



HM Inspectorate of Probation

AUDIT OF
ACCREDITED
PROGRAMMES

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

*Report on:
Dorset – Think First*

September 2002

Acknowledgements:

We are grateful for the cooperation of staff from the Dorset 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
CRO	Community Rehabilitation Order
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
NPD	National Probation Directorate
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OGRS	Offender Group Reconviction Scale
PIP	Performance Inspection Programme
PSR	Pre-sentence report

Contents

	Page
Context:	3
Scoring Approach:	3
Overview:	4
Findings and recommendations:	5
<u>SECTION A: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>SECTION B: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>SECTION C: QUALITY OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>SECTION D: CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	<u>23</u>
Next Steps:	28
Scoring summary sheet:	29

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:

Committed leadership and supportive management	20%
Programme management responsibilities	30%
Quality of programme delivery	30%
Case management responsibilities	20%

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.
- Dorset had been running Think First from one site in Poole since March 2001. Checks were made on resources and facilities at this location.
- Nine Think First videos were assessed.
- Interviews were held with the ACO responsible for accredited programmes, the programme manager, the information and communications officer, three treatment managers, and a representative selection of programme tutors, case managers and PSR authors, together with several of their managers. Nine offenders, all of whom had completed the programme, were interviewed at the Poole site.
- Two of the audit criteria were not assessed – B4.3 and D1.8. The area had not yet been in a position to access national training for experienced tutors (B4.3); and accreditation of the Cognitive Skills Booster Programme to reinforce offender learning was awaited nationally (D1.8).
- This audit report refers solely to one accredited general offending behaviour programme: Think First.

Findings:

Dorset's commitment to What Works and accredited programmes was reflected in the area business plan, in the role played by senior managers in context setting events and in the regularity of discussions of Think First at senior and operational manager meetings. Magistrates were kept informed of What Works developments and the CO had contributed an article for the Magistrates' Training Bulletin. The area's experience in delivering the McGuire programme had stood it in good stead and a comprehensive Think First implementation plan had considered possible threats to achieving the target number of completions. The OGRS 2 profile of case records sampled showed that area policy in relation to eligibility was being closely followed, although there was still work to be done in relation to assessment of suitability, judging by comments made by PSR authors and tutors.

The area had decided to use a 'product champion approach' and harness the programme centre's experience in programme delivery prior to roll-out across the county. Some excellent initiatives to increase completion rates had been developed through the energetic collaboration between the programme manager and treatment managers. Latterly, treatment managers had been involved in running workshops for new case managers to foster a fuller appreciation of the pivotal nature of the role, and plans were in place to mentor new staff where required. However, delays in extending the case manager role outside the programmes team, together with the absence of national training for treatment managers, had affected the confidence and capacity of treatment managers to assure fully quality of delivery. Greater emphasis was needed on practice development and refining tutor skills, particularly when it came to managing diversity. Nonetheless, a satisfactory standard of delivery had been achieved to date.

Although some recording practice was impressive, e.g. checklists of work undertaken pre-programme, recording of catch-ups, supervision plans needed attention. This was especially so in relation to integrating the programme within the overall plan of work for the offender, setting SMART objectives and regularly reviewing these objectives taking account of post- programme reports.

The area had been attentive to evaluation and monitoring requirements for Think First and there were many examples of practice having been modified as a result of performance monitoring. However, not all staff received regular easily understood information on Think First performance (either local, regional or national). Ensuring that relevant staff had current performance information would become more critical as the case management function was taken across the county and broader ownership was required.

Recommendations

The CO should ensure that the area:

- *enables treatment managers to undertake fully their role in relation to skills development, so that learning objectives for delivery staff are clearly identified(A1.2);*
- *takes account of all stakeholders, including judges and defense solicitors, in information-giving events for sentencers (B1.2);*
- *amends sentencer and offender leaflets to make specific reference to the needs of women and minority ethnic offenders (B1.2);*
- *videotapes and carries out integrity checks of catch-up sessions (B2.3);*
- *produces job descriptions which reflect the competencies of all staff involved in Think First (B3.2);*
- *sets up a means by which staff can refresh their knowledge of Think First and promotes current research findings on the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural programmes (B4.4, B4.5);*
- *establishes supervision arrangements for sessional tutors which are as robust as those of their full-time colleagues (B5.1);*
- *improves the accessibility of Think First to women and minority ethnic offenders (B6.4);*

