



OFFENDER
MANAGEMENT
INSPECTION
INSPECTION

A report on Offender Management in
Cheshire

An inspection led by
HM Inspectorate of Probation

August 2006

FOREWORD

Cheshire has benefited from strong and dedicated management and leadership from both its management team and the Board, a creative regional collaboration and some valuable inter-agency links. The area's positive involvement with the Offender Management Model Pathfinder has demonstrated its resolve to work closely with the prison service. It has very solid links with other significant partnership agencies. It has demonstrated ongoing commitment to the diversity agenda in a number of ways.

Practice with offenders is effective in many respects, whilst leaving room for improvement in others. The area recognises this and is already working to address the shortcomings. Preparation for sentence is being carried out well, as is the assessment of likelihood of reoffending. The management of compliance and the delivery of interventions are successful elements of the work with offenders. Most had complied with the requirements of their sentence and had not reoffended, however, a more consistent approach to the timeliness and content of plan reviews by offender managers is necessary to enhance quality. Risk of harm work is improving, but needs further careful attention if the public is to be afforded as much protection as possible. Cheshire's commitment to review and evaluation and to constant improvement will stand it in good stead as it continues to move forward into offender management.

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CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS	5
SUMMARY	7
SUMMARY OF SCORES	8
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	10
NEXT STEPS	10
SHARING GOOD PRACTICE	12
OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN CHESHIRE	14
SERVICE USERS' PERSPECTIVE	18
1. ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING	20
1.1 General Criterion: PREPARING FOR SENTENCE	20
1.2 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF RISK OF HARM	20
1.3 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD OF REOFFENDING	22
1.4 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF OFFENDER ENGAGEMENT	22
1.5 General Criterion: SENTENCE PLANNING	23
2. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS	25
2.1 General Criterion: DELIVERING THE SENTENCE PLAN	25
2.2 General Criterion: PROTECTING THE PUBLIC BY MINIMISING RISK OF HARM	26
2.3 General Criterion: VICTIMS	27
2.4 General Criterion: ENSURING CONTAINMENT AND PROMOTING COMPLIANCE (Punish)	27
2.5 General Criterion: CONSTRUCTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Help and Change)	28
2.6 General Criterion: RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Control)	29
2.7 General Criterion: DIVERSITY ISSUES	28
3. ACHIEVEMENT AND MONITORING OF OUTCOMES	31
3.1 General Criterion: ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIAL OUTCOMES	31
3.2 General Criterion: SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRESS	32
4. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	33
4.1 General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING	33
4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS	35
4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT	37
4.4 General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	36
4.5 General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION	37
4.6 General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES	38
APPENDIX 1 Contextual information	39
APPENDIX 2 Inspection model, methodology and publication arrangements	40
APPENDIX 3 Scoring approach	41
APPENDIX 4 Role of HMI Probation	46

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ACO	Assistant Chief Officer
ASRO	Addressing Substance Related Offending
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CDVP	Community Domestic Violence Programme
CO	Chief Officer
CPA	Cheshire Probation Area
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement
DTTO	Drug Treatment and Testing Order
ESF	European Social Fund
ETE	Employment, Training and Education
FDR	Fast Delivery Report
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HDC	Home Detention Curfew
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HMYOI	Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution
HR	Human Resources
ISP	Initial Supervision Plan
JP	Justice of the Peace
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LJNC	Local Joint Negotiating Committee
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MAPPP	Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel
NOMIS	National Offender Management Information System
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPD	National Probation Directorate
NPS	National Probation Service
OASys/eOASys	Offender Assessment System/electronic OASys
OLASS	Offenders Learning and Skills Service

OMI	Offender Management Inspection
OMU	Offender Management Unit
PO	Probation Officer
PPO	Prolific and Other Priority Offender
PSO	Probation Service Officer
PSR	Pre-Sentence Report
REM	Race and Ethnic Monitoring
RoH	Risk of Harm
ROM	Regional Offender Manager
SDR	Standard Delivery Report
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bounded
SMB	Strategic Management Board
SMT	Strategic Management Team
SOTP	Sex Offender Treatment Programme
SPO	Senior Probation Officer
SSSO	Suspended Sentence Supervision Order
TPO	Trainee Probation Officer

SUMMARY

Assessment and Sentence Planning

Reports contributed positively to the sentencing process. In relation to assessment, the likelihood of reoffending and criminogenic needs tended to be accurately assessed. A good level of attention was paid to offenders' learning style, motivation and capacity to change. Tiering was complete throughout the area, although we found a level of inaccuracy. Too many sentence plans were of insufficient quality and did not integrate work on interventions. However in the absence of an Offender Assessment System assessment, standalone unpaid work requirements had a simple and appropriate sentence plan. At the planning stage the diverse needs of offenders were not always seen to be taken into account.

Implementation of Interventions

Offenders were well prepared for interventions and there was a good level of communication between all workers and with offenders. Unpaid work supervisors and programme tutors were commended for their positive and encouraging support for the offender during the intervention. Offender managers were less good at supporting offenders throughout the life of an order or licence and there was insufficient contact between them and prisoners pre-release to prepare them for supervision. There was positive evidence of most prolific and other priority offenders having enhanced levels of contact and provision. Most offenders were given appointments at an appropriate level, but there needed to be an improvement in the timely instigation of breach actions. A more consistent approach to the timeliness and content of plan reviews was necessary to enhance quality. Constructive interventions were found to encourage the offender to accept responsibility for their offending. However, there were significant gaps in provision to address criminogenic need, particularly in relation to alcohol misuse. Despite gaps in planning in relation to diversity, service delivery was seen to take individual needs into account in most cases.

Achievement and Monitoring of Outcomes

Most offenders had complied with the requirements of their sentence and had not reoffended. Achievement of sentencing objectives was strong in most cases. Resources allocated had been consistent with the assessed risk of harm and likelihood of reoffending. However, there was no obvious improvement in criminogenic need in two thirds of cases. Attitudes and behaviour had also not improved in over half of the cases. There was a satisfactory level of offender manager continuity in most cases. Structured sentence planning had not been a feature in over half of the sample.

Leadership and Strategic Management

The Cheshire Probation Board was actively and effectively involved in planning and performance. There was a high level of communication from the Strategic Management Team and Board to keep staff informed about developments. An effective project management approach to policy development and implementation had been adopted. Regional collaboration was a priority in the North West with tangible benefits to the development of offender management. Strategic partners confirmed that the area was well

placed to influence local planning and that managers were well regarded. Benefits included a jointly funded prolific and other priority offenders scheme and cooperative work to address common responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). After a volatile period in relation to performance against national targets, the area had achieved most of them by the end of the year. The resources invested in the Performance and Quality Assurance Unit produced demonstrable benefits in an impressive approach to monitoring, evaluation and review to improve performance. Arrangements to implement the Offender Management Model were almost complete and had benefited from investment in a number of posts. The work of the diversity manager was effective in improving services to minority offenders and communities and to conditions for staff. Whilst the quality and frequency of staff supervision were said to be good on the whole, the frequency of appraisal completion was not. Despite having a thorough training plan there had been gaps in provision during the last year that left some staff feeling ill-equipped to do their job. The area had demonstrated an entrepreneurial approach to commissioning services, however there were still gaps in provision including access to mental health and alcohol services, plus a violent offenders' programme.

Risk of Harm

The quality of risk of harm assessment was satisfactory in just over half of the sample looked at during this inspection. Screening and planning was often completed late. Plans were not comprehensive, although we saw evidence that recent changes to the format used were having a positive impact. Work to contribute to safeguarding in the case sample was less well developed than other aspects of public protection. All high risk of harm cases were reviewed monthly at team meetings and the appointment of district managers in November 2005 had improved the management of these cases. Home visits were carried out as required. Reviews were not carried out on time in more than half of the high risk of harm sample. Work with offenders on victim issues was underdeveloped. Restrictive interventions were fully monitored in most cases and across a range of measures the risk of harm had been managed successfully in most cases.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements at Level 2 were seen as ineffective and there was little evidence of offender manager involvement. Notes from meetings, including action plans, were not seen in half of the files and did not feature in risk management plans.

Approved premises could not accommodate all of the sex offenders in the area but there were arrangements for them to be referred to premises in other parts of the region. The Cheshire approved premises were seen to offer a good level and range of constructive and restrictive interventions to offenders posing a high risk of harm to the public.

SUMMARY OF SCORES

Outlined in Chart 1 are percentage scores for each Offender Management Inspection Criterion in sections 1-3. A line of priority for improvement is also indicated. The scores which fall below this line indicate those criteria which form a primary focus for improvement. Table 1 indicates a score drawn from a range of indicators in the *Assessment & Sentence Planning* and *Implementation of Interventions* sections about risk of harm work. This score is significant in determining whether a re-inspection will be carried out. Full details of our Scoring Approach are contained in Appendix 3.

