

THEY HAVE HELPED ME UNDERSTAND  
A LOT ABOUT MY OFFENCE

I GET TO TALK TO SOMEONE  
WHO TREATS ME LIKE AN ADULT AND WITH RESPECT

## FOREWORD

I am delighted to present this annual report on behalf of the nine inspectorates and regulatory bodies undertaking the programme to inspect the 155 Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) of England and Wales. Many people worked very hard to establish this programme, and this report, on the completion of its first phase, is a vindication of their efforts.

There are some key messages to draw from this report. At a time when the larger scale programme for the Inspection of Children's Services is being devised, led by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), there are lessons to be learned from how the YOT inspection programme has worked in practice. But, the first key message is that a joint inspection programme of this nature can work.

Second, this has been the first independent scrutiny to look at all the YOTs. Hence we have been establishing, with the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and with YOTs themselves, benchmarks for what counts as effective practice. These have become the standards and criteria for our joint programme, which YOTs can work towards achieving.

Finally, on behalf of all members of the joint inspection team we wish to pay tribute to the way in which the YOTs inspected during this first phase have really engaged proactively with the process. Increasingly the purpose of inspection is to help bring about improvement in practice. This is only achieved when the service being inspected responds positively and aims to learn from the inspection experience. Almost all the YOTs we have seen in this first year have taken this constructive approach.

In summary, this report shows not only that agencies can work together effectively to provide a service for children and young people on behalf of the community, but also that the inspecting bodies can work together effectively too. This inspection programme thereby helps to improve the overall effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System.



*A. M. Bridges*

**Andrew Bridges**  
Chief Inspector  
of Probation

## INTRODUCTION

This is the first annual report to be produced by HM Inspectorate of Probation on the work of YOTs. It marks the end of a challenging year when we have, working with colleague inspectorates, implemented a new joint inspection programme, during which all 155 YOTs in England and Wales will be inspected. The programme will take five to six years to complete.

YOTs were established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and became agencies in April 2000. Although the YJB has a statutory role in respect of performance monitoring of the YOTs, responsibility for external scrutiny through a programme of inspections was designated to HM Inspectorate of Probation by the Secretary of State in 2002.

The purpose of the programme is to report to the Secretary of State and, through him, Parliament and the public, on the effectiveness of the YOTs in fulfilling their statutory duties to prevent offending by children and young people, and thereby protect the public, whilst safeguarding their rights and promoting their welfare.

Although responsibility for the conduct of the inspections rests with HM Inspectorate of Probation, the development and implementation of the programme is undertaken in conjunction with the following inspectorates:

- Audit Commission
- Commission for Social Care Inspection (formerly Social Services Inspectorate)
- Estyn (HM Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales)
- Healthcare Commission (formerly Commission for Health Improvement)
- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons
- Ofsted
- Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.

A steering group was established, consisting of representatives from all the inspection bodies involved and the YJB. Its role is to advise HM Inspectorate of Probation on the development of the inspection programme and the production of the reports. This is the first multi-agency inspection to be implemented on a cyclical basis and, in common with the YOTs, the group has had to develop its own ethos and culture in working together. One of the first issues it had to address was the editing of the reports. It was clearly impractical for each report to be scrutinised by all the inspectorates in turn and it was a demonstration of the trust placed in us that we were assigned that responsibility. Representatives from each of the inspectorates now contribute their findings to the reports, which are circulated in draft form across the inspection team to ensure that they properly reflect their respective views. The final editing, however, rests with HM Inspectorate of Probation.

Recruitment for the multi-disciplinary inspection team was an urgent priority and the process began in April 2003. The team now consists of experienced inspectors from the participating inspectorates, and currently replicates the composition of most YOTs. In developing the inspection, we have been heartened by the positive way in which the YOTs themselves have assisted us and engaged in the process. We needed to ensure that we were properly informed about the complexities of the YOTs, in relation to a wide range of issues such as size, structure, methods of data collection and impact of the demography of the area. We therefore, held 11 consultation events across England and Wales, which were attended by over 250 YOT managers, chief executives and chairs of steering groups. Additionally, a consultation document was circulated to all the YOTs and 41 written responses were received.

The consultation exercises helped in consolidating our thinking, as well as identifying a number of factors for consideration. These included:

- considerable variations in the size, location (in terms of their strategic position within the local authority), partnership arrangements and approach between YOTs
- doubts about the reliability and validity of information supplied to the YJB on the performance measures
- conducting file reading exercises with the minimum amount of disruption to the team, particularly where case records were held electronically.

In addition to the consultation exercise, visits were made to a number of YOTs who advised us on discrete areas of work. It became apparent that, for the inspections to remain a dynamic and relevant process in what was rapidly changing environment, they would need to be broken down into different stages.

The first stage, for which YOTs have been invited to volunteer, has been developed with the express purpose of establishing benchmarks. These will then be used to inform the later stages of the inspection programme, which will continue to focus on core issues and be aimed at driving up performance.

We were determined, from early on, that the programme would be comprehensive and focus on practice. Examination of case files has therefore formed a core part of the methodology.

Two pilot inspections were conducted in June and July 2003, the file reading forms changed and refined, and the methodology established. We are indebted to the chief executives, YOT managers, management boards and teams of both authorities for assisting us with a process which was in its early stages of development.

We decided at the outset that our scoring system should reinforce the strategic importance of the YOT within the local authority structure and, ultimately, feed into the scores for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in England and inform the Wales Programme for Improvement. It was, however, the first time that a joint inspection of a multi-agency partnership had been attempted on a cyclical basis. We recognised that it was unlikely that the methodology of such a new initiative would be without problems, despite the pilots, and that these would emerge during the first stage of implementation. The scoring system would therefore be refined as the programme developed.

The first stage of the inspection programme began in September 2003 and will be completed in August 2004. The 15 YOTs included in the first phase of the inspection are:

<b>HALTON &amp; WARRINGTON</b>	<b>SHEFFIELD</b>	<b>MILTON KEYNES</b>	<b>CONWY- DENBIGHSHIRE</b>
<b>HAVERING</b>	<b>CARDIFF</b>	<b>LANCASHIRE</b>	<b>COUNTY DURHAM</b>
<b>SLOUGH</b>	<b>LEICESTERSHIRE</b>	<b>STOKE-ON- TRENT</b>	<b>OXFORDSHIRE</b>
<b>SUFFOLK</b>	<b>ENFIELD</b>	<b>NEATH PORT TALBOT</b>	

Findings from the 11 inspections completed at the time of writing will be discussed later in this report.

## METHODOLOGY

Trying to achieve synergy in methodological terms was a major struggle for the joint inspection team. Inspectorates involved in the initial planning stages had various models of working which focused on specific areas of work with children and young people in their parent organisations. Were children and young people being kept safe? Were they receiving education? Were their physical and emotional needs being met? How do we know that intervention by agencies made a difference? These were some of the issues with which we had to grapple during the planning stages and which we constantly revisit.

The inspection template, which formed the basis of the pilot inspections, borrowed from the methodology used for inspecting probation areas by HM Inspectorate of Probation. The YOT is evaluated against standards, which have been developed using legislation, guidance and common understandings of good practice from various disciplines, including the youth justice agenda.