- *regularly communicates performance information (local, regional and national) to all relevant staff groups (B7.1);*
- *institutes practice development opportunities for all staff involved with Think First to improve responses to common issues such as dealing with diversity and challenging anti-social behaviour (C1.4);*
- *uses case managers to reinforce offender learning in the course of the programme (D1.3);*
- *monitors the timeliness of enforcement in relation to programme and other attendance requirements (D1.5);*
- *integrates Think First and end of programme reports into supervision planning through the use of SMART objectives (D1.7).*

The NPD should ensure that:

- the performance information it receives from local areas is fed back to them on a regular basis.

SECTION A: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

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 targets were included in the Area Three-Year Plan 2001/2004 and associated objectives set out in the Business Plan for 2002/2003.
- The Think First objectives in the business plan for the probation centre in Poole linked in closely to area objectives.
- Senior managers had played a key role in introducing each context setting event.
- Minutes of senior management meetings and county managers' group meetings attested to the fact that Think First issues were regularly discussed. The Probation Board received quarterly What Works progress reports from the ACO with responsibility for accredited programmes.
- The What Works implementation plan had identified threats and contingency measures. This showed that from an early stage attention had been given to anticipating and overcoming obstacles.
- The area's experience in running the legacy McGuire programme had assisted in the allocation of sufficient resources for the proper running of Think First. A workload management strategy had been implemented to allow case managers the space to carry out their allotted tasks effectively by reducing the availability of community sentences to offenders with an OGRS 2 score of less than 30%.

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:

- The area had produced an organisational chart outlining the management structures for the delivery of the programme.
- The 'product champion approach' had allowed managers to establish principles and standards of good practice and prepare for the roll-out of the case management function beyond the programme centre.
- The programmes team had instituted mentoring of case managers from other teams so as to offer support and assistance to staff taking on this new role. PSR writers said they had ongoing dialogue with the programmes team.

Areas for improvement:

- Delays in extending the case manager role beyond the centre had created additional pressures in terms of ensuring staff ownership (see A1.3) and impacted upon the integration of Think First across the work of the area.
 - Treatment managers had had to continue undertaking case management tasks, thus limiting the time available for their treatment integrity responsibilities.
-

- Detailed competency-based job descriptions for programme staff were in draft form and had not yet been seen by all relevant staff.

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:

- There was evidence of improvements in referral rates from parts of the county which had historically been reluctant to refer offenders to programmes. The programme manager stated that monitoring of non-referrals of eligible offenders showed that reasons for this were legitimate.
- Three of four senior managers and 85% of other staff (excluding administrative staff) had attended context setting events. There was a rolling programme of these events to meet the needs of new staff.

Areas for improvement:

- Staff interviewed expressed mixed views about Think First. Several tutors said they did not think the programme was suitable for offenders with substance misuse problems, driving offences or low motivation. One case manager said her experience of offenders going through the programme was positive, another that he was sceptical of the value of Think First. This suggested the need for broader ownership of the programme together with access to up-to-date information on the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural programmes with offenders. It also reflected the differential experiences of staff based at the probation centre and in field teams.

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:

- Probation fora for magistrates were used as a vehicle for giving sentencers comprehensive information about accredited programmes. These annual meetings were supplemented by specific training for new magistrates where members of the probation centre were involved in presenting information about Think First.
- The area had ensured that full feedback on these events was sought from magistrates.
- Following the PIP inspection, which had found poor concordance rates in the area, sampling of PSRs had shown improving rates during the period concerned (although missing data made it difficult to know how reliable this finding was).
- Sentencer leaflets set out information about the Think First programme and the additional support offered to offenders with basic skills deficits.

Areas for improvement:

- Although an event for defence solicitors about accredited programmes had been organised the previous year, this had not attracted interest and no further attempts had been made to engage with this group of stakeholders.
- There had been only limited communication with judges in relation to accredited programmes.

