



Press Notice

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Independent inspection of probation and youth offending work

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PROBATION INSPECTORATE ANNUAL REPORT 2006/2007

SQUEEZE ON PROBATION CAPACITY THREATENS PROGRESS ON OFFENDER MANAGEMENT:

- RISK OF UNSAFE LEVEL OF PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS

An increasing squeeze on the capacity of the adult offender management system poses a major strategic threat to progress in continual improvement in the quality of the work, said Andrew Bridges, the Chief Inspector of Probation, in publishing today the Annual Report for 2006/2007 of HM Inspectorate of Probation.

Andrew Bridges comments on the increasing demands on offender management work from the increased prison population, new provisions in recent years on community supervision and the cost of infrastructure to support the task of offender management. Despite marked real term increases in probation budgets in recent years, it is clear to HMI Probation that resources have still not kept pace with increasing demands. In summary Mr Bridges comments:

“Our overall point here is not a proposal to pour extra resources unthinkingly into the problem but to highlight the contrast, which has developed slowly over a long period of time, between rising expectations and a squeezed capacity to meet them..... As an organisation with a track record of taking a hard line on the issue of improving quality within existing resources or less, this Inspectorate is able to recognise when efficiency savings year-on-year reach their reasonable limits when demands are still increasing.

....our view is that there is a continuing ‘Long Squeeze’ on the capacity of the NOMS⁽¹⁾ world to achieve the necessary ‘Long Haul’. While this continues there is a risk of an unsafe level of public expectations of what can be achieved. On our part we will continue to support all feasible measures to achieve the ‘Long Haul’ of steady improvement of quality of offender management, and we will help to drive it with our inspections.”

⁽¹⁾ *National Offender Management Service*

The report gives an account of HMI Probation's work in 2006/2007:

- carrying out inspections of offender management in 13 criminal justice areas under the three year Offender Management Inspection programme, which started in May 2006, and completing follow-up inspections from the previous area inspection programme
- carrying out 31 inspections of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) under the five year joint inspection programme which HMI Probation lead. The YOT Inspection Programme now accounts for nearly a half of HMI Probation's total resources. HMI Probation will be publishing a separate annual report on the YOT Inspection Programme, as in previous years, on 25 September.
- contributing to 38 inspections under the Supporting People inspection programme led by the Audit Commission
- on joint thematic inspections, publishing the reports of inspections which HMI Probation led on public protection and on community penalty enforcement, and completing fieldwork on an inspection of the take-up by probation areas of community sentences made by courts. HMI Probation also published, jointly with the Healthcare Commission, a report on health provision in YOTs
- publishing the last two of the thematic inspections undertaken as an integrated element of the previous area inspection programme - on Enhanced Community Punishment/Unpaid Work, and on Work with Substance Misusing Offenders. In addition, HMI Probation published a short inspection of Junior Attendance Centres
- publishing the reports of two independent inquiries – a Serious Further Offence case (Anthony Rice - findings summarised in last year's Annual Report); and an inquiry into the management of offenders in approved premises (hostels) following a Panorama programme in November 2006.

Following the Government's decision not to proceed with the merger of the five Criminal Justice Inspectorates, HMI Probation has worked closely with the other Criminal Justice Inspectorates on the development of increased joint inspection work, including contributing strongly to the plans for the Joint Inspection Programme for 2007/2008. The large majority - about 90% - of HMI Probation's work in 2007/2008 will be within the jointly owned Joint Inspection Programme.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The report will be available on the HMI Probation website www.inspectorates.justice.gov.uk/hmiprobation at 10.00 on 10 July.
2. Requests for interviews – available on 9 July - should be made to Becky Dearden on 020 7210 6843.
3. A separate annual report on the Youth Offending Team inspection programme will be published on 25 September.