



OFFENDER
MANAGEMENT
INSPECTION
INSPECTION

A report on Offender Management in
Hertfordshire

An inspection led by
HM Inspectorate of Probation

March 2007

FOREWORD

Hertfordshire Probation Area had faced particular challenges in working to improve performance. It was against a backdrop of significant underperformance, a change of chief officer, and major policy implementation initiatives from the centre that our Offender Management Inspection fell. It was to the credit of the Board, senior management team and staff that they had prepared diligently for the inspection and been open to its findings.

It was clear that the area still had some distance to travel in implementing the national offender management model. Whilst there was clear evidence of practice improvement, problems with staffing structures and tiering of cases would inhibit further progress until resolved.

Sentence planning needed to be brought centre stage and a correct balance established between meeting offending-related needs through planned delivery of interventions and protecting the public. As an area Hertfordshire needed to become more outcome-focused, working towards realistic progress for offenders. Some Risk of Harm work had clearly improved from previous inspections, although the job was not yet done. The direction of travel was positive and there was evidence of significant steps forward.

The Board, managers and staff were building a new culture of commitment to quality. Changes in the senior management team had revitalised this process and we identified an encouraging energy and commitment to bring about further improvements.

ANDREW BRIDGES

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

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The inspection also depended on the contribution made by local area assessors who assisted with the offender manager interviews. Their participation and commitment was greatly appreciated.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ACO	Assistant chief officer
ATR	Alcohol Treatment Requirement
CALM	Controlling Anger and Learning to Manage it
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CO	Chief officer
CRAMS	Case Record Administration and Management System
DIP	Drug Intervention Programme
DRR	Drug rehabilitation requirement
DTTO	Drug treatment and testing order
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI	Effective Supervision Inspection
ESOL	English as a second or other language
ETE	Employment, Training and Education
ETS	Enhanced Thinking Skills
FDR	Fast delivery report
HMI Prisons	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
HR	Human resources
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
NOMIS	National Offender Management Information System
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPD	National Probation Directorate
NPS	National Probation Service
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OLASS	Offender learning and skills service
OMI	Offender Management Inspection
OMU	Offender Management Unit
OSAP	Offender Substance Abuse Programme
PO	Probation officer
PPO	Prolific priority and other offender
PSO	Probation service officer
PSR	Pre-sentence report
RoH	Risk of Harm
SDR	Standard delivery report
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SMB	Strategic Management Board
SMT	Senior management team
SOTP	Sex Offender Treatment Programme
SOVA	Society of Voluntary Associates
TPO	Trainee probation officer
VLO	Victim liaison officer
YOT	Youth Offending Team

SUMMARY

Assessment and Sentence Planning

Reports to court made a positive contribution to the sentencing process. They were generally of a good standard and overall were received well by sentencers. The quality of assessment of likelihood of reoffending needed development; assessments were comprehensive and timely in under half the cases. The diversity needs of offenders were not being actively assessed in all instances, though where disadvantaging factors had been identified, plans had usually been put in place to minimise the effect. Skills for life screening and full assessment had not been carried out in all relevant cases, and lack of consistent provision across the area was affecting service delivery to offenders and achievement of targets. Case tiering was inaccurate in about a quarter of instances, having been linked with resource management decisions earlier in the year rather than the demands of the sentence and Risk of Harm posed. Sentence planning needed considerable further development; it was not seen as central to the management of the case in most instances and did not fully reflect the interventions planned or undertaken. Offenders had little or no involvement in the process.

Implementation of Interventions

Overall, offenders had been prepared sufficiently for interventions, though there was less evidence of these having been sequenced appropriately. The offender manager role in coordinating interventions was not carried out well in over half of the cases, and there was limited demonstration of support for offenders by the offender manager while they undertook different interventions, such as accredited programmes. There was also a lack of evidence of routine liaison with prisons to prepare offenders for release in most cases. More attention needed to be given to victim issues by offender managers though, without exception, the victims whose views we canvassed praised the service provided to them.

Evidence of constructive interventions to help offenders change their offending behaviour was scarce, apart from where an accredited programme had been undertaken. There were some positive examples of provision to meet the employment, training and education needs of offenders, and effective work by volunteers in supporting offenders. However, more attention needed to be given overall to reintegrating offenders into the community, including better access to literacy, numeracy and language interventions across the area. Diversity needs were not always taken into account in managing cases. Case recording needed to be more detailed to demonstrate fully the work being carried out with offenders. Most offenders were given appointments at the appropriate frequency, though this was less often the case with unpaid work sessions or with prolific or other priority offenders. Enforcement of orders and licences was good, and breach action taken appropriately and in a timely way in most of the relevant cases.

Achievement and Monitoring of Outcomes

The majority of offenders had complied with the requirements of their sentence and had not reoffended. Overall, resources allocated were consistent with the assessed

likelihood of reoffending, though this was not always the case in respect of Risk of Harm. In terms of the achievement of sentencing objectives, those relating to *punishment* and *control* were achieved most strongly. There was less evidence of outcomes in respect of the *help* and *change* objectives, linked with limited demonstration of constructive interventions being undertaken. Structured sentence planning had not been given high priority; it was evident in only a third of cases. Continuity of offender management was limited, with a third of cases having experienced three or more offender managers. Only two-fifths of cases showed positive change in offenders' attitudes and/or behaviour. There was progress against the highest priority criminogenic needs for half the offenders, but Offender Assessment System data were not being re-scored routinely so there was limited evidence in some cases of the initial outcomes of supervision.

Leadership and Strategic Management

There had been considerable changes in the senior management team over the previous year and the Board had provided continuity and support during this period, as well as a strong focus on performance improvement. There had been difficulties in meeting national performance targets but, with support from the National Probation Directorate, renewed energy had gone into tackling this and performance was now improving. Some targets remained a challenge and achievement was patchy across the area. The quality of management information had increased and there was a stronger understanding amongst staff that 'performance mattered'.

Contribution to inter-agency work at a strategic level was noted positively by partner organisations, and formal arrangements for liaison with sentencers were in place. Implementation of the offender management model was under way, and it was recognised that staff needed to be deployed more effectively in order to resource this. Overall, staff supervision and appraisal were carried out to a sufficient standard, though there were unmet needs in respect of training and staff development, some of which reflected changes in staff roles as part of the implementation of the offender management model.

There had been a limited focus on review and evaluation generally, and the area planned to develop this aspect of its work to inform policy and practice development, with more use of Offender Assessment System data. There were particular gaps in provision for offenders in respect of accommodation, mental health services and tackling alcohol use, and a lack of consistency in provision across the area for meeting literacy, numeracy and language needs. The area was reliant on services provided by other agencies to meet offender needs fully and attention was being paid to addressing these in conjunction with relevant partner organisations.

Risk of Harm

Risk of Harm assessment was completed to a sufficient standard in most cases, though this was not always timely. In some instances there was insufficient evidence of management involvement in the assessment of high Risk of Harm cases or where child safeguarding was an issue. Risk to children was not accurately reflected in all relevant cases. Risk of Harm classification and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements status were not always communicated well internally, and external agencies working

with offenders were not made aware routinely of the level of Risk of Harm posed by them.

Whilst most risk management plans were completed using the required format, they were fully comprehensive in around half the cases. Reviews of Risk of Harm were not being undertaken regularly. Ongoing planning to address risk to children was absent in some cases and home visits were not being made sufficiently frequently to monitor safeguarding concerns or keep Risk of Harm to a minimum. More attention needed to be paid to victim issues, including in cases of domestic abuse. Where restrictive interventions were in place, they were well monitored overall and supervision enforced appropriately, so Risk of Harm was successfully managed in the majority of cases.

There were good links at strategic level between the organisations involved in Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, and the Strategic Management Board was taking steps to operate fully in line with national guidance. Its manager post was viewed positively by the agencies involved as bringing consistency to processes and procedures. However, Level 1 cases were not being recorded routinely as such by offender managers and these were not processed through the formal Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

The area had no approved premises and was forced to seek places in other areas for offenders needing the highest level of restrictive interventions, in order to minimise their Risk of Harm to the public.

SUMMARY OF SCORES

Outlined overleaf in Chart 1 are percentage scores for each Offender Management Inspection Criterion in sections 1-3. A line of priority for improvement is also indicated. The scores which fall below this line (which is not a line of 'sufficiency') indicate those criteria which form a primary focus for improvement. Table 2 indicates a score drawn from a range of indicators in the *Assessment & Sentence Planning* and *Implementation of Interventions* sections about Risk of Harm work. This score is significant in determining whether a further focused inspection will be carried out. Full details of our *Scoring Approach* are contained in Appendix 3.

Chart 1: Scoring of sections 1-3:

Offender Management Inspection - Hertfordshire (December 2006)

