



HM Inspectorate of Probation

AUDIT OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES

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

*Report on:
Greater Manchester Probation Area –
Think First*

June 2001

Acknowledgements:

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

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Glossary

ACE	Assessment, Case Recording and Evaluation System
CO	Chief Officer
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
IAPS	Interim Accredited Programmes Software
IQR	Implementation Quality Rating
JAP	Joint Accreditation Panel
LSI-R	Level of Service Inventory-Revised
N/A	Criteria not assessed
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OGRS	Offender Group Reconviction Scale
PSO	Probation Service Officer
SPO	Senior Probation Officer

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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 JAP. 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 4 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 7 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:

- Greater Manchester had devolved the delivery of the Think First programme to 5 cluster areas. Three had already begun to deliver Think First programmes and the remaining 2 were due to “go live” later in the year.
- The audit comprised 4 principal methods: assessing the quality of advance information; interviews with staff and offenders; observation of videotaped programme sessions; and case file reading.
- A wide range of staff involved in the delivery or support of the programme were interviewed including senior, district, programme and treatment managers, programme tutors, case managers and court personnel.
- Four programme delivery sites within the clusters were visited and in each of these locations the accommodation and general facilities conformed to the Estates Standards Manual.
- A total of 9 randomly chosen programme sessions from 3 separate groups were selected for video monitoring purposes, but 2 of the tapes could not be observed due to technical difficulties.
- Three of the criteria were not assessed – B4.2, B4.3 and D1.8. The area was at an early stage of delivery and so relatively inexperienced tutors were inevitably assigned to run Think First together (B4.2); national plans were awaited for ongoing training for experienced tutors (B4.3) as well as the accreditation of the cognitive behavioural booster programme to reinforce offender learning (D1.8).
- This audit report refers solely to the quality of delivery of the Think First programme in Greater Manchester.

Findings:

Greater Manchester fully engaged in this audit process. The quality of the advance information received was high and the commitment of the senior management team evident. Staff at all grades were open, forthcoming and keen to discover their strengths and areas for improvement. Video observation of practice demonstrated a satisfactory level of programme delivery and programme management tasks were given due attention.

The main area for development was in case management, which was perhaps not surprising given the uncertainty nationally as to what constitutes the most effective case management arrangements. However, case managers were well informed about, and supportive of, the Think First programme. By developing clearer links between programme staff and case managers, progress made by an offender on the programme could be better integrated within supervision planning.

There was a recognition at this early stage of audit that this had been a standard setting and learning exercise for HMIP as well as for the Greater Manchester Probation Area. We are grateful for the opportunity this has presented for HMIP and for the interest shown in the process.

Recommendations:

The CO should ensure that the area:

- *moves from a referral to an allocations culture and improves its targeting of offenders for Think First;*
- *reviews training requirements for all staff involved in the delivery or managerial oversight of the programme so that staff competence is enhanced;*
- *uses video monitoring forms to differentiate the supervision needs of individual tutors and to explore practice issues;*
- *establishes a deselection procedure for tutors who fail to deliver the programme to the required standard;*
- *requires the prior approval of the district manager to cancel or postpone programmes;*
- *assigns 3 tutors to each programme to ensure staff continuity with all sessions being delivered by at least 2 of these tutors;*
- *establishes a consistent framework and approach to supporting the delivery of Think First in each of the clusters, e.g. by standardising documentation such as post-programme reports;*
- *reviews case management arrangements so that offenders are supported at all stages of the programme and issues guidance on how case managers can reinforce the learning of offenders undertaking the programme;*
- *clearly records all pre-programme work with offenders to ensure that participants are fully prepared;*
- *sets SMART objectives in supervision plans and reviews;*
- *routinely provides middle managers with the right performance information to enable them to positively influence practice.*

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.*

Greater Manchester has had a long-standing commitment to What Works and evidenced-based practice, hosting a number of international What Works conferences during the 1990s. Since being chosen in 1998 as one of the 3 original pathfinder areas for the McGuire Think First programme, Greater Manchester's senior management support for the Think First programme and for What Works generally had been very evident. This judgement was confirmed by the quality of the advance information received from the area and by the detailed knowledge of senior managers about what constituted programme effectiveness.

