



HM Inspectorate of Probation

# AUDIT OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES

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

*Level 3 Follow-up Report on:  
Devon & Cornwall Probation Area –  
Think First*

July 2003

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## Acknowledgements:

We are grateful for the cooperation of staff from the Devon & Cornwall Probation Area in completing this follow-up audit.

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## Glossary

ACO	Assistant chief officer
CO	Chief officer
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
IQR	Implementation Quality Rating
N/A	Criteria not assessed
NPD	National Probation Directorate
NPS	National Probation Service
OASys	Offender Assessment System
PSR	Pre-sentence report
TPO	Trainee probation officer

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## 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 follow-up 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.

For this follow-up audit, those criteria that were fully met on the original audit have not been re-assessed. The marks awarded then have therefore been carried over. The only exception to this relates to those criteria that are informed by video monitoring scores (see C1.1-C1.3). Revised scores have been awarded for these criteria based on up-to-date video monitoring scores.

## Overview:

- The original audit of Think First in Devon & Cornwall took place in May 2002.
- The follow-up audit February 2003 comprised the following elements: video monitoring of 12 recorded Think First sessions; a case file read; interviews with the Director of Operations, the ACO with programme responsibility, programme and treatment managers, tutors, case managers and PSR writers. Three site visits and seven offender interviews were also carried out.
- Only those criteria not fully met at the original audit have been reassessed and new marks awarded.
- In relation to NPD recommendations in the original report, progress has been discussed with the Directorate's Head of Offending Behaviour Programmes.

## **Findings:**

The Devon & Cornwall Probation Area had positively engaged in the improvement process needed following the original audit of Think First in May 2002. A detailed action plan was devised, focusing particularly on mandatory unmet criteria. Most recommendations had been addressed and the area achieved increased scores in all of the four sections of the report.

The commitment of senior managers to the proper delivery of accredited programmes and Think First in particular was evident from its investment in training and additional staff to deliver and oversee the programme. The resources given over to programme and treatment management were of particular note and had led to enhanced supervision arrangements for Think First tutors. The major area for development remained case management. There was evidence of better liaison between case managers and programme staff and the former had received additional training about Think First. However, pre-programme work was not consistently recorded across the area and supervision planning and review had not improved since the original audit. The new service design cluster model appeared to have worked well in fostering cooperation between case managers, report writers and programme staff, but this arrangement needed to be strengthened in the written case management guidance that is being produced by senior managers.

Progress would have been further enhanced by ongoing attention to issues of attrition and reasons for non-completion of programmes and continued integration of the case management role. In the meantime, Devon & Cornwall had made good progress and raised the standard of delivery of Think First in many significant respects.

## ***Next Steps***

Devon & Cornwall Probation Area achieved a revised IQR of **71%**.

This audit follow-up report and the IQR will be received by the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel in Autumn 2003.

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## SECTION A: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

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Recommendation(s) from the original audit which relate to this section.

*The CO should ensure that the area:*

- *at a senior management level uses monitoring and evaluation information to inform planning and improve performance (A1.1);*
- *makes available on a regular basis research information and feedback on local performance to all staff to enhance ownership and use of accredited programmes (A1.3).*

- ▶▶ **Fully met:** The area provided evidence that monitoring and evaluation information was being regularly considered and used by senior managers to inform resource planning. A good example of this was the review of the Plymouth delivery site where low completion figures indicated the need for additional programme management time which was then allocated.
- ▶▶ **Fully met:** Performance information was regularly shared in team meetings and the area's process improvement group had focused on strategies to improve completions. Pathfinder interim evaluation data had also been discussed with all managers, as well as the most research on attrition by Hazel Kempshall.

### A1.1 Committed leadership

2

- In May 2002 a new ACO had been appointed with area responsibility for programmes and, in particular, for implementing the improvement plan following the original audit.
- Senior and divisional management minutes evidenced increased operational oversight of Think First.

### A1.2 Management structures

2

- Additional programme management time had been allocated to Think First. The decision to increase this resource in Plymouth, following disappointing completion rates in that division, was a good example of how management structures had been sensibly adjusted in the light of monitoring information.
- Clear, competency-based job descriptions had been produced for all relevant staff.
- There had been an increase in treatment management posts and it was evident that the quality and consistency of tutor supervision had markedly improved.
- The treatment management provision in Cornwall was not adequate as supervision arrangements were less developed than in Devon.

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

1

- Additional ‘in house’ case management training had been provided in November 2002. This had helped reduce the ambivalence case managers had expressed about the programme at the original audit.
- Managers acknowledged that there were still inconsistent referral rates across the divisions, although the aggregated returns for the NPD were showing a welcome increase in commencements. A review had also been undertaken to see if more resettlement cases could be referred to Think First.
- The cluster model had done much to instil greater cooperation between programme staff, PSR authors and case managers.