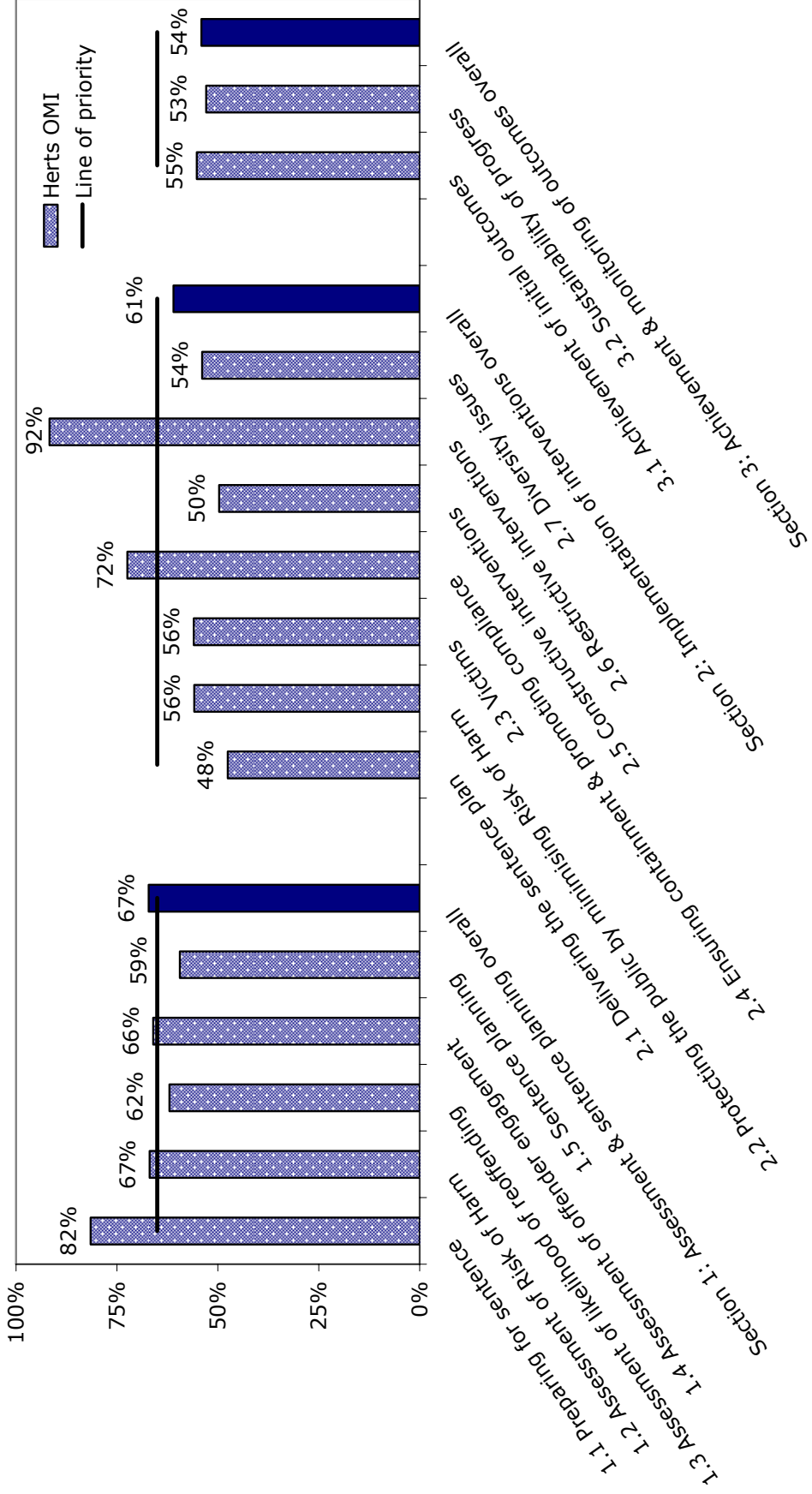


Table 1: Scoring of section 4:

4.1	General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING	Satisfactorily met
4.2	General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS	Partly met
4.3	General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT	Partly met
4.4	General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Partly met
4.5	General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION	Not met
4.6	General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES	Partly met

Table 2: Risk of Harm Thread

Score for Risk of Harm Thread	65%
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improvements are necessary as follows:

1. Risk of Harm is reviewed regularly, and a particular focus is given to ongoing planning which accurately reflects Risk of Harm to children and known adults
2. all Level 1 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements cases are consistently identified, recorded and accounted for through the multi-agency process
3. a higher profile is given to sentence planning, with all sentence plans and reviews completed on time and to a high standard
4. the diverse needs of offenders, including those relating to literacy, numeracy and language, are comprehensively assessed and further appropriate provision made to meet need
5. increased priority is given by offender managers to issues of victim safety, and victim awareness work appropriate to the case is undertaken with offenders
6. constructive interventions, to help offenders and change their behaviour, are delivered in all relevant cases and this is evidenced in case records
7. gaps in provision of accommodation, and appropriate mental health services, for offenders are met through joint work with other agencies
8. prolific and other priority offenders receive a premium service as required
9. Offender Assessment System re-scoring is actively used as a progress measure for criminogenic needs and resultant data used to improve practice and provision of services.

NEXT STEPS

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

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

There will not be a further inspection in Hertfordshire.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Below are examples of good practice we found in Hertfordshire.

Thorough induction:

OMI Criterion: 1.4 Assessment of offender engagement

Brian was subject to a community sentence with an additional alcohol treatment requirement. His induction to supervision was very thorough, including assessment of his learning style and discussion of what methods would be used to help change his behaviour. He was involved in drawing up his sentence plan, with attention to what he thought was most important as well as to what his offender manager required to be undertaken.

Effective joint risk management:

OMI Criterion: 2.2 Protecting the public by minimising RoH

Alice had been in custody for sex offences and her case was managed through MAPPA. Prior to her release, her offender manager had worked closely with social services, the police, prison and victim contact staff to ensure that the victim and other people potentially at RoH were protected. The risk management plan was detailed and comprehensive, recognising Alice's vulnerability as well as risk posed, and it was delivered jointly by her offender manager and police officers.

Community reintegration:

OMI Criterion: 2.5 Constructive interventions

There was particularly effective use of volunteer workers to support offenders in a range of interventions. The probation area worked closely with SOVA, a charitable trust, which provided up to 80 volunteers, approximately half of whom supported the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills in offenders. The work of volunteers was highly praised by staff, with many working over prolonged periods with individual offenders who posed a range of complex needs.

Positive outcomes:

OMI Criterion: 3.1 Achievement of initial outcomes

Paul had a long history of offending, and mental health difficulties led to him self-harming when he faced problems in his life. His offender manager, a trainee PO, worked carefully to motivate and encourage him to complete his community order. Victim awareness work undertaken with him resulted in changes in his thinking and in his attitude to the victim. Although there were setbacks, Paul did not self-harm when faced with new challenges and he made significant changes to his lifestyle, including gaining employment. Early outcomes had been positive and he had complied fully with all the requirements of his sentence.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Planning for the introduction of the offender management model had begun in 2005 with offender management separated from delivery of interventions, as part of Phase 1 of the roll-out of the model nationally. Organisational structures changed more recently and, at the time of the inspection, work was still in progress to implement the model in full. This meant that there were differing levels of knowledge and understanding about the model across the four centres. The area had begun to recognise that organising its staff into tiers, as well as tiering cases, had not proved as useful as anticipated. Its current model involved each staff grouping (tier) dealing with a single or, at most, two tiers of cases. As noted elsewhere in this report, this had proved problematic for a number of reasons, not least in terms of ensuring continuity of offender manager and allocating resources appropriate to the type of case.

The intention was to move to staff groupings (OMUs), but without being prescriptive as to the size of each. It was acknowledged that the biggest role change was for case administrators, who currently had differing involvement throughout the area. From our meeting with some of these staff, it was evident that there were generally positive views about the offender management model and the increased opportunities it offered for more involvement in cases. However, some case administrators felt that they were sometimes left with insufficient time in which to complete work properly, particularly for those in OMUs with greater numbers of cases. The area was about to embark on a value for money review of administrative services and the development of the case administrator role would be tied into this.

Phase II of the national roll-out of the offender management model was under way at the time of the inspection and plans for its implementation in Hertfordshire were being put in place. It was expected that some degree of reorganisation would be needed in order to ensure continuity of offender manager from the PSR stage through to custody and management of post-release licence. The area was implementing this part of the model on a gradual basis as it was experiencing capacity issues, which it planned to address through changes in the way PSO staff were deployed. Role boundary issues (between PO and PSO staff) were now under discussion with unions. The Phase II roll-out covered high priority cases with a custodial element, extending beginning-to-end offender management nationally to adult determinate sentence prisoners, who were sentenced to 12 months or more and who were PPOs or assessed as posing a high or very high RoH to others. It was anticipated that PO staff would mostly manage Tier 3 and 4 cases, however, the area was not yet confident of the skills base of all relevant staff and was taking steps to address this, for example through additional training in respect of managing RoH. The area also faced a major challenge in its staff going in to prisons to chair sentence planning boards there, as most of its offenders in custody were not held locally in Hertfordshire or nearby. At a national level, work was under way to ensure that offender managers in the community retained full access to the OASys assessment and sentence plan from the point at which cases fell under these new arrangements. This was not in place nationally at the time of our inspection and occasional difficulties for offender managers in obtaining release of access to OASys were expected to continue in the interim. No particular technical difficulties around OASys connectivity with prisons were being experienced in Hertfordshire. To aid contact with offenders in custody, and liaison between offender managers and prison-based staff without the need for travel, the area was considering the installation of video

conferencing equipment. At present, this was only available through the courts. Relationships with HMP The Mount and with HMP Woodhill (which acted as its 'local' prison) were described as positive.

The new national case record system, NOMIS, was not due to be rolled-out to the Hertfordshire Probation Area until late in 2007. Nationally, there had been delays in its implementation.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN HMP THE MOUNT

We visited HMP The Mount to hear of progress in implementing the NOMS offender management model. We were able to meet with the acting governor in charge and the acting head of the OMU.

HMP The Mount is a large, adult male, category C training prison. Its population came primarily from London; only 5% were from the Hertfordshire area. 60% of its population were from black or minority ethnic backgrounds and 40% were foreign nationals, ten of whom were held awaiting deportation. The prison had undergone recent changes in its senior management, with the governor and head of OMU leaving in October 2006. At the time of the visit, the deputy governor was acting governor in charge and the previous assessment and reintegration manager was now the acting head of OMU.

The OMU, required to be in place from September 2006, was divided into two functions: offender management and assessments, and interventions. It was staffed by two POs, three PSOs, a principal officer and a senior officer, and three prison officers. All were supported by three administration officers (acting as case administrators) and an officer support grade post, and work was undertaken in shared offices. Five staff operated as offender supervisors. This structure had been developed in April 2005, anticipating that it would meet future need. There had been a great deal of uncertainty initially as to what offender management entailed and many staff were reported as not being completely sure of the implication from a custodial point of view. Information to staff and prisoners had been produced in the form of briefings and a leaflet. Specific training on the offender management model had also been carried out by the assessment and reintegration manager in July 2006. The introduction of the model had brought no major problems with unions in the prison, though some initial difficulties were experienced at national level regarding role boundaries issues in respect of PSOs completing OASys. However, this had been resolved speedily. All the OMU staff had job descriptions and were aware of their role and task, with offender supervisors being allocated particular geographical areas to work with. The integration between probation and prison staff within the establishment was described as excellent, with the development of the OMU seen as having assisted in the removal of boundaries between traditional roles.