There are five standards which focus on the following areas of practice:

- management and partnership arrangements
- children and young people at risk of offending
- children and young people who offend
- parents/carers of children and young people who are at risk of offending or who offend
- victims.

Sources of evidence include policy documents, case files, relevant staff, partner agencies and those who have come into contact with the service.

The process of the inspection entails a week-long visit to each YOT to read between 50 to 120 files, which are randomly selected. The size of the case sample is chosen to give a statistical representation of the work of the YOT. The case worker is interviewed in half of the cases selected. The quality of completion of ASSET forms (an assessment tool developed by YJB) and compliance with YJB standards for undertaking various aspects of the work, are verified. Analysis of the findings is undertaken, prior to the second week of fieldwork, so that the information gleaned can help inform the key lines of enquiry. A YOT worker is usually involved in the file reading as a member of the inspection team.

The focus during the second week of the inspection is on interviewing those involved in providing the service and the recipients of it. The arrangements for managing the YOT are looked at in some detail. This includes ascertaining membership and level of functioning of the steering group, the funding arrangements for the YOT and the leadership, direction and support provided for its effective working. The work of specialist officers is examined and representatives from the partner agencies on the steering group are also interviewed.

Senior managers are interviewed to gauge their priorities and gain their perspectives on services for which they have responsibility. Additionally, first-line managers and staff at various levels are interviewed in an attempt to obtain views at both strategic and operational levels.

The views of children and young people and those of their parents/carers are sought on the YOT's involvement in their lives. Interviews are undertaken wherever possible. Children and young people are also able to give their views through an interactive computer questionnaire (Viewpoint). This approach has proved useful for those who are harder to engage with face-to-face or who enjoy computer games.

Work with victims, including restorative justice, is another area which the inspections cover. Time is spent with those with responsibility for the topic and issues are discussed with victims who wish to share their experiences with us.

In devising a scoring system, we wanted to recognise that YOTs were in an early stage of development and would inevitably be progressing at different rates. In addition, we also needed to send out a clear message to local authorities and YOTs in particular about the standard of performance we considered reasonable to expect. We therefore decided, in this first stage of the programme, to grade each of the five standards and give an overall assessment, indicating whether the performance was satisfactory or not. We realised that some areas of work, such as with the victims of crime, were relatively new, but considered that the YOTs had had sufficient time to establish effective management and partnership arrangements, and should be undertaking their core work competently with children and young people who had offended. We felt that satisfactory performance in these two areas was a good indication that the YOT was functioning well and that its performance was sustainable. We therefore decided to weight these two areas of work and make them essential to a satisfactory assessment.

This inspection programme is still in its early stages of development. As it is so new we constantly keep the methodology and process under review, so that we can keep abreast of changes in YJB national standards and monitor our effectiveness.

## INITIAL FINDINGS

The joint YOT inspection team have had a successful first year and have now visited 11 of the 15 YOTs to be inspected, reviewed 757 cases, of whom 181 were subject to detention training orders (DTOs) and consulted 114 children and young people. From this evidence, a number of themes have emerged which will enable YOTs to prioritise their development over the next few years. These themes are picked up and explored in more detail below.

### QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT

#### Leadership

There was considerable variation in the management arrangements for the YOTs we inspected. Although the majority of chief executives had taken the lead expected of them in establishing the YOTs with their partners in the police, probation and health service, only a few continued to chair the management board. In most instances, this responsibility was devolved, sometimes to the deputy chief executive or to the head of children's services who, frequently also line managed the YOT manager.

Many of the chief executives we met had been quick to see the strategic potential of the YOT and the possibility of further engagement with partner organisations. These chief executives provided clear, effective and, in our view, essential leadership, without which YOTs were unable to contribute to the broader crime and disorder strategies and the community safety plan. Where the local authority chief executive and other chief officers had little or no direct knowledge of their work, YOT managers were left, too frequently to determine their own pace and direction for themselves. Access to resources was then dependent upon their ability to negotiate with department directors or service heads. In some cases YOT managers were able to overcome these difficulties. However, the continued success of these YOTs was vulnerable should the manager leave.

The post of the YOT manager has always been regarded as a key appointment, essential to the success of the YOT. We saw many managers playing a crucial role in a number of arenas, operating at both a strategic and an operational level. These managers were clearly held in high regard by their chief executive and other senior colleagues. Nevertheless, the increasing demands placed on the YOT manager with their responsibility for a complex range of arrangements, including delivering on some high profile government initiatives, had implications for both the configuration of the YOT and the role of its operational managers.

### GOOD PRACTICE

In one of the YOTs we visited the YOT Strategic Manager represented the regional YOT Managers Group on the Local Criminal Justice Board and chaired the Youth Justice Forum of this Board.

We came across various structural models. Some of the larger YOTs had a deputy and operational managers, whereas other smaller YOTs had one or more operational managers, but no deputy. All had the potential to work well, particularly where the management team operated as a cohesive unit and the operational managers had made that important transition from senior practitioners to performance managers. As already discussed, clear policy direction proved a more significant factor in determining the YOT's success than its structure or location, as did the commitment of its partner organisations.

### Partnerships arrangements

The inspections have revealed the complexity of multi-agency work. In areas where staff were appropriately seconded by health and education, as well as by police, probation and social services, there was a dynamic mix of committed and hard-working people who contributed their specialist knowledge and expertise to the YOT.

### GOOD PRACTICE

One of the YOTs we visited held annual open days to update partner agencies, sentencers and local members of the council on its work. These were cited by the local courts as a good means of raising awareness and sharing information.

A common feature was the lack of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, seconded by partner agencies. The police, to their credit, were the exception here, and appeared generally to have provided officers as required. Where there were shortages of case managers, some health and education staff were asked to undertake the core work of the YOT. Whilst we do not feel that specialist staff should be rigidly restricted to work in their particular discipline, this practice gave rise to difficulties. Health staff reported that they were being deployed on a range of tasks, such as writing pre-sentence reports, and thought that this could be in conflict with their specialist role. At the time of writing, discussions are taking place with both the YJB and the Nurses Midwives Council to explore these issues further. Many YOTs expressed the view that in the absence of guidance from the YJB, they managed as best they could.

The YOTs that functioned most effectively were able to use specialist staff to greatest effect. Often, instead of seconding staff, money was allocated to the YOT, which then managed as creatively as it could to replace the missing skills. Although the contribution of actual funds enabled the YOT to recruit a member of staff rather than carry the vacancy, the practice was fraught with problems. The arrangements were frequently short-term, based on an annual funding cycle, leaving the YOT to employ staff either on a time-limited contract or on a locum basis. As a result, a new group of staff was emerging, with no professional affiliation to any of the partner organisations in the YOT. These staff, although frequently carrying a specialist role to reflect their funding basis did not have the same relationship with the parent organisation as seconded staff and were not able to access information, take part in training or properly reflect the parent organisation's view.

