



HM Inspectorate of Probation

# AUDIT OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES

North-West Region of the  
National Probation Service for  
England and Wales

*Report on:  
Cumbria Probation Area – Think First*

September 2001

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## Acknowledgements:

We are grateful for the cooperation of staff from the Cumbria Probation Area in completing this audit.

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## Glossary

ACE	Assessment, Case Recording and Evaluation System
ACO	Assistant Chief Officer
CO	Chief Officer
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
IAPS	Interim Accredited Programmes Software
IQR	Implementation Quality Rating
LSI-R	Level of Service Inventory-Revised
N/A	Criteria not assessed
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OGRS	Offender Group Reconviction Scale
PO	Probation Officer
PSO	Probation Service Officer
PSR	Pre-sentence report

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## Context:

Programmes achieving accredited status have undergone a rigorous process of development and scrutiny to ensure they have maximum impact in terms of reducing reoffending. Selecting well-tested programmes is however only part of the picture – without effective implementation by probation areas much of the positive influence on offenders' behaviour may be lost.

Establishing robust quality assurance systems and independent audit arrangements for accredited programmes is therefore crucial. HMIP is responsible for auditing accredited programmes on behalf of the Joint Accreditation Panel. Each probation area will be assessed against the delivery criteria given in the Performance Standards Manual June 2001, which also outlines how these criteria are to be met and evidenced.

## Scoring Approach:

The criteria for the delivery of accredited programmes have been divided into four sections. These sections, and the overall weighting assigned for each section, are as follows:

<b>Committed leadership and supportive management</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Programme management responsibilities</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Quality of programme delivery</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Case management responsibilities</b>	<b>20%</b>

Each criterion is scored as **Fully Met** (2 marks), **Largely Met** (1 Mark) or **Not Met** (0 marks).

The scoring summary sheet at the end of this report shows the marks awarded for each criterion – for those criteria designated as Mandatory (see Performance Standards Manual) the mark given is doubled. This denotes the critical impact these criteria have on the effective delivery of programmes.

The marks awarded for each section are shown and then expressed as a % by dividing the total number of marks scored by the maximum available, and multiplying by 100. Section B has been divided into seven sub-sections for ease of scoring.

To determine an area's IQR, the scores for each section are multiplied by the appropriate factor to take account of the relevant weightings given above. The % totals for each section are then added together to give the IQR.

## **Overview:**

- The audit comprised four main elements: assessment of advance information; observation of randomly-selected videotaped programme sessions; case file reading; and interviews with staff and offenders.
- Cumbria was running Think First at four sites – Kendal, Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle and Maryport. Site visits were made by HMIP staff to Kendal, Barrow and Carlisle where checks were made on resources and facilities.
- Interviews were held with the CO, ACO (programmes responsibility), programme manager and treatment managers, as well as representatives of programme tutors, case managers and PSR writers. Four offenders at the Barrow site were also interviewed.
- This audit report relates to one general offending behaviour accredited group work programme: Think First.
- Nine videos were monitored from programmes run in Kendal, Barrow and Carlisle.
- Two of the audit criteria were not assessed – B4.3 and D1.8. This decision was taken because plans were awaited nationally for ongoing training for experienced tutors (B4.3), and for the accreditation of the cognitive-behavioural booster programme to reinforce offender learning (D1.8).

## **Findings:**

Cumbria gave full commitment to the audit process and viewed it as an opportunity to evaluate its work to date and acknowledged that much of its work in relation to programmes was still in progress. Cumbria had, prior to the audit, reviewed its own performance against the criteria in the Performance Standards Manual. Some of this thinking will further the development of key parts of the supporting environment for accredited programmes.

It was clear that Cumbria's geography posed particular challenges to the need to start offenders promptly on groups, as both offenders and tutors could be required to travel long distances. Low numbers made the scheduling of regular viable groups difficult and there had been little exploration of weekend work to try to facilitate this. Furthermore, a history of high volume throughput on *non*-accredited programmes prior to April 2001 had had a mixed impact on the implementation of accredited programmes in recent months. Whilst it had left the area with a number of tutors already experienced and trained in similar cognitive-behavioural programme work, it also left the legacy of non-specific referral to programmes as opposed to targeted allocation. Video observation of Cumbria's tutors indicated a satisfactory standard of delivery at this stage, and there was encouraging evidence that this could be improved upon over time.

The main areas for development were in relation to a more consistent and streamlined targeting and assessment system in which PSR writers should have a central role, the enhancement of the treatment and case management roles, and improved accessibility to group work for minority ethnic and women offenders.