SECTION B: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

B1.1 Resources and facilities

2

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

Strengths:

- The group room at Poole was sufficiently large enough to accommodate 12 offenders and two tutors. There were subsidiary rooms for carrying out small group exercises.
- Equipment was of a good standard and included flipcharts, an overhead projector, whiteboard and clipboards.
- Sessions were recorded on a digital camera and subsequently transferred to videotape. The quality of videotapes was good.
- A dining room and recreation room were available for use by offenders who were undertaking morning and afternoon sessions.
- At lunchtime, offenders were able to have a cheap, hot meal prepared by an outside caterer.
- Videotapes were stored in a secure cabinet in a room which was locked when not in use.

Areas for improvement:

- One of the tapes assessed did not contain a record of the whole session.
- The siting of the camera made it difficult to assess the level of engagement of the group.
- Staff said that in summer the group room became hot and stuffy and if windows were left open sessions were affected by traffic noise.

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:

- The area had produced leaflets for offenders which clearly set out the content and length of Think First, as well as information about facilities at the programme centre.
- A separate information sheet detailed the rules of attendance and consequence of failing to comply.
- The leaflets were given to offenders prior to sentence so that they understood the commitment they were making.

Areas for improvement:

- Neither the offender nor the sentencer leaflets made reference to the needs of minority ethnic or women offenders.

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:

- The programmes team had clear objectives and policies in relation to the management of attendance and enforcement.
- The file read showed that offender attendance was closely monitored and that it conformed to the requirements of Think First.
- Transport arrangements assisted offenders who were off the main transport routes to attend the programme, and the provision of meals at the centre was also designed to enhance completion rates.
- There was evidence to the effect that where offender circumstances changed significantly while they were on the programme, efforts were made not to 'lose' them. For example, where an offender became employed, they were 'bus stopped' to the evening group.

B2.2 Avoidance of cancellation or disruption to sessions

2

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:

- The frequency of session delivery conformed to the requirements of Think First.
- A programme calendar set out the dates and content of each of the planned sessions. Case managers interviewed were aware of the dates of the next pre-group work elements.
- Although to date most case managers had been drawn from the programme centre team, and therefore also had a role in Think First delivery, offenders interviewed understood the role of the case manager in dealing with problems outside sessions.
- The programme calendar had been circulated to courts in the early stages of roll-out. This arrangement had been modified where low referral rates had affected the area's ability to run programmes as planned. Field teams were now given information about programme dates and were expected to advise PSR authors accordingly.

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:

- Catch-ups were scheduled in the rota of tasks to be undertaken for each programme. This identified the staff who would carry out catch-ups and ensured that there was sufficient time for the programme material to be covered.

- Strenuous efforts were made to give offenders who missed a session the opportunity to come in for catch-up before the delivery of the next one, even when these were delivered on the same day.
- A comprehensive policy on catch-ups had been circulated to centre staff, with additional information in relation to 'bus stopping' in the case of employed offenders.
- Tutors were completing full records for each catch-up delivered on locally devised forms.
- Any decision to 'bus stop' an offender was being recorded and ratified by both a treatment and programme manager.

Areas for improvement:

- Catch-ups were not yet being videotaped and were therefore not subject to integrity checks.

B2.4 Timeliness

1

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.*

Strengths:

- The file read exercise showed that in 70% of the cases examined, offenders were psychometrically tested within a month of sentence, or there were legitimate offender-led reasons for the delay.
- The programme manager said that where there were delays with programme starts, there was an opportunity for offenders to attend a partnership-run course designed to increase motivation.

Areas for improvement:

- Case records showed that delays were being experienced between psychometric testing and the start of the group work element of the programme. This sometimes necessitated the re-testing of offenders.
- Although the area had been monitoring the timeliness of programme starts, they acknowledged the need to produce guidance to tighten the timescale for programme starts to meet the standard.

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:

- All tutors who were delivering the programme had passed the assessment centre process and Think First tutor training.
- Assessment centre procedures and information about tutor selection were described in area documentation from August 2000. This also set out how staff who did not pass the assessment centre would be supported.
- There was a written policy to the effect that only staff who met the defined criteria could deliver the programme.

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:

- The draft job descriptions for programme tutors and treatment managers were competency-based.
- Staff interviewed were clear about their respective roles and responsibilities.