Chart 1: Scoring of sections 1-3:

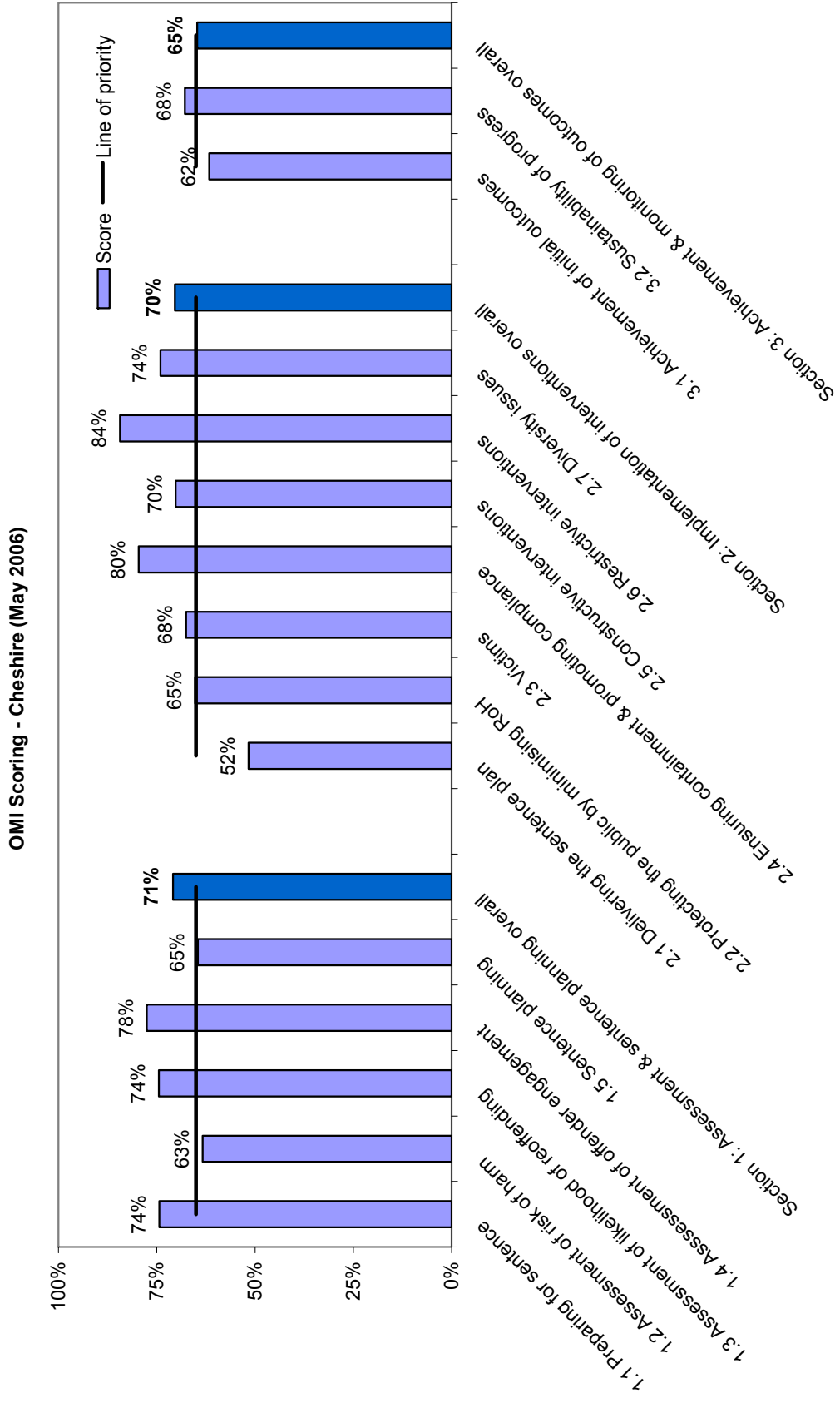


Table 1: Scoring of section 4:

4.1 General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING	Well met
4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS	Well met
4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT	Well met
4.4 General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Satisfactorily met
4.5 General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION	Well met
4.6 General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES	Satisfactorily met

Table 2: Risk of Harm Thread

Score for Risk of Harm thread	65%
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improvements are necessary as follows:

1. Satisfactory risk of harm assessments are completed and regularly reviewed in all cases.
2. The quality and timeliness of risk management plans meet the standard defined nationally.
3. Action is taken to address the effectiveness of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements at Level 2.
4. All sentence plans and reviews are completed on time and to a high standard.
5. A Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements coordinator at middle manager level or above is appointed by the Responsible Authority.
6. An appraisal is completed annually for all staff.
7. A training needs analysis is undertaken in relation to offender managers and a plan to address these, including victim work with offenders, is implemented.
8. Gaps in interventions are addressed to improve the achievement of outcomes, in particular in relation to alcohol misuse.

NEXT STEPS

An improvement plan addressing the recommendations above is needed four weeks after publication.

Further focused inspections will be carried out approximately 12 months after the original OMI when HMI Probation has a serious concern about an area's RoH work.

There will not be a further focused inspection in Cheshire.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Below are examples of good practice we found in Cheshire.

Impact of assessment and positive proposal in a PSR.

**OMI Criterion: 1.1
Preparation for sentence**

In this case the court had indicated that the offence was so serious that custody was the only option. However, the PSR author identified that Sean's offending was a result of his drug misuse and, crucially that after many years of offending and failure to comply with community penalties, he was now motivated to change. She carried out a thorough assessment using OASys and referral to a DRR specialist, and was able to present a comprehensive and persuasive argument to the court for a DRR. This was successful and Sean had managed to complete ASRO successfully as a result.

Targeted intervention and sequencing

**OMI Criterion: 2.1
Delivering the sentence plan**

Dave was on a community order with a Think First requirement. His level of alcohol misuse was such, however, that his offender manager judged that without addressing this, Dave would be likely to have problems completing the programme. He undertook the work himself, but made it SMART. Adopting a harm reduction approach using what and how much Dave drank, he was able to break the work down into achievable and measurable goals, e.g. drink lower strength lager and singles not doubles to save money and promote health. As a result Dave presented as prepared and well motivated when he did start the Think First programme.

Arrangements for interventions take account of diversity issues.

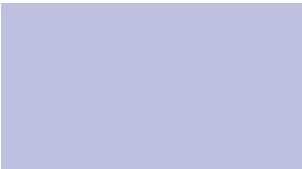
**OMI Criterion: 2.7
Diversity issues**

The court had made John subject to a community order with Think First and unpaid work due to the seriousness of his offending. His offender manager was aware that literacy was a problem for John and could have got in the way of him successfully completing the requirements of his order. Without patronising him she worked around John's literacy problems using a more pictorial approach to generating discussion rather than written exercises. She also liaised with the unpaid work team to ensure that he was able to access basic skills provision for 20% of his hours.

A strategic approach to promoting diversity

**OMI Criterion: 4.1
Leadership and planning**

The area had invested to promote diversity. It worked collaboratively with other criminal justice agencies under the auspices of a local CRE to carry out consultation about their work as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). This same group also engaged with 'Connecting Communities', an approach to the recruitment of black and minority ethnic staff. At the centre of the area's work was a



diversity manager who found and disseminated information about resources for all minority offenders as well as engaging with community groups and developing policies to support staff.

Developing offender management

OMI Criterion: 4.1
Leadership and planning

There were strong local links between the probation, police and prison services as well as the unitary authority and county CDRPs. One consequence was that when an adult male offender was given a prison sentence every effort was made to transfer him to HMP Risley, where all three agencies could keep in touch with him and plan for release. This approach was not limited to PPOs, but included other offenders as well.

Improving performance

OMI Criterion: 4.5
Review and evaluation

The area made sophisticated use of data from OASys to create detailed reports about work with offenders. In this way they were able to address individual performance, e.g. in PSR proposals, and also to generate data to make decisions about resource allocation into interventions. This was undertaken by the Performance and Quality Assurance Unit and underpinned by an effective project management approach to policy development which ensured that recommendations for improvement were followed through.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN CHESHIRE

NOMS Offender Management Model – North West Pathfinder

Since November 2004 the North West has been a NOMS Pathfinder region with the purpose of putting into operation and testing the National Offender Management Model in both the custodial and community settings. The following paragraphs aim to describe the context, which is regional rather than area specific.

In its early stages the Pathfinder had focused on selected offenders in two HMYOIs – Thorn Cross and Lancaster Farms, and those serving community sentences in Bolton and Stockport in Greater Manchester, the Wirral in Merseyside and in West Cumbria. Later stages of the Pathfinder have included offenders in HMP Hindley and high RoH offenders and PPOs in both HMP Liverpool and HMP Risley. A female institution, HMP Styal, had also been included since early this year.