## **Recommendations**

*The CO should ensure that the area:*

- *revises its targeting procedures so that it is more consistently accurate;*
- *reviews its policy on the timeliness of commencements with a view to minimising delays in programme starts;*
- *improves the accessibility to offending behaviour group work programmes for women and minority ethnic offenders;*
- *fosters a culture of active allocation of resettlement cases to accredited programmes;*
- *tackles the issue of differential allocation to Think First across geographical and functional areas;*
- *adopts a clear strategy to inform sentencers about programme work in an ongoing way;*
- *establishes active treatment management which encompasses the full range of duties appropriate to the role, most particularly the monitoring of 10% of videos and the supervision of tutors;*
- *sets up, as a matter of urgency, a system of regular structured supervision for programme tutors and that constructive use is made of videotaped programme sessions to develop practice;*
- *strengthens the case management role by building on the training recently given;*
- *organises training in programme theory to treatment managers, programme tutors, PSR writers and case managers;*
- *provides training in session familiarisation to PSR writers and case managers;*
- *develops a strategy for maximising attendance at, and completion of, group work programmes;*
- *addresses the issue of disruption to programmes run on the Carlisle site;*
- *gives additional input to staff on focused supervision planning and the use of SMART objectives;*
- *continues to develop its plans to evolve an active feedback loop in which all grades of staff are involved in making use of monitoring and evaluation data to improve practice.*

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## SECTION A: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

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### A1.1 Committed leadership

2

Description: *The senior management of the area should be openly and explicitly committed to the proper running of the programme through policy and public statements.*

**Strengths:**

- What Works had a clear profile in area planning documents, with a heightened priority being set out in the Area Plan 2001/2004. This reflected a renewed focus on programme implementation following changes to senior management posts in April 2001.
- Appropriate resources for programme delivery had been made available.
- All senior managers had attended Think First context setting events.
- Senior managers had made use of the audit process to progress thinking and planning for Think First and future accredited programmes.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The commitment of senior managers to the What Works agenda, whilst recognised by staff, had not always galvanised commitment within all staff groups to successful programme implementation.

### A1.2 Management structures

1

Description: *Effective line management structures exist for the proper operation of the programme integrating this within case management structures. Adequate time should be set aside for the effective management of the programme.*

**Strengths:**

- Cumbria had supplied an organisational chart outlining the management structure in relation to accredited programmes.
- Records of team meetings showed that programme issues were communicated across functional areas.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Initial job descriptions had been based on pre-existing roles, with some additional items added, rather than being clear, competency-based and tailored to new roles in programme management.
- Full integration into case management structures had not been achieved at the time of the audit and not all staff roles were sufficiently established.
- The treatment management function had not been developed at the same pace or with the same success as other programme roles.

### A1.3 Staff ownership of the accredited programme

1

Description: *There is full ownership of the programme by managers, programme tutors and other relevant staff, e.g. court personnel and case managers.*

#### **Strengths:**

- Programme tutors clearly believed in the value of the programme and were committed to delivering it to a high standard.
- Attendance levels at staff training events were generally good.
- There was stated commitment on the part of case managers to attend the three-way review meetings at the post-programme stage (although this commitment was largely untested because of little experience of managing cases through to completion).

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Variation in referral rates across the geographical spread of Cumbria required attention.
- PSR writers still appeared to feel on the periphery of programme implementation and experienced a sense of isolation.
- A culture of active allocation of resettlement cases to accredited programmes had not been fostered.

### A1.4 Effective communication with sentencers

1

Description: *There is high quality, proactive communication with local sentencers and clerks to the justices about the programme, including written information.*

#### **Strengths:**

- Presentations had been given to sentencers at probation liaison committee meetings informing them about What Works and accredited programmes in particular.
- Probation staff had been involved in delivering What Works and Think First information to new magistrates as part of their early training.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Although written information existed, there was no structured plan to provide ongoing information and publicity to sentencers in order to keep them aware of issues such as targeting and proposals for Think First and the subsequent roll-out of accredited programmes.
- The information needs of the judiciary and court clerks had not been comprehensively addressed.

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## SECTION B: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

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### B1.1 Resources and facilities

1

Description: *Adequate accommodation consistent with the Estates Standards Manual is available for all sessions of the programme.*

**Strengths:**

- Break out rooms were available at each site visited.
- Adequate equipment was made available both to tutors running groups and to offenders participating in them.

**Areas for improvement:**

- None of the sites visited had main group rooms which would be large enough to accommodate 12 offenders. Current facilities will not enable Think First to be run at full capacity as numbers increase over time.
- Facilities used to run groups and to store equipment and videotapes at the Kendal site were inadequate.
- At the Carlisle site there was considerable disruption to group sessions. Programme tutors were required to cover office duties on that site when running groups, other probation staff were permitted access to offenders while sessions were in progress and disruption was caused by the proximity of the group work site to the Bowling Green Hostel, as hostel residents sometimes caused a disturbance while groups were running.

### B1.2 Provision of information leaflets about the programme

1

Description: *There should be a set of leaflets for offenders, sentencers and staff clearly describing the programme and its requirements.*

**Strengths:**

- An information leaflet for participants had been produced which outlined programme requirements.
- Papers outlining Think First for sentencers had also been produced.
- A very full pack of documentation had been produced for staff, which was made available in September 2001.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The information leaflet for offenders did not include reference to diversity issues or other special needs as they relate specifically to accessibility to Think First.
- The area did not have summary information about the content and requirements of the programme for sentencers in leaflet form which could then be attached to PSRs.