Areas for improvement:

- Job descriptions did not fully reflect the competencies in the national management manual.
- The job descriptions for the programme manager and administrator were still being developed.
- Treatment managers were undertaking administrative tasks which limited the time they had available for treatment management (such as assessing videotaped sessions).

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:

- All tutors interviewed said they had sufficient time for preparation and debriefing.
- Treatment managers made themselves available for consultation during these times.
- Session evaluation forms were completed on offender levels of engagement and understanding. These were comprehensively done and provided a good guide for case managers.

Areas for improvement:

- There was not always time for sessional tutors to prepare sessions together with their colleagues.

B3.4 Staff continuity

1

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:

- Three tutors were assigned to each programme, with a treatment manager acting as additional back-up in case of unforeseen crises.
- All tutors assigned to a programme were introduced to members of the group at a pre-group work session.
- One offender commented that where changes of tutor had been necessary, this had been handled in a sensitive manner.

Areas for improvement:

- Staff shortages and national training commitments had resulted in some programmes being delivered by more than three tutors.

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:

- All tutors had received training prior to their first delivery of the programme.
- A rolling programme of context setting events was in place to take account of the needs of staff new to Think First.
- Case manager training for staff in field teams had recently commenced. The programmes team had developed workshops for new case managers to further enhance their understanding of the role.

Areas for improvement:

- One tutor had experienced a long gap between training and delivery of the programme.

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

1

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

Strengths:

- Where possible, tutors had been paired taking account of different levels of experience.
- In instances where two inexperienced tutors were delivering the programme, the treatment manager was also present during sessions.

Areas for improvement:

- In practice, changes in the staffing of the tutor group had made it difficult to ensure that more experienced tutors were always paired with less experienced tutors.
- One tutor said that an assumption had been made about her level of expertise on the basis of previous experience with the McGuire programme.

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 training for experienced tutors has yet to be rolled-out nationally.

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:

- Documentation provided by the area showed that records were kept to confirm that tutors had been assessed as competent at the point of training by national trainers.

- Most tutors, treatment managers and case managers interviewed were able to describe the programme concepts and methods in reasonable detail.
- All tutors and treatment managers had their own copy of the Think First theory and practice manuals.

Areas for improvement:

- Not all staff groups interviewed were equally confident in describing the concepts used in Think First. PSR writers and some case managers in particular struggled to do so.

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:

- Treatment managers were confident in describing the theoretical and evidential basis of Think First.
- All staff interviewed were able to make a link between Think First and cognitive-behavioural theory and all stressed the importance of treatment integrity in the delivery of the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Most staff interviewed had difficulty in outlining either the theoretical or evidence background to Think First. They had little up-to-date knowledge of any recent UK based research into the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural programmes.

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:

- Tutors had either received, or were due to receive, training in motivational interviewing, group work skills, or pro-social modelling.
- Tutors confirmed that their training needs were addressed in supervision, and appraisals reviewed the training undertaken and set new objectives for the coming year.
- Case managers were being provided with additional training on the case manager role by members of the programmes team.

Areas for improvement:

- Some tutors said that they had had no recent training in supporting skills.
- Treatment manager video monitoring forms were rarely couched in terms of learning objectives, thus they did not provide a sufficiently strong basis upon which to identify the developmental needs of tutors.

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:

- Line management supervision of most staff involved with Think First was taking place monthly.
- Tutors appreciated the distinction between line management supervision and supervision of delivery.
- Treatment managers were meeting with tutors and discussing delivery issues using session evaluation forms (session registers) and self-evaluation monitoring forms completed by tutors. These meetings were taking place at the frequency specified.
- There was evidence of a great deal of support given to new tutors by treatment managers through assistance with planning and debriefing of sessions.
- The programme manager received copies of session registers and thus had on-going information about delivery issues.

