

SUBJECT: YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE INSPECTION REPORT

MEETING: Children and Young People's Select Committee

DATE: 12th November 2015

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Children and Young People's Select Committee of the outcome of the inspection of Youth Offending work in Monmouthshire & Torfaen conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) between 22-24th June 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That the Children and Young People's Select Committee scrutinise the inspection report and highlight any concerns relating to performance in achieving outcomes for children and young people.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service (YOS) was established in 2000 as a statutory function of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The primary purpose of the service is to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people (aged 10-17 years).

3.2 Between 22-24th June 2015 HMIP conducted a Short Quality Screening (SQS) of work in Monmouthshire & Torfaen. The inspectorate examined 14 cases of children and young people who had recently offended and were supervised by Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS. The SQS inspection focuses upon the quality of work at the start of a sentence through to the point when initial plans should be in place post sentence. This period is chosen because the quality of work completed at this stage is deemed to be critical to the likelihood of positive outcomes being achieved following completion of the sentence. The YOS had received two weeks advanced notice of the inspection.

3.3 In summary the inspectorate found:

“that the performance of the Monmouthshire and Torfaen YOS was consistent with our findings from our previous inspection in 2010. Staff were well supported in their

work and they engaged positively with children and young people and partner organisations. There is scope for improving the quality of practice by ensuring that all assessments and plans are underpinned by an analysis of relevant case issues and integrate diversity matters when required. Achieving consistency between staff in this respect would help to improve the quality of the services offered by the YOS as a whole.”

3.4 The inspectorate identified a number of key strengths, including:

- **The quality of advice given to Courts:**
HMIP found that sufficient advice had been given to the Courts to assist with sentencing in all cases examined.
- **The engagement of children and young people and parents/carers in assessments:**
HMIP found that children and young people and their parents/carers had been positively engaged and involved in the preparation of all pre-sentence reports examined.
- **Priority was being given to addressing compliance and non-engagement issues:**
HMIP found that the levels of supervision by the YOS of children and young people maintained a good balance between promoting compliance, providing appropriate interventions and holding young people to account for their behaviour. Where children and young people had not co-operated with their sentence HMIP considered that the YOS had taken appropriate action in all cases examined.

3.5 The areas for development identified by HMIP included:

- **The need for all assessments and plans to be informed by an analysis of relevant issues:**
HMIP found that in 3 of the 14 cases examined the assessments of what was likely to make a child or young person offend were not of sufficient quality. This was largely because the assessments were insufficiently analytical. In such cases, HMIP found that the insufficient assessment had led to an insufficient plan, thus limiting the possibility of positive outcomes being achieved. HMIP noted that assessment and planning was an area of considerable strength for some staff and that the YOS could improve by ensuring consistency between staff.
- **Reviews need to reflect any significant changes in the circumstances of children and young people:**
HMIP found that three of the nine assessments that had been reviewed had not been done well enough. This was then mirrored in the associated plans. This was largely because the reviewed assessment did not reflect significant changes in the family or personal circumstances of the child or young person likely to result in a need to change the focus of the planned intervention.
- **Evidence of the impact on quality of management oversight of cases needed to be better recorded:**
HMIP found that staff supervision and quality assurance arrangements had made a positive impact in many of the cases inspected. They found that staff valued management oversight of their practice and felt that they received effective supervision and that their line managers had the skills and knowledge to help them develop and improve. However, HMIP noted that management

oversight of cases was not regularly evidenced in case files and had not delivered the required quality in all cases.

3.6 The YOS welcome the findings from the SQS inspection and have completed a post inspection improvement plan in response to the recommendations. The inspection improvement plan includes a commitment to reviewing existing quality assurance and case recording policies and processes and training for frontline practitioners (see appendix 1 for a copy of post inspection action plan).

4. REASONS:

4.1 The Children and Young People's Select Committee is responsible for monitoring the performance of services provided to children and young people in Monmouthshire.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 The YOS budget is complex as it is made up of statutory partner contributions as well as external grant funding for the provision of a service (both preventative and statutory) that spans two local authorities.

5.2 This report does not propose the development of an additional service, hence there are no current resource implications. However, by virtue of the complexity of the YOS budget, changes in one element of funding could have a significant impact upon other funding which would have the potential to impact upon the service. To this end finance, which incorporates funding contributions and year on year financial planning is a standing item on the YOS Local Management Board agenda.

5.3 Local authority contributions currently make up 79.23% (38.87% Monmouthshire County Council and 40.36% Torfaen County Borough Council) of the contributions from statutory partners. Torfaen County Borough Council have reduced their contribution for 2015/16 by £50,000 but have agreed to make up the shortfall in contribution from their proportion of the YOS reserve. In addition to this the Youth Justice Board reduced their 'Good Practice Grant' by 7.6% for 2015/16 and are in the process of consulting on a potential further, in year reduction, of between 10.5-14%.

5.4 The month 5 forecast indicates that the YOS will come in on budget for 2015/16. The anticipated in-year reduction in grant funding from the Youth Justice Board has been offset by a forecasted underspend on staffing due to time-limited vacancies. The YOS and Local Management Board are in the process of considering where future savings can be made in light of the reduction in the budget.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 This report does not require a decision and as such, no equality impact assessment has been completed at this stage.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 The work completed in YOS complies with all safeguarding requirements and corporate parenting processes in all areas of work in both Local Authority areas.

8. CONSULTEES:

8.1 Tracy Jelfs – Head of Children’s Services

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

9.1 Report of Short Quality Screening (SQS) of Youth Offending Work in Monmouthshire and Torfaen

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/monmouthshiretorfaensqs/>

9.2 Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service post inspection action plan (please see appendix 1).

10. AUTHOR:

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