In operating the model, the Pathfinder had had an open agenda on the type of staff who would become offender supervisors and on the profile of OMUs. The Pathfinder had been clear, however, about the role that offender supervisors should fulfil. It had been left to governors as to how OMUs were set up and whether seconded probation staff were included or whether they were put into delivering interventions. It was apparent that seconded probation staff were often being used in OMUs for their RoH knowledge and assessment skills, though some OMUs consisted entirely of prison staff.

In testing the model, the Pathfinder had conducted action research and a process evaluation, with plans to do an outcome evaluation next year when the Pathfinder is scheduled to finish. Problems encountered and lessons learned so far have included:

- Population management – this has been found to be the single biggest element that can undermine the model. There needs to be a clear allocation matrix for Observation, Classification and Allocation and closer liaison with offender management teams.
- Indeterminate sentence prisoners – these need to be seen as a distinct group as they could be subject to a discontinuity in their offender management. As with other longer-term prisoners, indeterminate sentence prisoners seem to be far more likely to be moved around the prison estate than those serving shorter sentences.
- OASys – the quality of the assessment is critical, with poor initial assessments affecting subsequent assessments and sentence planning. There also remain issues around who is responsible for doing the assessment and the offender manager taking ownership of it.
- eOASys connectivity – while there are challenges with the usability of eOASys, connectivity has been found to improve in exchanging information.
- Cultural changes – offender managers are being required to take on a new role with authority over cases that may be in custody as well as those in the community. It is recognised that new skills are required for this role and training provision is being looked at.

There are also clearly problems with implementing offender management in the private prison estate. They do not, as yet, have access to OASys in its full form and there are problems with what they are contracted to do, with ‘notices of change’ having to be negotiated.

Cheshire Probation Area

Offender management was well developed in the Cheshire Probation Area. In particular there were positive relationships with HMP Risley and HMYOI Thorn Cross, which had been strengthened in the Pathfinder. In-house work to meet the national requirements had been underway since March 2005, was regularly reviewed and was on target. A final policy with practice guidelines had been issued in February 2006.

With the exception of unpaid work the necessary changes to roles to create more generic OMUs had recently been made. Unpaid work was due to follow shortly, separating the offender management and interventions aspects of the requirement. PPOs remained with specialist offender managers who were co-located with police colleagues. All other teams had been split into small 'pods' within the OMUs with PO, PSO and case administrators working collaboratively and providing cover for one another.

All cases in the area had been allocated to tiers. Efforts were being made to allocate PSRs in such a way as to maximise the potential for offender manager continuity. Guidelines for dealing with changes to levels of RoH and covering for absence also contributed positively to the potential benefits.

Whilst there were the usual restrictions on travel to prisons, the area had paid to install video conferencing equipment in local prisons and probation offices and there was an expectation that contact would be made in this way for reports and offender management. Police, prisons and the probation service worked together to ensure that as many adult male prisoners as possible were sent to HMP Risley to facilitate offender management.

The area had taken a lead nationally in OASys connectivity during 2005. There had been problems with the probation area gaining ownership of assessments on release as a result of this. In part this was a technical problem which had been resolved earlier in 2006.

NOMIS was not due to be rolled out to the Cheshire Probation Area and HMP Styal and HMP Risley until January 2008, making it one of the last areas to receive it. HMYOI Thorn Cross was due to take it in November 2007.

HMYOI Thorn Cross

We visited HMYOI Thorn Cross to hear of progress with the NOMS Offender Management Model.

Proud of a strong and proactive personal officer scheme, HMYOI Thorn Cross was well-placed to implement offender management by building on this, specifically in the role of offender supervisor. Ninety of 127 eligible prisoners were included in the Pathfinder at the time of this inspection, and 358 prisoners had passed through the scheme since its inception.

As one of only two open HMYOIs in England and Wales, HMYOI Thorn Cross benefited from a regime flexibility which enabled a meaningful focus on prisoners' needs. Prison managers had been able to make changes in response to the enhanced requirements of offender management. For example, the fact that prisoners had to 'fit into' a 'career path' had resulted in the closure of the welding shop when it was no longer considered viable as a current means to employment.

Staff were clear about boundaries between offender managers and offender supervisors. The latter were very active in supporting prisoners, e.g. on outside work placements, with family and relationships outside the prison and also engaging in interventions in HMYOI

Thorn Cross. In this way they built up a detailed knowledge of inmates which was invaluable to good offender management.

Typically a prisoner was visited by their offender manager within two weeks of arrival. A review took place and targets were set drawing on the profile of OASys scores. Three-monthly reviews followed until the exit review. The offender manager would visit 2-3 weeks prior to release. Both offender supervisors and offender managers completed OASys and it was generally viewed positively. However, offender supervisors complained that OASys was not always received from other prison establishments when a prisoner moved to open conditions at HMYOI Thorn Cross. There had also been some problems with offender managers not always attending sentence plan reviews. This was improving, however, and video conferencing facilities were seen as a viable alternative where offender manager attendance was not possible. Staff at HMYOI Thorn Cross saw the offender management system as 'paying dividends', as it provided consistency, whereas many young men previously did not know who their 'home' probation officer was.

With very few MAPPA cases at HMYOI Thorn Cross, there was usually single agency supervision upon release. A disappointment for offender supervisors in HMYOI Thorn Cross was that despite hoping they would continue to contribute to a young person's sentence plan after release, this had not happened. This was a frustration as they felt they often had extensive knowledge that could inform and support post-release supervision.

Managers were keen to increase the range of interventions available at HMYOI Thorn Cross. In particular there was a need for an alcohol programme and a lack of provision for those convicted of causing death by reckless driving. There had already been impressive joint work with the probation area, e.g. a drink impaired driver's programme for the benefit of a combined group comprising inmates from both establishments, together with those under supervision in the community, had been completed in March 2006. A further programme, ASRO for alcohol only, was planned for July 2006.

Managers were confident that the OMU would be in place by September 2006 in the form of an offender manager team on each wing. A staff re-profiling exercise was underway and offender supervisors had been identified. The establishment of offender management would change the role of seconded probation staff also, and job descriptions were currently under review. Managers felt that relationships with unions were 'constructive' and that all staff worked for the good of prisoners. There was generally very positive liaison between prison staff and offender managers, although offender supervisors were not aware of the part played by case administrators in the community and tended to deal only with offender managers.

There was some unease with the reality that the Pathfinder had focused only on some of the inmates, i.e. initially those who came under the auspices of the Pathfinder. This meant that these prisoners, along with certain other categories such as PPOs, had been prioritised for interventions, e.g. accredited programmes for which places were limited. Prison managers and staff were looking forward to offender management going to scale as this would feel more equitable and minimise the impact of some potentially contradictory targets.

SERVICE USERS' PERSPECTIVE

Offenders

There were five focus groups: two with unpaid work groups, two with accredited programme groups (SOTP and CDVP) and one at the approved premises in Sandbach. In total 27 offenders were interviewed.

Comments from the unpaid work groups were very positive about the conduct of supervisors: offenders were treated with respect by helpful and supportive staff, which assisted in motivating them to get the order completed. There was some concern about the range of placements on offer not making the best use of the offenders' skills. However, they were aware that unpaid work was a punishment and deterrent and that it benefited the community. Most were proud of some of the jobs they had undertaken.

Not all offenders on programmes had had contact from their offender manager during the time they had been attending the group. Where they were, they reported positive and constructive relationships. Most offenders who had been in prison had seen their offender manager shortly before release. Programme tutors were seen as supportive and willing to help individuals experiencing any problems with the material in sessions. Mentors had also been used on the CDVP to support offenders.

At the approved premises, residents were preoccupied with the protests that were being mounted weekly by local residents about the continuing presence of the hostel in their community. There were also concerns about a media campaign which was aimed at stirring up local resistance to approved premises nationally, although Cheshire had not yet been targeted. Residents we met with also confirmed that they found staff based at the premises and contact with their offender manager helpful.

Out of 100 questionnaires, 23 were completed and returned. Most of the comments were positive. Eighteen offenders recalled having their sentence plans discussed with them. They reported that the issues their offender manager had helped them with most were thinking skills and attitudes to offending. Two said that they did not have a good working relationship with their offender manager. Twenty two said that they were more likely to think about the victims of crime as a consequence of this sentence and 22 said that they thought they were less likely to reoffend as a result.

Victims

Eight victims were invited to a focus group, but unfortunately no-one attended. However, two of those invited did write to explain that they were unable to attend and to express positive views about the level of service received. Of the 20 questionnaires sent out to people who had been victims of crime only one was returned. The views of this victim about the service experienced were mixed: they had received initial information in a timely manner and had been listened to when they had concerns, but did not feel that the service on offer had been well explained to them and were overall dissatisfied with it.

Courts

Twenty out of 100 questionnaires sent to sentencers were completed and returned. Overall they were satisfied with the work of the probation service. Eighteen were satisfied with the quality of fast delivery reports and 19 with standard delivery reports. Seventeen thought that liaison arrangements were effective and all felt that they had at least some of the information they needed about the work of the service. Most were happy with probation staffing levels in court and all thought that these staff had sufficient knowledge and skills. There was some concern about the time it took to get breaches into court.

1. ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING

1.1 General Criterion: PREPARING FOR SENTENCE

Activity in the phase leading up to sentence is timely, purposeful and effective.

74%

Strengths:

- (a) *Almost all of the cases in the community sample (56 out of 60) had had a PSR written for the current offence and 82% were assessed as being satisfactory. Where the court had indicated the level of seriousness, all but three of the reports clearly took this into account. 90% of the sentencers who completed and returned our questionnaire were satisfied with the quality of FDRs and 95% with the quality of SDRs.*
- (b) *Most reports were completed on time using the nationally approved format. The area was in the process of introducing the OASys PSR template. Where this was used (17 reports) the template enhanced the quality of the report in 12 cases.*
- (c) *A clear proposal for sentence was made in 95% of reports, which was followed in 82% of cases. 82% also included a clear risk and needs assessment.*
- (d) *There was a report in only one PPO case. This also contained a clear and proportionate proposal and did not identify the offender as a PPO.*
- (e) *Where self harm was an issue this was clearly recorded in all but one report. Whilst recording in this one report was not acceptable, there was evidence in others of report writers or court staff communicating appropriately with prison staff about the risk of self harm.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *In only 36% of relevant reports was victim profile information found to inform the report, as victim impact statements were not routinely made available to the area.*
- (b) *An outline sentence plan was contained in only 64% of the 53 reports where a positive proposal for a community sentence had been made.*

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

Strengths:

- (a) *There was effective middle and/or senior manager involvement in the assessment of 85% of the high and very high RoH cases.*
- (b) *The RoH analysis was found to accurately reflect the risk posed to the general public in 87% of cases.*
- (c) *Risk management plans were completed on time in most high and very high risk cases.*
- (d) *A referral had been made to approved premises in ten high or very high RoH cases. That two of these were assessed as inappropriate was attributed to the lack of alternative supported accommodation.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *The quality of RoH assessment was overall described as satisfactory in only 55% of cases. In ten cases there was no RoH assessment and in a further case, where an assessment had been completed, it was not clear what the assessed level was. In 14 cases, inspectors assessed the classification to be inaccurate.*
- (b) *Where there was a RoH screening it was done late in approximately 20% of cases, in both community and licence samples.*
- (c) *It was of concern that in interviews, offender managers, both PO and PSO, often demonstrated a lack of understanding and confidence about MAPPA generally. Specifically there was often a misunderstanding about the use of the different levels in managing potentially dangerous offenders. This was compounded by the fact that offender managers did not attend Level 2 meetings, nor did we see evidence on approximately half of the files that notes and action plans were shared with them. In some cases there was a record in the contact that there had been a meeting, but in others assessed as Level 2 the offender manager confirmed that as far as they were aware, there had been no meeting. It was not surprising to find that in 34% of cases where there were MAPPA or other assessments available, they were not used to inform risk assessments or management plans.*
- (d) *Work to safeguard individual children was overall less satisfactory than work to protect adults. In several cases it was found that whilst offender managers or their SPOs made initial contact with social services departments regarding the safeguarding of children, they did not actively pursue information or involvement. In only 57% of relevant cases was there satisfactory middle and/or senior management involvement, and whilst the RoH analysis accurately reflected the RoH posed to children this was a lower proportion than for adults.*
- (e) *Risk management plans in community orders were comprehensive in 40% of cases (48% of licences). However, there was positive evidence that when the area adopted the national plan format in early 2006, supported by training, the quality improved significantly.*
- (f) *Of the eight appropriate high or very high RoH referrals to approved premises,*

three were unsuccessful. A further four cases assessed as having required a referral due to the need for greater oversight to protect the public from harm, were not referred. The area was aware that it had inadequate provision for sex offenders and for female offenders. It was attempting to address the former locally, but currently there were problems both nationally and in the immediate environs of one of its approved premises that militated against this. These issues were also being actively addressed by the area. There was good cooperation regionally that meant that beds could be found outside of Cheshire.

- (g) *Insufficient attention was paid to victims' issues in 44% of the relevant cases.*

Conclusion: This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

1.3 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD OF REOFFENDING
Likelihood of reoffending is comprehensively and accurately assessed using OASys as applicable.

74%

Strengths:

- (a) *In 83% of cases there was a completed OASys assessment. (There were 15 tier 1 cases in the sample that did not require a full OASys to be completed).*
- (b) *The assessment of likelihood of reoffending was found to be of sufficient quality in 84% of cases. Criminogenic factors were satisfactorily assessed in 86% of cases, although positive influences were less likely to have been identified.*
- (c) *There were five PPO cases in the sample, of which the three so designated on sentence or release were assessed within five days.*
- (d) *Where there were previous assessments available, these were drawn on to inform the current assessment in 82% of cases.*

Conclusion: Performance against this criterion was good.

1.4 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF OFFENDER ENGAGEMENT
Potential obstacles or challenges to positive engagement are identified and plans made to minimise their possible impact.

78%

Strengths:

- (a) *A basic skills screening had been carried out in 80% of cases.*
- (b) *Full attention was paid to the methods most likely to be effective with the offender in 88% of cases. In almost all of these cases this included an assessment of their learning style, motivation and capacity to change. Internal and external key workers confirmed that there was a good level of communication between them and offender managers to ensure a full assessment of need and engagement.*

- (c) *In 71% of cases the individual needs of the offender were actively assessed. Where potentially discriminatory or disadvantaging factors had been identified (37 cases), plans were put in place to minimise impact in 82% of them.*

Conclusion: Performance against this criterion was good.

1.5 General Criterion: SENTENCE PLANNING

The offender manager plans interventions in custody and the community with a view to addressing criminogenic factors and managing any RoH to others. The initial sentence plan or unpaid work assessment is designed to describe a structured and coherent plan of work for each offender.

65%

Strengths:

- (a) *In all but two community orders the offender was allocated to an offender manager within required timescales.*
- (b) *It was clear from the record that steps had been taken to ensure that the offender fully understood the requirements of the sentence in 92% of cases. In 94% of cases, steps had been taken to ensure that offenders understood the penalties for breach. This was confirmed by 70% of the offenders who completed and returned our questionnaire.*
- (c) *For those stand-alone unpaid work cases where there was no requirement to complete an OASys assessment, the area had established its own simple but relevant sentence plan.*
- (d) *Some elements of the sentence plan in community orders were done better than others, e.g. planned contact levels were included in 92% of plans, 77% of contacts were recorded as enforceable and 73% were completed on time.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *In eight cases there was no ISP. Although all offenders in the sample had been allocated to a tier, inspectors found that ten had been incorrectly allocated. Subsequent planning did not accurately reflect the purpose of sentencing in 16 cases.*
- (b) *In 41% of applicable cases, the roles and liaison responsibilities of the various workers were not clearly defined in the sentence plan.*
- (c) *Licence cases in the sample had been released in November and December 2006 when full OASys connectivity between the probation area and local prisons had been established. However, there had been problems with gaining ownership of the individual plan, which affected the area's capacity to complete ISPs on time following release on licence. This was said to have been resolved.*
- (d) *There were 18 cases where consideration of restrictive conditions or requirements should have been given to minimise the RoH to the public in addition to the 34 cases where it was appropriately given and recorded in the plan.*

- (e) *In community orders where there was a plan, only 19% outlined how the RoH was to be managed.*
- (f) *Overall, sentence plans were of sufficient quality in 64% of cases. Only 48% focused on achievable change and 55 % set relevant goals for the offender. Inspectors described the approach to planning as 'woolly', reflected in the finding that only 52% could be said to have given clear shape to supervision. Interventions, e.g. work in approved premises, were seldom integrated into the plan nor were they properly sequenced in 48% of cases.*
- (g) *In 31% of the community cases where other assessments were available to be drawn on the sentence plan did not reflect these.*
- (h) *Interventions identified to address offending behaviour and promote community reintegration were appropriately identified in less than 50% of cases. In only 41% of cases was the reduction or containment of RoH appropriately addressed, yet 60% of cases fell into the medium, high or very high RoH categories.*
- (i) *Whilst the diverse needs of individual offenders had been identified in 71% of cases, this was carried through into the plan in only 59% of cases.*
- (j) *It was clear from only 66% of records that the offender had been given the opportunity to participate actively in the planning process.*

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS

2.1 General Criterion: DELIVERING THE SENTENCE PLAN

The offender manager facilitates the structured delivery of all relevant elements of the sentence.

