working with children and young people who sexually abuse. A member of staff from the YOT and a social worker from Children and Families were trained to assess and deliver programmes relevant to the children and young people’s needs. Dedicated time of one day a week each was given over to this work.

We found that the YOT was not actively enforcing the orders they were supervising. Only 63% of appointments arranged conformed to the national standard requirements, of which only 51% of appointments were kept and breach action was instigated in only 50% of relevant cases. Due to late instigation of breach action, in some cases a decision was made to withdraw the warrant as the order had expired. Files read indicated that staff operated a system of informal decision making outside of the supervision planning process and without management involvement. Added to this, however, we found a number of cases where warrants had not been executed a year after they were issued and YOT staff had expressed their dissatisfaction at this situation.

We were impressed with the supervision provided to children and young people on the ISSP. It was clear that the team worked hard to appropriately engage each child/young person, whilst holding them accountable for their behaviour and adherence to their court orders.

Resettlement work with children and young people serving DTOs was allocated to two specialist workers. We found that this provided a good level of consistency in approach, which contributed to the 89% attendance at sentence planning and review meetings. We found some commendable work was being carried out with some of the children and young people in custody, particularly those with complex needs.

Due to the intervention of the YOT case manager a vulnerable young man was transferred from a YOI to a local STC where he was able to receive supervision and support which was more appropriate to his needs.
Good practice

The YOT case manager and the Health Service worked jointly with a vulnerable young man with complex health, developmental and self-harm issues. Family support was maintained by involving his mother in monthly planning meetings. The work not only focused on keeping him safe during his DTO sentence but also acknowledged the danger he was likely to present to the public by referring him to the MAPPP.

Strengths:
- Partner agencies were sometimes engaged in offering services to children and young people.
- The ISSP, referral orders and resettlement work were well targeted and delivered.

Areas for improvement:
- Assessments and supervision plans were not prepared in a timely manner or of a good enough quality.
- Final warnings were not delivered in accordance with Home Office and YJB guidance.
- The police were not always abiding by the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Home Office YJB guidance about the issuing of a final warning more than once.
- Work with minority ethnic children and young people was not well developed.
- Home visits were not made in accordance with the national standard requirements.
- Orders were not adequately enforced.
- Effective practice principles were not being applied.

PARENTS/CARERS

The parents/carers who were subject to a parenting order received individual support from the specialist worker as there was no group work programme. We did not find any examples where interventions with parents/carers were linked to work undertaken with their children who were supervised by the YOT. The health worker delivered the parenting intervention and some YOT workers identified some issues with the exchange of information due to health restrictions. This should be addressed.

As with assessments, we did not find any examples of proactive parenting intervention and/or skills development for parents/carers who were not subject to a parenting order. There were examples of informal talks and follow-up support for some parents/carers, but it was significant that of the 50 cases (88%) that had identified family and personal relationships as an issue for the child or young person, we found that work had been done on only eight (16%).
Similar to work with children and young people, knowledge and skills in this area depended solely on the background of the individual worker. Some YOT workers were able to tell us of partnership resources to which they could refer parents/carers if the need was identified, whereas others told us that no resource was available.

Although resources were undoubtedly available in the community, there was no structure for assessment, referral or feeding back to the YOT. Similarly, there did not appear to be any which catered specifically for black or minority ethnic parents/carers.

We were, however, impressed with the quality and variety of support given to the parents/carers of children and young people serving DTOs. In particular, the specialist DTO workers went to great lengths to involve parents/carers by ensuring that they were aware of planning and review meetings by taking them to such meetings.

Seven parents/carers were interviewed. Four were on statutory parenting orders, one was offered parenting support and refused and two stated that they were not offered any support. Of the four on statutory orders, three stated that they found the process very helpful and overall the majority felt that their involvement with the YOT was helpful to them. Feedback from parents included:

- "I went every two-four weeks to receive help with how to cope with my son, we are closer now, he talks to me much better now and confides in me."
- "The problems have not in themselves improved, but I feel more supported and understood."

