



Speech

Dame Glenys Stacey
Association of Youth Offending Team Managers (AYM), Annual General Meeting
Rugby, 09 June 2016

Good morning, and thank you very much for inviting me to your annual conference.

Thank you also, on behalf of the public, for all the good work done by you and your staff during the year since you last met at annual conference, making a positive difference and turning young people's lives around. I am a recently appointed Chief Inspector, and appreciate that I do not have first-hand knowledge of all your work over the year just gone, but as we all wait for the final report of the Ministry of Justice's review of Youth justice (the Taylor review), and as we all anticipate significant changes to the current arrangements, I would like to place on record my sincere appreciation for all the good work done and being done by you and your staff. Thank you.

We do not know of course the timetable for the implementation of any changes to government policy to follow the Taylor review, but we know that legislation will be needed for substantial changes, and that takes some time. We are entering an unsettled period, and some of your staff will be anxious and unsettled themselves. For many of you the biggest immediate issue is funding, and indeed I appreciate that is a significant issue for many of you now, regardless of the prospect of any future changes.

Funding aside, many of your established habits and ways of working will serve you well as you lead staff through the next two years: forging good working relationships with partners, working closely with your local authorities, embracing the opportunities that come with engaged Police and Crime Commissioners, influencing priorities, bidding for and then managing carefully various streams of funding, and finding ways to join up services and provide a wide range of support for young people you work with, so as to divert them from crime and improve their life chances.

What I would like to talk to you about today is the role of the Inspectorate, and the best ways in which we can work over this unsettled period, to ensure that we make the best contribution and the biggest difference for you, your staff and the young people reliant on YOT services. I am going to outline some of the work we are doing, and some of the ways we are developing, and I would like your views.

Let me talk about thematic inspections first of all. Thematic inspections provide the chance to take an in-depth look at one issue. So for example early this year we completed a thematic inspection of unpaid work. We found some high quality management and delivery, but much of it was not good enough, with unpaid work viewed simply as a punishment that was being administered by a separate group of probation staff. We felt this was a wasted opportunity.

Our most recent thematic inspection (published last month) was in relation to desistance for 16 and 17 year olds, and the effectiveness of practice in Youth Offending Teams in supporting children and young people's routes away from offending. Thank you to anyone here who participated in that inspection.

You will be familiar with desistance theory, but the relative impact of the various factors that can make a difference for this age group is not so clear in the research. We interviewed a good number of children and young people who had not reoffended for a period of 12 months or more after the end of their statutory supervision, to see what they thought worked for them. We also interviewed a similar number of those who had reoffended within 12 months of receiving a community or custodial sentence and their parents/carers and key workers, to find and contrast their experiences.

Not surprisingly, we found that as with adults, personalised approaches work best – those that take into account gender and ethnicity, for example. What is more we found that effective methods for children and young people are age-appropriate, and based on a good understanding of the individual's needs, history and circumstances, for example Looked After status.

Most notably – and I think this perhaps takes the research forwards a little - those young people successful in desisting from crime laid great store on a trusting, open and collaborative relationship with a YOT worker or other professional, seeing it as the biggest factor in their achievement. You may say that is not rocket science, and indeed it isn't, but given its importance you no doubt consider regularly how effective any and all of your staff are at forging those precious relationships.

We also found that those young people persisting in crime who had experienced restorative justice had mixed views about it. In addition, some case managers were ambivalent about reparation work. Children and young people were sometimes slotted into existing projects that case managers thought unlikely to prove effective for the child or young person, and case managers reported far too much time spent 'pushing' children and young people through unpaid work, with enforcement action often a consequence. That chimes with our findings in our unpaid work thematic.

Notably for these children and young people persisting in crime, unpaid work had been ineffective in promoting desistance despite the effort and cost involved in making it happen, whereas those who were successful in desisting crime generally had much more positive experiences of it. But the main point is this: the key relationship – whether it is with the case manager the nurse or whatever - it matters, and perhaps matters most.