Strengths:

- Greater Manchester's Think First Implementation Plan 2000 provided comprehensive guidance. It had been updated in May 2001 and addressed the key elements of organisational support, including race equality and diversity issues.
- Senior managers had played a lead role in context setting days for the programme. There was a close fit between public statements in support of Think First and the allocation of necessary resources to run it effectively, e.g. group rooms were of a high standard.

Areas for improvement:

- A number of district managers had not yet attended a context setting event.
- Insufficient attention had been given to the ongoing training needs of relevant staff, e.g. supporting skills for programme tutors and booster training for treatment managers.

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:

- Greater Manchester supplied an organisational chart outlining the management structures for the programme delivery. Clear competency-based job descriptions existed for staff involved in managing the programme.
- Staff demonstrated that they fully understood their role in managing, delivering or supporting the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- A significant proportion of key staff involved in managing or delivering the programme, e.g. programme and treatment managers, had other operational and management responsibilities that affected the time allocated to the oversight of Think First.

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:

- Senior and operational managers, programme tutors and case managers confirmed a strong sense of ownership of the programme.
- There was evidence of an extensive training programme including context setting events, tutor and case management training.
- Case managers, tutors, treatment managers and court staff were able to articulate the programme's main aims and objectives.

Areas for improvement:

- It was not clear from referral data that consistent usage was being made of the programme across each district, or that each functional unit referred appropriate numbers.
- The area had yet to move to an allocation rather than referral culture and a number of offenders who fitted the eligibility criteria had not been automatically referred.

A1.4 Effective communication with sentencers

2

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

Strengths:

- Greater Manchester demonstrated a high level of commitment to informing sentencers about developments concerning accredited programmes in general and the Think First programme in particular.
- A series of well-attended briefing events had been organised for magistrates and a presentation made to judges to inform them about the Think First programme.
- Information leaflets for courts gave a clear explanation of the programme and the expectations placed on offenders.

Areas for improvement:

- Two of the magistrates' courts had still to receive a briefing, although this had been offered by the probation area.
- Recent concordance data suggested that further dialogue with sentencers would be beneficial to explore issues of offender eligibility/suitability for Think First.

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:

- Group rooms in each location were of sufficient size to accommodate the maximum permitted number of offenders plus 2 programme tutors.
- There were comfortable chairs in each group room and the standard of equipment was generally good.
- Video monitoring equipment and sound systems were mostly of a high standard, although there had been difficulties with sound quality in one location.

Areas for improvement:

- Whilst the group facilities were assessed to be of a good standard, there was an absence of “break out” rooms for small group exercises/discussion in some locations. It was recognised however that it would take time to provide such a facility throughout the area given the constraints of the buildings used to deliver programmes.

B1.2 Provision of information leaflets about the programme

2

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

Strengths:

- A set of leaflets had been produced for relevant audiences that explained the programme and its requirements using clear, easily understood language.
- The leaflets fully set out the conditions of attendance and the consequences of failing to comply.
- The process for registering a complaint was outlined in the offender leaflet, together with a clear statement that offenders had the right to be treated fairly and without discrimination.

Areas for improvement:

- Leaflets produced for all groups of offenders did not fully address race equality and wider diversity issues. The area may be assisted by the development of national programme leaflets.

B2.1 Managing attendance

1

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:

- Due attention had been paid to national standards enforcement requirements but staff had also adopted a facilitative approach to encourage offender attendance. Obstacles to participation on the programme were explored and solutions sought.

- The pathfinder database developed by the area ensured accurate data on offender attendance and completions.
- Case managers were e-mailed on the same day, using the Lotus Notes system, as to whether or not their offender had attended the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Case file results revealed that enforcement action did not always take place within the agreed national standards timescales.
- There was little evidence that operational managers used pathfinder data to ensure case managers effectively managed offenders' attendance.

B2.2 Avoidance of cancellation or disruption to sessions

0

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.*

Staff acknowledged that there had been slippage in course dates and that some programmes had been cancelled or postponed. Senior managers had expected this in the early phase of delivery and said that programmes had not been cancelled or postponed due to workload or other pressures, but to insufficient offender numbers to make certain programmes viable.

Strengths:

- The area demonstrated that it had the capacity to run programmes without disruption to sessions.
- Each cluster had been given a target figure for offender completions, matched with resources.