### B2.1 Managing attendance

2

Description: *Offender attendance and absence are managed to achieve the required National Performance Management target for offender completions. Attendance is managed to achieve coherent delivery with full impact for all undertaking the programme. The maximum number of absences by any one offender is consistent with the requirements of the programme manual for the specific accredited programme.*

**Strengths:**

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- Staff were clear about their respective roles in the enforcement of orders and licences with programme conditions.
- Attendance registers clearly recorded offenders' attendance or absence in relation to all programme sessions.
- Absences were communicated in a timely way by programme staff to case managers. Appropriate action was generally then taken to follow-up absences and deal with them according to the requirements of national standards.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Attendance by offenders over the course of a programme was not being recorded in a way which was accessible to staff. There was no 'at-a-glance' picture of trends which might have become apparent, e.g. common drop-out points, difficult sessions or groups of sessions, tutors who may need to improve their ability to engage offenders over time.

**B2.2 Avoidance of cancellation or disruption to sessions**

1

Description: *Sessions are not cancelled or disrupted owing to offender crises, high workload or other pressures, and arrangements exist to deal with crises outside of the programme session. Sessions are delivered at the frequency defined in the programme manual.*

**Strengths:**

- A published calendar had been drawn up scheduling Think First groups until September 2002, with sessions being provided on a once or twice-weekly basis.
- Cumbria had had to postpone or cancel programmes because of low offender numbers, but on the whole not because of poor resourcing or staffing difficulties.
- Those offenders interviewed by HMIP were clear about the requirement for regular and reliable attendance and the need to focus on session content.

**Areas for improvement:**

- There was considerable disruption to programmes run on the Carlisle site (see B1.1).

**B2.3 Catch-up sessions/ Attendance**

1

Description: *Provision is made for catch-up sessions, or a 'bus stop' approach, to allow offenders who miss a session to continue with the programme. All offenders missing sessions, who are not excluded from the programme, should attend catch-up sessions, or in the case of a 'bus stop' approach be moved onto another programme within ten working days, to ensure full delivery of the programme. Treatment managers must specify arrangements for monitoring the integrity of catch-up sessions.*

**Strengths:**

- Cumbria's scheduling and pacing of sessions facilitated timely catch-up sessions. The efficient delivery of these extra sessions was encouraging in view of the area's geographical difficulties and the long distances which sometimes had to be travelled by tutors to provide catch-ups.
- The system of catch-ups being delivered by the third allocated tutor maximised consistency of delivery to offenders.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Catch-up sessions were not always clearly recorded as separate programme sessions in case records, especially where they took place on the same day as a standard scheduled programme session.

- There was no system for the monitoring of catch-up sessions by treatment managers as set out in Probation Circular 92/2001.

## B2.4 Timeliness

0

Description: *All offenders commence the programme, or specified pre-programme phase, within the first month of the order or within three months if other structured pre-programme work is undertaken. Occasionally, the timing may be different to permit other preliminary work to be completed, e.g. a programme of drug detoxification.*

Geographical considerations in Cumbria exacerbated the challenge of commencing offenders swiftly. Sometimes low offender numbers threatened the viability of scheduled groups, and high employment rates have made daytime groups problematic. Furthermore, the area's complex referral system to programmes caused further delays between sentence/release and programme commencement. The case file read revealed a lack of understanding that commencements could be appropriately delayed if additional work was required to make an offender 'programme-ready'. Of the sample read, only 6/27 cases started within one month. For the other 21 no reason for delay was recorded and there was no evidence of preparatory work being undertaken.

### **Strengths:**

- The area had recently begun to monitor timeliness of commencements.
- Relevant preliminary work was being done in a large number of cases as offenders awaited the start of programmes. However, this was not structured work undertaken to prepare them for Think First.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- There was a need to adjust scheduling to reflect the impetus to begin programmes promptly.
- There was no system in place for programmes staff to monitor potential allocations to Think First because offenders were not being tracked from the point of PSR proposal.
- Case managers and programme staff were not consistent and clear in the recording of the pre-programme sessions which marked the commencement of Think First, e.g. psychometric tests.
- The need for planned preparatory work was not being explicitly assessed, nor the nature of work recorded, in the case of offenders who were deemed not ready to begin a programme within one month.
- As no weekend groups were being run, commencement delays were caused for some offenders who did not have ready access to a programme as a result of work or other weekday commitments.

## B3.1 Staff selection

2

Description: *A staff selection procedure meeting the requirements of the programme manual is in place and only staff meeting the defined criteria are selected to deliver the programme.*

### **Strengths:**

- Area documentation clearly showed that all staff delivering Think First had successfully passed the required assessment centre selection process.
- Potential tutors were given full written information about the tutor role. A presentation outlining programme work was being offered by managers in Cumbria to candidates applying for tutor posts from outside the area.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The area had no deselection policy.