52%

Strengths:

- (a) *Arrangements were in place to prepare offenders thoroughly for interventions and to reinforce them afterwards in 88% and 79% of cases respectively.*
- (b) *In most cases where there was more than one worker involved in the management and supervision of a case there was evidence that the offender manager positively oversaw and coordinated the work. There also tended to be a good level of communication between workers and with the offender. External and internal key workers confirmed a generally positive level of liaison.*
- (c) *There were differences in perceptions of how well staff motivated and supported offenders. 91% of offenders completing the HMI Probation questionnaire said that they did have a good working relationship with their offender manager who listened to what they had to say. In addition offenders interviewed in focus groups confirmed that programme tutors and unpaid work supervisors went out of their way to motivate and support them.*
- (d) *By the time of the inspection, 78% of sentence requirements had been fully implemented.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Where there was more than one requirement in a licence or order (75%), we did not find appropriate sequencing of interventions in one third of these cases. Nor did work in the community build sufficiently well on activity in prison in a similar proportion of licences.*
- (b) *In cases in the sample, we found that offender managers were less likely to be good at actively motivating and supporting offenders throughout their sentence (53%) than had been the case in the returned questionnaires. Most offenders interviewed in focus groups complained that whilst undertaking unpaid work or an accredited programme they rarely or never saw their offender manager or that there appeared to be no point to the contact if they did.*
- (c) *Reviews of sentence plans were poor in terms of timeliness (59% on time) and quality. Plans were normally 'pulled through' from an earlier plan and were not brought up to date. In only 39% was work with the offender seen to flow from them coherently and 82% lacked objectives and milestones giving a clear direction to supervision.*
- (d) *Reviews did not integrate other plans in 49% of relevant cases.*
- (e) *There was insufficient joint work between prison-based staff and offender managers to prepare offenders for release into the community in almost two*

thirds of licence cases.

- (f) *There were ten cases that had been transferred in from other areas. Whilst eight had had their first appointment within five working days, only one had the RoH management plan and a home visit completed within the required timescales. The area was not well supported by the transferring areas, as only five were received with an up-to-date OASys assessment.*

Conclusion: This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

2.2 General Criterion: PROTECTING THE PUBLIC BY MINIMISING RISK OF HARM

All reasonable actions have been taken to protect the public by keeping to a minimum the offender's RoH to others.

65%

Strengths:

- (a) *Where a review of RoH was done there was evidence of ongoing planning to protect the public in approximately 80% of cases. At this stage the planning to protect children had improved and was addressed at the same rate as adults. All high RoH cases were now reviewed in monthly team meetings in each OMU with notes sent to the district manager.*
- (b) *In the three licence cases where there had been a recall in relation to a RoH issue, this was appropriate and was carried out properly. There was evidence of the offender being given a clear explanation for the recall in two of the cases and efforts being made to re-engage them.*
- (c) *Home visits in high and very high RoH cases were carried out as required, with some evidence of this being repeated where necessary to help minimise RoH.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Reviewing RoH was not well done with just over half being reviewed at 16 weeks post-sentence or release and again at 16 weekly intervals. It was of even greater concern that in 66% of the 38 cases where there had been a significant change that might give rise to an increase in RoH, no review was done.*
- (b) *Changes in RoH were anticipated where feasible in 58% of cases, identified in 53% and acted upon appropriately in 52%.*
- (c) *MAPPA were assessed as having been effective in only 11 of the 21 cases.*
- (d) *Practice was less positive in relation to home visiting in cases where there was a RoH to children. Only half of the 14 cases requiring monitoring had an appropriate level of visits.*

Conclusion: This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2.3 General Criterion: VICTIMS*Consistent attention is given to issues concerning victims.***68%****Strengths:**

- (a) *A written offer of face-to-face contact was made to all statutory victim contact cases. In five of the six relevant cases victims had been offered the opportunity to comment on proposed release conditions.*
- (b) *We were given positive examples in the sample and in focus groups of where the contribution of Victim Liaison Officers had been well used with offenders in statutory victim contact cases, as had the women's safety workers in domestic abuse cases.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Victim safety (including children) was an issue in 46 cases. Whilst this was given a high priority in 70% of the cases it meant that 14 actual or potential victims had insufficient attention paid to their safety.*
- (b) *The prevalence of victim awareness work was not satisfactory being found in 49% of relevant cases.*

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2.4 General Criterion: ENSURING CONTAINMENT AND PROMOTING COMPLIANCE (Punish)*Contact with the offender and enforcement of the sentence is planned and implemented to meet the requirements of national standards and to encourage engagement with the sentence process.***80%****Strengths:**

- (a) *There was evidence of almost all cases having had a full and timely induction following sentence or release on licence.*
- (b) *The frequency of appointments conformed to the national standard and was sufficient to facilitate the requirements of the sentence in 79% and 77% of cases respectively. Home visits were undertaken in many cases, above the minimum requirement in the national standard.*
- (c) *Whilst the likelihood of the frequency of unpaid work sessions conforming to the national standard was lower than for the whole sample at 70%, there was evidence in only one case of this being due to a stand-down caused by a lack of staff.*
- (d) *Unpaid work placements were assessed positively, with 89% positive matching to the offender, 93% seen as suitably demanding and 96% providing a benefit to the community.*
- (e) *It was positive that four of the five PPO cases had enhanced levels of contact and*

a pattern of reporting supportive of all the elements of the sentence.

- (f) *Attention to monitoring attendance across all interventions (88% of cases) was good and action to support compliance very good, being found in 94% of cases. Judgements about the acceptability of absences were consistent and appropriate in 87% of cases.*
- (g) *The quality of the case record was good overall, with 95% being well organised, 94% containing clear REM data, 82% being completed in a timely manner and 91% with clearly recorded contacts.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Sufficient contact with prisoners pre-release to promote effective offender management in the community was not undertaken in 54% of cases. However, the area had been praised by local prisons for paying for the installation of video conferencing equipment to facilitate this.*
- (b) *The frequency of appointments was sufficient to meet the RoH considerations presented in only 27% of cases and should have been increased beyond the minimum.*
- (c) *Breach action was instigated within the required timescales in 66% of relevant cases.*

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

2.5 General Criterion: CONSTRUCTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Help and Change)

Interventions are delivered to identified ends and to meet the requirements of the sentence: help and change.

70%

Strengths:

- (a) *In 77% of cases it was found that constructive interventions encouraged the offender to accept responsibility for their offending behaviour and its consequences. 91% of offenders completing and returning the HMI Probation questionnaire said that they believed that the probation service's work had made them think more about their offending.*
- (b) *Whilst sufficient work had been directed at community reintegration issues in 79% of cases where it was needed, it was frequently commented that there were gaps in provision in Cheshire in relation to alcohol misuse, mental health needs and supported housing.*
- (c) *Offender managers prepared reports and attended review hearings as required in the three DRR cases in the sample.*
- (d) *A third of cases in the sample had an accredited programme as a requirement. 63% of these had commenced the programme as set out in the sentence plan.*

Where this had not happened, in all but four cases, there was an acceptable explanation for it.

- (e) The two approved premises in Cheshire offered constructive interventions for male offenders. They had positive links with substance misuse agencies and had introduced a programme called LIHMO, 'Living in here, moving on,' a practical, problem solving based approach to improving life skills that had also had a beneficial effect on managing the premises.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Basic skills input had not been made available in two thirds of the cases that had had this identified as a need. This appeared to be a reflection of the performance of the OLASS contractor at the end of 2006, which had been resolved by the time of the inspection.
- (b) The approved premises in Cheshire offered an extensive range of interventions that were being used with residents. However, in more than half of the cases the intervention had not featured as part of the sentence plan.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

2.6 General Criterion: RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Control)
Interventions are delivered to identified ends and to meet the requirements of the sentence: control.

84%

Strengths:

- (a) Restrictive interventions were monitored fully in 90% of cases. Whilst all reasonable actions were taken to minimise harm in 76% of cases, that did leave 11 cases where more could have been done. This links in part with earlier comments about MAPPA Level 2.
- (b) There was a good range of restrictive interventions available in the approved premises, which were being used effectively with seven of the nine offenders who required this level of enhanced supervision. Plans were in hand to employ two waking night staff from August. Staff worked in collaboration with the police and others to facilitate surveillance measures under the auspices of MAPPA and the electronic monitoring of residents.
- (c) Licence conditions in over 80% of cases were comprehensive, necessary, and proportionate to the RoH and likelihood of reoffending. They were seen as less proportionate to the protection of victims in 50% of cases.
- (d) In the three PPO cases where offending had been related to drugs, there were appropriate additional licence conditions.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

2.7 General Criterion: DIVERSITY ISSUES*Full and proper attention is paid to diversity issues.***74%****Strengths:**

- (a) *The identified diverse needs of offenders had been properly addressed in 82% of relevant cases. The approved premises were seen to meet the needs of all but one resident.*
- (b) *When a singleton placement in unpaid work or on an accredited programme had been made, staff were able to evidence that attention had been paid to arrangements to support offenders' engagement. Offenders' views supported this.*
- (c) *Offenders were clearly informed that discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated in 93% of cases.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *There was room for improvement in meeting the needs of offenders with literacy and dyslexia issues (68% were satisfactory) and also with disability issues (67% were satisfactory).*
- (b) *Informed consent for a singleton placement in a mixed setting had not been obtained in five of the relevant 16 cases. We were informed that it was not standard practice to offer, women in particular, a choice.*

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

3. ACHIEVEMENT AND MONITORING OF OUTCOMES

3.1 General Criterion: ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIAL OUTCOMES

Planned objectives are efficiently achieved.