Offender supervisors completed a prisoner's OASys or reviewed it within three months of reception. The SMT was informed weekly of the number of PPO, MAPPA and high or very high RoH cases, and all were treated as being within the scope of offender management arrangements. The establishment had prepared itself for a high number of offender management meetings but, to date, there had been no visits by community-based offender managers to deal with sentence planning issues. (NB: As this second phase of offender management model implementation only began for limited types of prisoners sentenced from November 2006 onwards, no such cases fell into our inspection sample.) There were dedicated facilities for offender management, including meeting rooms, offices and interview areas, though no video conferencing facility currently existed.

Current interventions for prisoners included the ETS and CALM accredited programmes, and the cognitive skills booster course. There was also provision for assessment for

SOTP. A 12 steps course was offered to tackle substance misuse. All prisoners were able to access the full range of services, interventions and activities in the prison, except those who had less than three months to serve and who had already been served with an 'intention to deport' notice. A working group had been established to manage the specific needs of foreign national prisoners. There had been no recent analysis of the range of interventions required to meet the needs of the prisoner population overall, though the database maintained by the OMU had the facility to do this. Where an OASys had been completed, a 'priority intervention' form was attached, indicating to all relevant departments the order in which the prisoner's targets needed to be tackled. Where an offender manager had indicated in the sentence plan a need for a specific programme to be undertaken, this was given high priority in the establishment, so there was potential for offender managers to make an effective impact on the experience of prisoners during their sentences. Where particular interventions were not available, there was provision to transfer the prisoner to linked prisons elsewhere.

So far, the experience of collaboration and cooperation with probation areas had not been particularly positive. It should be remembered here that only 5% of the prison's population were Hertfordshire residents. The majority of those imprisoned would therefore not be cases held by Hertfordshire Probation Area, but potentially could be managed by any of the 42 probation areas in England and Wales. The prison noted that there were problems with communication with offender managers in the community, with a lack of awareness on their part of their role in the offender management model, though this was not specifically related to Hertfordshire Probation Area. The establishment described its frustration at the lack of information and joint working in some probation areas and the difficulty experienced by offender supervisors on occasions in identifying or contacting the offender manager. Examples were given of this adversely affecting some prisoners, with the lack of up-to-date RoH assessment hindering progression to Category D establishments. There had been few requests from offender managers for temporary transfer of OASys, and most of these had been requests for 'read-only' access. No particular problems with OASys connectivity were reported. Briefing information had been produced in-house to increase the awareness of offender managers, and an offender management protocol had been devised for work with Hertfordshire Probation Area. Communication at a senior level between the prison and probation area was described as more positive now, and the establishment anticipated further improvements with a new CO in the probation area and new, enthusiastic leadership at HMP The Mount. Its frustration remained in getting outside probation areas to engage fully with the offender management model and the governor was keen to offer opportunities to offender manager staff in Hertfordshire to work alongside his staff so that shared learning could be gained. Since the visit, we understand that joint training had been agreed and was planned to take place in May 2007.

SERVICE USERS' PERSPECTIVE

Offenders

Four interview groups with offenders were undertaken: two with unpaid work groups, and two with accredited programmes groups (Women's Programme and OSAP). No interview group took place with approved premises residents, as it would normally on OMI, as there were no such premises located in Hertfordshire. In total, 12 offenders were interviewed about their experiences; five women and seven men, the majority of whom were white.

There were mixed views from those offenders undertaking unpaid work about its benefit to the community and their opportunity to learn from it. One stated that they could "see the point of it" and that it was of benefit. Another reported that they had been apprehensive when first sentenced but were now "quite enjoying it". Both were undertaking their unpaid work in a community placement which offered a number of opportunities, including the maintenance of grounds and of boats, and were in contact with the beneficiary throughout their placement. Those on another group also enjoyed their placement and felt that the involvement of the beneficiary had been helpful. There was a general view, however, across both groups that their skills were not matched to projects. Only one had had the opportunity to undertake skills for life work as part of their unpaid work hours; others indicated they would have welcomed this. All remembered having had an induction, which covered health and safety issues thoroughly as well as the 'rules and regulations', but none were aware of a sentence plan. This included those who were subject to a supervision requirement as well as those undertaking unpaid work as a stand-alone requirement. Contact with offender managers was very limited for those on stand-alone unpaid work requirements and several reported difficulties in contacting them when they needed to. Concerns were expressed about apparent unfairness in enforcement of absences, though there were also a number of positive comments about how individual needs had been taken into account in planning work sessions, for example in respect of family and work or education commitments.

None of the offenders on accredited programmes could remember having seen their sentence plan or having been involved in discussion about it. However, all had been through an induction process and were aware about the expectations of their behaviour whilst subject to supervision, and of the enforcement process if they did not comply. It was evident that there was limited contact with their offender manager whilst the programme was under way, though those on the OSAP programme noted that they had been offered help with contacting community organisations (such as colleges, Job Club and money advice services) to assist their reintegration into the community. These offenders also commented on the work of the probation area in making them think more about their offending – "it gets drummed in" – though there were mixed views about how helpful this was. None of those on programmes thought that they had been made more aware of the effects of offending on victims, either through the programme or by their offender manager. Those on the Women's Programme commented on the network of support it built for them with other women, but were less positive in terms of its relevance to their particular needs or in respect of it tackling their offending. The majority of the offenders on programmes faced obstacles in attending; travel and child care responsibilities were the main concerns, and whilst help was provided with the

travel issues, those on the Women's Programme felt that its pattern of attendance did not meet their needs.

Out of 100 questionnaires to offenders 17 were completed and returned. Most comments were positive and 12 indicated that they had had a good working relationship with their offender manager who was prepared to listen to what they had to say. Comments from two offenders, who reported a poor working relationship, were very negative. All reported that the rules covering their supervision, including breach, had been explained to them either fully or in part. Eleven recalled having had their sentence plans discussed with them, whilst four were clear that no such discussion had taken place. Just under half reported that the probation area had helped them with issues concerning attitudes to offending, and slightly less noted assistance with emotional well-being. One indicated that no help at all had been received and another that it had been difficult to contact their offender manager. Fifteen thought that the work of the probation area had made them think more about their offending, and 13 commented that it had made them think more about the victims of crime. Fourteen believed that they were less likely to offend as a result of their supervision, though some took the view that they would not have reoffended anyway.

Victims

Four victims were invited to an interview group and all attended. Three out of four commented that contact by the Victim Unit had been very prompt after the offender was sentenced. All noted that the VLO role had been explained clearly and offers of assistance had been followed through by the VLO. Examples were given of practical help and advice being provided, to assist with making a victim's home safer, and of useful information about changes in a prisoner's location, release time or recall to custody. In one instance, information about an offender's release had not been passed on promptly to the Victim Unit, which resulted in a distressing situation for the victim concerned as she saw the offender in a public place. Once alerted to this by the victim, the VLO was able to establish with the prison what had happened and relevant information was provided. Victims commented that improved communication from prisons and courts to the Victim Unit would ensure that information could be passed on promptly in all situations.

All four victims indicated that they had been offered the opportunity to contribute to decisions about additional conditions on the offender's licence. Some of the victims were protected through non-contact and/or exclusion zone conditions and all were satisfied with the priority given by the VLO to their safety. There were a number of examples where support and practical help were provided to tackle safety issues directly, including assistance about rehousing and dealing with letters from prisoners, and all were clear about how they could access the VLO if they had concerns or worries about their safety. Comments were made that the work of the Victim Unit had *"helped make them feel more secure during the prison sentence and licence period"*, but there was a concern about whether this would continue after the offender's contact with the probation area had ended. Interestingly, none of the four victims had heard of MAPPA or were aware if the offenders in their case were managed under these arrangements.

There were very positive comments made about the focus of the Victim Unit on the different needs of the victims concerned. All felt that the time and place of meetings had been arranged to suit them rather than the VLO. Additional support was also available through volunteers. One person described this as having been a *"positive*

support, enjoyable and helpful in a practical way too". For another, it had not been such a positive experience, but they did not feel pressured into making use of this service if they did not wish to.

Overall satisfaction with the work of the Victim Unit was very high. Two of the victims recalled having responded to questionnaires in the past about their experience of the unit, but were not aware of how this information had been used.

Of the four questionnaires sent on our behalf to people who had been victims of crime, one was completed and returned. This person expressed very similar views to those outlined above, and was completely satisfied with the service provided. Having taken up the offer of contact with the VLO, they had been provided with support and given the information they needed to assist with their safety.

Courts

Twelve out of 30 questionnaires sent to sentencers and other court personnel were completed and returned. Overall there were positive views about the work of the probation area. All who responded were satisfied with the quality of FDRs and most with the quality of SDRs. There was less satisfaction with the timeliness of reports, with particular comments about timescales for FDRs in some instances. Arrangements for enforcement of community sentences were seen by all as working well, wholly or in part. However, those who responded to the relevant question were unaware of specific 'fast-track' arrangements in place for the enforcement of PPO or high RoH cases. Comments about enforcement were mixed, ranging from concerns about significant delays in enforcement proceedings to positive comments about prompt recall to court and breaches being dealt with in line with national guidelines. Probation staffing levels in court were seen as insufficient by some respondents, although there were mainly very positive comments about the knowledge and skills of those staff. One respondent noted that *"the probation staff in court are excellent – well informed, experienced and clear"*. 82% were satisfied with the liaison arrangements between the probation area and sentencers, and all who responded to the particular question were satisfied that the information they received about current probation policy and practice was sufficient for their needs, either fully or partially. There were mixed views about the professional leadership behaviour shown by the area's managers, but with some positive comments too about the recent strengthening of local management. 80% of respondents thought that the area engaged effectively with the LCJB, but few were aware of any monitoring of report proposal against court disposal, for instance, or comparison of this with successful completion of orders or licences. Several indicated that they would welcome such information.

1. ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING

1.1 General Criterion: PREPARING FOR SENTENCE

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

82%

Strengths:

- (a) Most of the 60 community order cases in the sample had had a PSR prepared for the current offence. Where the court had indicated the level of seriousness, all reports had taken this into account. All 12 of the sentencers or other court personnel who completed and returned our questionnaire were satisfied with the quality of FDRs and ten out of 12 with the quality of SDRs.
- (b) All reports were assessed as being of the appropriate type (i.e. FDR or SDR) and completed using the nationally approved format, and 91% were prepared within the timescale set by the court. Improvement in timeliness over the last six months was noted by some of the sentencers and others who completed our questionnaire, though there was also some dissatisfaction with the time it took to prepare FDRs on occasions.
- (c) The OASys PSR template had been used in almost all the reports and the quality of the report was thought to have been enhanced by its use in 90% of instances. 93% of the reports were judged as being based on the appropriate risk and needs assessment.
- (d) A clear proposal for sentence had been made in 98% of reports and a community-based sentence proposed in the same number. This had been followed by the court in 84% of cases.
- (e) 98% of reports were assessed as objective, impartial and free from discriminatory language or stereotype, as required by the national standard, and 91% were judged to be suitably concise.
- (f) Where self-harm was an issue, this was clearly recorded in all the reports.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Appropriate victim information was included in only 59% of relevant reports.
- (b) 30% of reports were judged as not meeting the national standard in respect of being balanced, verified and factually accurate. In some instances this related to an acknowledged lack of verification of information provided by the offender.
- (c) Six reports were prepared in PPO cases. In only half was the seriousness of the offence and the likelihood of reoffending clearly outlined. Four of the reports lacked a clear and proportionate proposal and in three instances the offender was inappropriately described as a PPO in the report, contrary to national guidance.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

1.2 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF RISK OF HARM

RoH is comprehensively and accurately assessed using OASys in each case and additional specialist assessment tools where relevant.

67%

Strengths:

- (a) RoH screening had been completed in 97% of community sentence cases and it was assessed as accurate in 88% of instances. However, see below in respect of its timeliness.
- (b) A full RoH analysis was completed in 60 cases and in 75% of these it was judged to have been completed to a sufficient standard. Where the screening or full RoH analysis had taken place, the classification of harm posed was clear in all but one case.
- (c) Assessments accurately reflected RoH to known adults in 93% of relevant cases. This figure was lower, though, in respect of RoH to children which was judged as accurate in 81% of instances. The figure was similar with regards to RoH to the public generally, at 80%. RoH to staff was accurately reflected in 88% of appropriate cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The RoH screening was completed on time at the start of sentence in just under half of the community sentence cases, and completed or reviewed on release in a timely manner in 69% of the post-release licence cases. In two community sentence cases there was no screening at all.
- (b) Fifteen cases in the sample were classified as posing a high RoH to others. In only nine instances had this been clearly communicated to all staff involved in the case. The register 'flags' in CRAMS were not being used in all relevant situations to indicate that an offender posed a high RoH. Similarly, 17 cases in the sample were identified as being managed within MAPPAs. In five instances there was no evidence of this having been clearly communicated to all staff involved in the case. Only cases judged to meet the criteria for Levels 2 and 3 MAPPAs were formally managed through that process. This meant that offenders who should have been identified as Level 1 MAPPAs were not being recorded as such and the area was unable to tell us how many such cases it had, which was a matter of concern. We were told that the MAPPAs SMB was reviewing its policy in this respect.
- (c) External agencies working with offenders informed us that they were not always made aware of the level of RoH posed by an offender. Some of these agencies had access to CRAMS, and there appeared to be a reliance on them identifying the RoH classification themselves. Where external agency staff had no access to the

probation case record, there seemed to be no system of ensuring that they had RoH information on a routine basis. One partner agency commented that turnover in probation staff had led to the process of information exchange becoming less consistent. Some internal keyworkers also noted difficulties in obtaining information from offender managers in relation to RoH issues on a routine basis; offender managers were not often readily available so keyworkers would seek information on CRAMS which, as noted above, did not always 'flag' RoH status.

- (d) There was evidence of effective middle and/or senior management involvement in the assessment of only 61% of the high RoH cases. Similarly, in the 18 cases where child safeguarding was an issue, management involvement was judged to be effective in 12 (67%) instances.
- (e) In 32% of cases where there were previous prison, probation or YOT assessments, these were not used to inform RoH assessments.
- (f) Insufficient attention was paid to the assessment of victim issues in 39% of applicable cases. This concerned both thorough assessment of victim safety issues and offender victim awareness.
- (g) Risk management plans were comprehensive in just over half of the community sentence cases which required one and just under half of applicable licence cases. Whilst the required format was being used in 76% of all relevant cases, there was an absence of detail about how the case was going to be managed to minimise RoH. In a third of relevant community sentence cases, the risk management plan was not produced as required within five days of the order being made or of the offender being assessed as posing a high RoH. In eight community sentence cases and five licence cases no risk management plan was completed at all.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

1.3 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD OF REOFFENDING

Likelihood of reoffending is comprehensively and accurately assessed using OASys as applicable.

62%

Strengths:

- (a) The likelihood of reoffending assessment drew on other relevant assessments in 72% of applicable cases. Staff from partner agencies gave examples of substance misuse assessments contributing to PSRs, though some agencies thought that more use could be made of their assessments, particularly where these related to suitability for particular interventions.
- (b) Positive influences on offenders, such as supportive and pro-social factors, were identified in 72% of cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Criminogenic factors were not satisfactorily assessed at the start of sentence or release from custody in 40% of cases. In some instances this related to issues of timeliness, but the quality of assessment also needed development.
- (b) Seven of 11 PPO cases in the sample had had an OASys needs assessment which was comprehensive. In six cases this was completed within five days as required.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

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

66%

Strength:

- (a) Where potentially discriminatory or disadvantaging factors had been identified, 95% of cases showed that plans had been put in place to minimise their impact.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Diversity issues and other individual needs had been actively assessed in only 60% of the sample. In a third of cases, offenders were thought to have faced potential obstacles to their effective engagement in supervision which had not been identified by the offender manager.
- (b) Skills for life screening had been carried out at the start of sentence in only 59% of cases and arrangements to screen for offenders' literacy, numeracy and language skills was a key area for development. The area used a computer-based screening tool in many instances which was time consuming and tackled only literacy, not numeracy or language. Case administrator staff indicated that there was inconsistency across the area as to who administered this, to which offenders, and how. Some commented that, on occasions, they had been left to deal with distressed offenders following the screening, without being trained to cope with this.
- (c) Where the initial screening had taken place and this indicated the need for a full assessment, this was carried out in just 53% of relevant cases. Literacy, numeracy and language provision was made by three local further education colleges, with classes taking place at three out of the four probation area centres. There was no provision at the fourth centre following termination of the previous contract and delays in the introduction by the LSC of a new OLASS commissioning model and this had affected the provision of a replacement service. The lack of appropriate skills for life provision for all offenders was clearly having an impact on overall service

delivery and achievement of targets, and needed to be addressed speedily.

- (d) Full attention was paid to the methods most likely to be effective with the offender in just 57% of cases and the offender's learning style, motivation and capacity to change had been clearly taken into account in 65% of instances. External agencies reported that they had had the opportunity to discuss with offender managers appropriate ways of working with specific offenders, but this was mainly done on an informal basis. It was thus unlikely to have been recorded on the case file. Some partner agencies expressed concern that offenders' intellectual abilities were not being taken into account sufficiently when skills for life requirements were being considered as part of community orders. Examples were given of requirements which were unrealistic for offenders to complete within the timescale; either too long or too short depending on the individual's needs.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

1.5 General Criterion: SENTENCE PLANNING

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

59%

Strengths:

- (a) In 85% of community sentence cases the offender was allocated to an offender manager within the required timescale.
- (b) Some parts of the sentence plan were being completed appropriately; for example, planned contact levels were included in 84% of cases.
- (c) It was evident from case records that in 90% of instances steps had been taken to ensure that offenders fully understood the requirements of their sentence, and in 88% of cases that offenders understood the penalties for breach of their order or licence.
- (d) Interventions to address offending behaviour were appropriately identified in 78% of relevant cases.
- (e) Case administrators were generally positive about their new role in the offender management model, welcoming the opportunity it brought for greater involvement in cases. However, there were differences across the four centres in how OMUs functioned.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Whilst all offenders in the sample had been allocated to a tier, 24 had been incorrectly allocated. We found evidence of Tier 4 cases allocated to Tier 2 whilst the offender was in custody, and other tiering decisions appeared to have been made on the basis of availability of staff rather than the type of case and its needs. The area acknowledged that particular decisions had been made about case tiering in order to deal with staff vacancies and workload demands during the summer of 2006. This was around the time that the cases in the sample were sentenced or released. With hindsight, the area accepted that these decisions had not been correct and cases were now being reallocated appropriately. Given the way tiering had been used, it was not surprising that sentence planning did not reflect the tier in 28% of cases. In many instances, offender managers saw case tiering as an administrative device and had lost the concept of the link between the sentence, the tier and the sentence plan.
- (b) Plans were sensitive to diversity issues, including offender vulnerability, in just over half of cases. From discussions with offender managers it was evident that they were giving consideration to the diverse needs of offenders but not always recording these in the sentence plan. This linked with the finding about lack of sufficiency in case recording, referred to later in this report.
- (c) Sentence plans gave clear shape to supervision in just 32% of cases. Just over a half of plans focused on achievable change for the offender and relevant goals were set in 56%. Only 55% of plans were completed on time.
- (d) When consideration should have been given to restrictive licence restrictions or order requirements aimed at minimising the RoH to others, in just over a third of relevant cases there was no evidence that this had been done. How RoH was to be managed in community orders was outlined in just 38% of applicable cases.
- (e) The roles and liaison responsibilities of all workers involved in the sentence were clearly defined in less than half of the sentence plans. From discussion with some of them, workers from external agencies were unfamiliar with the sentence planning process and how their responsibilities should be included in this. It was also evident that they did not routinely receive a copy of the sentence plan. Internal keyworker staff reported a similar experience of not being involved in constructing sentence plans or being asked to contribute to reviews. In a third of cases it was not clear who was going to deliver particular interventions. Many offender managers also seemed uncertain about their role being the central pivot around which other work with the offender took place. Case administrators also commented on a lack of guidance about different roles and responsibilities under the offender management model, particularly between their role and that of PSOs.
- (f) Interventions to promote community reintegration were identified in only 41% of cases, and those to reduce or contain RoH in only 57% of applicable cases.