**B3.2 Staff roles and competencies**

1

Description: *Differences in role between grades or posts are clearly reflected in job descriptions. A defined set of competencies exist for each staff role involved in the programme, using those specified in the programme manuals and the national management manual.*

**Strengths:**

- Job descriptions existed outlining all the key roles.
- As a staff group, programme tutors expressed a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities.
- The programme manager also articulated a well-defined description of her own role in relation to the management of programmes.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Job descriptions had not been compiled as new documents, but had emerged as composite descriptions building on the basic component parts of PO or PSO roles. They therefore lacked clarity about the tasks relating to each role.
- Treatment managers were not universally clear about their own role and the tasks concomitant to it. This resulted in a lack of transparency about what this role entailed and some failure to accommodate all the facets of the job.

**B3.3 Preparation and debriefing time for tutors**

2

Description: *Tutors are allowed 1½ hours for preparation and debriefing for each session in addition to the programme delivery time.*

**Strengths**

- The hours each tutor worked were devoted solely to programme work. This made for focused attention on the part of programme delivery staff to good preparation and debriefing.
- Programme tutors were routinely resourced to spend the required amount of time on preparation and debriefing tasks.

**B3.4 Staff continuity**

2

Description: *Three leaders should normally be assigned to each accredited programme to allow for leave, sickness and other contingencies. All sessions of the programmes are delivered by at least two of the three assigned staff. Continuity is maintained by at least one of the staff members having run the previous session.*

**Strengths:**

- There was an impressive commitment by programme managers and tutors to offer consistency of delivery to offenders by doing appropriate contingency planning. Cumbria's success to date in providing continuity of staffing was attested to by the offenders interviewed during the audit.
- Sound resourcing by managers had enabled the allocation of a third tutor for each programme.
- Sessions were routinely delivered by two of the three allocated tutors.

**Areas for improvement:**

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- There was no indication that clear work had yet begun for continuity planning in respect of an expanded schedule including weekend programmes.

#### **B4.1 Training arrangements for new staff**

2

Description: *Training courses exist for all grades and roles involved in delivering the programme and all staff newly assigned to the programme receive training before running their first programme. The training delivered follows that defined in the programme training manual.*

##### **Strengths:**

- The area had accessed centrally provided training for the first group of tutors and had enhanced this with some in-house provision.
- A full record of staff trained in programme work had been provided.
- The area showed a commitment to only using staff who had received the recommended minimum training input.
- Training given to new staff had conformed to the standard and content required by the programme manual.

##### **Areas for improvement:**

- The accessing of training on a rolling basis for those staff new to accredited programmes needed attention.
- Training given to some of the Think First case managers had been rather late, i.e. early September 2001.
- Staff interviewed during the course of the audit were aware of their own individual ongoing training needs. However, a lack of practice-based supervision, particularly in respect of programme tutors, militated against this being adequately recorded or built into the training programme.

#### **B4.2 New staff paired with an experienced colleague when running their first programme**

2

Description: *Staff newly trained in a programme should be paired with a more experienced colleague when running their first course.*

As Cumbria was in only the first six months of the roll-out of Think First in its accredited form, this criterion would not normally be applicable at this stage as all staff had trained so recently. However, the area had valuable experience prior to this of delivering a non-accredited form of the Maguire offending behaviour group work programme, in which some of the current programme tutors were trained. This had left Cumbria with a useful pool of tutors trained in a programme based on similar methodological foundations and premised on the same theoretical basis.

##### **Strengths:**

- Tutors with some background in cognitive-behavioural group work techniques had been linked, where possible, to tutors who were new to group work or to working with offenders.

##### **Areas for improvement:**

- There was no structure for the formal group supervision of tutors by which learning could be pooled and shared between experienced and inexperienced staff.

### **B4.3 Training arrangements for experienced staff**

N/A

Description: *Competency-based booster and developmental training arrangements exist for all staff experienced in delivering the programme. All programme delivery staff are required to attend such training when they have demonstrated their competence to do so. [This will include delivering a stipulated minimum number of courses.]*

This criterion has not been assessed as nationally ongoing training for experienced tutors and treatment managers was still in the planning stages.

### **B4.4 Staff knowledge of the concepts and methods used in the programme**

1

Description: *All relevant staff have a knowledge of the programme model, targeting objectives and methods sufficient for effective delivery of the programme.*

#### **Strengths:**

- The programme manager articulated a clear understanding about the programme model, its objectives and methods.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Many staff acknowledged that their programme knowledge had faded since they had been trained, or felt the training had not covered the areas of theory and methodology sufficiently.
- Whilst knowledge of the targeting band for Think First was good, staff did not have the necessary knowledge of the research and evidence link underpinning it and this was detrimental to sound targeting practice.

### **B4.5 Staff knowledge of the theoretical and evidential basis of the programme**

0

Description: *All relevant staff have a knowledge of the programme's theoretical base and evidence, sufficient for effective delivery of the programme.*

#### **Strengths:**

- The training supplied had provided some treatment managers, programme tutors, case managers and PSR writers with an understanding that the programme deployed cognitive-behavioural techniques to challenge offending behaviour.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Staff knowledge was not sufficient to make programme delivery as effective as it could have been.
- The evidence base for deploying a cognitive-behavioural approach with offenders, whilst generally accepted by delivery staff, was not accepted by case managers or PSR writers.
- Those staff dealing directly with offenders did not demonstrate that they could make the required links between theory and their own practice. There was insufficient programme knowledge on the part of treatment managers, programme tutors, PSR writers and case managers. This contributed to a lack of confidence about programme delivery and reduced staff ownership of Think First.