62 %

Strengths:

- (a) *Across a range of measures we found that the public had been better protected during supervision with RoH successfully managed in the majority of cases. There was evidence of responsiveness to RoH in both an increase in restrictive measures in a small number of cases and a decrease where the offender had demonstrated progress. In 94% of domestic abuse cases there was evidence of appropriate monitoring for and response to further incidents.*
- (b) *Nineteen offenders had been reconvicted since the start of their sentence with a further four cautioned.*
- (c) *Most offenders (72%) had complied with the requirements of their sentence.*
- (d) *There had been some limited direct benefits to the community in 66% of cases. These included the unpaid work carried out in 24 cases.*
- (e) *Achievement of the sentencing objectives was strong in most cases. 90% of all cases in the sample experienced punishment, 73% of those in tiers 2, 3 and 4 received sufficient help and 73% in tier 4 were also sufficiently controlled during the sentence. The change objective was more difficult to achieve with it being apparent in only 54% of tier 3 and 4 cases.*
- (f) *The resources allocated to 83% of cases were consistent with the offender's RoH and 88% to the likelihood of reoffending. Resources were also found to be used efficiently in achieving planned outcomes in 80% of cases.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *All but one of the offenders completing the HMI Probation questionnaire said that they had made some progress in thinking about the impact of their offending on the victims. However, this was not evidenced in the cases in the sample where progress was found in only 28%.*
- (b) *In 44 cases there had been no demonstrable benefit to the community from the sentence, e.g. a reduction in seriousness or frequency of offending or reduced threat to victims.*
- (c) *Where OASys had been rescored there had been no improvement in the score in 69% of cases. In the factor linked to offending that had been identified as the highest priority in each case, there was found to be progress in 59% of cases. Thinking and behaviour was the most common factor by far in 42 cases, followed by alcohol misuse in 16 cases, which was clearly more important than illegal substance misuse in nine cases.*
- (d) *Learning outcomes and skills had been applied in only 38% of cases.*

- (e) *Attitudes or behaviour had improved in 42% of cases.*
- (f) *Sentencing objectives in the higher tiers were less reliably achieved with, 54% in tiers 3 and 4 achieving change and 67% in tier 4 experiencing control.*

Conclusion: This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

3.2 General Criterion: SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRESS

Results are capable of being sustained between different phases of a sentence and beyond the end of supervision.

68%

Strengths:

- (a) *We found continuity in offender management in that, including the PSR author, 22 cases had had just one offender manager and a further 59 had had two.*
- (b) *88% of offenders in the sample who had a criminogenic need that could be addressed with them by a community-based organisation had been made aware of where to find assistance. However, it was found that full attention to long-term community reintegration issues had only been given to 66% of cases.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Structured sentence planning had not been given a high priority throughout in 55% of cases.*
- (b) *There was sufficient action taken by offender managers to consolidate learning and reinforce new skills in 61% of cases.*

Conclusion: This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

4. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

4.1 General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING

There is active leadership in the implementation of national policies via local policies and procedures which are regularly monitored and reviewed, through proactive planning with other key agencies, and by promoting the diversity agenda.

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) *The Cheshire Probation Board was actively and effectively involved in planning and performance. The annual business plan built on the national template to address local priority issues, e.g. to extend customer surveys. There was an emphasis on communication with staff via the use of a summary information leaflet, twice yearly meetings with the Board Chair and CO at the time of planning, and review and letters from the Chief about major developments. As a consequence 85% of staff interviewed, and all in the focus groups and meetings, agreed that they were kept well informed.*
- (b) *An effective project management approach to all policy development and implementation had been adopted. The Offender Management Policy, as an example, included practice guidelines and a monitoring and review framework. To emphasise the importance of this development the ACO visited every OMU meeting to ensure consistent communication about expectations and roles.*
- (c) *There was evidence of pro-active liaison with sentencers locally and in the region led by the relevant ACO and a JP board member. Implementation of the Criminal Justice Act (2003) had not been unproblematic due, initially, to the volume of unpaid work requirements and community orders with multiple requirements. Good use of regular meetings meant that the area was now satisfied that these issues had been resolved. Concerns remained about the level of SDRs requested and the use of SSSOs, but these were being actively addressed.*
- (d) *Regional collaboration was well developed in the North West. Cheshire had contributed significantly to the development of the current regional business plan through chairmanship of the chief officers' group plus developmental work in relation to the Offender Management Pathfinder and SLAs with the ROM.*
- (e) *Strategic partners confirmed that the area was well placed to influence local planning and that managers were well regarded. The CO chaired the LCJB and ACOs worked actively with the unitary authority and county CDRPs, Safeguarding Boards etc. The local authority make-up within Cheshire made representation at the appropriate level in the six small CDRPs impractical as they did not work collaboratively, which was an issue for all agencies. There was a partnership approach to some elements of community development and consultation under the auspices of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000), an example being in relation to the Traveller community. The Board structure facilitated links by members with organisations in their local areas.*

- (f) *A strong working relationship at a strategic level between the police and probation services had ensured investment in public protection MAPPAs, a PPO scheme where the two agencies' staff were co-located and developments in the management of domestic abuse. Whilst the prison service made no financial contribution there was evidence of effective collaboration to support the PPO scheme and MAPPAs. In addition, efforts were made by the three agencies to keep as many adult male prisoners as possible in HMP Risley to facilitate effective offender management.*
- (g) *The area's approach to promoting diversity was wide ranging and effective. They worked with other criminal justice agencies in 'Connecting Communities', an approach to consulting communities as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) and to recruiting staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, coordinated by a local CRE. Internally, the area had an ambitious long term Diversity and Race Equality Action Plan supported and monitored by a multi-grade Practice Development Group. Their Race Equality Scheme was fully CRE compliant and they had achieved those elements of work towards compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) that were within their control.*
- (h) *Over the past few years there had been annual surveys of the views of offenders reporting to local offices, unpaid work beneficiaries, sentencers and approved premises residents. Feedback was taken into account in planning and disseminated to staff. Impact assessments as required under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) were undertaken in all new policies.*
- (i) *Most staff interviewed felt that managers demonstrated a professional management approach and that they modelled positive leadership behaviour.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Despite the overall positive picture of collaboration to protect the public, MAPPAs required further development. Specifically, whilst there was a jointly funded MAPPAs coordinator post, the title did not match the role as defined in national guidance. This meant that the expertise and objectivity typically invested in a middle manager post was missing. The SMB was however committed to achieving the targets in the 2005/2008 national MAPPAs business plan which included appointment to such a role.*
- (b) *Evidence from case file reading also pointed to Level 2 MAPPAs being ineffective. This was due in part to the purpose of meetings being ill-defined. Too many cases were brought to meetings. Assessment of the appropriate forum for managing these, including all registered sex offenders and CDVP cases should have been taken outside of the meeting reserving this forum for in-depth assessment and planning for those requiring a multi-agency approach. Instead, cases had scant time for discussion and appeared to have become a bureaucratic exercise which did not involve the case manager.*

4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS

Key performance targets are consistently met, with careful attention to diversity issues throughout.

Well met

NPS Performance Data	Target	2005 - 2006	
		Area	England & Wales
Enforcement – breach taken where required within ten working days: all orders/licences	90%	97%*	91%*
Offender compliance including orders allowed to continue	85%	84%*	81%
Appointments arranged in accordance with national standards	90%	92%*	85%
Appointments attended in accordance with national standards	65%	69%*	62%
Accredited programme completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	165%*	114%*
Unpaid work completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	103%*	101%*
DTTO/DRR starts: % performance in relation to target	100%	61%	88%
DTTO/DRR completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	114%*	99%*
Basic skills: % performance in relation to starts	100%	116%*	112%*
Basic skills: % performance in relation to awards	100%	105%*	149%*
Sickness absence: average days absence	9 days	11.5	12.3
Proportion of magistrates’ court PSRs prepared to court’s timescale	90%	99%*	97%*
Accurate and timely ethnicity data	95%	99%*	97%
Home Secretary’s Race Equality Employment Target for 2009	(North West Region) 5.4%	(Cheshire Region) 6.4%* 6.8%	
Proportion of victims of serious sexual/violent offences (where offender sentenced to custody of 12+ months) offered contact within eight weeks	85%	96%*	93%*
RoH assessments and plans for high RoH cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	85%*	81%
RoH assessments and plans for PPO cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	88%*	82%
* Asterisk indicates area has met target or is ‘near miss’.			