Areas for improvement:

- Treatment managers had what they termed ‘consultation’ meetings with delivery staff. There had been a reluctance to define these meetings as ‘supervision’ because of sensitivities relating to the treatment manager role in relation to staff who were perceived as equally experienced. The effect of this was that not enough emphasis had been given to identifying where practice needed to improve. Established tutors felt that current arrangements were insufficiently supportive.
- Not all tutors interviewed could recollect what record was kept of treatment manager supervision/consultation. This was partly explained by the amount of informal contact which took place between treatment managers and tutors.
- Both programme and treatment managers said that pressure of work affected the frequency or focus of supervision. The programme manager could not always carry out monthly supervision of treatment managers, and treatment managers did not always have time to observe a video before their sessions with tutors.
- Arrangements for the supervision of sessional delivery staff were less robust than those for regular tutors.
- There was no forum for the development of good practice in the delivery group as a whole and common concerns tended to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

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:

- Recent appraisal documents were well-structured and addressed competencies and performance against objectives. They provided a strong framework for the appraisal of practice.
- Appraisals clearly identified what training had been undertaken and what was required in the coming year.

Areas for improvement:

- Treatment manager supervision notes and video monitoring forms were insufficiently focused on strengths and areas for development to inform appraisals.
- There was no written policy on the deselection of tutors who did not meet the required standards.

B6.1 Offender selection and assessment

2

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.*

Strengths:

- There were clear policies in relation to the targeting of offenders for Think First and all relevant staff were aware of these.
- PSR authors used the targeting matrix and discussed with the programmes team cases of eligible offenders for whom a proposal of Think First did not appear to be appropriate.
- The area had responded promptly to the lowering of the OGRS 2 banding to 31% and all PSR authors had been instructed to take account of the change.
- The case file read showed that 31 of 34 offenders were in the correct OGRS 2 banding for Think First.
- Written guidance on the reasons for exclusion were included in the targeting matrix.
- Literacy screening and support were integrated in the assessment process.
- The programmes team were keeping a record of each discussion with PSR authors regarding suitability.

Areas for improvement:

- Tutors had concerns about the level of motivation of some of the offenders allocated to Think First, and PSR authors also said that there was insufficient attention given to whether or not an offender was 'ready' for the programme. This suggested that further work might be required on understanding motivation and the role of the case manager and PSR author in assessment.

B6.2 Offender knowledge and understanding of the programme requirements

2

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:

- In all but two of 34 case records examined, the requirements of the programme had been communicated to the offender on two separate occasions, verbally and in writing.
- Case managers understood their role in respect of ensuring that offenders knew what was expected of them.
- Most of the offenders interviewed remembered being told about the programme and signing an agreement.

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:

- Limited over-booking was taking place to maximise the numbers of offenders attending Think First. This had been tailored to the differential responses of offenders attending evening and day programmes (offenders attending evening groups were more likely to attend).
- Area documentation showed that groups had not started with more than 12 participants or with fewer than four.

B6.4 Accessibility of group work programmes

1

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.*

Strengths:

- The area had policies to the effect that singleton placements of women and minority ethnic offenders should not take place without their consent.
- Where women had been placed in mixed groups, this had been discussed with them and consideration given to tutor pairing as well as group composition (for example, waiting for several women to join the group).
- The woman offender interviewed confirmed that her needs had been discussed with her prior to commencement of Think First. Her partner was also on the programme and had been allocated to another group so that arrangements for the care of their children would not be disrupted.

Areas for improvement:

- Although an approach had been made at an early stage to the local race equality council, the area had no ongoing arrangements or policies in place for the support of minority ethnic offenders.
- Case managers said that arrangements to assist women with childcare responsibilities were limited and believed this may have resulted in lower referral rates of such women to the programme.

B7.1 Implementation of monitoring and evaluation design

1

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.*

Strengths:

- The area had a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation policy setting out principles and procedures, including guidance on inputting of data on IAPS by administrative staff through back office arrangements.
- The specific responsibilities of staff involved in Think First also formed part of this document.
- A recently produced strategy offered a framework for the development of effective two-way communication regarding performance and best practice in relation to accredited programmes.
- All tutors interviewed said that they had received information about the number of offenders completing the programme. Some had also seen a report from Merseyside based on research into obstacles to completion. This demonstrated that attention was being given to disseminating information from the national arena.
- Managers were receiving copies of the quarterly returns to the NPD.
- An internal audit against the performance standards for accredited programmes had taken place.
- The quarterly reports to the Probation Board included the results of local monitoring of referral rates and drop-outs.