- (g) Offenders had had the opportunity to participate actively in the sentence planning process in under half of the sample. Those we met in various interview groups also indicated that they had had limited or no involvement in the sentence planning process; indeed, some were unaware of the existence of any plan. Offenders who responded to our questionnaire made similar comments.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS

2.1 General Criterion: DELIVERING THE SENTENCE PLAN

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

48%

Strengths:

- (a) At the time of the inspection, when approximately six months had passed from sentence or release on licence, sentence requirements had been implemented fully in 71% of cases.
- (b) Thirteen out of the 17 offenders who responded to our questionnaire thought that probation staff and those from other agencies worked together well to manage their supervision. A similar number said that they had had a good relationship with their offender manager who listened to what they had to say. Internal keyworker staff delivering interventions commented that there were good working relationships between offender managers and themselves, though see below in respect of information exchange.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Where there was more than one requirement in a community order or licence, the interventions were delivered in an appropriate sequence in only 45% of cases. In the licence sample, work in the community built sufficiently on activity in custody in 42% of cases. Typically, such activity would include education or substance misuse work.
- (b) There was sufficient joint work between prison-based staff and offender managers to prepare offenders for release in under half of the licence cases. The area's new resettlement policy and procedure was intended to ensure improved continuity of work through custody and into the community in the future.
- (c) Although offenders had been prepared thoroughly for interventions in 71% of relevant cases, arrangements to reinforce new skills acquired were put in place in only 58% of these.
- (d) Positive behaviour by offenders was reinforced in only 48% of cases. It was evident from case files, and discussion with offenders attending accredited programmes, that they had limited contact with their offender manager whilst they were undertaking their programme, so opportunities to build on their achievements were missed. Programmes tutors also commented on a lack of contact with themselves by offender managers during a programme; offender managers were not routinely checking on the offender's progress.
- (e) Case files contained limited evidence that the offender manager oversaw and coordinated the input of all workers involved in the case. Only 44% of cases demonstrated this, and 48% showed that

there had been good communication between all staff and the offender. As already noted, sentence plans were not shared routinely with all workers delivering interventions in the case. Treatment plans, work plans and individual learning plans relating to work with partner agencies appeared to be treated as stand-alone documents, not being cross-referenced to the sentence plan by the offender manager. Where external agency workers had access to CRAMS, this was relied on as a means of sharing information in most cases, though some agencies reported that they took part in regular meetings with offender managers to review work completed. There was a clear need for more systematic planning and monitoring of offenders' learning and skills development.

- (f) Where there was a sentence plan, this had been reviewed at least every 16 weeks in only 45% of cases. The quality of sentence planning was poor; work was seen to flow coherently from the plan in 47% of cases and in just 28% there was evidence of objectives and milestones giving a clear direction to supervision.
- (g) Reviews integrated other plans as appropriate in 56% of relevant cases.
- (h) In the sample there were 11 cases which had been transferred between probation areas. Effective transfer practice required that both transferring and receiving areas worked to national guidance. In only six cases had a complete and current OASys been provided to the receiving area. A first appointment was made with the offender within the required five days and just three were visited at home within ten days of the receiving area being notified that the offender had moved. In two cases there was no evidence of the transfer having been carried out according to national requirements.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

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

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

56%

Strengths:

- (a) An identified increase in RoH posed was acted upon appropriately by the offender manager in 16 out of the 20 relevant cases.
- (b) In all five cases where the offender had been recalled to custody because of RoH concerns, this had been an appropriate part of the risk management process. Recall had been actioned effectively in all these cases, however there was evidence in only one case that clear explanations for the recall had been given to the offender and efforts made to re-engage this person.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) RoH was not being reviewed regularly. Only 44% of cases had been reviewed at the 16 week stage following the start of a community order or release on licence. Where there had been a significant change which might have given rise to an increase in RoH, there had been no review in 54% of relevant cases.
- (b) Changes in an offender's RoH were not identified sufficiently swiftly in 37% of relevant cases.
- (c) MAPPA were assessed as having been used effectively in ten out of the 15 relevant cases, and in five cases there was limited evidence that offender managers or other relevant staff were contributing effectively to MAPPA. Some offender managers spoke to us about inconsistent attendance by other agencies at the Level 2 meetings, resulting in action planning being less of a shared task than anticipated. In the meeting we held with the probation area's strategic partners, the MAPPA SMB chair indicated that consistent attendance by all partners had been an issue and steps were being taken to address this.
- (d) Ongoing planning to address RoH to children was absent in nine out of 22 relevant cases, and sufficient home visits to monitor children's safeguarding issues took place in just four out of 12 relevant cases.
- (e) There was a lack of evidence of ongoing planning to address RoH posed to known adults in 39% of particular instances, and similarly to the public generally in 37% of relevant cases.
- (f) Risk to staff was not being addressed in 11 of the 17 cases where it was an issue.
- (g) Home visits in high RoH cases were carried out as required in just 27% of cases and only repeated as necessary to keep RoH to a minimum in one case.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

2.3 General Criterion: VICTIMS

Consistent attention is given to issues concerning victims.

56%

Strengths:

- (a) In the statutory victim contact case where the victim responded to our questionnaire, this person was completely satisfied with the service provided. Also, in our victim interview group, a high level of satisfaction was expressed with the work of the Victim Unit. Offender managers too had praised its work, one noting "*I couldn't do my work without them*".
- (b) Where victims took up the offer of contact with the VLO, eight out of 11 had had the opportunity to give their views on appropriate licence conditions to ensure their safety. The same number had been informed of relevant release conditions. In our victim interview

group, all four attendees noted that they had had this opportunity and there were several examples of the use of non-contact conditions and exclusion zones as a result of attention being paid to victim safety in this way.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Victim awareness work had been undertaken with offenders in only 41% of relevant cases. This was particularly disappointing as the findings in our original ESI in 2004 had been very similar and an increased focus on victim awareness work had been part of the recommendations. There had been some improvement at the time of the follow-up inspection but this had clearly not been sustained.
- (b) Out of 16 statutory victim contact cases in the sample, there was evidence of half having had a written offer of face-to-face contact with the VLO within the required timescale, and of ten having been offered information about the criminal justice process. However, in six of the cases the victim lived outside the Hertfordshire area and the relevant information was not available on the files we saw. It was thus possible that appropriate victim contact had been made by another probation area, but the offender manager in Hertfordshire was not aware of this, as they should have been.
- (c) Victim safety had not been given a high priority in 13 out of the 46 cases where it was an issue. In addition, victim contact staff reported that information regarding release dates was not communicated routinely to them by offender managers. There was a concern that victims were not at the forefront of offender managers' minds in all cases and that the victim perspective could be overlooked.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

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

72%

Strengths:

- (a) Overall, the frequency of appointments arranged conformed to national standards in 81% of cases, and facilitated the requirements of the sentence in 76% of cases.
- (b) Unpaid work placements were judged as benefiting the community in 71% of cases and facilitating the requirements of the sentence in the same number. Unpaid work staff noted that placements were assessed, amongst other criteria, for the community benefit and

beneficiary contact they offered. Most were with charities or other non profit making organisations.

- (c) Attention to monitoring attendance was good across all interventions, at 82%, and effective action had been taken to secure compliance in 94% of relevant cases. Judgements about the acceptability of absences were consistent and appropriate in 95% of cases. Most partner agencies reported that they sent out enquiry letters themselves if an offender missed an appointment with them, though one agency simply informed the offender manager. In all cases, the decision about acceptability of the absence rested with the offender manager. Unpaid work staff reported considerable liaison with offender managers if there were difficulties in compliance or problematic behaviour by an offender.
- (d) Exclusion and curfew requirements were appropriately enforced, with effective liaison with the electronic monitoring provider, in all relevant cases.
- (e) Where required, breach action was instigated in a timely fashion in 82% of cases and was resolved within the required timescales in 71% of instances. External partner agencies did note that they were not always actively informed of the outcome of breach proceedings. Again, those who could access CRAMS relied on this as a source of information.
- (f) The quality of the case record was good in most respects, with 90% being well organised, 83% with clearly recorded contacts and 82% being completed in a timely manner. In 83% of cases there was clear recording of the offender's race and ethnicity as required. However, see below in respect of sufficiency of recording.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Contact by the probation area both with offenders in custody and with prison staff was insufficient to promote effective offender management in 64% of licence cases after release.
- (b) A quarter of cases contained no evidence that the offender had been offered a comprehensive and timely induction following sentence or release on licence.
- (c) The frequency of appointments was sufficient to meet RoH considerations in 68% of cases and to support sentence plan objectives in 57%.
- (d) The frequency of unpaid work sessions did not conform to the national standard in a third of cases. Placements were assessed as being appropriately matched to the offender in only 48% of instances and to be suitably demanding for the offender in 62% of cases. Unpaid work staff noted that they attempted to match offender skills with placements, but limited availability of these hindered their efforts. Difficulties in recruiting supervisors, particularly for weekend work, meant that there was often insufficient availability of placements for offenders. These problems

had also been a feature in the previous inspection in 2004, though there had been some improvement by the time of the follow-up inspection in 2005. Our findings would indicate that the area faced a continuing challenge in recruiting sufficient staff and providing unpaid work at the required frequency.

- (e) Of 11 PPO cases, there was evidence of an enhanced level of contact with the offender in only six, and the reporting pattern was judged to be supportive of all elements of the sentence in five cases.
- (f) Case recording was assessed as sufficient in only 58% of cases. From discussion with offender managers, it appeared that more thought had gone into decisions about how best to work with individual offenders to meet their diverse needs than was actually evidenced on the files. The same also seemed to be true in respect of work actually undertaken with offenders in many cases. Recording was (rightly) focusing on attendance and enforcement issues, but missing the qualitative aspects of the practice.

Conclusion: Performance against this criterion was good.

2.5 General Criterion: CONSTRUCTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Help and Change)
Interventions are delivered to identified ends and to meet the requirements of the sentence: help and change.

50%

Strength:

- (a) Arrangements for referral to externally provided work-related learning were good. There was an effective partnership with the APEX Trust which supported offenders into ETE interventions. Short introductory courses in construction were popular with offenders, increasing skill development in work areas such as plumbing and bricklaying. The area was also involved in the Prison Service Plus project, which included APEX and Job Centre Plus. Targeted at offenders facing particularly significant barriers to employment, it included newly formed job clubs which took place weekly at the area's four centres. Offender managers were enthusiastic about the support offenders received, which included specialist guidance in, for example, disclosing offending history in job applications. We were told of early successes arising from the programme.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Not surprisingly, given the limited recording of work actually undertaken with offenders in many cases, it was difficult to find evidence of constructive interventions which challenged the offender to accept responsibility for their offending. 54% of cases contained evidence of structured interventions which tackled this.