We will shortly publish our thematic inspection of referral orders. You will know that they account for almost half of the new cases received by Youth Offending Teams following sentence. Thank you again to those of you who participated in the inspection. Again, we saw powerful examples of the importance of the relationship between youth offender panel members and young people; indeed many young people valued the involvement of community volunteers in their cases. There are other parallels, in particular the value of reparation, and the need to achieve an appropriate focus on factors that contribute to reintegration of young people into their communities. Most importantly, we identified some critical areas where delivery of referral orders does need to improve, so that their full potential is realised, and I do urge you to read the report when it is published shortly and to reflect with your staff and community volunteers on our findings.

Let me come back now to the role of the Inspectorate in times of change. I have been discussing examples of our thematic inspections, because I believe that in times of change,

thematic inspection comes into its own. It can focus on specific areas of activity – pinch points for example in new working arrangements - or else it can look closely at a flagship policy of government, to see how that is working, is being delivered on the ground. With youth justice policy set to change, and following Transforming Rehabilitation in the adult world, we intend to increase substantially our thematic inspection work.

We are currently completing thematic inspections of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds; women in criminal justice, and delivery of Through the Gate rehabilitation services. We intend to conduct thematic inspections this year on Approved Premises and on Rehabilitation Activity Requirements.

We intend to do more thematic inspection because we think it can be so valuable, but we do need to choose carefully our subjects for thematic inspection. There is little value in inspecting something that is passing, and much more value in inspecting a current or growing issue, clearly. We are consulting now on the criteria we intend to use to determine other subjects for thematic inspections. Our consultation is open until 17 June and we would appreciate your views.

I'd like to draw your attention to two of our proposed criteria in particular: in selecting topics for thematic inspection we are proposing to consider and take into account the *potential impact of any findings* should we select that topic for inspection. We also think that if there have been *significant changes to policy or service delivery*, then that should influence our choice of subject for inspection. We would very much welcome your views on the criteria we propose, and any suggestions you have for criteria or for thematic subjects or topics that you think will be particularly helpful to you and your colleagues as we face changes to the youth justice system.

We continue to conduct our standard Full Joint and Short Quality Screening youth justice inspections, and you are familiar with those. Indeed we are publishing this morning the report of our Full Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Work in Newport and I am sorry that Newport is unrepresented here today, as the report shows real improvements in Newport, helping to turn children from crime, and we found that managers know what is needed to improve yet further and have some good plans in place for the future.

Once we know the nature and timing of changes to youth justice we will consider with Ofsted and others our current approach to youth justice inspection, and what are the most effective arrangements for inspection during any period of transition, and subsequently. We will appreciate your views, of course, before making any decisions to change our established inspection programme and methodologies. We will not rush unnecessarily to change our youth inspection arrangements.

There are two other developments we have in mind that might be of interest to you as you consider the future. Firstly, one might argue that there is little power in inspection if an Inspectorate's recommendations are left hanging in the air, and not followed up in any purposeful fashion. That is a rather simplistic view, as good, well-evidenced inspection reports will always have some impact and influence, and indeed knowledgeable, wise inspectors have impact and influence as they inspect, don't they?

But is it true to say that we could have a stronger impact, we could make more of a difference if we actively follow up our recommendations and if we publish how and when those recommendations are acted on by individuals, by local or national organisations or by government. We propose to follow up our recommendations in ways that are proportionate, and to track and report on implementation, to see and demonstrate to others whether our reports are being acted on, and I would appreciate your views on that, and how you think it is best done.

Lastly, we have learned from adult inspection that at times of change, the Inspectorate's ability to identify and promulgate promising practice as we spot it in the field, and effective innovations in the way services are delivered are particularly valuable, and valued. We want to give that particular attention, and to promote promising practice and auspicious innovations as well as we can, so that others in the field can consider them and benefit from them if they wish. This applies equally well in the field of youth justice as it does in the adult world, and I would appreciate your views and ideas as to how that is best done.

I have spoken enough of inspection, and the Inspectorate. Let me end by expressing my appreciation again to you and your staff again for the work you have done this year, and by thanking those of you who have participated in our inspections over the last twelve months.

Thank you very much, and thank you for listening.

ENDS