



HM Inspectorate of Probation

AUDIT OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES

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

*Level 2 Follow-up Report on:
Kent Probation Area – Think First*

April 2003

Acknowledgements:

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

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Glossary

ACO	Assistant chief officer
CO	Chief officer
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
IAPS	Interim Accredited Programmes Software
IQR	Implementation Quality Rating
N/A	Criteria not assessed
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OGRS	Offender Group Reconviction Scale
PSR	Pre-sentence report
SPO	Senior probation officer

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Scoring Approach:

The criteria for the delivery of accredited programmes have been divided into four sections. These sections, and the overall weighting assigned for each section, are as follows:

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

Each criterion is scored as **Fully Met** (2 marks), **Largely Met** (1 mark) or **Not Met** (0 marks).

The scoring summary sheet at the end of this follow-up report shows the marks awarded for each criterion – for those criteria designated as Mandatory (see Performance Standards Manual) the mark given is doubled. This denotes the critical impact these criteria have on the effective delivery of programmes.

The marks awarded for each section are shown and then expressed as a % by dividing the total number of marks scored by the maximum available, and multiplying by 100. Section B has been divided into seven sub-sections for ease of scoring.

To determine an area's IQR, the scores for each section are multiplied by the appropriate factor to take account of the relevant weightings given above. The % totals for each section are then added together to give the IQR.

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

Overview:

- The audit of Kent's delivery of Think First took place in January 2002. The area achieved an IQR of 53%, which resulted in a follow-up audit completed in February 2003.
- The follow-up audit comprised: an assessment of advance information provided by the area; and a two-day site visit during which a case file read and interviews with staff were undertaken. Quality of delivery was assessed by HMIP staff and area assessors and based on 11 videotapes of Think First sessions.
- Only those criteria not fully met at the original audit have been reassessed and new marks awarded. The bullet points under these criteria refer to the progress made since the original audit.

Findings:

Kent Probation Area drew up a detailed action plan in response to the 2002 audit of Think First. All staff were open and positive about opportunities to improve the management and delivery of the programme.

There had been considerable encouraging progress in the delivery of the programme. Staff were performing at a high level and had developed many of the skills required of mindful tutors. These staff were committed and well informed, recognising the importance of programme integrity and giving appropriate support to offenders. The area was fortunate in having an experienced team of treatment managers who had creatively worked to monitor and improve quality. It was of note in the HMIP video monitoring exercise that Kent's treatment managers were scoring sessions to a very high level of accuracy.

It was apparent that Kent had had problems going to scale on the delivery of this offending behaviour programme. A number of factors had contributed to a situation where delays to programme start had become extremely lengthy. Offenders often faced a wait of several months and occasionally did not have the opportunity to complete the programme within the life of their order. This was of concern as it denied them a valuable rehabilitative opportunity, at the same time as disadvantaging the area in trying to meet national completion targets and also diminishing staff and sentencer confidence in the programme. Whilst attention to targeting issues had improved the reliability of the referral process, factors such as the lack of a monitoring and evaluation strategy and a sentencer liaison plan left Kent with significant programme management difficulties. The ongoing limitations of IAPS had added to these problems.

Case managers had become more informed about Think First and understood their role better. However, they still needed to extend their familiarity with session content so that they could reinforce learning with offenders. In some respects two-way communication between tutors and case managers was not working effectively and required more attention.

The area had devoted considerable energy to a number of diversity issues, with pleasing results. Tutors were now confidently able to address discriminatory behaviour by group members, and the accessibility of the programme to women and minority ethnic offenders had been enhanced. Particularly of note was the important work being done by a number of staff to address the literacy needs of offenders.

Next Steps

Kent Probation Area achieved a revised IQR of **67%**.

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

SECTION A: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

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

The CO should ensure that the area:

- *implements a strategy for communicating with sentencers and stakeholders in order to keep them abreast of What Works developments (A1.4).*

► *Not met: Kent still lacked a strategy governing communication with sentencers and had not extended its work in communicating programme issues to key stakeholders.*

A1.1 Committed leadership

2

Criterion fully met at original audit.

A1.2 Management structures

1

- The area had undertaken a review of programme delivery, using the European Excellence Model as a guide. This had resulted in a revision of management structures to reflect the need for a more strategic approach.
- The ACOs with respective responsibility for programmes and case management had a clear commitment to work together, although there remained much to be done in fully integrating the two aspects of delivery.
- Job descriptions had been revised to provide links with relevant standards (see B3.2). These had been circulated to staff but remained in draft form.
- There were no job descriptions outlining the role of the programme manager and specifying the tasks of case managers in relation to Think First delivery.