These issues around multi-agency work need further consideration by the YJB. It was apparent from our examination of a relatively small number of teams that YOTs would be assisted by model protocols and further national guidance on staffing arrangements, including the complexity of discipline, grievance and complaint procedures covering more than one organisation.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

In one YOT certain professionals, including probation and education staff, came together within their disciplines to form 'action learning sets' which looked at procedures and practice with a view to provide synergy across the YOT.

The children and young people we consulted during the inspection were clear that the personal qualities of their YOT worker were an important factor in engaging them in work on their offending.

I GET TO TALK TO SOMEONE WHO TREATS ME LIKE AN ADULT AND WITH RESPECT. THEY HAVE HELPED ME UNDERSTAND A LOT ABOUT MY OFFENCE.

I LIKE THE WAY I CAN ALWAYS TALK TO THE PEOPLE AND WE CAN UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER AND HAVE FUN AT THE SAME TIME AS HELPING ME STOP OFFENDING.

## WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We found evidence of much hard work and positive engagement with children and young people and were impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of staff. At their best, teams were managing the tensions between the juvenile justice and child welfare agendas successfully. Here, compliance with YJB national standards is high, as is generally morale.

## PREVENTION

There was a wide variation in the importance placed on preventative work. In some cases, YOTs undertook little or no preventative work. In the best examples, YOTs were clear about the contribution of preventative work to the overall crime and disorder strategy, their role in this work, and their contribution either through direct delivery or in partnership with others.

When asked what they enjoyed doing, children and young people said:

I LIKE IT WHEN MY MENTOR TAKES ME OUT AND I LIKE HAVING SOMEONE TO TALK TO.  
I GET TO TALK TO PEOPLE AND THEY TALK TO ME ABOUT MY PROBLEMS.

BEING WITH SOMEONE DIFFERENT AND DOING ACTIVITIES.  
THEY ARE INTERESTING AND I LEARN A LOT ABOUT MYSELF AND HOW TO STAY OUT OF TROUBLE.



## ASSESSMENT

The ASSET tool is the vehicle used by YOTs to identify the needs of each child or young person and plan appropriate interventions to address them. We were disappointed to find that there is no identification of religion required on ASSET and that the question on ethnicity, of other than white British, was not always adequately completed. These gaps have implications for adequate planning and service delivery if the needs of children and young people are to be satisfactorily met.

We found considerable variation in ASSET completion. In each YOT visited, we met a small number of workers who clearly understood and used ASSET well, but in too many instances, as shown in figure 1, the quality of ASSET completion was mediocre. Although we were pleased to find that the majority of parents/carers were consulted about the supervision of their child, nearly a quarter of the children and young people involved did not appear to be aware of the contents of the assessment or to have made any contribution to the process.

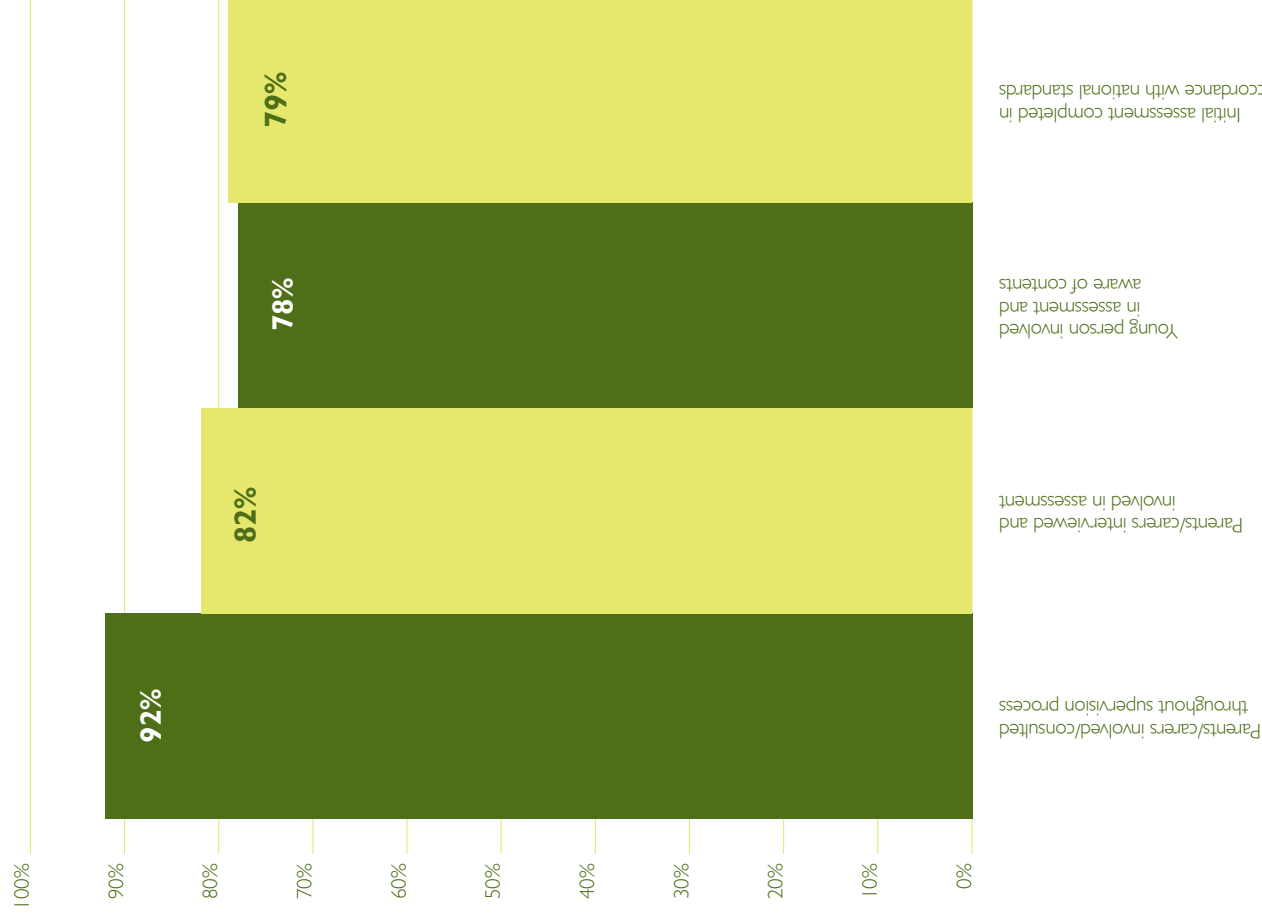
Cultures varied within YOTs. We saw many cases where the case manager was using the assessment process to structure their analysis of the child's or young person's needs, using specialist staff as appropriate. Some staff were still, however, clinging to old philosophies and used them at times, we felt, to justify lack of engagement with children and young people. Despite the work undertaken by the YJB to improve ASSET completion through the Effective Practice Quality Audit process, of which we thoroughly approve, we noted the same aversion to ASSET commented on by the Audit Commission in their recent report, Youth Justice 2004. We read ASSET forms where the conclusion reached was illogical and bore little resemblance to the circumstances of the case.