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**B4.6 Supporting skills necessary to run programmes**

1

Description: *From interview, observation, appraisal and training audits all relevant staff have supporting skills including core group work skills, presentation skills, case management, etc. sufficient for the effective delivery of the programme.*

**Strengths:**

- There was strong evidence that many programme tutors had a wide repertoire of relevant skills which enhanced the standard of delivery.
- In some cases training needs had been identified and prioritised, e.g., motivational interviewing training in respect of case managers.

**Areas for improvement:**

- There was no system in place for the regular supervision of all staff involved in programme work. It was a cause for some concern that the addressing of skills deficits could not, with any confidence, be said to be recorded and addressed.
- There were clear deficits in supporting skills and areas for skills enhancement were not being regularly identified and updated.
- Training in relevant complementary skills areas was not being provided either within the context of the overall area training agenda, or within the programmes team through supervision or as whole team events.

**B5.1 Staff supervision and quality of practice**

0

Description: *All staff involved in the programme receive support and supervision at a frequency specified in the national management manual. This will enable tutor skills to be developed and problems resolved within the lifetime of the current programme by supervisors familiar with effectiveness methods and the programme. The manager to have observed staff in the delivery of the programme either directly or through video prior to each supervision session.*

**Strengths:**

- There was some evidence that informal systems of mutual support were in place for tutors to get assistance either from each other, the treatment managers, or the programme manager. Practice issues were also covered at team meetings.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Programme tutors were not being appropriately supervised and supported on a formal basis as specified in the national management manual.
- Very little video monitoring had taken place at the time of the audit. The requirement for treatment managers to monitor one in ten sessions was not being met, and the practice development opportunities of using videotaped practice as a focus for supervision were not being maximised.
- Treatment managers had not received their formal training and the treatment management role had not been established.

## B5.2 Staff appraisal

1

Description: *All members of staff involved with the programme have their competence to perform their assigned role assessed annually through the appraisal process. Staff whose performance is assessed as below the acceptable standard but making progress should be given further training and other assistance to improve their performance and a date set for review. Staff who are not making progress in achieving the required standard of performance should not take any further part in running the programme.*

### **Strengths:**

- A system for the annual appraisal of all staff was in place. These were carried out by the ACO in respect of the programme manager, and by the programme manager for treatment managers and programme tutors.
- A performance planning document formed the focus of interim review every three months and objectives relating to programme work were clearly incorporated.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- There was a need to inform existing appraisal systems by a robust process of ongoing supervision in relation to all staff roles.
- There was no policy covering the action to be taken in the event of underperformance of staff and the possible deselection of tutors.

## B6.1 Offender selection and assessment

0

Description: *Routine monitoring results confirm the profile of those entering the programme are consistent with the criminogenic needs addressed by the programme, the level of risk of reoffending and the level of risk of harm/dangerousness.*

There were evident problems with the targeting and assessment of offenders, with some of those being allocated to Think First having had very high OGRS scores. The area recognised that this had led to increased non-compliance and attrition levels in some of those cases. These difficulties with inappropriate targeting were perhaps understandable in view of the previous culture in Cumbria of a high volume throughput on *non*-accredited programmes. Under this scenario attention was not given to targeting offenders to specific programmes in the way now required of staff.

### **Strengths:**

- The profile of those undergoing programme work was being routinely monitored by the area.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The role of the programme team, and in particular treatment managers, in developing a strategy for influencing offender selection and assessment had not been established. This should have included plans to replace the current rather unwieldy assessment system with something more streamlined, less prone to delay, and more likely to promote good targeting.
- Targeting criteria were not clear enough and staff were not committed to accurate targeting.
- More training was required for PSR authors, specifically so as to aid tighter targeting.
- Some courts were sentencing offenders to Think First against the PSR proposal in cases where offenders' OGRS 2 scores did not fit within the recommended range. This indicated the need to give more accessible information to sentencers about the importance of good targeting practice and how this might inform sentencing.

## B6.2 Offender knowledge and understanding of the programme requirements

1

Description: *The requirements of the programme are clearly communicated on at least two occasions to each participant verbally and in writing, and there is evidence from signed consent forms, observation and/or interview that offenders know and understand the requirements.*

### Strengths:

- An information leaflet for offenders had been produced.
- A letter of understanding was usually signed by offenders, but not routinely kept on the case file.

### Areas for improvement:

- Recently produced information leaflets were not being used by all staff.
- There were few examples of offenders being informed both verbally and in writing about programme requirements.
- Occasions when offenders were informed about the programme were not always being clearly recorded.
- Induction did not include an initial Think First briefing.

