



Press Notice

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Independent inspection of adult & youth offending work

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HM INSPECTORATE OF PROBATION ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09

ROLE OF INDEPENDENT INSPECTION IN PROVIDING 'ASSURANCE' TO MINISTERS AND THE PUBLIC

In the Annual Report for 2008-09 of HM Inspectorate of Probation, published today, Andrew Bridges, the Chief Inspector of Probation, comments on the role of independent inspection in providing *Assurance* to Ministers and the public, particularly in relation to Public Protection and Safeguarding work. Mr Bridges comments:

“An independent inspection regime establishes whether or not a public service is being delivered effectively. The existence of the system of inspection therefore provides *Assurance* to Ministers and the public – even though the findings on any individual occasion may not necessarily be experienced as ‘reassuring’ at all! *Assurance* is the benefit that arises for the public from knowing that a particular regime of independent inspection exists.

Furthermore, in accordance with established Government policy on inspection, as and when public services respond to our reports our inspection work also provides the additional benefit of *improvement*.”

Both of these benefits are especially important with *Public Protection* and *Safeguarding* work, which we have made integral to our core inspection practice, because they are work that is not readily measured by any means other than by inspection. Accordingly they are key examples of where and how inspection uniquely *adds value*.”

Mr Bridges outlines several key principles relating to HMI Probation’s inspection of *Public Protection* and *Safeguarding* work:

- ‘Risk to the public’ can never be eliminated, but the public are entitled to expect the authorities to do their job properly.

- ‘Doing one’s job properly’ means ‘doing all that one reasonably could’ – with Public Protection this is “taking all reasonable action to keep to a minimum each offender’s *Risk of Harm to others*”.
- In reviewing an individual case (previous examples were Hanson and White, and Anthony Rice), HMI Probation reports on whether the authorities ‘did all they reasonably could’ in that particular case.
- In inspecting a sample of cases HMI Probation report on *how often* the relevant authorities ‘did all they reasonably could’ in that sample of cases.
- HMI Probation do not criticise a service for ‘failing to achieve the impossible’, but instead judge how often a service has done *what it was possible to achieve*.

The report gives an account of HMI Probation’s work in 2008-09:

- successfully completing to schedule the Offender Management Inspection (OMI) programme, led by HMI Probation, which has inspected offender management in all 42 Criminal Justice Areas over the 3 years from mid-2006. During 2008-09 HMI Probation completed 15 inspections under OMI. HMI Probation also worked on plans for the successor programme, which will start in September 2009.
- also successfully completing the joint inspection, with eight other Inspectorates or regulatory bodies, of Youth Offending Teams, under which HMI Probation have led the inspection of all the 157 YOTs over a 5-year period from autumn 2003. HMI Probation also made plans for the successor inspection programme - Inspection of Youth Offending (IYO) - which started in April 2009.
- making a substantial contribution to joint thematic inspection work: publishing a joint thematic report led by HMI Probation on electronically monitored curfews, and leading a further four joint thematic inspections under the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Programme – on Prolific and other Priority Offenders, Indeterminate Sentences for Public Protection, Mentally Disordered Offenders and Sex Offenders. HMI Probation also participated in other joint inspections with CJ and other inspectorates.
- publishing the report of an inquiry into the management of *Risk of Harm* in London as a follow-up to the Chester-Nash case from 2005, and in March 2009 starting work on a series of special case inspections in London arising from the Sonnex case.

HMI Probation has continued to work closely with the other Criminal Justice inspectorates on the development of increased joint inspection work, including contributing strongly to the plans for the joint inspection programmes for both

2008-09 and 2009-10. The large majority - about 90% - of HMI Probation's work in both years is within the jointly-owned Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Programme.

The core of HMI Probation's inspection work continues to be the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of adult and youth offending work in a representative sample of particular cases of individuals who offend. HMI Probation consider that inspection should be proportionate and focused on key aspects of work where direct inspection makes assessments that cannot readily be made by other means. HMI Probation have followed this approach in the plans for the new inspection programmes of adult and youth offending work starting in 2009. Reflecting this, the youth offending inspections will focus in every locality mainly on the key issues of *Public Protection* and *Safeguarding* of children. The Secretaries of State for Justice and Children, and the relevant Cabinet Committee, have endorsed this approach.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The report will be available on the HMI Probation website <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprobation> at 10.00 on 14 July.
2. Requests for interviews with Andrew Bridges – some availability on 13 July or early 14 July - should be made to Andrew Bridges on 07810 055459.