Joint ‘end-to-end’ targets on enforcement for LCJB	Target	Rolling quarter January-March 2006	
		Area	England and Wales
Average time to resolve community penalty breach proceedings from relevant unacceptable failure	No more than 35 working days	43 days	43 days
Proportion of all breach proceedings resolved within 25 working days of relevant unacceptable failure to comply	50%	37%	43%

Strengths:

- (a) *Achievement of key targets was a high priority in Cheshire. To this end it had invested in the performance and Quality Assurance Unit headed up by an ACO. Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes against targets was a key function of the unit, as was internal inspection and research. An action plan for change to drive up performance would be the output of each element of evaluation which, using the project management approach, would in turn be monitored monthly by the SMT. Managers received regular reports and were held to account by the SMT and Board.*
- (b) *An area of strength had become a weakness when the OLASS contract commenced in 2005 and basic skills awards were reduced by more than half the previous monthly average. The new contract provider was brought in to explain itself to the Board and accepted a number of suggestions for improvement, including apprising the colleges of the importance of returning information to the probation service. As a consequence performance had again exceeded the national target by the end of the year.*
- (c) *Good use was made of data from OASys to add quality to the needs analysis, which ensured a positive approach to promoting diversity in the area. Accredited programmes, at 165% of the national target, were the area's strongest achievement during the year. Using the data to profile offender need, the area had decided to invest in extra programmes to exceed the national target. It had also evaluated and improved its approach to the preparation of offenders for programmes so that its attrition rate was significantly below the national level. In addition it increased its use of volunteer mentors to support individuals in programmes and basic skills where needed. In an area where an individual black or minority offender was likely always to be the only one, recruitment of black and minority ethnic mentors had made a positive contribution.*
- (d) *Regional collaboration was well developed across the North West with the Cheshire Probation Area contributing strongly to developments at both board and officer levels. This included financial contributions to regional work, e.g. secondment of a prison governor grade to work on the prison/probation delivery agenda. For example, they led on the finance function to support the Offender Management Pathfinder involving HMYOI Thorn Cross and HMP Risley. There were also examples of the area drawing on good practice from elsewhere, currently through participation in the unpaid work Best Value Review and an approach to high performing areas in relation to staff sickness.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Whilst Cheshire's approach to performance improvement was both comprehensive and detailed, its performance within the national weighted scorecard had been rather volatile over the last year: being positioned each quarter from May 2005 at 17th, 3rd, 21st and 42nd in February 2006. The performance report for the end of 2005/2006 showed that they had recovered from this position and were now 10th in the scorecard.*
- (b) *The two targets that Cheshire had not met or nearly met by the year end were in relation to staff sickness and DRR starts. In relation to both, performance was improving and we saw evidence that management time was being invested to continue the improvement.*

4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT

There is a strategic approach to deploying resources to deliver effective performance and support diversity initiatives and there are positive indications in relation to value for money.

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) *The area had been able to invest in a significant number of posts to strengthen OMUs during the last financial year. In addition the creation of two district manager posts (a role new to the area) in February had brought a greater level of focus on RoH work. We were able to see that they had already had a positive impact on the quality of work in some cases in the sample. They also provided support to SPOs and had freed up the ACO with responsibility for offender management to concentrate on work at a strategic level.*
- (b) *Investment had also been made in supervisors for unpaid work, so that the level of stand-downs had been reduced to 1%. A 10% increase in agency placements over the last year to 35% had contributed to this.*
- (c) *The police and probation services had joint responsibility for PPOs under the auspices of the LCJB. Investment was made in time through strategic and operational action groups, shared intelligence and staffing.*
- (d) *We saw evidence that the work of the diversity manager was effective in improving the service to offenders, e.g. through the production of a directory of services for offenders and to the oversight of an interpreter service. She also played a key role in developing support and opportunities for staff, e.g. through induction and policy work, including anti-harassment and bullying called 'respect and dignity at work'.*
- (e) *Court staffing levels had been increased last year by two FTE PSOs in order to prepare FDRs. Work was underway to establish how POs could be used efficiently to prepare same day reports on more serious offenders. Fourteen (70%) of the sentencers who responded to the HMI Probation questionnaire thought that staffing levels were sufficient.*
- (f) *A resource allocation formula was used to review the deployment of staff on a quarterly basis. Appropriate investment had been made in setting up the OMUs from February 2006.*
- (g) *The area maximised the resources available to it through regional cooperation, for example a plan for the current year to fund an ACO secondment to the Government Office to work on the regional reducing reoffending action plan. Agreement to do this attracted £20,000 of Government Office funding. They had also successfully bid for funding for domestic abuse development from the LCJB and were bidding through the LSC for ESF funding for basic skills developments.*

4.4

General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Workforce planning and development leads to a good match between staff profile and service delivery requirements. Relevant diversity legislation is observed in staff recruitment and deployment.

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) *Workforce planning over the previous year had had at its core, assumptions to support the development of the Offender Management Model. A projected under-spend had been used to go over establishment with PO and PSO posts which had supported the staffing of OMUs. It would also add to the area's capacity to deal with staff attrition during the current financial year.*
- (b) *Attention was paid to the ongoing developmental needs of TPOs, e.g. during practice placements arrangements were made for them to co-work high risk cases to gain the experience necessary to work as newly qualified POs. They also had in-house training on MAPPA, RoH and victim awareness. They continued to get support from practice supervisors over and above supervision from their line manager after qualifying.*
- (c) *Staff role boundaries were well defined, an example being in the offender manager policy and guidelines. 85% of staff interviewed were clear about their role in offender management. From discussion with staff and managers it was clear that lines of accountability were well understood.*
- (d) *Relationships with recognised unions were seen as positive. A LJNC met regularly and was felt to be constructive. Currently, unions were working with the employers on the national job evaluation scheme.*
- (e) *Staff reported that 71% had supervision on a six-weekly basis, or more frequently. Area policy required supervision every two months linked with the performance review (appraisal) cycle. 78% reported satisfaction with the quality of supervision received.*
- (f) *The area did operate with full regard to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) in relation to all of its responsibilities including as an employer. Only 2% of the population of Cheshire described themselves as of black or minority ethnic origin, yet there over 6% of area staff and middle manager groups were so described. The area's Race Equality Scheme was comprehensive and had been praised by the NPD.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *There was a costed staff development plan linked to the business plan. However, only 57% of staff interviewed felt that their training and developmental needs were being met. This applied in particular to PSOs relatively new to the service who felt ill-equipped to deal with the demands of the offender manager role. This was in part due to the demands of Criminal Justice Act (2003) training which had dominated the last year. A review of the plan also indicated that a number of training events had been cancelled last year. Middle managers identified that the child protection training delivered by social services also did not meet the needs of offender managers. OASys training was delivered on a quarterly basis so staff*

could wait some time before undertaking this basic training. There was a plan of training for all staff in offender management for the current year which would address some of these issues.

- (b) Whilst staff sickness levels are below the national average, at 11.5 days on average per person, they are too high and are a matter of ongoing concern for the Board. Levels were decreasing. Measures had been put into place to address these, including proper adherence to the policy to undertake return to work interviews and a 'well-being' event for staff put on jointly with the local Occupational Health Unit. Middle managers reported feeling well supported by the HR unit in addressing sickness levels.
- (c) 68% of staff interviewed reported that they had had an appraisal in the past 12 months. However, the area was aware that this required improvement and that there were problems with the quality of their monitoring of appraisal completion.

4.5 General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION

Outcomes of interventions are assessed and reviewed using available data.

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) The views of service users and stakeholders were routinely collated and evaluated to improve service delivery, including victims, offenders, unpaid work beneficiaries and sentencers, as well as staff. There was evidence of how these were used to develop performance through regular policy reviews. In addition the best value review of unpaid work included a service user perspective.
- (b) There was an impressive range of monitoring of all aspects of service delivery, which was always used by managers at appropriate levels to improve performance. This could be very detailed, e.g. sentencing and PSR data were analysed both for appropriate proposals against offender manager and Criminal Justice Act (2003) principles and for concordance in outcomes. Each report or case was taken up with the PSR author. Completion data were shared with sentencers on a regular basis. There was routine monitoring of all PSRs and outcomes for black and minority ethnic offenders, which was also used to improve practice.
- (c) We saw evidence of work to improve outcomes using the OASys database as the source of information. This targeted achievable improvements with offenders who were assessed as having needs around alcohol, accommodation and ETE.
- (d) Reporting on serious further offences and complaints was built into the Performance and Quality Assurance Unit's responsibilities. There were well established procedures for reporting to the Board and for the identification and dissemination of learning points.

4.6

General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES

There is efficient provision of effective services to support offender management outcomes and to ensure equal access to provision for offenders.