A1.3 Staff ownership of the accredited programme

1

- A number of half-day 'refresher' training events had been staged in summer 2002, outlining case managers' responsibilities for Think First. These had been well attended and generally well received, increasing the knowledge base of this staff group.
- Two editions of a *Groupwork Programmes Newsletter* had been circulated to all Kent staff in December 2002 and January 2003. These gave information about programme developments, scheduling, etc. There were plans to evolve this into a quarterly bulletin.
- Monthly performance data on referrals to Think First showed some inconsistencies in referral rates across the area. On a positive note, this issue was being monitored regularly by the ACO who was working with SPOs in the case management units to address this. In turn, SPOs could access referral data for their unit, which enabled them to deal with under-referral at individual officer level.
- Little progress had been made towards including licencees on the programme post-release. Organisational delays in programme start worked against this, and so there remained a largely untapped pool of offenders, particularly coming from the ten prisons within the area, who were not yet accessing Think First after leaving custody. As Kent was a pilot area for the Cognitive Skills Booster Programme, it was hoped that the needs of some offenders who had undergone programmes in prison would be met in this way.

- There was an interest in Think First on the part of most staff, and a firm commitment from many. However, case managers/PSR writers reported that their ownership of the programme was adversely affected by the pressure of referral targets and the lengthy organisational delays to programme start faced by many offenders.

A1.4 Effective communication with sentencers

0

- Group work staff and SPOs from case management units had delivered training on accredited programmes to magistrates at bench meetings.
- Programmes had been an agenda item at some management meetings with Crown Court judges.
- The area had no communication strategy in place and the ACO for programmes was not actively involved in liaison with sentencers.
- There had still been no specific work meeting the information needs of court clerks and advocates.

SECTION B: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

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

The CO should ensure that the area:

- *has sites which are fit for purpose: uncluttered, properly ventilated and with sufficient wall space for the display of programme material (B1.1);*
- *catalogues videotapes which are correctly timed and dated (B1.1);*
- *amends sentencer and offender leaflets to make specific reference to the needs of women and minority ethnic offenders, and establishes that programme requirements are fully explained to offenders on at least two separate occasions so that programme requirements are clear (B1.2, B6.2);*
- *reduces drop-out rates by making use of the information that is beginning to be collected (B2.1);*
- *undertakes quality assurance of catch-up sessions and other sessions, giving particular attention to their length, to promote treatment integrity (B2.3);*
- *improves the timeliness of programme starts for all offenders, including women (B2.4);*
- *produces job descriptions which are up to date and reflect the competencies required of all staff involved with Think First (B3.2);*
- *allows all tutors sufficient time for preparation of the session material (B3.3);*
- *develops the skills of staff with split roles by facilitating their attendance at practice development sessions (B5.1);*
- *monitors reasons for exclusions from the programme so that targeting and assessment are accurate and undertakes an audit of the training needs of sessional PSR authors if they are found to contribute to poor targeting (B6.1);*
- *updates the practice guidelines on singleton placements for women and minority ethnic offenders, taking account of the right for offenders to have a choice as to whether they attend a single or mixed gender group (B6.4);*
- *shares local research findings with the National Probation Directorate and ascertains the validity of Kent's approach in running single-gender groups (B6.4);*
- *produces a protocol for monitoring and evaluation arrangements, clearly setting out the roles of relevant staff; and distributes performance information in an easily accessible form to all frontline staff so that they understand the contribution they make to performance (B7.1).*

- ▶▶ **Partly met:** Premises had not been upgraded, although minor improvements had been made to facilities.
 - ▶▶ **Fully met:** The area was taking greater care in cataloguing and storing recorded session material.
 - ▶▶ **Partly met:** Whilst the required improvements had been made to information leaflets, offenders were not reliably informed about programme requirements.
 - ▶▶ **Partly met:** Staff were beginning work to monitor attrition rates and reasons for drop-out.
 - ▶▶ **Not met:** There was no clear understanding of the protocol covering the monitoring of catch-up sessions; there remained some instances of insufficient time being taken to deliver sessions.
 - ▶▶ **Not met:** Despite minor improvements to timeliness for some women offenders who could now access mixed gender groups, overall there were worryingly lengthy delays for Think First offenders.
-