- (b) Sufficient work and resources had been directed at community reintegration issues in 58% of relevant cases.
- (c) Where offenders had identified needs in respect of improving skills for life, arrangements had been made for an appropriate intervention in 60% of relevant cases. Overall provision for literacy, numeracy and language learning was insufficient, with a lack of consistency across the area.
- (d) Of the two DRR cases in the sample, offender managers prepared reports and attended review hearings as required in one case.
- (e) Twenty-nine cases contained a requirement for attendance at an accredited programme. In 17 of these, provision of the programme and its timing was not consistent with the sentence plan, and clear and acceptable explanations for this were given in only four cases. We were told by offender managers of particular delays (up to three months) in accessing domestic abuse programmes, which was concerning given the number of offenders (20) in the sample with a history of domestic abuse. Programmes tutors confirmed lengthy waiting lists for some accredited programmes. During the inspection week in mid December 2006 we were given the example from one centre of 30 offenders waiting for a Think First programme, with the next group not starting until March 2007. A particular contributing factor was said to be the lack of tutors available to run evening programmes for offenders who were in day time employment. More positively, the SOTP could be attended across centres in the area, so offenders had quicker access to this programme if they were able to travel.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

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

92%

Strengths:

- (a) Restrictive interventions were fully monitored in 92% of relevant cases and every reasonable action was being taken to minimise RoH in 82% of cases.
- (b) Hertfordshire was an area without its own approved premises but made appropriate alternative arrangements for offenders posing a high or very high RoH, despite the difficulties – noted in our report – in accessing approved premises elsewhere.
- (c) Additional licence conditions were judged to be necessary and proportionate to RoH in all cases. They were also thought to be proportionate to the likelihood of reoffending in 96% of cases, and proportionate to the protection of victims in 93% of instances.

- (d) In all three PPO cases where offending had been related to drug misuse and the offender was released on licence, there were appropriate additional conditions on the licence.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

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

54%

Strengths:

- (a) In 81% of the sample, offenders had been clearly informed that discriminatory behaviour on their part would not be tolerated. The offenders we interviewed also confirmed that this had been made clear to them.
- (b) The identified diverse needs of offenders had been properly addressed in 77% of cases. We saw a number of examples of sensitivity to the needs of individual offenders, including the use of volunteers as mentors to provide support, and assistance with travel costs. SOVA reported that they tried to match the needs of an offender to the strengths of a worker and gave the example of matching a Polish speaking offender with a recently appointed Polish speaking volunteer.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Nine offenders in the sample had needs relating to disability. These were judged to have been addressed appropriately in six cases.
- (b) 49% of offenders with literacy or dyslexia needs had not had these met. This was a serious concern and was likely to have been connected with inconsistencies in skills for life provision across the area.
- (c) Only two out of six minority offenders in the sample had given their informed consent to being placed as a singleton in a mixed group setting. In the same number of cases, arrangements had been made to support the offender's engagement, but in no case was there evidence of attention to staff composition in these instances. Programmes tutors reported that they did check consent and had moved offenders up the waiting list to ensure that they were not a singleton in a group, but this information was not evident on the files we saw.
- (d) Whilst interpretation facilities were available where needed at the area's four centres, we were told that there was no such availability at unpaid worksites. This meant that offenders who spoke little or no English were at a disadvantage in this setting. It was also reported to us by unpaid work staff that orders had had to be taken back to court for revocation in these circumstances because of

concerns about health and safety. Unpaid work staff were concerned about the situation, and it needed to be addressed urgently.

Conclusion: This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

3. ACHIEVEMENT AND MONITORING OF OUTCOMES

3.1 General Criterion: ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIAL OUTCOMES *Planned objectives are efficiently achieved.*

55%

Strengths:

- (a) Across a range of measures we found that the public had been better protected during supervision, with RoH successfully managed in the majority of cases. There was evidence of responsiveness to changes in risk posed, with an increase of restrictive measures imposed in 12 cases, and a decrease in a small number (four) where the offender's behaviour had demonstrated improvement. The MAPPA level had also been decreased in a third of the relevant cases.
- (b) The resources allocated to 85% of cases were consistent with the offender's likelihood of reoffending.
- (c) Retention on literacy, numeracy and language programmes was good. In 2005/2006, of 345 offenders who started programmes, over 200 remained in learning long enough to achieve at least one award.
- (d) Since the start of sentence or release on licence, there had been no reconviction or caution for 77% of offenders in the sample. Eleven out of the 17 offenders who replied to the questionnaire thought they were less likely to offend again as a result of their supervision.
- (e) Achievement of sentencing objectives was strongest in the lowest tier cases and 83% of all cases in the sample experienced appropriate punishment. The control objective had also been achieved in 70% of the Tier 4 cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) In just over a quarter of cases the resources allocated were not consistent with the offender's RoH, and in 29% of cases resources were not being used efficiently. In three out of 11 cases there was no evidence that the offender's PPO status was matched with appropriate increased resources.
- (b) Increased victim awareness was demonstrated in only 28% of relevant cases in the sample, though, more positively, 13 out of the 17 offenders who responded to our questionnaire believed that their supervision had made them think more about the victims of crime.
- (c) Twenty cases in the sample involved offenders who had a history of perpetrating domestic abuse. In seven cases there was no evidence on the case record of offender managers checking with the police Domestic Violence Unit as to whether there had been further call outs to addresses linked to the offender. So it was unclear how successfully RoH was being managed or reduced in these particular cases.

- (d) Although 65% of offenders had complied fully with the requirements of their sentence by the time of our inspection, there was still room for improvement.
- (e) OASys had been re-scored in only 58% of cases. Where it had been undertaken, there was no improvement in the score in 62% of cases. Progress in respect of the highest priority need was evident in half the cases. Thinking and behaviour was the most common criminogenic factor in 66 cases, followed by alcohol misuse (41 cases) and lifestyle and associates (38 cases). This closely mirrored the national picture.
- (f) 58% of cases showed no clear evidence of positive changes in offenders' attitudes and/or behaviour.
- (g) Reduction in the frequency of reoffending was demonstrated in only 13 cases and reduction in seriousness in six.
- (h) Whilst there had been some direct benefits to the community – including unpaid work carried out in 16 cases – only 29% of all cases demonstrated reduced threat to victims and potential victims.
- (i) There was evidence in only 52% of Tier 2, 3, and 4 cases that constructive interventions had been delivered to help offenders. Of particular concern was that only 26% of sentencing objectives in relation to change in behaviour were being achieved. This was likely to be linked with limited evidence of constructive interventions being undertaken with offenders, as noted earlier in the report.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

3.2 General Criterion: SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRESS

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

53%

Strength:

- (a) We heard from SOVA that, where offenders were linked with volunteers, they were assisted to access community resources to aid reintegration. Other partner agencies also reported regularly referring offenders to community-based organisations who could continue to support those offenders once their period of supervision had ended.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) There was limited continuity in offender management, with 32% of cases having experienced three or more offender managers, including the PSR author. In half of these it was thought that the number of offender managers had had a detrimental effect on sustaining progress in the case.

- (b) Structured sentence planning had not been given a high priority throughout the sentence, as was apparent earlier in the report. Only a third of cases demonstrated this.
- (c) There was sufficient action by offender managers to consolidate offender learning and reinforce new skills in 44% of cases. Specifically in relation to unpaid work, arrangements to recognise and record offenders' achievement of personal and vocational skills were underdeveloped.
- (d) Full attention had been given to longer-term community reintegration issues with offenders in just 61% of relevant cases. 35% of offenders who were judged to have a criminogenic need, which could be addressed by a community-based organisation, had not been made aware of how to find assistance.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

4. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

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

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) Hertfordshire Probation Area's Business Plan for 2006/2007 had been produced in the format required by the NPD. In addition to identifying national targets, it included those set by the LCJB along with improvement objectives relating to the regional agenda. A number of local targets were also set, in respect of unpaid work and its links with community safety and community involvement. Following dissatisfaction with the way the business planning process had been driven in the area previously, work with middle managers had been undertaken to improve communication and help develop team plans. A helpful 'traffic light' summary document had been produced for all staff that made clear which performance objectives had priority and where practice had to improve.
- (b) The area was appropriately engaged in the LCJB which had been chaired by the area's CO until his retirement in 2006. Action in relation to the Regional Reducing Reoffending Plan was being pursued through the LCJB, and the area had recently taken responsibility for the offender accommodation pathway in this, particularly appropriate given the challenges posed in meeting this need, referred to elsewhere in the report. Strategic partners commented positively on probation input at the LCJB level, but noted that limited resources prevented more effective engagement at the practice levels.
- (c) Despite considerable changes in the SMT, the area's continuing commitment to its role within MAPPAs was noted by MAPPAs SMB members. An ACO chaired the SMB and it was recognised that further development work was needed to ensure that all agencies contributed appropriately and thus the MAPPAs worked effectively. A MAPPAs manager post was now in place, jointly funded between the area and Hertfordshire Police and based at the area's head office. The coordinating role of this post and the consistency it was bringing to the arrangements in the area was commented upon positively by offender managers and by other agencies.
- (d) A stakeholder conference was held yearly, to involve other criminal justice agencies, contracted and statutory partners, CDRPs, and community groups in the business planning process. Sentencers were also invited to this, and the area had been looking to enhance its liaison arrangements. There were now formal liaison structures at

local bench level and the new court manager post was intended to develop communication further. In addition to the liaison arrangements, there was involvement in the training of new magistrates which had been received positively. Whilst the area was keen to ensure a reliable level of quality service for sentencers, there was concern at Board and senior manager level that too many PSRs were being requested on offenders posing a low RoH and low likelihood of reoffending. Tackling this issue was a major priority for the area, given the resources it demanded.