Areas for improvement:

- Although the programmes team contributed data for returns to the NPD, they said that they received little information from head office regarding rates of completion and attrition.
- Case managers outside the programmes centre said that they were given limited information about Think First performance, other than numbers of programme completers.

B7.2 Practice is informed by monitoring and evaluation evidence

2

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 area had sought to maximise allocation to the programme by instituting a policy that discussion between PSR authors and the programmes team should take place whenever the suitability of eligible offenders was in question.
- Catering and transport strategies had been refined in the light of information from the NPD, local staff and offenders. Rates of referral from the west of the county had improved as a result of the availability of transport and the provision of food at the centre.
- Consideration had been given to increasing the motivational work carried out with offenders who had had to wait for the start of the programme.
- The programmes team had developed workshops and checklists for case managers to ensure that the lessons learnt early in implementation, regarding pre and post group work, were taken forward.

Areas for improvement:

- Case managers referred anecdotally to high breach rates amongst the few women offenders who had been referred to the programme. No work had been done so far to ascertain whether this was an issue requiring action.
- Systematic use of national and regional information was not yet taking place.

SECTION C: QUALITY OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY

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:

- Exercises were generally being set up correctly and delivered in the right order.
- Tutors were not introducing extraneous material into the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Exercises were not always being run to time. This was particularly problematic when tutors allowed group participants to stray from the purpose of the discussion or exercise.
- There was insufficient attention given to rigorous checking out of offender learning or understanding.
- The aims and objectives of the session were not always clearly met.

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 were good examples of open questions.
- Tutors listened attentively to group participants and allowed them the time to answer.

Areas for improvement:

- Participants were not always helped to make links between exercises and the purpose of the session.
- Practice in relation to challenging anti-social comments was inconsistent. Not all such comments were challenged, nor were group members encouraged to do so.
- Attention was needed to summarising points throughout sessions so that pace and purpose were maintained.

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:

- Tutors used appropriate language and were clearly spoken.
- Group members appeared to be involved (the camera angle made this difficult to assess in every case).

Areas for improvement:

- Co-working merited attention, especially when the male-female tutor pairing offered an opportunity to model good communication and joint leadership.
- Handovers lacked definition and an absence of planning was sometimes evident.
- Introductions and endings of exercises were not always done well.

C1.4 Programme delivered addressing race equality and diversity issues

0

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:

- Staff were aware of the importance of giving unambiguous messages to offenders about what constituted unacceptable behaviour and attitudes.
- In interview, both treatment managers and tutors showed that they were sensitive to the needs of women offenders. Treatment managers were aware of the costs and benefits of a woman offender having to wait longer than a man before she could be placed in a group with another woman.
- The literacy needs of offenders were being fully considered and met through the current structures.

Areas for improvement:

- Some of the tutors interviewed lacked confidence in dealing with sexist behaviour. On the one occasion when a group had been cancelled because of the sexist behaviour of group members, the tutors concerned had not felt that the issue had been fully addressed by the treatment manager.
- Video monitoring suggested that challenges to anti-social comments were inconsistent: sometimes being done very well, and sometimes not being done at all.
- Tutors said there was no opportunity, outside their sessions with treatment managers, to develop their practice in relation to dealing with diversity.
- Staff referred to a limited range of approaches, particularly when it came to working with minority ethnic offenders.

C1.5 Programme integrity checklist

2

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

Strengths:

- Tutors were completing programme integrity checklists after each session and copies of these were on the programme, treatment manager and programme manager files. Case managers also received a copy.
- The checklists were being completed in a thoughtful manner, as was evidenced by the comments made next to each name.

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:

- Post-programme reports were being prepared promptly, in time for the three-way meetings with case managers, in respect of all offenders completing the group work element of the programme.
- Early locally devised reports had addressed offender participation, attitude and progress. More recent reports used the national format and therefore also looked at skills development and recommendations for future supervision.
- Case managers said that reports were useful in establishing the focus of post group work meetings.

Areas for improvement:

- Identification of future objectives and likely scenarios for relapse were not always sufficiently specific.

SECTION D: CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

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:

- In over half the cases examined supervision plans contained evidence of assessments based on OGRS 2.

Areas for improvement:

- There was little integration of Think First within the overall plan of work for the offender. In only three of 34 cases was this done well.
- Objectives in relation to the programme were not SMART, nor were they regularly reviewed.