**A1.4 Effective communication with sentencers**

2

- The Director of Operations had met with all but one of the resident judges to talk to them about accredited programmes in general and Think First in particular.
- The area provided an induction programme for new recorders.
- A programme of lunchtime workshops provided judges and magistrates with information about the services provided by Devon & Cornwall, including accredited programmes.
- A detailed sentencer satisfaction survey had been produced in August 2002 which included a section on accredited programmes. Magistrates and judges expressed a high degree of satisfaction on the level of information they received about the Think First programme.

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## SECTION B: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

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Recommendation(s) from the original audit which relate to this section.

*The CO should ensure that the area:*

- *produces a clear action plan to reduce attrition rates and secure compliance with the programme (B2.1);*
- *manages staffing arrangements to facilitate scheduling and continuity in delivery (B2.2, B3.4);*
- *improves the timeliness of offender commencement on programmes (B2.4);*
- *adopts and disseminates competency-based job descriptions for all staff working in support or delivery of the programme, to promote a mutual understanding of each person's role (B3.2);*
- *provides consistent supervision and ongoing appraisal for all programme staff (B5.1, B5.2);*
- *amends its instructions for the assessment and targeting of offenders and develops a strategy to improve referral rates (B6.1);*
- *makes arrangements to provide equal access to programmes for all offenders (B6.4).*

- ▶▶ **Largely met.** The ACO for programmes was a member of the regional What Works group looking at completions and attrition rates. The research from Hazel Kempshall had been widely circulated in the area. Devon & Cornwall had also produced a Think First video to use with prospective offenders to encourage their participation on the programme.
- ▶▶ **Fully met.** The area had published calendars for Think First and three tutors were routinely assigned to each programme to ensure continuity of delivery and that catch-up sessions were delivered.
- ▶▶ **Not met.** Some offenders still faced significant delays to programme start and offenders' readiness to start Think First was not consistently recorded.
- ▶▶ **Largely met.** Competency-based job descriptions had been produced for most staff delivering and managing the programme. The cluster model has also fostered a greater understanding of staff roles.
- ▶▶ **Fully met.** Staff supervision and appraisal arrangements had greatly improved since the original audit.
- ▶▶ **Largely met.** The case file reading showed good results for offender selection and targeting. Court managers had worked hard to ensure better targeting of Think First proposals. An area instruction on offender assessment and targeting would further consolidate the progress made.
- ▶▶ **Largely met.** A policy had been drafted regarding women accessing Think First, but this had yet to be implemented, and there was still confusion amongst practitioners as to issues such as informed offender consent and singleton placements.

### B1.1 Resources and facilities

2
---

*Criterion fully met at original audit.*

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

1

- A Think First information leaflet for offenders had been produced in June 2002. Offenders also signed and received a copy of a statement of understanding explaining the requirements of the programme.
- The information leaflet failed to cross-reference the NPS complaints procedure and did not take into account wider diversity issues.

**B2.1 Managing attendance**

1

- Offender attendance and absence were well managed by case managers and programme staff.
- The process improvement group had met to look at improving completion rates during the summer of 2002 and a number of initiatives had been taken to tackle problems of attrition, e.g. the use of the Think First video with prospective participants.
- The area had still to define fully its management strategy for meeting the required national performance management target. Commencement figures had shown a welcome increase, but attrition rates remained high.

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

2

- Area-wide calendars outlining the schedule for Think First delivery had been produced and programme scheduling was more consistent.
- Offenders were given written details outlining dates of sessions and other attendance requirements.
- No groups had been cancelled and individual programme sessions were only cancelled in exceptional circumstances.
- Case managers were responding well to offender crises, once alerted by tutors, and these were being addressed outside the programme setting rather than being allowed to disrupt Think First delivery.

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

2

- Catch-up arrangements were well managed and the case file results demonstrated that this was a strong area of practice.
- Treatment managers confirmed that they were videotaping and observing the required number of catch-up sessions.
- Occasionally, scheduling difficulties had resulted in catch-ups being delivered out of sequence from the programme.

**B2.4 Timeliness**

0

- Results for the timeliness of programme commencements remained disappointing, scoring only 0.7 in the case file results.