## B6.3 Group size

2

Description: *For group programmes the maximum starting group size during the previous year did not exceed 12 and the minimum was not less than four.*

### Strengths:

- Although keeping sufficient numbers for ongoing group viability was proving difficult some of the time, the area adhered to the requirement for minimum group size at the start of a programme and did not exceed the maximum recommended number.

### Areas for improvement:

- It was of concern that not all group rooms would be able to accommodate 12 offenders.

## B6.4 Accessibility of group work programmes

0

Description: *If female or minority ethnic offenders are placed in mixed groups there are no singleton placements unless agreed to by the offender. Appropriate support arrangements should be evidenced for these programme participants.*

Low numbers of minority ethnic offenders had made it difficult to run specific Think First programmes for these offenders. There had been attempts to run all-women groups but this had also proved problematic. Whilst there was a level of awareness about the needs of these offenders, there was a lack of clear understanding about the appropriate inclusion of female and minority ethnic offenders on Think First. The availability in Cumbria of the Priestley 1:1 programme for offending behaviour work had led to a tendency to divert these offenders into this individual provision, rather than ensure accessibility to group work for those who did not come under the exclusion criteria in other regards.

### Strengths:

- Some limited written practice guidance in relation to diversity issues had been produced in July 2001.

### Areas for improvement:

- Offending behaviour work in a group work format was not always being made available to female and minority ethnic offenders.
- Further written guidance was needed which addressed the issue of ensuring equal access to group work programmes for all offenders.
- The interrelation between Think First and the emerging Priestley 1:1 programme had not been adequately explored or guidance provided, so that offenders were not always allocated to the resource which most appropriately matched their needs.

### **B7.1 Implementation of monitoring and evaluation design**

2

*Description: Interview and observation show that monitoring and evaluation arrangements are working as intended and are understood and supported by all staff involved. This should include both input and feedback of data to managers and practitioners at local level.*

At the time of the audit, IAPS had not yet been made available and the area was reliant on its own paper-based systems for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

#### **Strengths:**

- A monitoring and evaluation strategy in relation to Think First had recently been drawn up.
- Staff understood the importance of data collection and their own part in that process.
- The role of administrative support staff in servicing the monitoring and evaluation process appeared to be working well.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- There was a need for further general work to implement fully the monitoring and evaluation strategy.
- An area for particular attention was the monitoring and evaluation of the assessment and targeting stages of the programme process in order that this could be made more effective.

### **B7.2 Practice is informed by monitoring and evaluation evidence**

1

*Description: Consistent use is made of evaluation information as it becomes available by those with most direct responsibility, e.g. managers giving regular consideration to attendance and completion information, practitioners to offender feedback and attitude/behaviour change scores. Awareness/knowledge about evaluation results from the same programme operating elsewhere will be relevant.*

#### **Strengths:**

- The programmes team, programme manager and ACO (programmes) in particular, regularly informed all staff across the area about programme issues. These communications, often by e-mail, included monitoring and evaluation information.
- Most staff were interested in receiving relevant monitoring and evaluation data.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- There was a low level of awareness among staff generally about comparative data and results from other probation areas in the north-west region. Although there was evidence of some consultation at a senior management level, there was no means by which information about performance and practice in other Think First areas was being regularly communicated to practitioners.

- The feedback loop of monitoring and evaluation did not have its final links in place. Practitioners were not actively encouraged to comment on data given to them, to ask for relevant data which was not routinely supplied, and to consider improvements to their systems and practice which might have arisen from the findings.

## SECTION C: QUALITY OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY

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### C1.1 Adherence to programme manual

1

Description: *All sessions of the programme should be delivered in line with the instructions of the programme manual and demonstrate close adherence to the aims and objectives. There should be evident commitment to follow the intention/purpose of the exercises used, including repetition/reinforcement, where these are designed parts of the programme.*

#### **Strengths:**

- Session material was usually covered in the correct order and generally without addition or modification.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- It was evident that insufficient checking of offenders' learning was being done.
- There was some straying from the purpose of sessions (programme drift) and greater discipline was therefore required in this respect. Improved programme and theoretical knowledge could address this.
- Occasional timing problems within sessions required attention, especially where this led to sessions not being completed within the time allowed.

### C1.2 Adherence to treatment style

1

Description: *From direct observation or video evidence, programme tutors make competent and appropriate use of the techniques specified. There will be evidence of effective communication of the material, offender understanding and engagement. Pro-social attitudes are skilfully modelled by workers and are predominant in the group. This includes challenging pro-criminal or anti-social attitudes and behaviour.*

#### **Strengths:**

- There was evidence of the use of effective summarising and repetition techniques in the delivery of programme material to offenders.
- Strong links were established between related sessions and learning opportunities were maximised as a result.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Open questions were not being used consistently enough by programme tutors.

### C1.3 Group work skills

1

Description: *Programme tutors demonstrate effective management of the group, including effective co-working to facilitate learning by offenders and modelling pro-social behaviour. Disruption by participants is minimised.*

#### **Strengths:**

- Praise was given by tutors to encourage and foster positive engagement by group members.
- In some cases very good co-working between tutors made for seamless handovers and positive examples of session delivery.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Tutors were not always rewording complex language and reframing difficult concepts so as to aid offender comprehension.