Areas for improvement:

- Decisions to cancel or postpone programmes had been made at an operational manager level but without prior consultation with senior managers.
- District and middle managers were not receiving regular performance management reports from the pathfinder database to enable them to monitor their team's referral levels to the programme.

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 10 working days, to ensure full delivery of the programme. Treatment managers must specify arrangements for monitoring the integrity of catch-up sessions.*

The delivery schedule adopted for most of the groups, whereby 2 sessions of the programme were delivered on one day per week, placed some constraints on the time programme tutors could assign to catch-up sessions. This limited the work that could be covered, especially important if an offender had missed both a morning and afternoon programme session.

Strengths:

- A reliable system had been established to ensure catch-up sessions were scheduled and delivered in each cluster area.

- Case file reading results confirmed that in the small number of cases where offenders had not attended the required catch-up session, enforcement issues were dealt with appropriately.

Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient time was allowed for delivering a catch-up session, particularly where an offender had missed a full day (2 sessions) of the programme.
- The area was not monitoring the quality of the catch-up sessions it delivered by videotaping or audio-taping a sample of these. Probation Circular 92/2001 offers further guidance on monitoring catch-up sessions.

B2.4 Timeliness

1

Description: *All offenders commence the programme, or specified pre-programme phase, within the first month of the order or within 3 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:

- Timely commencements were evident in the majority of case files read.

Areas for improvement:

- Pre-programme work undertaken, where an offender was assessed as not being ready to commence the programme within one month of the start of their order, was not clearly documented.
- The case file did not clearly record pre-programme work carried out with all offenders ensuring that participants were fully prepared.

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.*

The area provided information that supplemented the regional consortium assessment centre results, as the regional database did not give complete information for each staff member who had attended the assessment centres. Some tutors expressed the view that they would have liked more information about the practicalities of running programmes, including the requirement that sessions were videotaped.

Strengths:

- Potential tutors were given information, in advance of attending the assessment centres, explaining tutor selection procedures.
- The advance information and regional consortium database confirmed that staff selection procedures conformed to programme requirements.

B3.2 Staff roles and competencies

2

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:

- Clear competency-based job descriptions existed for relevant posts.

- Staff were able to explain their role in delivering or supporting programme delivery and were clear about the role played by their colleagues.

Areas for improvement:

- The job description for the SPO (programme manager) did not give sufficient attention to their programme management responsibilities.

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:

- Programme tutors were allowed the required time for preparation and debriefing for each session of the programme they had delivered.
- The debriefing phase allowed tutors to provide feedback to individual case managers.

Areas for improvement:

- Senior managers had not yet adopted a standard agenda for debriefing meetings to ensure consistency.
- The level of communication between programme tutors and case managers was good where they were located in the same office, but less so when located separately.

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 2 of the 3 assigned staff. Continuity is maintained by at least one of the staff members having run the previous session.*

Strengths:

- Some evidence of contingency planning by programme and treatment managers to ensure staff continuity, e.g. discussion of tutors leave and other work commitments in staff meetings.
- To date, at least one of the original tutors had been able to deliver each session of the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Programme and treatment managers were not assigning 3 tutors at the start of the programme so that unexpected and unplanned tutor absence could be accommodated and staff continuity maintained.
- Staffing allocation arrangements presented potential difficulties for out of hours programmes, where obtaining cover for absent staff could be problematic.

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:

- Ensuring that all relevant staff involved in delivery of Think First had received the required training was a significant achievement.
- A high percentage of staff, particularly case managers, had been very satisfied with the training provided.

Areas for improvement:

- Some tutors said they would have appreciated additional guidance on how to manage difficult groups or individual offenders within the programme. The area had run a one day basic group work skills course as part of a foundation programme for PSOs, but now needed to ensure that programme tutors were confident in their group management skills.

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

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

This criterion has not been assessed as in year 1 it is recognised that relatively inexperienced tutors will be paired together to run programmes.

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/treatment managers is still in the planning stage.

B4.4 Staff knowledge of the concepts and methods used in the programme 2

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

Strengths:

- Relevant staff were assessed as having sufficient knowledge of the main concepts and methods used in the programme.
- Case managers, programme managers, and particularly treatment managers, had a very clear understanding of the programme model.
- Staff showed a strong level of support for, and confidence in, the programme design.