- (e) Partner agencies commented favourably on the area's commitment to working collaboratively at a strategic level, despite the constraints of its small SMT and the number of changes over the last year. At an operational level, keyworkers from partner agencies reported being integrated within the probation area and that their important contribution to service provision was recognised. They felt that they were 'part of the team' and were able to access relevant training to enhance their effectiveness.
- (f) Probation commitment to the Youth Justice Service was praised by partner agencies, noting a 'better than national' contribution by the area. There was also evidence from partners of the area's full engagement in the commissioning process for drug and alcohol services and its keen involvement in the multi-agency DIP Steering Group. Its contribution, at different levels, to the Supporting People programmes and their reviews was also noted, and the planning and development towards SOVA's involvement in a variety of services was commented upon very positively. Senior managers contributed appropriately to Children's Safeguarding Boards, as part of the area's commitment to public protection. Linkage with local authorities at a general level was through a Chief Officers' Group (comprising all the chief executives in the county and district authorities) of which the CO was a member.
- (g) 85% of staff interviewed felt that their managers demonstrated a professional management approach and 85% that they modelled good leadership behaviour. However, many staff made a clear distinction between their views about their immediate line manager, which were almost always positive, and their views about more senior managers. The number of changes in the SMT and uncertainty about the future had clearly impacted on staff at the front line, and the particular way some managers had striven to improve performance had been viewed negatively.
- (h) Support from the NPD/NOMS was seen very positively by the area. The work of the NPD Quality and Delivery Unit had been appreciated in helping drive up performance, and the assistance of the NPD Public Protection and Licensed Release Unit was regarded as having helped immensely in improving RoH work in the area. After the retirement of the long-standing CO during the summer of 2006, the appointment of an interim CO that autumn had been experienced as most constructive. An improvement plan had now been submitted to NOMS.

- (i) The area was clearly receptive to the findings of regulatory bodies and had acted on their findings to improve performance. There was considerable evidence of the Board holding senior managers to account following our previous inspections and performance had improved between the original ESI in 2004 and its follow-up in 2005. A comprehensive Performance Action Plan had been put in place, which had been monitored robustly at Board level.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Although the area engaged appropriately with MAPPA at a strategic level, it became evident during the inspection that Level 1 MAPPA cases were not consistently identified and recorded as such and did not go through the formal MAPPA process. We were informed that the MAPPA SMB was reviewing its position in this respect, along with other changes it was making to bring its procedures in line with national guidance.
- (b) There was an expressed commitment to diversity at Board and senior manager level, but limited evidence of diversity issues being an integral part of the strategic planning process. Impact assessments on existing policies were under way but there was a backlog of these. New policies, such as the Child Protection Policy, made no explicit reference to diversity issues.
- (c) Whilst it was evident that policies and procedures were communicated to staff, through e-mail and more recently through staff briefings, 36% of offender manager staff interviewed did not feel well informed about their area's policies and procedures. Case administrator staff commented that, although they were informed about significant changes and knew how to access policies and procedures, they were not always aware of how these impacted on their role. They indicated that they would welcome more guidance about putting changes into practice.
- (d) Whilst the stakeholder conference outcomes fed back into the business planning process and sentencer surveys had been undertaken in the past, the perspective of service users such as offenders and victims did not feature in planning processes. This limited the area's ability to draw on valuable feedback about its service delivery and it intended to develop further its practice in this respect.
- (e) Although there was some evidence of involvement with local communities, the area recognised that it needed to engage more actively, both to meet offender need and to make a positive contribution to people in its locality. The local targets in the business plan in respect of unpaid work were intended as steps towards increased community engagement.

4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS
Key performance targets are consistently met, with careful attention to diversity issues throughout.

Partly met

NPS Performance Data	Target	April-September 2006	
		Area	England and Wales
Enforcement: breach taken where required within ten working days: all orders/licences	90%	81%	91%*
Offender compliance: proportion of arranged appointments attended in first 26 weeks	85%	86%*	82%*
Accredited programme completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	135%*	96%*
Unpaid work completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	108%*	106%*
DTTO/DRR starts: % performance in relation to target	100%	66%	94%*
DTTO/DRR completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	68%	102%*
Skills for life: % performance in relation to starts	100%	88%	104%*
Sickness absence: average days absence	9 days	10.5	11.2
Court report timeliness	90%	72%	76%
Accurate and timely ethnicity data	95%	89%*	96%*
Home Secretary's Race Equality Employment Target for 2009	(East of England Region) 4.9%	8%* (regional actual at 31/12/05)	
Proportion of victims of serious sexual/violent offences (where offender sentenced to custody of 12+ months) offered contact within eight weeks	85%	87%*	92%*
RoH assessments and plans for high RoH cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	93%*	92%*
RoH assessments and plans for PPO cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	79%	93%*
Offenders into employment: % performance in relation to target	100%	90%*	121%*
Offenders into employment, retained for four weeks: % performance in relation to target	100%	52%	106%*

* Asterisk indicates area has met target or is 'near miss'.

Joint 'end-to-end' targets on enforcement for LCJB	Target	April-September 2006	
		Area	England and Wales
Average time to resolve community penalty breach proceedings from relevant unacceptable failure	No more than 35 working days	45 days	44 days
Proportion of all breach proceedings resolved within 25 working days of relevant unacceptable failure to comply	50%	43%	47%

Strengths:

- (a) There was evidence of a real energy at Board and SMT level to tackle the problems in meeting performance targets. Changes in the SMT had brought an increased level of recognition of the need for improvement and a variety of measures had been put in place to achieve this. The latest NPD weighted scorecard figures showed an improvement against targets and in relation to other probation areas, so the measures appeared to be having a positive impact.
- (b) The SMT was provided, on a routine basis, with performance data against the weighted scorecard targets. This was now broken down to individual team level to make it more meaningful to front line staff. Weekly 'exceptions' reports came to the SMT, with further reporting back through Board structures, and then quarterly accountability meetings with the regional offender manager. There was extensive evidence of the Board's role in holding senior managers to account, and of its efforts to concentrate on improving performance, particularly in respect of RoH work over the previous 12 months. The quantity and quality of performance information generated in the area had also been praised recently by the NPD Delivery and Quality Unit, with the proviso that possibly not all managers were aware of the information available or how it was used.
- (c) The area's strongest achievement, at 135% of target, was in relation to accredited programmes completions, and 30% of cases in the sample contained an accredited programmes requirement.
- (d) The Annual Audit Letter for 2005/2006, issued in November 2006, noted that the Board had 'adequate arrangements in place' in relation to – amongst other criteria – monitoring and scrutiny of performance, managing its significant business risks and managing and improving value for money. So, despite poor delivery against key national probation targets, the Audit Commission criteria had been met. However, a recommendation had been made that the outcomes of the Board's improvement plans continued to be monitored, in terms of future performance and delivery of key performance targets.
- (e) Examples of cooperative working to meet targets were evident, both across agencies and within the probation region. As noted below, joint work had been undertaken with the LCJB to improve 'end-to-end' enforcement of community sentences and probation contributed towards achievement of DIP targets. Improvement in probation attendance at multi-agency training and at child protection conferences counted towards Local Children's Safeguarding Board targets. Within the region, work had taken place to improve the quality of OASys as part of an increased focus on RoH practice. In the area, regular case file audits had also been introduced, designed to improve the quality of work particularly in high RoH cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Whilst performance against targets was improving, as noted above, and the area had risen off the bottom of the NPS weighted scorecard for the first time in over a year, there were still particular concerns about some aspects. Timeliness of court reports was proving a challenge, as it was nationally. Achievement in relation to DTTO/DRR starts and completions was noticeably weaker than the national picture, and the number of offenders retaining employment for four weeks or beyond was only just over half of the target figure. Performance was clearly patchy across the area, particularly in relation to ETE and skills for life targets and this appeared to stem from inconsistency in provision, also noted elsewhere in the report. From discussions with middle managers and some practitioners, it seemed that the importance of achieving national targets was only recognised at their level in the organisation late in 2005. Thus a focus on performance outcomes on a routine basis (as opposed to preparation for inspection) was relatively new. The Board and senior managers appreciated that this changed culture needed to be embedded, but now felt well placed to take the work forward. The contribution of an interim CO between September and early December 2006 had been warmly welcomed by the Board, and the appointment of a new CO in December was seen as a new opportunity to demonstrate the area's performance and achievements.
- (b) The LCJB joint targets on enforcement had not been met, neither had the NPD target of breach action being taken, where required, within ten working days. Whilst some sentencers and other court personnel who responded to our questionnaire praised the promptness of breach action, others expressed concerns about delays in some parts of the area in the resolution of proceedings, particularly in respect of 'not guilty' pleas. However, improvement measures were in place and the figures were improving. Board members commented to us that the area had been praised at the LCJB for its efforts to achieve positive change, and the average time to resolve community penalty breach proceedings was very close to national performance figures.
- (c) There was some evidence of attention to diversity issues in meeting targets, but it was not extensive. It was reported that the SLA with a partner organisation had been altered to ensure diversity issues were addressed, and SOVA had recently commenced a project to draw more men from black and minority ethnic groups into education. However, the lack of provision for skills for life in one part of the area meant that some offenders were disadvantaged because they lacked appropriate access to address their literacy, numeracy and language needs.

4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT

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

Partly met

Strengths:

- (a) There was a specific, ring-fenced budget for diversity initiatives and this had been used in a number of different ways, including for various activities during Black History week. Positive images relating to diversity were evident in the area's four centres, for example posters in reception areas, group rooms and staffrooms. It was less easy to see, though, how the impact of these initiatives was monitored.
- (b) The area had made a successful bid for ESF monies to contribute towards providing ETE link workers in each of its four centres, to support offenders seeking employment and/or education.
- (c) To aid workload allocation and prioritisation, the area used a locally devised workload measurement tool, its 'yardstick'. This provided additional weighting for higher tier cases and the early part of orders or licences, and for PSRs and parole reports. A 'traffic light' system for monitoring caseloads was also in place. The 'yardstick' was recognised to have its limitations, not least as it only covered the work of POs, so the area intended to pilot the national workload measurement tool in one of its centres, prior to rolling it out fully.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) It was now recognised by the area that staff needed to be deployed more effectively in order to implement the offender management model in full. At the time of the inspection, best use was not being made of PSO staff and, as noted earlier in the report, these issues were now being tackled, with discussions about role boundaries under way with unions.
- (b) Findings from the cases inspected indicated that PPOs were not always receiving the premium service required. There were tensions between the different strands of PPO work, with the intelligence needs of the police sometimes taking precedence over offender needs for treatment, for example. The area had a relatively large number of PPOs for its size, with corresponding demands on service resources. The area had already recognised that further development was needed and a draft PPO strategy, taking account of national requirements, had been prepared in November 2006. There was active consideration of joint OMUs between police and probation for both PPOs and offenders posing a high RoH to others to improve performance.
- (c) From case files and interviews with offender managers, it was evident that resources had not always been focused on those offenders presenting a high RoH. Where these offenders were in custody, a policy decision had been made during the summer of

2006 to allocate the cases to Tier 2 and manage the custodial element of their sentences in this way. As noted elsewhere in the report, the area recognised that this decision had not been appropriate and the cases were being reallocated appropriately.