**Strengths:**

- Parents/carers on parenting orders received a service.
- Most parents/carers who received help found the YOT intervention useful.
- Parents/carers of children and young people serving custodial sentences were given good quality support.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Services were not available to parents/carers who were not on statutory parenting orders.
- All YOT staff were not aware of community resources and there were no formal referral and feedback processes.
- There were no specific services for parents/carers of minority ethnic children and young people.
- Group work facilities were not available for those parents/carers for whom individual work was not appropriate.
- YOT staff were not able to share information with each other.
2.3 Outcomes for work with children and young people who are at risk of offending or who have offended

**Inspection criterion**

- Those assessed as being at risk of offending and undertaking interventions are engaged in activity to reduce their risk of offending and address their needs.
- For those children and young people who have offended examination of the case file provides evidence of progress and a reduction of risk factors.
- The YOT demonstrates a reduction in reoffending for all bands of penalties (pre-court, first tier, community penalties and custody).
- Indicative accounts of outcomes from children and young people, parents/carers and other relevant persons show positive outcomes.
- For those children and young people who have offended, supervision plan objectives are met in areas of assessed need.
- Interventions for parents/carers promote effective parenting.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE AT RISK OF OFFENDING**

It was reported that the ASBO Strategy Group had engaged approximately 20 children and young people during the current year and that a further ten cases were under consideration.

Overall, the partners in Medway provided and were in the process of developing a range of interventions to children and young people assessed as being at risk of offending. The YOT Service Manager and a range of staff played a significant role in the development and delivery of such services.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE OFFENDED**

Reviews of Asset and supervision plans were not consistently conducted by the YOT and we found that the cases we reviewed showed an improvement in Asset scores of 41% and a positive change in attitudes and behaviour of only 25%. We were, however, pleased to see that 52% of the children and young people supervised by the YOT had complied with their orders and that only a small proportion of the children and young people in the cases we examined had reoffended during the YOT supervision period.

Six children and young people were interviewed and four reported that they enjoyed good relationships with YOT staff. All had received help with criminogenic factors in their lives, which included employment, education and consequences of offending. One maintained that he had not received any assistance with his substance misuse problems.

We interviewed seven parents/carers and the majority expressed their satisfaction with the interventions that the YOT had undertaken with their children. Although one parent of a 16 year old expressed disappointment that they had not been consulted or involved in any work undertaken with their child during the two years of YOT involvement, another expressed his
satisfaction by saying: “They got him out of thinking about thieving”. Whilst the young people interviewed stated that: "The YOT has helped me to think about my future" and "I get on well with the YOT, I can tell them things I can't tell my Dad".

**Protective factors – Education**

During the period of the inspection the YOT was involved with 53 children and young people of school age. Of these 35 were in full-time provision, six in part-time provision and 13 were said to be not known to the service. We found that 69% of the children and young people had experienced some difficulty with their schooling and we were pleased to see that in 92% of cases action had been taken.

We found some examples of good practice and links with partner agencies including Connexions and the Kent Council for Addiction, both of which attended reviews in YOIs and continued their involvement with the young people upon their release into the community.

Evidence of good practice within the team included:

- a young person with severe learning difficulties was referred back to the referral order panel for failing to comply with the contract. The panel recognised that in view of his specific needs he required a supervisor who understood his condition and the case was transferred to a worker from a health service background who had worked with him within his ability
- an action plan and agreement between the Connexions liaison worker and a young person, which very clearly linked the ETE needs of the young person with his offending behaviour and included work under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, how this links into CRB checks and what that meant for the young person
- in maintaining a young person’s school placement, the case manager accompanied the young person and his parents to quarterly reviews at his school
- the case of a young person who posed a high risk of harm to the local community was referred to the local MAPPP, which refused to consider him. The YOT worker involved persisted and referred the matter to the county MAPPP, which agreed with the YOT worker's assessment and resulted in the young person receiving appropriate attention from the agencies involved.

