

News

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Youth Justice Service praised in national probation report

North Yorkshire's Youth Justice Service provides good support to children who have offended or who are at risk of offending, according to inspectors.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation praised the service for developing trusting and supportive relationships with children and families.

The Inspectorate looked at 12 aspects of the service's work and awarded an overall rating of 'Good'. It awarded an 'Outstanding' rating for the quality of its partnerships and services for children.

Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell said: "There is much to commend North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service – this is a well-led and well-managed service. Staff are committed to the children that they work with and have high aspirations for them.

"We were particularly impressed with the way the Youth Justice Service uses performance data to understand children's needs and to commission a strong mix of targeted, specialist and mainstream services."

One of its highly-praised initiatives is a pop-up shed that can be driven across the county to deliver restorative justice projects. Staff set up the shed in spaces such as gardens or church halls and supervise children to create woodwork projects for local charities or communities. Children develop new skills and, at the same time, give something back to society.

The service has also partnered with a social enterprise to run a project for children with high offending-related and social care needs. Children spend four days a week on construction and horticulture projects, and one day a week developing their English, Maths and ICT skills or studying for a vocational qualification.

Stuart Carlton, Director of Children and Young People's Services and Chair of Youth Justice Management Board welcomes publication of the inspection report. He said: "I am delighted that the inspectors recognised our strong partnership vision for Youth Justice in North Yorkshire, always seeking the best outcomes for children who get into trouble.

"As we have improved our prevention and diversion support for children, there are now fewer young people in the criminal justice system. However, those children tend to have very complex needs and require intensive, skilled support. The inspection findings show that this is being achieved."

Vicky Metheringham, Head of Youth Justice, Looked-After Children and Care Leavers, said: “Our staff and volunteers are passionately committed, highly skilled, creative and resourceful. They provide a very high quality of support for the children, families, victims and communities we serve, and the findings of the report is well-deserved.

“North Yorkshire is one of only four high-performing councils who have been authorised to diverge from national regulations for youth justice, and to pilot creative new approaches. Our team is relentlessly seeking further improvement, working more closely with other services and developing advanced, best-practice methods.”

The service works with 10 to 17-year-olds who are serving court sentences, or who have received cautions or community resolutions. Many children have complex needs – 13 per cent are in the care of the local authority, 46 per cent have mental health issues and 55 per cent misuse substances.

County Councillor Janet Sanderson, Executive Member for Children and Young People’s Services, added: “The results of the inspection are very pleasing indeed. The Council’s vision for children and young people demands that every child gets the help they need to achieve positive and successful lives.

“This is especially important for children who are offending, because we also need to protect victims and communities from further harm. North Yorkshire residents can be confident that this is being done very well.”