### GOOD PRACTICE

In one YOT that we inspected specialist workers contributed to ASSETs thus enabling the needs of children and young people to be viewed more holistically.

## INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Figure 1



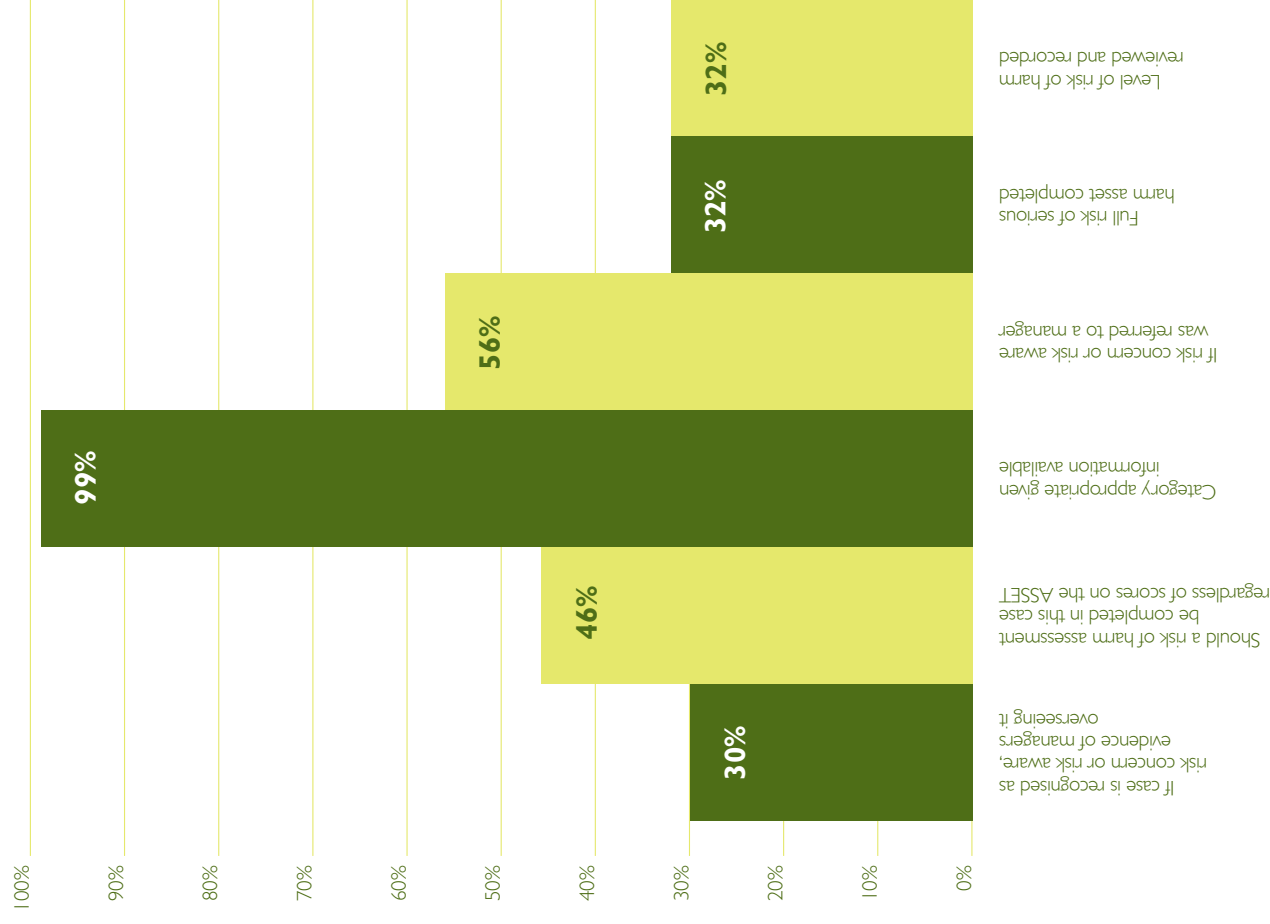
Fully or largely met

Another common feature was the poor identification of risk of harm. None of the YOTs we visited performed adequately in this respect. Despite the triggers in the initial ASSET form, a full risk assessment was prepared in only a third of cases, as required. A significant proportion of the remaining cases should also, in our opinion, be subject to a full risk assessment. Whilst we are aware that work is ongoing within the YJB to tackle these issues, our inspection shows that it is an area which needs to be addressed with some urgency.

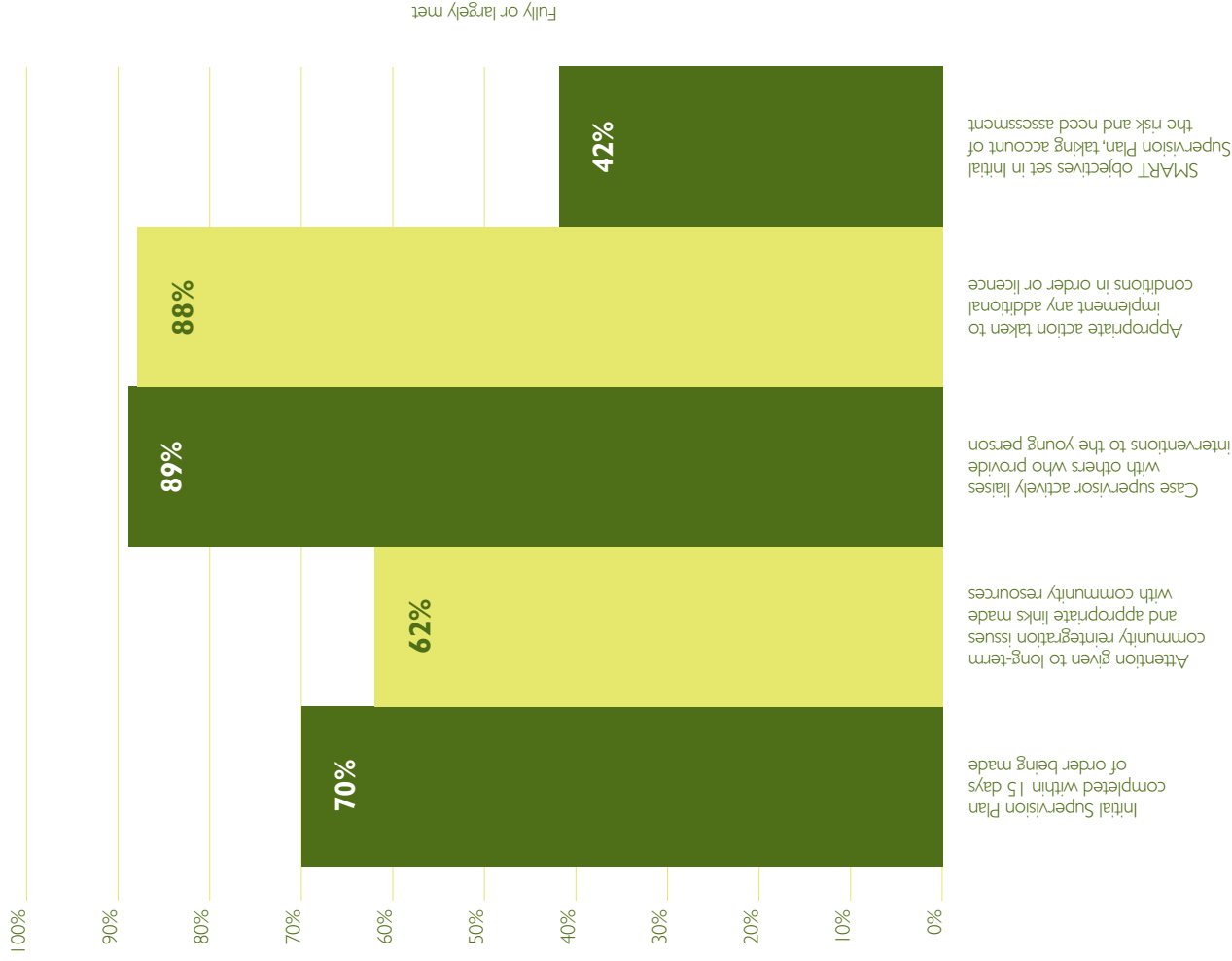
Discussion with staff about ASSET revealed their lack of understanding about both the process involved and its intent. Some suggested that they were unclear about the procedures and were reluctant to trigger an assessment which, they felt could inappropriately label a child or young person. We found many instances where the 'flags' in the case management system had been ignored or questions not answered. The majority of cases we examined where risk of harm was relevant did not stand scrutiny. Given that the purpose of the process is to make a full and accurate assessment of risk, based on all relevant known information, screening children and young people out as well as in, these responses were particularly inappropriate and needed to be addressed, both by local managers and by the YJB itself.