**Health issues**

A number of the children and young people supervised by the YOT had complex health and substance misuse needs and, although we found some examples of excellent practice, there were also cases where referrals to these specialists had not been made or needs met. Although the West Kent Mental Health NHS Trust substance misuse worker attended the YOT offices one day each week, referrals to that specialist were not high. In addition to the children and young people assessed as having emotional, physical and
mental health needs mentioned above, a further 40% and 41% were assessed to have drug and alcohol misuse needs. But only 67% of the total were referred for assessment and treatment. This situation is even less acceptable given that the YJB had provided funds specifically for a substance misuse worker. We were told that the grant received from the YJB was used to pay half of the health worker’s salary and one YOT worker’s salary. The aforementioned workers roles included using DUST as a second level checking of children and young people who had been identified in Asset as requiring further screening before referring on, as appropriate, to the substance misuse worker. It was clear from our inspection that either this process did not work or that not enough of the available resources were being used. There was also no information sharing protocol between the drugs worker and the YOT and, as a result, there was a lack of clarity around what information could or should be passed between these agencies.

**Addressing vulnerability**

Safeguarding children and young people appeared to be a high priority for the team. We found that 27% of the children and young people supervised by the YOT were considered to be vulnerable to self-harm and 31% vulnerable to harm from others. And we were pleased to find that action to protect them had been taken in 78% of cases and that in 93% of cases we considered the action taken to be appropriate.

We found that 22% of the children and young people on the YOT’s caseload were looked after. We were pleased to find that in all cases the YOT and Social Services were jointly involved with the child/young person and that of the remainder, in 51% of cases there was some Social Services involvement.

**Strengths:**

- Children and young people and their parents/carers expressed satisfaction with the YOT.
- There were some examples of good practice within the team, particularly with vulnerable children and young people.
- Only 25% of children and young people supervised by the YOT had reoffended.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Assets and supervision plans were not always reviewed.
- There was no information sharing protocol between the YOT and the substance misuse service.
PARENTS/CARERS

We were pleased to see that the YOT specialist worker conducted an evaluation of the parenting intervention via a questionnaire given to each parent/carer, and that they were generally satisfied with the services they received. It was also clear from our conversations with parents/carers that there was a need for parenting intervention and they appreciated the help they received:

◊ "If it were not for the YOT I would not be able to cope, they are good people and seem to understand what the parents and children go through."
◊ "The YOT helped to sort out my housing problems and also gave me help with my other child who had medical problems."

Strengths:

◊ The YOT successfully engaged with some parents.
◊ The YOT worker had taken steps to obtain feedback from parents/carers.

Area for improvement:

◊ There was no process for an independent evaluation of parenting interventions offered by the YOT.

Good practice

The mother of a young person serving a DTO suffered from claustrophobia and would not travel over bridges or enter confined spaces. Through the support of the YOT she was able to attend all the planning and review meetings at the YOI which was some distance away from the home area.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS/CARERS

This section is judged as satisfactorily met.
3. VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

3.1 Assessment of the needs of victims of children and young people who have offended

**Inspection criteria**

- An assessment of victims’ needs should be made and used to inform planned interventions.
- All victims are given the opportunity to make informed decisions about their involvement in cases of children and young people who have offended and are supported in doing so.

Work with victims was another area of underdevelopment in the YOT. This was mostly because the YOT police officer had to go to great lengths to obtain basic victim information post-sentence as it was not routinely available from the police.

No formal assessments was made of the needs of victims, although each victim contacted was given the choice of attending the panel or having an impact statement prepared for the referral order panel.

**Strength:**

- The majority of victims of children and young people receiving a referral order had been contacted.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The police were not passing victims details on to the YOT within 24 hours of a final warning or charge.
- The needs of victims were not formally assessed.
- Not all victims of crime committed by children and young people were contacted.
3.2 Restorative interventions with the victims of children and young people who have offended

**Inspection criteria**

- Victims have access to a restorative intervention tailored to their needs.
- Victims are offered the opportunity to specify any reparative element of the child’s or young person’s supervision plan and to be informed of their progress.
- Restorative and reparative interventions are provided that are appropriate to the age, vulnerability, culture, ethnicity, language needs, literacy levels and gender of the victims and children and young people who have offended.

Medway Council clearly viewed restorative justice as a means of combating anti-social behaviour in the community and prided itself on restorative justice developments in the area, to which it had provided a considerable amount of funding.