Areas for improvement:

- Programme tutors had yet to benefit from ongoing inputs from their treatment managers which would help them integrate concepts and methods.

B4.5 Staff knowledge of the theoretical and evidential basis of the programme 1

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

Strengths:

- All staff in support or managerial roles for Think First had a strong knowledge of the theoretical and evidence base.
- The evidence base for using cognitive behavioural approaches with offenders was accepted by delivery and case management staff, although programme tutors appeared to have less theoretical knowledge than other colleagues.

Areas for improvement:

- There was a risk that tutors could be technically proficient at delivering the programme without developing the generalist skills necessary to make links for offenders between and within sessions. Programme tutors would benefit from further theoretical inputs about cognitive behavioural approaches and the international evidence.

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.*

Basic group work skills training had been provided for some PSO programme tutors but other grades of staff had not received supporting skills training. Treatment managers indicated that they were keen to receive additional training, e.g. how to supervise and provide feedback to staff on their performance and auditing good practice standards. The senior managers of the area acknowledged that the initial focus for training resources had to be to tutors, case managers and court personnel in the concepts, methods and theory underpinning Think First, but that subsequent training would be informed by their area supervision and appraisal process.

Strengths:

- A number of programme tutors had received some additional group work skills training.

Areas for improvement:

- Treatment managers needed assistance in observation of practice and how to assess the quality of performance of programme tutors.

B5.1 Staff supervision and quality of practice

1

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:

- The frequency of treatment managers' supervision of tutors met or exceeded the guidelines set out in the national management manual.
- Tutors confirmed that the focus for supervision appropriately concentrated on their ability to run effectively the accredited programme. Programme managers scheduled quarterly sessions with tutors to address personal development and non-programme related issues.

Areas for improvement:

- Video monitoring forms being completed to assess tutor performance were not yet used to differentiate the supervision needs of individual tutors, or fully explore practice issues such as effective co-working arrangements.

- There was an absence of guidance on how the supervision of programme tutors should be organised to ensure consistency of approach across each of the clusters.

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.

Greater Manchester had developed an appraisal system that had the capacity to assess the competency of staff involved in delivering Think First. It was however too early for the area to demonstrate its procedures for raising the standards of underperforming programme staff, or to indicate what would happen in practice to tutors who consistently failed to attain the required standard for programme delivery.

Strengths:

- Greater Manchester's appraisal system provided the framework for ensuring that only competent staff were involved in delivering the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Monitoring of staff competence to deliver the programme was at an early stage and a strategy had yet to be developed to assist underperforming tutors.
- There was no policy document outlining the procedures for deselecting tutors who do not perform to the required standard after receiving additional support and training.

B6.1 Offender selection and assessment

1

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.

Greater Manchester selected Think First participants from those offenders who fell within 16-33 ACE, or 31-74 OGRS 2, scores. Case file reading results revealed that a number of offenders selected for the programme had OGRS 2 scores above and below the target range. In part there was an issue of accurate completion and calculation of OGRS 2 scores and the area had undertaken an audit to determine the accuracy of these scores. The targeting matrix, assessing an offender's cognitive deficits and motivation to complete the programme, was also completed.

Strengths:

- There was a recognition of problems with the accuracy of OGRS 2 information and the area had taken steps to address this via auditing these results and by introducing a step-by-step guide to completing these returns. A key role had been identified for district administrative managers in raising standards of accuracy for this assessment measure.
- In the majority of case files read offenders selected for Think First fitted within the agreed ACE or OGRS 2 scores.

Areas for improvement:

- Offender selection and assessment did not fully conform to the requirements set out in the Think First management manual.

B6.2 Offender knowledge and understanding of the programme requirements

2

Description: *The requirements of the programme are clearly communicated on at least 2 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:

- A contract letter had been produced that clearly outlined the responsibilities and rights for programme participants.
- Case file results and limited corroboration from 2 offenders confirmed that the requirements of the programme were fully explained on at least 2 occasions.

B6.3 Group size

1

Description: *For group programmes the maximum starting group size during the previous year did not exceed 12 and the minimum was not less than 4.*

Strengths:

- The initial group size for programmes conformed to the guidance set out in the Performance Standards Manual.