- (d) The area faced continuing difficulties in the recruitment and retention of sufficient staff to supervise unpaid work, leading to insufficient work placements to meet demand, as noted elsewhere in the report. Individual placements (with outside agencies) were being increased as a way of tackling this, and these comprised 35% of all placements at the time of the inspection. High vacancy levels also existed at times in other staff groups, with two of the area's centres bearing the brunt of this. Partner agencies noted the challenges all public sector and voluntary organisations faced in Hertfordshire in recruiting staff, given the high cost of housing and its nearness to London where higher salaries were available. The area had used incentive payments in the past to encourage staff mobility but this was no longer in place.
- (e) Whilst the knowledge and skills of probation staff in court were praised by some respondents to our questionnaire to sentencers and other court personnel, concerns were expressed by some that staffing levels were not always sufficient to provide appropriate information to sentencers.

4.4 General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
Workforce planning and development leads to a good match between staff profile and service delivery requirements. Relevant diversity legislation is observed in staff recruitment and deployment.

Partly met

Strengths:

- (a) 75% of offender manager staff interviewed reported satisfaction with the quality of supervision received from their line manager, with just under a quarter describing it as excellent. Middle managers commented that they considered senior managers to be supportive of them, as well as focusing on performance issues. 91% of offender manager staff interviewed reported that their formal supervision took place six weekly or more frequently, though case administrator staff reported less consistent provision of supervision.
- (b) The majority of staff interviewed indicated that they had had an appraisal in the last 12 months, and in almost all cases this was linked to the business plan. All the case administrators we met noted that they had received an appraisal, though it was less clear how performance had been measured, or support provided, in the instances where supervision was not taking place regularly.
- (c) Rebuilding a constructive working relationship with recognised trade unions had been a priority for the senior manager who now had responsibility for HR and diversity, and discussions were under way in respect of a number of topics.

- (d) The area operated in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 in relation to all its responsibilities, including as employer. Diversity issues were promoted by Board members and the Home Secretary's Race Equality Employment Target had been exceeded in the area and the region, giving a very diverse workforce compared with the local community in Hertfordshire. 8% of its staff had a declared disability and all four centres were compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 in terms of accessibility.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Whilst 82% of staff interviewed indicated that they were clear about their role in the offender management model, offender management teams were not yet fully in place. A draft proposal to clarify role boundaries between PO and PSO staff had recently been produced and was awaiting discussion with unions. It was the area's intention that PSO staff would act as offender manager in their own right in low and medium RoH cases (with some exceptions), thus freeing PO staff resources to concentrate on Tier 3 and 4 cases.
- (b) Whilst there was a costed staff training and development plan, which linked clearly with the area's business plan, 41% of offender managers interviewed did not think that their training and development needs were being met. For some this reflected recent changes of role within the offender management model, for which they felt unprepared.
- (c) Just over a third of TPOs interviewed felt that insufficient attention was paid to provision of appropriate learning opportunities and to support for them.
- (d) Sickness absence figures were above the target set by the NPD, though they were better than the national average. Positively, 88% of staff interviewed were clear about the area's procedures for addressing absence. At the time of the inspection the area was about to introduce a new sickness absence policy, to support staff and promote attendance.

4.5 General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION
Outcomes of interventions are assessed and reviewed using available data.

Not met

Strength:

- (a) Learning points from a review following a serious further offence had been identified and further guidance given to staff concerning liaison with police and social services in domestic abuse and child safeguarding cases. The Child Protection Policy had also been updated as a result. A cross-grade public protection working group had been set-up to improve practice in this vital aspect of its work. It had already identified relevant issues from recent HMI Probation investigations and produced an action plan to benchmark its own

practice against the recommendations. Regular audits of high RoH cases had also been undertaken and feedback provided to staff to help improve performance. Middle managers reported that 'vast improvements' were now being seen in work with Tier 4 cases. The new Public Protection Policy had also been developed through the working group, building on learning from inspections and serious further offence reviews.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The area recognised that review and evaluation of outcomes generally was an aspect of practice which needed considerable further development. Apart from in accredited programmes, where outcome data about attrition rates had been used to improve practice, there was little other evidence of aggregated data (such as OASys information) being collated and used, or of monitoring and evaluation information being regularly discussed in teams.
- (b) Few sentencers or other court personnel who responded to our questionnaire were aware of any monitoring of sentencing proposals having been undertaken, such as the correlation between proposal and sentencing outcome as compared with successful completion of orders or licences. Several respondents indicated that they would welcome such information.
- (c) Partner agency staff noted that they provided data for their own organisations and for the area, but were unclear how this information was used and what impact it had on service delivery improvement, for example.
- (d) Whilst stakeholder views were gathered at the business planning stage, there was little evidence that feedback from service users and stakeholders was routinely collated and evaluated to use in improving service delivery.

4.6 General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES
There is efficient provision of effective services to support offender management outcomes and to ensure equal access to provision for offenders.

Partly met

Strengths:


- (a) As noted earlier in the report, the area played an active role in joint commissioning with other bodies, such as Supporting People (where its expertise in strategy development in respect of offenders had been welcomed) and the DIP Steering Group. The area contributed to the local joint commissioning council for the provision of alcohol and drug services to Hertfordshire.
- (b) Whilst the area had no formal commissioning strategy as yet, a variety of services were commissioned from voluntary, community and private sector organisations to provide services to offenders. Partnership contracts were in place with SOVA, the APEX Trust, a housing consultancy, and a finance and debt advice service. A

number of new initiatives were under way to meet gaps in provision for offenders, including a 'no cost' SLA with Job Centre Plus.

- (c) Following concerns identified in previous inspections about the monitoring of partnership contracts, Board members reported that there was now 'vigorous scrutiny' of such contracts to ensure that the services commissioned were of high quality. It was recognised, though, that further development work was needed to ensure that the area was providing the right services to meet the criminogenic needs of offenders in its locality.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) In 44% of cases inspected, it was noted that gaps in service provision had impacted on the effective management of the offender. In particular, accessible accommodation for offenders generally was in short supply and this was noted by partner agencies as one of the key difficulties in the area. Insufficient appropriate provision, especially for those offenders posing a high RoH, was a specific source of frustration for offender managers, their strategic managers, and for the MAPPA SMB. Lack of approved premises, for those offenders needing that particular level of restrictive intervention combined with accommodation, posed an ongoing challenge and a regional protocol was about to be put in place to enable better access to approved premises across the region. More widely, the area believed it had achieved what it could in respect of supported housing through the Supporting People programme. Interestingly, a partner agency thought that the area 'could be more robust' in pursuit of provision to meet offender needs in respect of accommodation. It did have a new accommodation strategy focused on maximising access for offenders to other accommodation resources, and a 'no cost' SLA had been developed with community accommodation providers. The LCJB was also concerned about accommodation issues and was seeking out additional resources to aid development work.
- (b) Offender managers and managers at a strategic level reported difficulties in timely access to appropriate mental health services for offenders. Where psychiatric and/or psychological services had been provided to nine cases in the inspection sample, these were judged to have been sufficient in only five.
- (c) The area's provision of resources for ATRs was praised by partner agencies. However, providing this service meant that the alcohol counsellors were no longer able to offer interventions to those without such a requirement in their order or licence. This gap was keenly felt by offender managers, and where alcohol services had been provided, either in-house or through outside agencies, these were judged to have been sufficient in 17 out of 29 cases.
- (d) Despite the range of offender provision that was commissioned by the area, there was insufficient evidence overall that services were developed to support work with minority groups.

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- (e) As noted earlier in the report, in relation to links between offender manager staff and prisons, there were concerns in half the licence cases about the working arrangements between prisons and offender managers. The latter reported problems in obtaining information from prisons in some cases, particularly from those in London. There were also some difficulties in the timely transfer of OASys between prisons and offender managers; this had been identified similarly in other probation areas inspected.
 - (f) There was limited evidence of utilising the perspective of service users in commissioning, maintaining or decommissioning service provision.

APPENDIX 1
Contextual information

Caseload at mid-December 2006

Total caseload	3,570
% <i>White</i>	85%
% <i>Minority ethnic*</i>	15%
% <i>Male</i>	88%
% <i>Female</i>	12%
Number of cases subject to MAPPA:	
Level 1	No figures supplied
Level 2	45
Level 3	19
Number of PPO cases	72 under supervision
* Excluding cases for which ethnicity information is not available.	

The local definition of a PPO case – on which the above figure is based – is *any individual who is assessed by the local management body of PPO schemes in Hertfordshire as being a prolific or priority offender.*

Total revenue budget in 2005/2006: £ 9.836 m

Total revenue budget in 2006/2007: £ 10.316 m (an increase of 4.7%)

Approved premises: There are no approved premises in the Hertfordshire area.

APPENDIX 2

Inspection model, methodology and publication arrangements

Model

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

Methodology

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

Publication arrangements

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

APPENDIX 3

Scoring Approach

This describes the methodology for assigning the scores to each of the general criteria, to sections 1 to 3 and to the *RoH Thread*. A fuller detailed description is on HMI Probation's website at:

<http://www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation>

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

Section 1: Assessment and sentence planning

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

Section 2: Implementation of interventions

- 2.1 Delivering the sentence plan
- 2.2 Protecting the public by minimising risk of harm
- 2.3 Victims
- 2.4 Ensuring containment and promoting compliance (Punish)
- 2.5 Constructive interventions (Help and Change)
- 2.6 Restrictive interventions (Control)
- 2.7 Diversity issues

Section 3: Achievement and monitoring of outcomes

- 3.1 Achievement of initial outcomes
- 3.2 Sustainability of progress

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

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

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

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

Section 4: Leadership and strategic management

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

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

APPENDIX 4

Role of HMI Probation

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

Home Office Objectives

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

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

Role

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

Code of Practice

HMI Probation aims to achieve its purpose by:

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

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

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2 Monck Street
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