Any assessment tool can always be improved and must, of course, be subject to ongoing scrutiny and modification. ASSET, if completed properly, provides a useful framework to inform work with the child or young person. Its potential has still, in our view, to be fully realised by the YOTs as it could not only inform the work with the child or young person, but also, if aggregated, provide much useful management information. We found a few instances where YOTs were beginning to adopt this approach, and heard of others where it was said to be further developed. Such initiatives should be encouraged.

## RISK ASSESSMENT



## SUPERVISION PLANNING



## INTERVENTIONS

There was a range of interventions used by the various YOTs. Inevitably, their effectiveness depended on the quality of the assessment. Although the quality of supervision planning still required attention, it was encouraging to see that case managers worked actively to refer children and young people to appropriate interventions and to implement any additional conditions in their order or licence.

In the main, interventions were conducted on an individual basis, but a number of group work activities around anger management and offending behaviour took place. Greater attention should be given to addressing children and young people with particular needs, especially those from minority ethnic groups. Increasingly, however, YOTs were using bespoke packages to inform their work with children and young people. There were many such creatively designed intervention programmes, which provided opportunities for children and young people to be challenged, develop motivational skills, learn to identify their own risk behaviours and plan coping mechanisms to keep out of trouble. In the best examples, children and young people were helped to develop skills which were recognised through accredited certification of value to employers, such as basic skills, National Vocational Qualifications and the Duke of Edinburgh award.

### GOOD PRACTICE

Children and young people who attended one of the YOTs, participated in groups that addressed their offending behaviour or offending related issues, i.e. sessions on drug awareness. They could gain formal accreditation of their experience through the Open College Network. This could be combined with other activities to gain the full Duke of Edinburgh award. A partnership had been developed between one YOT we visited and an innovative project that focused on vehicle crime. It took a holistic approach in engaging children and young people in education and the general impact of the public on vehicle crime. The most powerful session of the programme featured the attendance of victims of road traffic accidents, who met with the children and young people.

We saw some good examples of work with children and young people subject to DTOs, where the case manager had contributed effectively to sentence reviews and planned carefully for their release. Overall, however, the standard of the work could be improved. The quality and level of pre-release work matched the assessment in 72% of cases and, more worryingly, work commenced in custody was continued on release in only 69%.

Many children and young people enjoyed working with their case manager and found it helpful.

I LEARN ABOUT OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR AND FINDING OUT IT GETS YOU NOWHERE.

I LIKE MOST OF THE THINGS AT YOT AS WE ALWAYS HAVE FUN AT THE SAME TIME AS WORKING TOGETHER.

I ENJOY BEING ABLE TO SPEAK ABOUT MY FEELINGS AND PROBLEMS WITHOUT WORRYING THAT EVERYONE WILL KNOW ABOUT IT AND BEING ABLE TO KNOW THAT I CAN GET HELP WITH MOST THINGS I NEED HELP WITH.

I LIKE MY YOT WORKER, SHE LISTENS TO ME AND TRIES TO HELP ME.

IT HAS KEPT ME OUT OF TROUBLE AND HELPED ME LOTS.

TALKING AND LISTENING TO THE SPEAKERS WHO SOMETIMES COME IN THE EVENINGS.

Others were not so positive. When asked what they did not like about coming to the YOT, they said:

COMING  
TWICE A WEEK  
I'D RATHER BE  
SAT AT HOME.

THE WORK  
ABOUT MYSELF.  
I WANT TO BE  
WITH MY MATES  
AND I HAVE  
TO DO WORK.

I DON'T LIKE  
NOTHING  
REALLY  
BECAUSE IT  
IS ALL BORING.

IT'S MEANT  
TO BE A  
PUNISHMENT  
SO I AM NOT  
GONNA LIKE  
ANY OF IT AM I?

## SAFEGUARDING ISSUES AND LINKS WITH SOCIAL SERVICES

Despite the investment in YOTs made by social service departments, by way of seconded staff and, frequently, managerial support, we were surprised at the apparent lack of communication and joint working between the two organisations. Many of the children and young people seen by YOT staff were in need of protection and safeguarding. Eleven percent (77), of the cases examined in the case file read, were Looked After Children, although the proportions varied from 3% to 17% in the individual YOTs inspected. Whilst we saw some good examples of working together, liaison with social services occurred in only 61% (47) of these cases. We heard anecdotal evidence from YOT staff that only children and young people at the highest and most immediate risk were accepted as referrals. This approach did not allow for intervention in cases where there were significant needs. These issues required further examination.

In addition to this inspection programme, we are currently engaged in the enhanced YOT inspection being undertaken as part of the Joint Chief Inspectors' Review of Children's Safeguards. This inspection will focus on safeguarding issues, covering the period from a child or young person's apprehension to their court appearance and sentence or alternate disposal. The findings from this inspection, due in late 2004, will inform the development of the future inspection programme.

## EDUCATION

In many instances education specialists were successfully integrated into the YOTs and were valued team members. The level of funding, however, varied significantly from one YOT to the next and, in an increasing number of cases, came as a block financial contribution rather than as a seconded member of staff. It was too early to judge how this was impacting on the overall provision of education services within teams but emerging evidence suggested that, in some instances, the specialist education focus was being superseded by the generic needs of the YOT.