Areas for improvement:

- Programmes had frequently dropped below the minimum recommended number of 4 offenders and the area needed to consider what action to take in this situation. Probation Circular 92/2001 allows a “bus stop” approach, whereby a group that falls below 4 offenders can join an existing group that has reached the same point in the programme. The National Probation Directorate will not permit both catch-up and “bus stop” arrangements and the area needed to decide which approach to adopt.

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.*

Greater Manchester had paid particular attention to the issue of maximising the accessibility of the Think First programme for all groups of offenders. It had begun to deliver a discreet Think First programme for minority ethnic offenders and was about to pilot separate provision for women offenders. Previously no women had been offered a place on a Think First programme and some staff had expressed the view that the programme catered primarily for male offenders. As a result of the policy to develop separate provision for women and minority ethnic offenders, the area had paid less attention to how such offenders could be supported within existing programmes.

Strengths:

- Clear commitment from the area to maximise the accessibility of the programme for all groups of offenders.
- A Think First programme for minority ethnic offenders had been introduced using minority ethnic staff.

- The arrangement for minority ethnic offenders provided an appropriate choice of being tutored by black members of staff or of attending a programme in an offender's home district.

Areas for improvement:

- Women offenders did not have early enough access to Think First, both in the separate programmes run for them and in mixed groups where they gave their consent to this. The unintended consequence of Think First women's programmes was that women offenders had to wait longer than their male counterparts to get on a programme.
- Although support arrangements were in place for minority ethnic and women offenders, further attention was needed to facilitate their attendance on general Think First programmes.

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:

- Clear guidelines had been produced for entering pathfinder database information, administering and completing psychometric tests and for completing and using programme integrity checklists as a focus for supervision with programme tutors.
- The development of the pathfinder database, the precursor to the full IAPS database, was a notable achievement.
- All staff had access to the pathfinder database information.
- Interviews with staff confirmed they understood the importance of implementation, monitoring and evaluation systems for Think First.

Areas for improvement:

- The pathfinder database was not being used routinely to supply operational managers with individual and summary report data. This would enable them to fully monitor staff performance in supporting the delivery of the programme.

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 area had a culture of commissioning research and informing staff of outcomes.
- Monitoring and evaluation results had been communicated to staff, e.g. they were informed about significant levels of improvement to the accuracy of psychometric testing returns.
- As an original McGuire pathfinder area, comparative data from the other pathfinder areas had also been shared with staff.
- The Lotus Notes system had been used to disseminate information quickly and widely.

Areas for improvement:

- The area was not demonstrating that senior and middle managers were using standard reports on offender attendance and usage by staff to influence policy and practice. Case managers should have more information about offenders' performance on the programme to reinforce and encourage participants' learning.

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 set up correctly and inappropriate additional material was not introduced to the programme.
- The aims and objectives of the observed sessions were met.

Areas for improvement:

- Programme staff paid insufficient attention as to whether offenders had assimilated the learning from a programme session.
- Tutors were not always allowing sufficient time for each element of a programme session.

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.*

This criterion was assessed as satisfactory, although in the unadjusted video observation results tutors scored less well for treatment style than for adherence to the programme or group work skills.

Strengths:

- Tutors encouraged the group to make links between exercises and sessions and were generally good at summarising learning points and reflecting these back to offenders.

Areas for improvement:

- Programme staff needed to allow offenders more opportunity to explain and validate ideas for themselves and to make greater use of open questioning to facilitate learning.

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.*

Generally, groups were well managed but the nature of the video observation, concentrating on overall programme delivery, did mask different levels of performance by some tutors for criteria C1.1 to C1.3, particularly in areas such as effective co-working.

Strengths:

- Groups were managed in a way that minimised disruption by participants.
- Exercises were introduced well and links were made to earlier aspects of Think First.

Areas for improvement:

- Treatment managers and tutors were not reviewing video sessions to satisfy themselves that co-working arrangements were operating satisfactorily.
- At times, not all group members were involved in a session and treatment managers should, with tutors, check on levels of offender engagement.

C1.4 Programme delivered addressing race equality and diversity issues

2

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.

There was a clearly demonstrated commitment to effectively addressing race equality and wider diversity issues. In each of the group facilities visited the area's anti-racism policy was prominently displayed, along with posters showing positive messages valuing diversity.