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**C1.4 Programme delivered addressing race equality and diversity issues**

1

Description: *From direct observation or video evidence, issues of racism and sexism are effectively addressed whether arising within programme delivery or offender response. Staff are alert to race equality and diversity issues, they always respond appropriately and show that they have considered and developed strategies for responding, e.g. relevant resources and arguments, clarity about boundaries, approaches that may promote perspective taking.*

**Strengths:**

- From interviews with staff it was apparent that there was a commitment to addressing race equality and diversity issues within the programme and an understanding about the reasons for this.
- Some tutors were able to give examples of how they had appropriately adapted session material, e.g. scenario exercises, to reflect specific offender needs.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Some tutors lacked confidence in addressing race equality and diversity issues.
- The provision of specific training on diversity issues within the context of group work was needed to boost tutor confidence. It was hoped that area training planned for 2002 would be tailored to meet this need.

**C1.5 Programme integrity checklist**

1

Description: *The programme integrity checklist for each session is completed.*

The impact of programme integrity checklists had not yet become apparent in Cumbria. Once again this was largely because there was no structured framework of tutor supervision within which this practice development tool could usefully be deployed.

**Strengths:**

- Programme integrity checklists were generally being completed by tutors and sufficient time was allocated for this.

**Areas for improvement:**

- No benchmarking work had been done with tutors who therefore tended to assess their own performance at an inappropriately high level, failing to recognise areas for improvement.
- There was currently little monitoring of programme integrity checklists. Treatment managers were not working alongside tutors to help them gauge their performance accurately, nor were they working through supervision and ongoing training to enhance identified aspects of their work.

## C1.6 End of programme summary reports

1

Description: *The case record shows that at the end of the programme delivery staff prepare a summary for the case manager indicating:*

- *participation in the programme*
- *progress made*
- *an assessment of risk, including the identification of factors relevant to the individual concerned*
- *an assessment of the offender's coping skills*
- *likely scenarios for relapse, including immediate precursors and triggers which might give prior warning*
- *identification of remaining treatment needs.*

### **Strengths:**

- Cumbria had been proactive in developing its own post-programme report and, in the small number of cases of offender completions, this document had been comprehensively completed covering all the required elements.
- Programme tutors had a good understanding of what was required of them in completing post-programme reports and were committed to compiling a thorough document.
- Cumbria had developed the positive practice of investing time in producing a report which was useful to case managers in planning subsequent supervision with offenders.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- At this stage not all tutors had written post-programme reports and therefore the sample size seen during the audit was small. It was hoped that early signs of good practice in this area of programme work could be built upon over the coming months.
- The use of the post-programme report had not yet been reviewed. Case managers were not consulted about the usability of the report so it was not yet as beneficial as possible to the supervision planning process.

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## SECTION D: CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

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### D1.1 Initial supervision plan sets relevant objectives for the offender

0

Description: *The supervision plan integrates the programme into the overall plan of work for each offender. Specific objectives are set in a sequence appropriate for the offender and are recorded in the initial supervision plan and regularly reviewed. Assessments should be based on OASys when available, or ACE or LSI-R before then.*

**Strengths:**

- Most case managers were including the completion of Think First as a supervision objective in the initial supervision plan.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Initial supervision plans were not of a consistently high standard. It was hoped that OASys would assist with this.
- Information gathered during the PSR stage and early phases of contact with the offender, e.g. ACE assessment, was not being used for supervision planning.
- Programme work was not being fully integrated into overall supervision planning.
- Objectives were not consistently SMART and therefore did not provide a clear focus for supervision.

### D1.2 Effective liaison arrangements between the case manager and programme staff

1

Description: *The case records show, and interviews with selected staff indicate, the existence of effective arrangements for liaison, handover and communication. This should include the three-way meetings between the case manager, programme staff and the offender at the end of the programme.*

Cumbria's chosen model of staffing for Think First had to date been to have whole-time specialist programme tutors delivering the programme. This had a number of advantages, not least that these staff were not distracted by having to combine a programme delivery role with, for example, the duties of managing a caseload. However, one of the disadvantages of the model in Cumbria was that as no programme staff were located within or attached to case management units, there was little naturally-occurring opportunity for liaison, which would have given overall benefit to the service delivered to offenders. This separation seemed to have developed at the time when the area was delivering non-accredited programmes, when case managers felt their role to be at best distant from, and at worst unconnected to, programme delivery. It was against this backdrop that the liaison arrangements between case managers and programme staff were explored.

**Strengths:**

- Most case managers saw the potential for themselves to have a proactive and involved role alongside programme tutors in the overall delivery of Think First.
- Many case managers felt the training delivered nationally had been helpful in outlining the nature of their role in liaising with programme staff.
- There were some positive examples in the case file read of helpful liaison between programme staff and case managers, e.g. use of e-mail contact, constructive use of post-programme three-way meetings.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Some case managers had only received their training in September 2001. There was a need, therefore, for a relaunching of the case manager role to build on new commitment from this staff group.
- There was no regular mechanism in place for Think First case managers to meet together and liaise formally with programme staff about best practice issues.
- The sequence of events in respect of individual offenders could not always be swiftly and easily determined. Records did not reliably have an holistic identity, as methods of clear and consistent recording of staff liaison had not been agreed and adopted.