Where working well, children's and young peoples' educational needs were identified at an early stage, referral processes were clear for all staff and a wide range of alternative education and prevention programmes had been established, particularly for those children and young people of school age. Education specialists generally had large case loads and in most cases prioritised their work with those children and young people aged up to 16 who were out of school. The arrangements for these children and young people were too often unsatisfactory. Their successful reintegration back into educational programmes depended on the availability of appropriate provision and the quality of relationships with the providing agencies. In some instances where resources allocated to education specialists were limited, staff referred children and young people back to the local education authority (LEA), but were unable to provide any additional support, even when this had been identified as essential to meet the specific learning needs of individual children or young people. Access to education, training or employment provision for 16-19 years old, particularly those leaving custody on DTOs, was at best patchy.

Practice varied widely between YOTs with different degrees of success. Some education workers, although very committed to their work, were not of a sufficiently high level of seniority or suitably experienced to influence schools. However, gradual progress was being made where good working relationships existed through the seconded posts. In the best examples, where working protocols were in place between the LEA and providing agencies, effective partnership arrangements had been established and a good range of targeted provision was developing.

### GOOD PRACTICE

One YOT had introduced a pro forma for schools to complete when a child or young person was first referred to them, in order to strengthen the education component in initial ASSETs.

Thirty of the children and young people consulted told us that they had been given particular help with their schooling. One said, "it is good because they bring to light what happens if I offend and they show me the path to a better career and lifestyle."

## HEALTH ISSUES

Where health specialists completed the health, mental health and/or drug and substance misuse sections of the ASSET, this often led to early assessment and intervention. The majority, however, did not do this, but instead received referrals from case managers. Although most of the health workers we interviewed had received training in its delivery, the YJB Mental Health Assessment Tool (2003) was only being implemented by some of the YOTs.

One YOT had undertaken an audit of the health issues recorded in ASSET and was consequently able to offer some evaluation of the health needs of those children and young people. Two others offered health assessments to all children and young people attending the YOT, and a further two had set up immunisation and screening programmes. We identified several children and young people who initially had no general practitioner or dentist and were subsequently referred by the health worker or specialist to these services. Some of the health specialists were actively involved in running interventions such as parenting and anger management programmes and were providing sexual health and contraceptive advice.

Access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) varied widely, with waiting lists for referrals often unacceptably long. Those 16-19 year olds no longer in education were often disadvantaged, as they were not always eligible for children's services. The success of YOT workers in securing appropriate provision for these children and young people appeared to depend more on their local knowledge and access to known specialists. Where CAMHS was available to the YOT, support and interventions were well managed and those children and young people in immediate need received an adequate service.

## GOOD PRACTICE

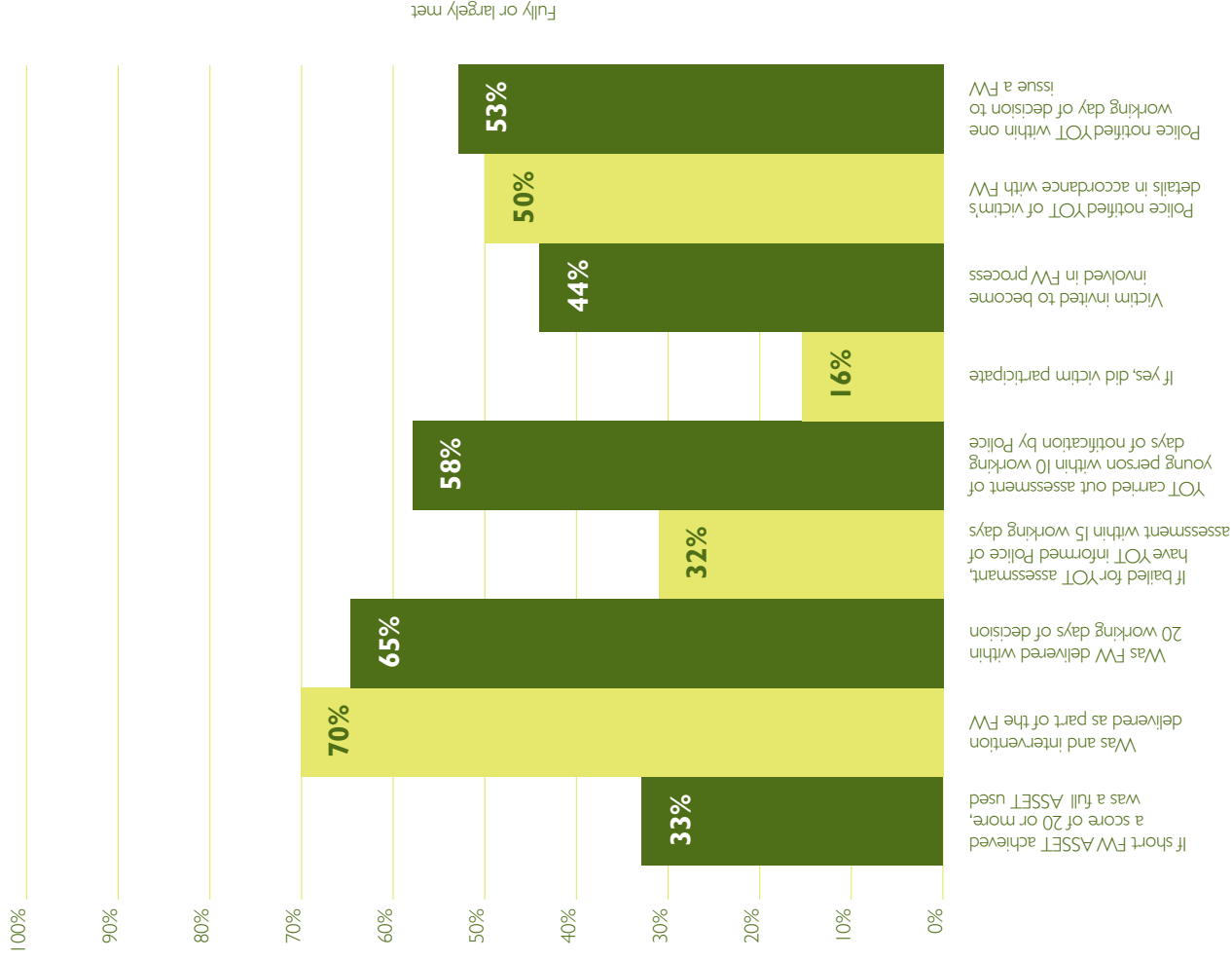
The adolescent counsellor from one YOT inspected was invited to meet the Prime Minister to explain what was involved in his work, following publicity about one case where he had used cognitive therapy with a young man convicted of an offence of violence.

The case file read highlighted the high proportion of cases with unresolved physical, sensory and mental health needs requiring intervention and treatment. Within the sample it was found that:

- 22% (176) had physical health needs
- 44% (348) had emotional or mental health needs, of which 70% (231) had been referred for treatment
- treatment started during the custodial element of a DTO was followed up on release in only 64% of cases.

Most health professionals kept separate health records containing sensitive health care information in accordance with their National Health Service (NHS) Caldicott responsibilities. Not all of the health workers recorded information in the YOT file, particularly if it was held electronically, and this could sometimes cause gaps in information, but most tried to ensure that their contact with the child or young person was noted somewhere in the file. Not all NHS Trusts had yet agreed to an information sharing protocol with the YOT.

