

Cheshire YOS HMIP Inspection 2009

AN “ENCOURAGING RESULT” FOR YOS

Following the completion of HMI Probation’s inspection of Cheshire YOS in August 2009, HM Chief Inspector of Probation Andrew Bridges commented ‘we consider this an encouraging set of results’. The work that CYOS does is considered to be good overall and the commitment of YOS staff to making a difference to the lives of young people was named as a key strength.

The HMIP report published on 12th Oct 2009 comments that a recent change in senior management has already resulted in greater stability and increased the prospect for making improvements. There is work to be done to improve some aspects of safeguarding and the management of risk to others. The YOS will need to develop its approaches to assessment, particularly on vulnerability and risk.

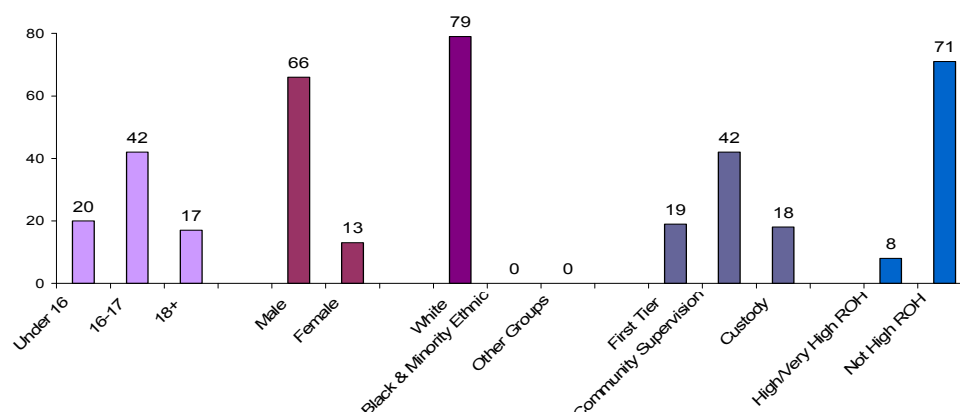
What the percentages below describe is that overall, HMIP judged that safeguarding work was completed sufficiently and robustly in 7 out of 10 cases, work to protect the public was completed well in 7 out of 10 cases, and work to reduce reoffending was done well in 8 out of 10 cases.

Cheshire in comparison to other NW YOTs			
YOS	Work to reduce safeguarding concerns	Work to reduce risk of harm	Work to reduce reoffending
Cheshire	69%	69%	77%
Halton & Warrington	79%	76%	78%
Sefton	38%	36%	50%
Lancashire	52%	51%	60%
St Helens	74%	66%	72%

HOW THE INSPECTION WAS CARRIED OUT

A representative sample of 80 cases from East and West Cheshire were examined and case managers were interviewed about their practice in each individual case. This process was undertaken by five inspectors over four days in August 2009. Supporting evidence for each element of the inspection criteria was provided in advance to the inspectors. Young people and victims were also consulted via questionnaires and their responses analysed.

Case sample information: Cheshire



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM HMIP

The report concludes that changes are necessary to ensure that, in a higher proportion of cases:

The vulnerability and safeguarding needs of children and young people are correctly identified and addressed.

A timely and good quality assessment of the individual's 'risk of harm to others' is completed at the start of an intervention, as appropriate to the specific case.

As a consequence of the assessment, the record of the intervention plan is specific about what will now be done in order to safeguard the young person's wellbeing, to make him/her less likely to reoffend, and to minimise any identified risk of harm to others.

Management oversight of work to address safeguarding and the risk of harm to others can be seen to support improvements in practice.

WHAT THE INSPECTORS FOUND

The following summaries appear in the full report:

1. Assessment and Planning

The completion rates for assessments and plans indicated a YOS where systems were in place to ensure that they were done. This was supported by an auditing process that included feedback to case managers about the quality of their work and suggesting improvements. Case managers were positive about the support provided to them. That there was a need to introduce more consistency into the quality of planning and management oversight was already understood by the new management team.

Whilst assessment and planning in relation both to ROSH and safeguarding was a weakness for the service overall, this did not include all staff. We met some outstanding case managers who were working imaginatively and with confidence with potentially dangerous and damaged young people to protect them and the public from harm. They made excellent use of the multi-agency resources available to them to plan for the best service possible.

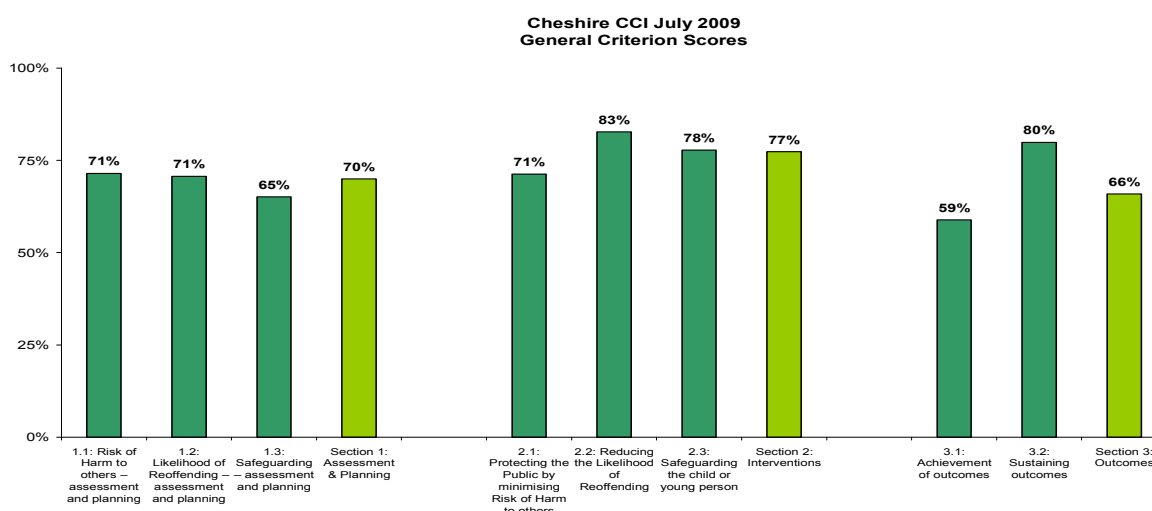
2. Delivery and Review of Interventions

Case managers were clear that their role was to manage the case and to pull in resources, from elsewhere within the YOS or to other agencies, and to achieve plans to manage the LoR. Attention to offending behaviour was encouraging; case managers engaged positively with this issue themselves and made appropriate referrals.

The level of resources available internally for delivering interventions appeared to be appropriate with some external gaps noted above. Young people with many needs could appropriately find themselves very busy which was often a form of positive containment, particularly for those not in Education or Training.

An improvement plan addressing the recommendations is submitted to HMIP in November 2009 and the Youth Justice Board monitor its implementation.

GENERAL CRITERION SCORES



3. Outcomes

It was encouraging to see that progress in relation to factors linked to offending was almost as positive in the custody sample as with those young people subject to community orders. Despite the lack of offending behaviour work in secure establishments, there were resources to address linked needs eg. substance misuse. Enforcement practice needed a more consistent approach. In the community it was encouraging to see the consideration of an exit strategy that might sustain the young person in the future rather than just drawing a line under supervision.

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