Strengths:

- Offenders were clearly informed about their rights and responsibilities concerning race equality and wider diversity issues.
- Tutors and treatment managers gave clear accounts of how they had tackled areas of offender prejudice and inappropriate language.

Areas for improvement:

- Aspects of the area's diversity policy required review as not all elements were as fully developed as its strong policy and practice on race equality issues.

C1.5 Programme integrity checklist

1

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

Strengths:

- The area had begun to use the video monitoring programme integrity checklist as a focus for supervision and development of practice.

Areas for improvement:

- Treatment managers had not had additional training in using the checklist and in video observation. The area had raised the issue of training for treatment managers with the National Probation Directorate.
- Treatment managers were paying insufficient attention to the treatment style skills of tutors. Some of the programme integrity checklists could be improved by providing tutors with more detailed feedback on aspects of their performance.

C1.6 End of programme summary reports

0

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:

- High quality reports were prepared on individual offenders from psychometric testing results.

Areas for improvement:

- There was no standardised post-programme report.
- The delivery clusters had sought local solutions for feeding back information to case managers on Think First offenders, and this had resulted in inconsistencies in approach.

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 the OASys when available, or ACE or LSI-R before then.*

Strengths:

- There was some evidence of the supervision plan integrating the accredited programme within an overall plan of work for the offender.
- Supervision plans did contain evidence of assessments based on the recognised ACE assessment instrument.

Areas for improvement:

- Case managers were not setting SMART objectives for offenders.
- Case records did not clearly demonstrate that supervision objectives were regularly reviewed.
- Closer linkage was required between post-programme reports and the setting of subsequent objectives for Think First completers in supervision plan reviews.

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 3-way meetings between the case manager, programme staff and the offender at the end of the programme.*

Strengths:

- Case managers and programme tutors had a positive view of each other's role.
- The post-programme review was attended by case managers who valued the quality of the reports prepared from the psychometric data.

Areas for improvement:

- The extent of liaison between programme staff and case managers often depended on where the programme was delivered.
- Overall, case managers' attendance at the mid-programme review (session 14) was inconsistent. Senior managers should provide guidance to case managers on attendance at this review.

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:

- Motivational work and pre-programme sessions were completed satisfactorily.
- Case managers explored obstacles to an offender's attendance and resolutions to these difficulties were sought.

Areas for improvement:

- Case management arrangements were not sufficient to ensure the offender was supported during and after the programme.
- Case managers could better reinforce an offender's learning whilst undertaking the accredited programme, e.g. by discussing homework assignments.

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.*

Strengths:

- Case managers demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the theory and practice underpinning the programme.
- These staff were satisfied that they had the skills necessary to reinforce learning by offenders undertaking this programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Whilst case managers demonstrated the ability to reinforce learning in some instances, the majority of case files audited suggested that this was not happening consistently, and there was no guidance to case managers on this aspect of practice.

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:

- The pathfinder database ensured that attendance was well monitored and the Lotus Notes system enabled case managers to receive swift communication as to whether an offender had attended the Think First programme or not.
- Effective enforcement practice was being followed in most cases.

Areas for improvement:

- Although enforcement action was taken by case managers in some instances, this did not always conform to the timescales laid down in national standards.

D1.6 Documentation

1

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

Strengths:

- A well ordered, easy to follow case file had been developed with clear indexing to sections making information more accessible.

Areas for improvement:

- Lack of clarity about what constituted the post-programme report and different descriptions given to aspects of pre-programme work made it difficult to assess if all relevant documentation had been completed.
- The terms used for different aspects of the pre-programme work were not standardised.

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 reports generated from the psychometric tests gave important information about offenders' progress and areas where further work was required.
- Attention had been paid to community reintegration issues in most cases.

Areas for improvement:

- Supervision plan reviews following an offender's attendance on Think First were not informed by the reports prepared from the psychometric data.
- Supervision plan reviews failed to set SMART objectives for offenders.
- A standard post-programme report was not available for case managers to inform supervision review plans.

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 is awaiting the national development of a cognitive behavioural booster programme designed to reinforce learning.

Next Steps

HMIP will employ a 3-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 2 and 90% for year 3). 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 1-2 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 6 months of the audit report being received by the probation area.

Greater Manchester Probation Area achieved an IQR of 62% and is a **strong 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 audit report and the IQR were approved by the JAP at the beginning of October 2001.