## FINAL WARNINGS



## FINAL WARNINGS AND WORK WITH THE POLICE

Approaches to the delivery of final warnings varied considerably across the YOTs inspected. In some areas the YOT and police had adopted the 2002 Home Office/YJB guidance, whilst in others the police had developed different initiatives, which could exclude YOTs until late in the process. We were surprised by this lack of uniformity and would encourage YOTs and police to adopt the 2002 guidance. One of the major issues was that of timeliness. Few of the YOTs inspected received notification from the police within 24 hours of a final warning being delivered, or a child or young person being bailed to a final warning clinic. This had major implications for the work of the YOTs and it was to the credit of their staff that they were still able to engage with the majority of children and young people.

### GOOD PRACTICE

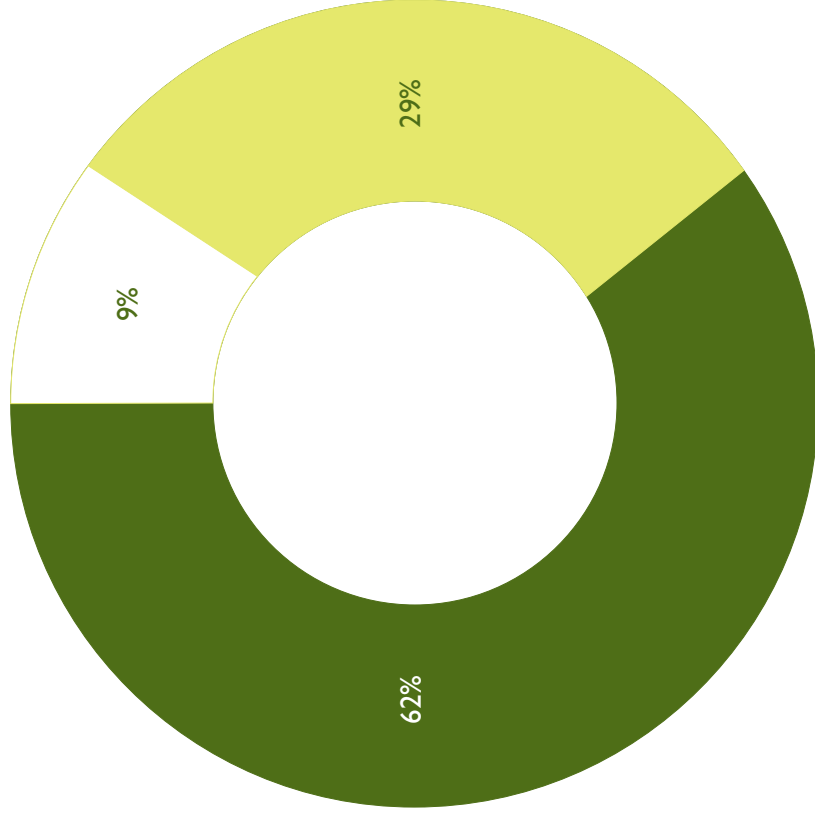
The YOT had developed an intervention plan specifically aimed at final warnings, which both the parent/carer and the child or young person signed up to. This helped ensure that the child or young person attended all the planned sessions, where at present there is no legal power to insist they attend.

Despite the recent recommendation from the Audit Commission, many of the YOTs inspected still did not have police computers placed within their offices to allow the police officers in the team to access the Police National Computer and other systems. Those teams that did have such access were able to gain swift information both on children and young people who had offended and on victims. It appeared to us that apart from the practical issues there was also a battle of hearts and minds to be won in this regard.



## VICTIMS

- Young person participated in direct reparation to the victim
- If no, any indirect reparation taken place
- Any reparation work appropriate to age, skills and ability of the young person and proportionate to offence



## WORK WITH VICTIMS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Work with victims also varied. Not surprisingly, it was best established in YOTs situated in areas where there was a long tradition of victim contact work. Where there was a strong worker, with a good focus and level of understanding of restorative justice work, this seemed to work well. In other areas, where the work was not so developed, some staff questioned whether they should be engaging with victims at all.

Although some work on raising victim awareness was undertaken it needed to be given greater focus. The emphasis placed on victim work depended on the leadership given by the YOT manager. Where this was strong, positive work was being undertaken. However, some YOTs needed to promote this area of work, which could and should be addressed by training. Also, although the majority of YOTs had a number of reparation projects, the range was not sufficiently diverse and did not always address the needs of minority ethnic children and young people.

In half the cases examined, the police did not notify the YOT of the victim information within 24 hours of charge or final warning as required. This delay created considerable difficulties for the YOT who, as a result, would frequently attempt to contact the victim by telephone once their contact details became known, in an attempt to expedite matters. This response, although understandable, took no account of the possible impact on the victim and was against the YJB effective practice guidelines. Only 44% of victims were contacted in final warning cases and, of these, just 16%, participated or contributed to the intervention. Timeliness was a major issue in relation to the referral panel meetings and we found considerable variation in performance. Only 58% (93 of 160) were held within the timescales set by the national standard. The number of victims attending referral panel meetings was also disappointingly low. Although various reasons were given for this, it was apparent that in some instances, victims' expectations were not being met by attendance at the panel.