The YOT did not have any in-house restorative justice interventions but had an arrangement with the Medway Mediation Service to provide interventions to support work with children and young people and to support victims attending referral order panels if required. We did not find any evidence that consideration had been given to the provision of ethnically sensitive or appropriate victim services or that young victims had been specifically catered for. Additionally, there was very little evidence in case files of the types of restorative justice interventions used with the children and young people or feedback on their responses and progress.

We found that the victims of children and young people on referral orders were the only ones receiving a service. The files read showed that 80% of these victims had been invited to participate in the panel meetings but, in the overall YOT caseload, only 35% of victims were contacted or invited to participate in reparation or restorative justice work.

Four victims were interviewed, two had attended the initial referral order panel meeting and found the experience helpful, whilst another expressed dissatisfaction that the young person had failed to attend the first panel meeting and was, in her view, ‘yet again’ allowed to flout authority.

**Strengths:**

- Provisions had been made to support some victims.
- Victims were offered letters of apology.
- Direct reparation was offered to some victims.
- Victims who attended referral order panel meetings were satisfied with their treatment and the outcome of the meetings.
- Victims’ feelings and wishes were well represented to referral order panels by the VLO.
Areas for improvement:

- Direct reparation to victims was not readily available.
- A range of restorative justice interventions and approaches was not used.
- There was no process for partner agencies to feedback information to the YOT.
- No specific services were available for black, minority ethnic or young victims of crime.
- The YOT did not contact all victims of crimes committed by children and young people.

3.3 Restorative outcomes for victims of children and young people who have offended

**Inspection criterion**

- Victims are satisfied with the work undertaken by the YOT.

Victims who did not attend the referral order panel meetings were informed of the outcome by telephone following the initial panel meetings. The four victims interviewed had received direct reparation and expressed their satisfaction, although one felt that feedback on the child/young person’s progress would have been helpful. Comments from the victims included:

- “I found the YOT to be approachable, and felt that I could ring and receive a service which indeed I did after two years.”
- “The YOT was very caring and also nice to us at court.”

It was clear from our inspection that where victims were involved with the YOT, the service they received was of a good quality. The YOT needed to ensure that this type of service was extended to all victims of crime committed by children and young people in its area.

**Strengths:**

- Victims were satisfied with the services they received.
- Victims were informed of the initial outcome of the referral order panel meeting.
3.4 Restorative and reparative outcomes for children and young people who have offended

**Inspection criteria**

◈ *Children and young people involved in restorative interventions make a positive contribution to the victim and community.*

Work to raise awareness of the impact of their offending behaviour on victims was carried out with children and young people in 70% of cases. Although direct reparation took place in 8% of cases, mainly through the medium of letters of apology, we found that a major part of the YOT’s reparation arrangements was centred around indirect reparation which included:

**Fort Amhurst:** A local charitable project where children and young people were engaged in a number of activities supervised by craftsmen and included mechanical repair, painting and ground maintenance, electrical work and catering.

**Cannon Project:** The painting and repainting of ancient cannons at the Chatham Docks.

**Chatham Cemetery:** Tending of uncared for graves and repairing vandalism.

**Sunlight Centre:** Work in a children’s nursery, community cafe and supporting vulnerable children.

The Fort Amhurst and Cannon Project facilities were used in 39% of cases and were available to children and young people of both sexes and all ages.

We found one good example of direct reparation where, at the request of the victim, a young person was able to single-handedly repair a fence that he had damaged. The victim expressed satisfaction with this.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT FOR WORK WITH VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

_This section is judged as partly met._
The joint inspection of YOTs

The Government announced the establishment of an independent inspection of YOTs in December 2002. The inspection programme is to be conducted jointly by CSCI, Estyn, the Healthcare Commission, HMIC, HMI Prisons, HMI Probation, Ofsted and SSIW. The joint inspection team is located within and led by HMI Probation, and is funded by the Home Office.

Home Office objectives

The joint inspection contributes primarily to the achievement of Home Office Objective II - 'more offenders are caught, punished and stop offending and victims are better supported', and to the requirement to ensure that custodial and community sentences are more effective at stopping offending.

It also contributes to the achievement of Objective III, through our scrutiny of work to address drug and other substance misuse, and to other relevant CJS and Children's Services' objectives.