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

2

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.*

Strengths:

- Three-way meetings were attended by case managers in 16 of the 19 cases assessed, which had reached this stage in the order,
- Case managers, particularly those based in the programme centre, said they heard from tutors if there were any difficulties with offenders on Think First.
- Case managers received regular communication from tutors in the form of session evaluation forms which were kept on offender records (in the absence of IAPS).
- Communication channels existed between the programme centre and field teams to ensure that information about the timing of pre-group work sessions was circulated.

Areas for improvement:

- Staff said that communication between the programme centre and field teams was likely to become more difficult as the case manager role was rolled-out across the area. One case manager (who had yet to supervise a Think First case) expressed anxiety as to how he would obtain information about an offender's progress. This suggested that still more work was needed to ensure that case managers understood the systems for exchange of information beyond the programme centre.

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.*

Strengths:

- Case records clearly showed that pre-programme work was being completed prior to the group work element. The recording of this work was excellent.
-

- A very useful checklist, which built upon the information in the programme manual, had been devised for case managers to ensure that all aspects of the pre-programme work were covered.
- In 24 of 29 cases reviewed, where there were actual or potential problems with an offender's attendance, participation or attitude, the case manager dealt with these fairly well or very well.

Areas for improvement:

- There was limited evidence of proactive work by case managers to reinforce learning or use crisis-led contact to develop offender problem-solving skills.

D1.4 Understanding and knowledge of programme methods

1

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.

Established case managers had attended Think First training some time before. Training was being rolled-out for new case managers in field teams.

Strengths:

- Workshops run by treatment managers gave new case managers additional support in carrying out the role.
- The workshops were supplemented by mentoring by treatment managers where relevant.

Areas for improvement:

- Not all case managers interviewed were equally confident in describing the aims and objectives of the programme.
- Some managers of case manager staff felt that they would have benefited from attending the training so that they could appreciate what was involved.

D1.5 Monitoring of attendance and enforcement

1

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:

- Case records showed that offender attendance was closely monitored.
- Procedures in relation to enforcement in the programmes team were clearly set out in the Team Plan for 2001/2002. This established that all absences were designated unacceptable in the first instance, until the case manager had evidence to the contrary. An area-wide enforcement policy was being drafted to improve performance for CROs. Case manager responsibilities would be described in this document.
- Arrangements for pairing case managers were designed to ensure that they took action to contact offenders on the same day if they failed to attend a session of Think First.
- All case managers interviewed were aware of the enforcement procedures at the programme centre.

Areas for improvement:

- Case records showed that enforcement action did not always take place within national standards timescales. A breach prosecutions unit was in the process of being set up, which was hoped to have a positive effect on the timeliness of enforcement action.

D1.6 Documentation

0

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

Strengths:

- The division of case records into sections enabled monitoring of documentation to take place.
- The internal audit had pointed to a number of areas for improvement which were borne out by the external audit.

Areas for improvement:

- Only 12 of 34 case records examined contained all the relevant documentation. The most common omissions were supervision plan reviews.

D1.7 End of programme review

0

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:

- Case managers said that post-programme reports were very useful documents.
- One offender interviewed referred unbidden to his personal objectives for future supervision, and others made reference to discussions they had had with their case managers regarding employment and training.

Areas for improvement:

- Post-programme reports had clearly influenced only one of the 19 cases which had reached this stage in the programme.
- Objectives set in supervision plan reviews were not SMART.
- There was limited evidence in case records of offenders being linked to community resources after the end of the programme (though some of this was taking place during the pre-programme phase).

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. The area was awaiting the development of the Cognitive Skills Booster Programme to reinforce learning.

Next Steps

In this the second year of the audit cycle, HMIP have moved to a revised follow-up process depending on a probation area's performance rating.

HMIP advised COs in June 2002 that areas scoring less than a 50% IQR would be subject to a fresh audit within six months of the audit report being received by the probation area.

Areas which have now met or exceeded a 50% IQR will not be subject to any follow-up process but will next be audited within HMIP's normal inspection/audit cycle.

IQR score

The Dorset Probation Area achieved an IQR of **56%**.

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