### GOOD PRACTICE

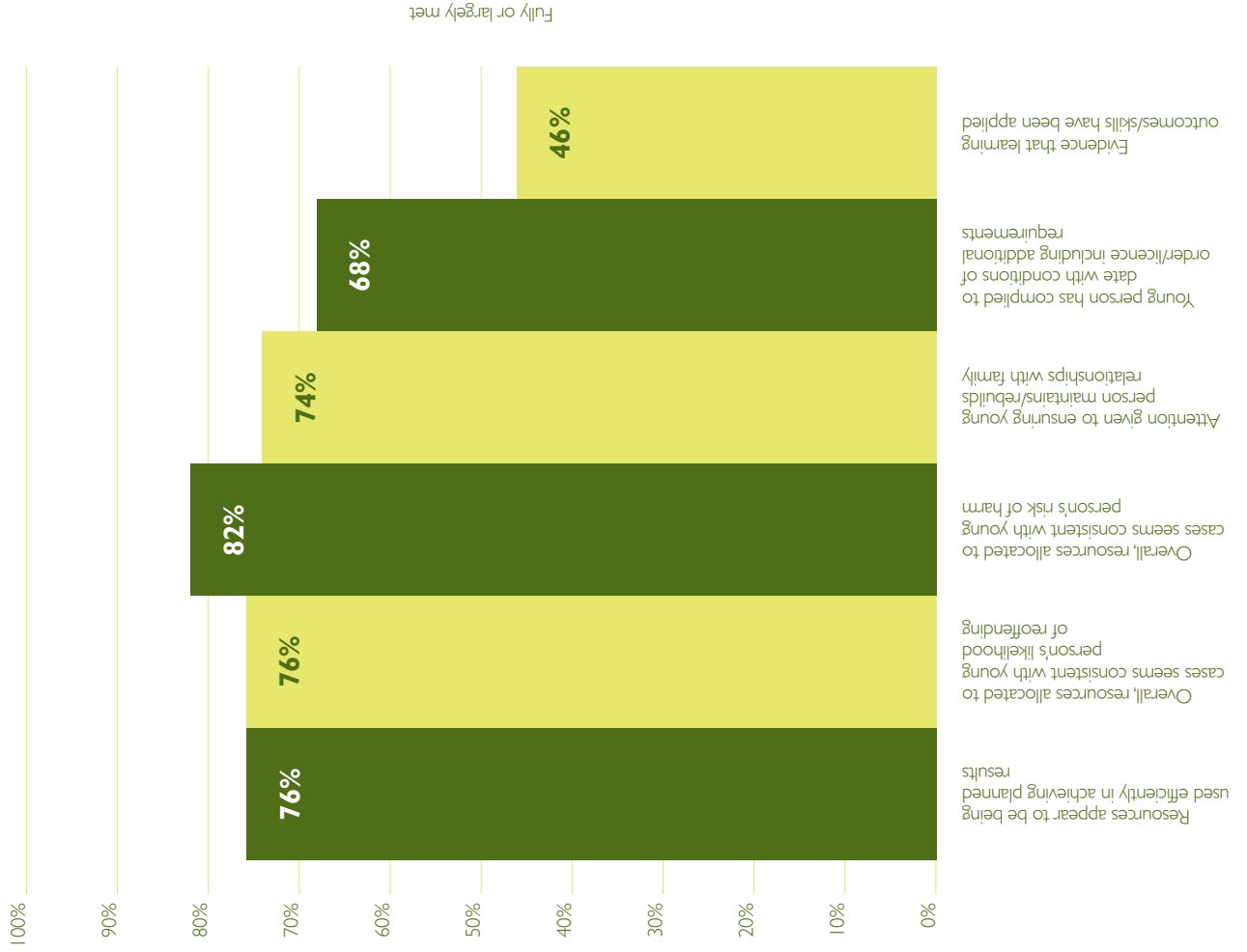
At one of the YOTs we visited referral panel members found their training so enjoyable, one said to the inspector: "I do not know what I'll do on a Saturday morning now".

We met with a small number of victims during the course of the inspections. Some were very satisfied with the service provided, others less so.

ONE VICTIM, WHO SCORED THE YOT "10 OUT OF 10" FOR "PROCESS, INFORMATION, SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIP", MENTIONED THE REFERRAL ORDER PANEL IN WHICH THEY HAD PARTICIPATED. "THEY SAID 'MY CHOICE, NO PRESSURE': THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON WAS ABLE TO DO REPARATION AT A SETTING PROVIDED BY THE VICTIM.

ANOTHER ONE OF THE VICTIMS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION SAYING, "I WOULD LIKE TO SEE CLOSER LINKS WITH SOCIAL SERVICES, POLICE AND THE YOT. AT TIMES I GOT THREE DIFFERENT ANSWERS."

## OUTCOMES



## OUTCOMES

Although still relatively new, we found much evidence to suggest that the YOTs were developing into strong organisations and were fulfilling their role in preventing offending.

Resources were being used effectively to address reoffending and the child or young person had complied with the conditions of their order or licence in the majority of cases. Action had been taken to address criminogenic needs and the initial ASSET score had reduced in over half the cases examined. Only 26% of the cases examined had reoffended during the course of their contact with the YOT and 61% of the children and young people consulted during the inspection said that they had 'definitely' stopped offending. When asked to say how the YOT had helped them:

- 12% of the children and young people said they felt better about themselves
- 24% said they felt differently about offending
- 10% felt they got on better with others
- 14% said that their relations with their family had improved
- only two of the 105 to respond did not feel that they had received any help.

Whilst the inspection revealed areas where the YOTs could clearly improve, given the nature of the problems faced, and presented, by many of these children and young people, these results have to be seen as an achievement.

What the YOT has meant  
to children and young people.

I LIKE THE WAY I CAN ALWAYS  
TALK TO THE PEOPLE AND  
WE CAN UNDERSTAND EACH  
OTHER AND HAVE FUN AT  
THE SAME TIME AS HELPING  
ME STOP OFFENDING.

I JUST COME HERE AND THINK  
WHY I HAVE OFFENDED AND  
WHY NOT TO DO IT AGAIN.

I LIKED THE ALCOHOL  
AWARENESS COURSE BECAUSE  
IT MADE ME THINK.

NOTHING, IT IS A WASTE OF TIME  
BECAUSE I HAVE NO PROBLEMS  
AND NO REOFFENDING TO DEAL  
WITH BECAUSE I AM TOTALLY  
STRAIGHT AND I HAVE NO NEEDS  
THAT THE YOT WORKER CAN HELP  
ME WITH. I AM IN COLLEGE.

I LIKE TALKING TO MY YOT WORKER  
BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE SHE ALWAYS  
LISTENS TO ME AND SHE'S  
REALLY UNDERSTANDING.

I LIKED DOING MY REPARATION  
WORK BECAUSE I GAVE  
SOMETHING BACK.

## THE NEXT STEPS

The inspections have shown how effective, partnership working can be in addressing offending by children and young people. We have seen many examples of good practice and made recommendations for improvement.

As agreed, the YJB is to oversee implementation of the action plan, addressing recommendations from the report. Welsh Assembly Government Ministers have already indicated their intention to take seriously the findings of these inspections and to follow up matters within their purview in local government and health services.

We had always planned to implement the inspection in a series of stages. This first phase has enabled us to begin to establish a range of benchmarks against which we will be able to assess the future progress of YOTs.

Our next stage will last until the implementation of the Inspection of Children's Services. Our aim is to develop a process, which in England is compatible with the Framework for the new inspection programme for children, can sit alongside both the CPAs and the Joint Area Reviews, but remains a separate procedure. We are, therefore, working with colleagues in Ofsted and the Audit Commission to ensure the development of complementary inspection standards and criteria, methods of data collection and assessment. We intend to minimise the demands placed on services by coordinating our approach whilst still maintaining a rigorous inspection process.

We are also working with colleagues in Wales to ensure that the second stage of our new inspection can link into the Wales Programme for Improvement and take continuing account of the different governance arrangements and the requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Our intention is to develop an inspection programme which mirrors the position of the YOT between the community safety and the children's services agendas. The second stage of our inspection will be risk proportionate in that fieldwork will only be undertaken where it is not possible to obtain the necessary information through other methods. Case file reading will continue to play an important part in the methodology as the means of assessing the quality of the face-to-face work undertaken with children and young people. Greater weight will be given to the analysis of advance information provided by the YOT and its partner organisations. Self-assessment will also form an important part of the process. The assessment and scores will link into the CPAs in England and will be used to inform the Wales Programme for Improvement.

The inspection so far has revealed the significant progress made by local authorities and their partners, in working with children and young people who offend. Although there is still work to do, much has been achieved and the YOTs should be congratulated on their success. Our commitment is to contribute to that process of continuous improvement through the development and implementation of an objective but fair inspection process.