The aims of the programme are to:

- assess the impact made by YOTs and partner organisations on the prevention of offending by children and young people through effective supervision
- appraise the work undertaken by YOTs and partner organisations to meet the needs of children and young people at risk of offending and enable them to lead law-abiding and constructive lives
- evaluate the role of the YOTs in safeguarding the rights and promoting the welfare of children and young people
- assess the extent to which the YOTs are meeting the required standards and targets set by the YJB
- promote good practice in the management arrangements of YOTs and service delivery to the courts and community
- identify underperformance and make recommendations to promote improvements
- evaluate the effective use of resources
- actively promote race equality and diversity as an integral part of the inspection process
- produce timely reports which contribute to improved performance by informing policy and practice.
Code of practice

Each inspection will:

◼ be undertaken with integrity in a professional, impartial and courteous manner
◼ enable the development of independent judgements, based on evidence
◼ seek to energise and engage with staff
◼ promote race equality and diversity throughout its processes
◼ be concluded with the timely publication of a report containing findings and recommendations for improvement.

Anyone wishing to comment on an inspection, a report or any other matter falling within the remit of this inspection programme should write to:

HM Chief Inspector of Probation
2nd Floor, Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London SW1P 2BQ
Inspection arrangements

- The joint inspection programme started in September 2003, following two pilot inspections. All 155 YOTs in England and Wales are to be inspected over a five to six year cycle. As this was a long programme, we decided from the outset to break it down into three phases in order to ensure that the inspection retained its relevance and continued to address local and national concerns.

- The three phases are:
  - from September 2003 to July 2004, when the inspection concentrated on key issues, with emphasis placed on establishing benchmarks and the dissemination of good practice. Fifteen YOTs were inspected during this phase of the programme, all of whom were volunteers.
  - the current phase, up to September 2005, when the inspection process will be based on the methodology established in the first phase. In so far as possible, fieldwork will be individually tailored to each YOT, informed by examination of the data available and the findings from other inspection programmes.
  - from September 2005 onwards, when the YOT inspection methodology will be congruent with the five outcomes in the Children’s Services inspection framework and complement that of the Joint Area Reviews in England. Although the YOT inspection will remain a separate process, inspections will run within a similar timeframe as the Joint Area Reviews where possible, so that areas of potential overlap and duplication can be reduced and rationalised. Findings from the YOT inspection will, therefore, inform not only the Joint Area Review but also the Annual Performance Assessment and the CPA. Work is currently being undertaken to ensure that this process is compatible with the different governance arrangements in Wales.

- The inspection will be carried out in line with the Government’s commitment to proportionate and coordinated inspection in local government. It will:
  - be proportionate to risk, and fieldwork will only be undertaken where necessary to support findings or to disseminate good practice.
  - complement, and be coordinated with other inspection programmes, including the Joint Area Reviews and comparable inspection processes in Wales.
  - take account of YOTs’ recent development as organisations.

- The standards and criteria developed for the first phase of the inspection have been slightly modified and focus on:
  - management and partnership arrangements
  - work with children and young people and their parents/carers
  - victims and restorative justice.
The fieldwork for each individual inspection will take place over two weeks, about two to three weeks apart. The first week will consist of a file reading exercise for which the YOT will be asked to identify a random sample of between 30 and 80 children and young people (dependent on the workload) who have been subject to some form of intervention in the previous months. The cases will cover most orders, including licences.

These case files will be examined in detail. In half the cases selected, we will also undertake in-depth interviews with the case manager, any other person significantly involved in delivering the intervention and, where possible, the child or young person themselves and their parents/carers. Where appropriate, we also hope to meet and hear from victims of crimes by children and young people supervised by the YOT.

In order to encourage self-assessment and increase ownership of the inspection findings, we are inviting YOTs to second a member of their staff, usually an experienced practitioner, to the inspection team for the duration of the file reading week. We have found this to be a positive way of developing mutual understanding and strengthening the links between inspection and practice.

As before, the second week of the inspection will involve meetings with the CEO, Management Board members, YOT Manager and staff. It will cover the management of the YOT, its performance and the contribution made by its partner organisations. Discussions will be informed by the findings of the examination of case files conducted in the first week of inspection.