**B3.1 Staff selection**

2

*Criterion fully met at original audit.*

<b>B3.2</b>	<b>Staff roles and competencies</b>	<b>1</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competency-based job descriptions had been developed for most of the key roles for staff delivering or managing the programme.</li> <li>• Staff were clear about their respective responsibilities and understood the role of colleagues.</li> </ul>	
<b>B3.3</b>	<b>Preparation and debriefing time for tutors</b>	<b>2</b>
	<i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	
<b>B3.4</b>	<b>Staff continuity</b>	<b>2</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three tutors were routinely allocated to each programme.</li> <li>• The area had clarified the position of TPOs delivering Think First and had disseminated the advice received from the regional consortium manager.</li> <li>• Continuity of programme delivery was being achieved.</li> </ul>	
<b>B4.1</b>	<b>Training arrangements for new staff</b>	<b>2</b>
	<i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	
<b>B4.2</b>	<b>New staff paired with an experienced colleague when running their first programme</b>	<b>2</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New staff were routinely being paired with experienced colleagues and tutors confirmed that these arrangements were working well.</li> </ul>	
<b>B4.3</b>	<b>Training arrangements for experienced staff</b>	<b>0</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area had submitted a bid for tutor accreditation training in September 2002, but the regional consortium had not yet provided this.</li> <li>• Some treatment managers had attended HMIP's area assessor training but had not yet had the opportunity to undertake the NPD's treatment manager training, although an event was planned.</li> </ul>	
<b>B4.4</b>	<b>Staff knowledge of the concepts and methods used in the programme</b>	<b>1</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutors and most case managers displayed a good knowledge about programme concepts and methods.</li> <li>• PSR authors remained unsure about the programme model and lacked the detailed knowledge about Think First to fully inform offenders about the commitment involved.</li> </ul>	
<b>B4.5</b>	<b>Staff knowledge of the theoretical and evidential basis of the programme</b>	<b>2</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There had been a discernible improvement in staff knowledge about the theoretical and evidence base for the programme.</li> <li>• Information from the Probation Studies Unit at Oxford University had been widely shared with managers and staff. This included factors affecting completions and reconviction data.</li> <li>• Hazel Kempshall's research on attrition had also been circulated within the area.</li> </ul>	

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

2

*Criterion fully met at original audit.*

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

2

- The quality, reliability and consistency of supervision had greatly increased.
- Supervision notes were detailed and helpfully identified strengths and areas for improvement.
- Scores in two of the three sections of the video monitoring forms showed increasing congruence between area assessors and treatment managers suggesting more accurate assessment of tutor performance locally.

**B5.2 Staff appraisal**

2

- All relevant staff now received annual appraisals in line with area policy.
- Sample appraisal reports confirmed that appropriate attention was paid to the existing competency framework.
- Continued use was made of treatment management supervision notes and other records in appraisal reports.

**B6.1 Offender selection and assessment**

1

- Of the 34 Think First cases reviewed, 22 fell within the correct targeting matrix band.
- E-mail guidance had been issued to all managers on targeting and sequencing of programmes.
- Programme staff and particularly treatment managers were used as a consultancy resource for PSR authors considering Think First.
- Courts and assessment team middle managers had been tasked with ensuring targeting matrices were completed on all relevant cases.
- The area still lacked a written policy on offender selection and assessment.

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

1

- Case file results showed that the majority of offenders had been given information about the programme on at least two separate occasions.
- Offenders confirmed that they had adequate knowledge prior to starting the programme and most of those interviewed spoke positively about Think First.

**B6.3 Group size**

2

- Records confirmed that the majority of groups conformed to the minimum and maximum starting size.
- On two occasions limited overbooking occurred but this was within the permissible boundaries.

**B6.4 Accessibility of group work programmes**

1

- An all women group had run successfully in Cornwall.

- A policy had been drafted regarding women accessing Think First, but this had yet to be implemented, and there was still a measure of confusion amongst practitioners as to issues such as informed offender consent and singleton placements.
- The diversity training for programme tutors had made this group of staff more aware of the support arrangements required for minority ethnic and women offenders.

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

2

- Each division continued to collect data on referral, attrition and completion and there was more assimilation of this information into an area-wide picture.
- Senior managers were supplied with the ‘critical few’ pieces of data regarding Think First which assisted their oversight of the programme.
- There was a regular e-mail exchange of information about the programme with relevant staff.

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

1

- The assessment and targeting process had been amended, with more scrutiny by managers as a result of low referral rates.
- Work had been done to examine reasons for attrition and possible courses of action to address this.
- Managers had commissioned research into Think First commencements and produced a video of offenders who had completed the programme to encourage participation and attendance.
- There was greater evidence of sharing information and good practice within the region, e.g. the work of the attrition group established by the regional What Works manager, than at the original audit.
- The area still lacked an overarching information strategy and many of the initiatives were practitioner or first line manager led, rather than directed by the senior management team.

## SECTION C: QUALITY OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY

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Recommendation(s) from the original audit which relate to this section.

*The CO should ensure that the area:*

- *equips staff to address diversity issues in the delivery of the programme (C1.4).*

▶▶ *Fully met.* Diversity training had been organised for programme staff, run by Tukelo Associates. Staff spoke very positively about this training.

### C1.1 Adherence to programme manual

1

- Programme material was covered in the correct order.
- Tutors maintained a helpful focus on the aims and objectives of the session.
- Exercises were not always run to time, with some elements taking too long leaving little space for other exercises to be explained and conducted adequately.