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) *Cheshire demonstrated an entrepreneurial approach to the commissioning of services for offenders. The 'Through the Gate' contract was commissioned in partnership with the prison service. It used ESF monies to fund services from the private sector to enhance access and sustained use of community resources in relation to offender learning and employability.*
- (b) *Contracts were awarded following a tendering process and monitoring procedures were in place to ensure that performance conformed to the SLA. Remedial action was taken as necessary to ensure that value for money was obtained.*
- (c) *There was evidence of the use of local, regional and national research into the provision of services to meet the criminogenic needs of offenders, including user surveys. For 2006/2007 need and plans are detailed in the comprehensive Area Reducing Reoffending Action Plan. The area acknowledged that not all of the necessary resources and interventions were as yet in place.*
- (d) *A good level of provision for minority offenders was sourced by the diversity manager. She had put together a directory of services to address various needs ranging from assistance for asylum seekers to resources for people who had problems with their sight. Where black or minority offenders had a requirement to attend an offending behaviour programme, they were offered the facility to attend the Black and Asian Think First module in Manchester. In addition she was available to give advice about specific offenders and as a consequence had made available advice on how to use interpreters, acknowledging that accessing their services was only the first step.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Despite the positive working relationship between the prisons and probation in Cheshire, there had been some issues noted in the discussions about licence cases which had not served to facilitate the smooth transition of prisoners on release. In addition to the problems caused by OASys connectivity, we were told that there were often problems in the exchange of information about potential HDC cases; offender managers were not told the outcome of HDC applications so did not know whether to expect a release or not.*
- (b) *There were gaps in provision to meet the needs of significant numbers of offenders. These included alcohol services, mental health and accommodation, which were all available only on a patchy basis across the county. Links were in place with appropriate bodies, e.g. DAATs and Supporting People.*
- (c) *In relation to alcohol specifically the profile of offender need did not match Government priorities. Funding for illegal substance misuse was extensive, but alcohol misuse received little funding yet was a greater problem in the area. This was seen clearly in the case sample.*
- (d) *As a consequence of these gaps and the absence of an accredited programme to address violence, offender managers undertook work themselves with offenders which might have been more effectively, and certainly more efficiently, delivered as a commissioned intervention.*

APPENDIX 1
Contextual information

Caseload at end of September 2005

Total caseload	3,042
% White	97.6%
% Minority ethnic*	2.4%
% Male	88.6%
% Female	11.4%
Number of cases subject to MAPP A	13.7% (417)
Level 1	6.2% (191)
Level 2	6.9% (211)
Level 3	0.5% (15)
Number of PPO cases	136 currently under CPA supervision
* Excluding cases for which ethnicity information is not available.	

The local definition of a PPO case – on which the above figure is based – is an individual who is assessed by the management body of one of the seven PPO schemes in Cheshire as someone whose offending adversely affects the local community to a significant degree and could be described as prolific.

Total revenue budget in 2005/2006: £12.625m

Total revenue budget in 2006/2007: £13.130m (increase of 4%)

Approved premises:

Linden Bank, Sandbach – capacity 22

Banbury House, Ellesmere Port – capacity 22

APPENDIX 2

Inspection model, methodology and publication arrangements

Model

- The OMI programme started in May 2006. All NOMS areas in England and Wales are being inspected over a three year cycle, region by region. We hope to identify and promote effective work with offenders and disseminate information about good practice.
- Probation areas are being assessed on how well they have met defined inspection criteria focusing on:
 - Assessment and sentence planning carried out on offenders
 - Implementation of interventions delivered to offenders
 - Achievement and monitoring of outcomes
 - Leadership and strategic management.Particular attention will be given to RoH issues – it is performance against these measures which will determine whether a re-inspection is carried out.
- The inspection takes account of the regular NPS performance data. These are produced by the NPD who are responsible for their collection and quality assurance.
- Each inspection takes place over one week. The area is asked to identify a random sample of 100 offenders (more in the largest areas) who have been under supervision for approximately six months. We then ensure that there is a minimum number of the following types of cases: high/very high RoH; PPOs; approved premises residents; statutory victim contact; black and minority ethnic offenders. The cases are drawn from both community orders and licences.

Methodology

- During the inspection we examine the file and carry out an in-depth interview with the offender manager. We also hold focus groups with offenders, victims, keyworkers and case administrators. We send questionnaires to offenders and victims whose cases arise in the sample and to a selection of those involved in sentencing.
- We interview senior and middle managers, Board members of the probation area, strategic partners and managers in a custodial setting. For the prison meeting we are joined by a colleague inspector from HMI Prisons.
- Inspection of about a third of the cases in the sample is carried out by area assessors, experienced staff of the probation area being inspected. We think this provides a positive experience both for the area and the staff directly involved and that it increases ownership of the findings.

Publication arrangements

- Summary verbal feedback is given to the area at the end of the inspection week. A draft report is sent to the area for comment four to six weeks later. Publication follows approximately 12 weeks after inspection.

APPENDIX 3

Scoring Approach

This describes the methodology for assigning the scores to each of the general criteria, to sections 1 to 3 and to the “Risk of Harm Thread”. A fuller detailed description is on HMI Probation’s website at <http://inspectrates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation>

For each of the *general criteria in sections 1 to 3* – i.e. those sections based on the scrutiny of the case sample – that is:

Section 1: Assessment and sentence planning

- 1.1 Preparing for sentence
- 1.2 Assessment of risk of harm
- 1.3 Assessment of likelihood of reoffending
- 1.4 Assessment of offender engagement
- 1.5 Sentence planning

Section 2: Implementation of interventions

- 2.1 Protecting the public
- 2.2 Victims
- 2.3 Promoting compliance
- 2.4 Delivering interventions
- 2.5 Diversity needs

Section 3: Achievement and monitoring of outcomes

- 3.1 Interventions are delivered with the desired outcomes
- 3.2 Sustainability of progress

The score is based on an average, across each of the questions in the Offender Management Tool for that criterion, of the proportion of relevant cases in the sample where the work assessed by that question was judged sufficient (‘above the line’). (In the calculation, the results for the individual questions and for the summary question are weighted 80/20. Further details are given in the description on the website.)

The *score for each of sections 1 to 3* is then calculated as the average of the scores for the component general criteria.

The *score for the “Risk of Harm Thread”* is calculated as an average, over all the questions in the Offender Management Tool in sections 1 and 2 relating to Risk of harm, of the proportion of relevant cases where work was judged ‘above the line’.

For *each of the general criteria in section 4*, that is:

Section 4: Leadership and strategic management

- 4.1 Leadership and planning
- 4.2 Performance against national and regional targets
- 4.3 Resource allocation
- 4.4 Workforce planning and development
- 4.5 Review and evaluation
- 4.6 Commissioning of services

a score of either **well met**, **satisfactorily met**, **partly met**, or **not met** is assigned on the basis of the performance across the specific criteria which make up that criterion. (Details are given in the description on the website.)

APPENDIX 4

Role of HMI Probation

HMI Probation is an independent Inspectorate, originally established in 1936 and given statutory authority in the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 renamed HMI Probation 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the National Probation Service for England and Wales. HMI Probation is funded by the Home Office and reports directly to the Home Secretary.

Home Office Objectives

HMI Probation contributes primarily to the achievement of Home Office Objective II:

- more offenders are caught, punished and stop offending, and victims are better supported
- and to the requirement to ensure that custodial and community sentences are more effective at stopping offending. We also contribute to the achievement of Objective III through scrutiny of work to address drugs and other substance misuse, and to other relevant criminal justice system and children's services objectives.

Role

- Report to the Home Secretary on the work and performance of the National Probation Service and Youth Offending Teams, particularly on the effectiveness of work with individual offenders, children and young people aimed at reducing reoffending and protecting the public.
- In this connection, and in association with HM Inspectorate of Prisons, to report on the effectiveness of offender management under the auspices of the National Offender Management Service as it develops.
- Contribute to improved performance in the National Probation Service, the National Offender Management Service and Youth Offending Teams.
- Contribute to sound policy and effective service delivery by providing advice and disseminating good practice, based on inspection findings, to Ministers, Home Office staff, the Youth Justice Board, probation boards/areas and Youth Offending Teams.
- Promote actively race equality and wider diversity issues in the National Probation Service, the National Offender Management Service and Youth Offending Teams.
- Contribute to the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system, particularly through joint work with other criminal justice and Government inspectorates.

Code of Practice

HMI Probation aims to achieve its purpose by:

- undertaking its work with integrity in a professional, impartial and courteous manner
- consulting stakeholders in planning and running inspections and regarding reports
- forming independent inspection judgements based on evidence
- the timely reporting and publishing of inspection findings and recommendations for improvement
- promoting race equality and wider diversity issues in all aspects of its work, including within its own employment practices and organisational processes
- developing joint approaches with other Inspectorate and Audit bodies to ensure a coordinated approach to the criminal justice system.

The Inspectorate is a public body. Anyone who wishes to comment on an inspection, a report or any other matter falling within its remit should write to:

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