The inspection findings will be compiled in a report which will include recommendations for improvement. These recommendations will be designed to encourage the YOT in its work, to support good practice and to promote improvements.

The report will be submitted to the Home Secretary, as the Secretary of State responsible for youth justice, with simultaneous copies to the Education and Health Secretaries, and where relevant, the Ministers for Education & Lifelong Learning, Finance, Local Government & Communities, and Health & Social Services in Wales. A copy will be sent to the YJB. Copies will also be made available to the press and placed on the website of HMI Probation at:

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/probation/inspprob
Scoring approach

We have decided to continue a similar approach to scoring in phase two as in phase one, in order to allow some broad comparisons of performance, but with certain provisos. First of all, it should be noted that this second phase of the inspection covers only three core areas, rather than five as in the first phase. In addition, as part of our aim of continually improving performance, two of the categorisations, ‘good’ and ‘good basis for development’ (formerly described as ‘satisfactory with good basis for development), have been amended, and whilst exacting a more rigorous standard of performance from the YOT also, we believe, allow for better representation of their actual achievements.

The three sections of the inspection will be individually assessed against the relevant standards, using the supporting criteria. Judgements will be based on:

✧ information supplied by the YOT
✧ interviews with chief officers, managers and staff both from the YOT and other partner organisations
✧ examination of case files
✧ discussions with case managers and other people significantly involved in the supervisory process
✧ the perspectives of the children and young people, their parents/carers and, where possible, their victims
✧ other relevant inspection findings.

The judgements are defined as:

✧ **Fully met** – exceptional performance beyond the requirements of national standards and other relevant guidelines
✧ **Satisfactorily met** – a sufficient level of performance to assure the joint inspection team that the YOT is progressing satisfactorily
✧ **Partly met** – less than sufficient performance on the majority of items
✧ **Not met** – inadequate performance on most items.

Some discretion is allowed to lead inspectors for scores to be adjusted if this seems appropriate due to other findings or contextual evidence.

The overall assessment will be determined by the judgements of the individual sections. As in the first phase of the inspection process, no score or grading will be given during this second phase, but instead a general categorisation highlighting particular achievements as well as areas for improvement. This approach was initially adopted as we felt that a more rigid scoring mechanism would be inappropriate given the developmental nature of much of the work of the YOTs and their relatively recent inauguration as organisations.
The overall performance of the YOT will be assessed as:

- **Commendable** – there is strong management performance and exemplary work with both children and young people and in relation to victims and restorative justice. These YOTs will be setting a standard of excellence which will act as an example to others.

- **Good** – either the section relating to management or work with children is fully met and the other sections are at least sufficiently met. YOTs within this category will have addressed most, if not all, key areas of work and be achieving a high standard of performance.

- **Good basis for development** – the sections relating to management arrangements and work with children and young people are both assessed as sufficiently met and work with victims and restorative justice is being taken forward. Although some key areas will still require attention, these YOTs will have demonstrated good potential and their work will be sufficient to promote confidence in their future development.

- **Requiring improvement** – either the section on management arrangements or work with children and young people is assessed as insufficiently or not met. In these instances, the inspection will have revealed concerns about key aspects of the YOT’s performance which need to be addressed.

- **Requiring significant improvement** – neither the section on management arrangements or work with children and young people is considered to have been sufficiently met. YOTs within this category will need to take immediate action to address major concerns about core areas of work.
**Next steps**

✧ The YOT will be asked to send a response to the recommendations, to the lead inspector, together with an action plan within three months of the publication of the report. It is anticipated that the recommendations will normally be addressed within 12 months of publication to allow sufficient time for integration within existing developments.

✧ Implementation of the recommendations will be monitored by the YJB. The joint inspection programme does not normally include any follow-up action unless issues were to emerge during the course of the programme that were of such serious concern to require immediate attention. The inspection of the Medway YOT has not revealed any such concerns.

✧ In addition to the reports on individual YOTs, the joint inspection team will also publish periodic reports on findings across a number of teams. Such reports will include comments on race equality and diversity issues and other trend information. These reports will also include comparisons between the performance of YOTs with similar characteristics.