### C1.2 Adherence to treatment style

2

- There was good use of open questions and reflective listening.
- Participants were encouraged to validate ideas for themselves.
- Tutors could have elicited more self-motivating statements from offenders.

### C1.3 Group work skills

2

- Tutors were clearly spoken and used appropriate language.
- There was good use of praise.
- Groups were well managed and there was evidence of tutors ensuring all group members were contributing to sessions.
- Co-working skills required further attention and handovers were not always handled well.

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

1

- Diversity training had been made available to staff and tutor confidence in managing these issues had improved significantly.
- Tutors had also worked hard to review programme sessions in detail to make the material appropriate for individual offenders.
- The area would have benefited from a greater sharing of good practice on diversity issues within Devon & Cornwall and other services.

### C1.5 Programme integrity checklist

2

*Criterion fully met at original audit.*

**C1.6 End of programme summary reports**

1

- Programme summary reports covered all the required elements and case managers spoke positively about their value in the subsequent supervision of offenders.
- Case file results were disappointing in the limited use made of post-programme reports in formulating ongoing supervision objectives.

## SECTION D: CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Recommendation(s) from the original audit which relate to this section.

*The CO should ensure that the area:*

- *improves the quality of supervision planning, including the setting of SMART objectives (D1.1);*
- *amends case management instructions to provide consistent preparation and support for offenders attending the programme (D1.3);*
- *increases the confidence and skills of case management staff to reinforce programme learning (D1.3, D1.4);*
- *provides offenders with post-programme follow-up and monitors that this is carried out (D1.7).*

- ▶▶ **Not met:** Managers anticipated better quality supervision planning following the introduction of OASys, which was yet to be fully implemented. Improvements were not evident from the case files read.
- ▶▶ **Not met:** A new service design had been established providing a sound framework for the delivery of case management across the area. However, written guidance relating to programme preparation and support was not due to be completed until the Autumn of 2003.
- ▶▶ **Largely met:** Case managers were confident of their skills to fulfil their programme duties but identified the need to boost their knowledge to improve their capacity to reinforce offender learning.
- ▶▶ **Not met:** It was evident that the delivery of post-programme work was not well established and there was no monitoring system to show if it had been carried out.

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

0

- Supervision plans provided insufficient evidence of linking the programme into the overall plan of work for the offender.
- Only one case out of 34 cases examined was considered to have fully SMART objectives relating to Think First.
- Staff were not clear about the requirement to complete the evaluation and monitoring tool and their use in the formation of supervision plans reflected this.
- The overall score for this criterion in the case file reading was 0.6.

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

1

- One-third of the case files read showed evidence of liaison between the case manager and programme staff. Attendance by the case manager at the post-programme meeting had taken place in seven of 11 relevant cases.
- Improvements in communication had been facilitated through the implementation of the cluster system. Pre-group three-way meetings, together with linkage between case managers and programme staff, had fostered shared ownership of cases and provided the backdrop for joint planning.
- Staff were confident about the liaison arrangements in place.

<b>D1.3</b>	<b>Supporting the offender through all phases of the programme</b>	<b>0</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-programme work was well recorded in some cases, but this was not consistent across all files. There had been no overall improvement since the original audit.</li> <li>• Case managers were not sure about area requirements for contact during programme delivery. Levels of contact appeared to depend more on proximity to the Think First delivery site than on a planning process.</li> <li>• Whilst there was good evidence of case managers dealing with individual problems and crises, there was little to demonstrate reinforcement of learning during the programme.</li> </ul>	
<b>D1.4</b>	<b>Understanding and knowledge of programme methods</b>	<b>1</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training had been delivered to case managers and PSR writers and they were able to give a general account of programme methods.</li> <li>• Case managers recognised the need to boost their knowledge so that they could more confidently engage with learning reinforcement.</li> </ul>	
<b>D1.5</b>	<b>Monitoring of attendance and enforcement</b>	<b>2</b>
	<i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	
<b>D1.6</b>	<b>Documentation</b>	<b>1</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all files contained the relevant documentation, in particular a number were missing supervision plan reviews.</li> <li>• There had been no change in the local policy not to store the evaluation and monitoring assessment tool on the case file. Consequently, there was little evidence of them on the case files read.</li> </ul>	
<b>D1.7</b>	<b>End of programme review</b>	<b>0</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was strong evidence of continued attention to community reintegration.</li> <li>• Post-programme reports were welcomed by case managers, but had yet to influence supervision plan reviews.</li> <li>• Among those who had completed Think First there were no cases where fully SMART post-programme objectives had been set.</li> <li>• Tension existed between completion of the post-programme work and a drive towards early revocation of orders.</li> </ul>	
<b>D1.8</b>	<b>Reinforcement and relapse prevention work</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	<i>Criterion not assessed at original audit.</i>	