### **D1.3 Supporting the offender through all phases of the programme**

1

*Description: The case manager is responsible for preparing and motivating the offender prior to their participation on an accredited programme and for reinforcing learning during the programme.*

Although it was evident that the case management support role required further development in Cumbria, it was felt by HMIP that Cumbria had the potential to build on plans and progress already made to strengthen work in this area.

#### **Strengths:**

- On the whole, case managers responded well when alerted by programme staff to problems with offenders' attendance or attitude.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Pre-programme sessions were not being delivered consistently as two identifiable pieces of work by case managers.
- Case managers did not always demonstrate a proactive approach towards motivating offenders and removing obstacles to their attendance at, and engagement with, programmes.
- Case managers were not reinforcing learning by offenders during the course of a programme. There was no policy on the frequency of contact and nature of the supporting role of the case manager during this period.

### **D1.4 Understanding and knowledge of programme methods**

0

*Description: Interviews with case managers demonstrate they have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the programme and that they either have the requisite skills to undertake reinforcement, follow-up and/or relapse prevention work, or the ability to refer to staff possessing these skills.*

#### **Strengths:**

- Case managers had accrued a basic knowledge of programme methods as a result of attendance at Cumbria's two-day What Works Conference (incorporating the Think First context setting day), and also one further days' input specific to their role.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Whilst some of the case manager training had been delivered in March 2001, others had not received their training until September 2001. This meant the case manager role, and the importance of programme knowledge within that role, had not yet been established.
- Skills training for case managers covering motivational interviewing and programme model and session content had not been accessed by all relevant staff.

- No provision had been planned for case managers to further explore their role in relation to relapse-prevention work with offenders.

### D1.5 Monitoring of attendance and enforcement

2

Description: *Responsibility for the monitoring of attendance and the enforcement of orders is clearly defined with appropriate systems in place. There is evidence of effective enforcement in all cases.*

#### **Strengths:**

- Recording of attendance was generally clear and attendance at programme sessions was seen as having appropriate priority.
- Where offenders were missing programme sessions, most absences were followed up within the stated national standards time scales.
- There was effective liaison between programme staff and case managers.

### D1.6 Documentation

1

Description: *The case record shows that all relevant documentation is completed.*

#### **Strengths:**

- Case files were easy to follow, with documents grouped in a logical order.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- The signed statement of understanding, or a copy of it, was not always lodged on the case file.
- Post-programme reports were not stored on the case file in addition to within central programme unit records.

### D1.7 End of programme review

1

Description: *The supervision plan review for each offender shows that at the end of the programme appropriate individual objectives are identified to strengthen and build on the progress made, and to achieve successful community reintegration.*

#### **Strengths:**

- The small sample of post-programme reports seen by HMIP was of an encouraging standard and augured well for the ultimately positive role of the post-programme report in subsequent supervision planning.
- In supervision plan reviews issues of community reintegration were being addressed well in many cases.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- The post-programme report was not being used to identify areas for further work.
- The area had not yet explored ways of promoting the complementary nature of the post-programme report and the supervision plan review.
- Supervision plan reviews did not have a clear enough focus and the objectives contained in them were not SMART.

**D1.8 Reinforcement and relapse prevention work**

N/A

*Description: There are specific arrangements in place to reinforce learning and for relapse prevention work, including booster programmes where required by the programme, delivered by appropriately trained and skilled staff.*

This criterion has not been assessed as the probation area was awaiting the national development of a cognitive-behavioural booster programme designed to reinforce learning.

## **Next Steps**

HMIP will employ a three-tier follow-up process, depending on a probation area's performance rating:

### ***Level 1 follow-up***

A level 1 performing area will have met or exceeded the agreed IQR figure of 70%. (This figure rises to 75% for year two and 90% for year three). The follow-up will normally be conducted within one year of the audit report being received by the probation area, and will usually be limited to a desktop exercise, depending on the advance information received, focusing on the areas for improvement for criteria that were not fully met in the original audit.

### ***Level 2 follow-up***

A level 2 area will not have reached the 70% quality rating for programme delivery, but will have attained at least 40%. The follow-up will combine a request for written information and a one-two day visit to the probation area with HMIP auditing further videotapes and case files. This will normally take place within one year of the audit report being received by the probation area.

### ***Level 3 follow-up***

A level 3 area will have scored less than a 40% IQR. The follow-up will involve a fresh audit of the probation area and will normally be completed within six months of the audit report being received by the probation area.

Cumbria Probation Area achieved an IQR of **55%** and is a **level 2 area**. A limited follow-up audit will be carried out in one year's time. The area should pay particular attention to mandatory items, which have not been fully met.

This report and the IQR will be received by the Joint Accreditation Panel in February 2002.