- ▶▶ **Partly met:** Some work had been carried out to improve job descriptions, although these were not available for all roles.
- ▶▶ **Partly met:** Preparation and debriefing time was being resourced for most tutors, although those in semi-specialist roles were often disadvantaged in this respect.
- ▶▶ **Partly met:** Treatment managers were considering delivering workshops around the area rather than centrally, so as to ease time and travelling requirements for semi-specialist tutors.
- ▶▶ **Partly met:** Some work had been done to monitor the accuracy of targeting and address the issue of unsuitable referrals.
- ▶▶ **Fully met:** Guidance on singleton placements and informed offender consent had been drawn up and staff were clear about the procedures to be followed.
- ▶▶ **Partly met:** Kent had successfully piloted mixed-gender groups and had increased the accessibility of Think First by no longer retaining only a single-sex model of delivery.
- ▶▶ **Not met:** The area had yet to produce a protocol for the monitoring and evaluation of programmes and also to establish a satisfactory feedback loop in respect of Think First data.

B1.1 Resources and facilities

1

- A catalogue of good practice videos had been compiled and made available for staff reference.
- Improvements to resources and facilities had been marginal. Whilst efforts had been made to improve the availability of equipment, a number of other problems remained.
- Whilst the provision of facilities for group work had been made a priority, it had not been possible for the area to acquire larger rooms or significantly improved premises.
- There remained difficulties with noise and ventilation in certain group rooms, although programme staff tried to minimise programme disruption.
- Staff awareness had been raised about the importance of providing a comfortable and uncluttered learning environment for offenders on Think First. However, many group rooms remained multi-use, making this an ongoing challenge.
- Some staff still lacked confidence in the correct use of video recording equipment.

B1.2 Provision of information leaflets about the programme

1

- Amendments had been made to leaflets for both offenders and sentencers, reflecting inclusivity and attention to diversity issues.
- The distribution of the information leaflets remained somewhat inconsistent. Once again, this was not helped by the fact that offenders were often waiting several months to begin the programme.

B2.1 Managing attendance

0

- Insufficient groups were being run and many offenders were facing considerable delays between sentence/release and beginning Think First. This created a long period during which offender attendance and motivation had to be sustained, and inevitably risked high pre-programme attrition and non-achievement of nationally-set completion targets. Waiting times were not being systematically monitored, although treatment managers had recently begun to record and analyse reasons for drop-out.
- A Think First Structured Preparation Group was being run by case managers in some parts of Kent. This was designed to reduce attrition in the lengthy pre-programme phase and maximise commencements. There was emerging evidence that offenders attending this group showed lower levels of drop-out once on the programme by comparison with those who had not accessed this resource.
- Warning and suspension letters had been revised and now reflected more clearly staff responsibilities for enforcement.
- Attendance at catch-ups was still not being reliably recorded on the case file.

B2.2 Avoidance of cancellation or disruption to sessions

2

- The routine allocation of three tutors to each programme had promoted uninterrupted delivery.
- Guidelines had been issued permitting the use of only one tutor if group numbers fell below four. This had resulted in fewer instances of postponement of sessions if numbers dropped.
- There was now a clear understanding by tutors of the need for programme integrity and they were no longer combining two sessions into one.

B2.3 Catch-up sessions/Attendance

0

- All catch-up sessions were being video recorded.
- Whilst there was some monitoring of these sessions being carried out, tutors and treatment managers were unclear as to the 'proportion' of catch-up sessions to be monitored.
- Case records clearly showed whether offenders had attended catch-up sessions as instructed in only nine of 23 applicable cases (39%).
- Problems persisted with the length and timing of catch-ups for daytime groups in particular. Such sessions were being delivered in only 30 minutes.

B2.4 Timeliness

0

- Mixed gender groups had been run, reducing waiting times for some women offenders.
- Kent was not delivering programmes at sufficient frequency and offenders were facing considerable delays before they could begin Think First. Only nine of 33 cases (27%) commenced within one month, and just another two cases (6%) had documented reasons for a planned delay to programme start.

- A ‘Gap Analysis’ report had recently been compiled by the programme manager. This had highlighted timely starts as a major problem area, and indicated causal factors such as inefficient administrative processes and limited availability of some tutors.
- Case managers also reported lengthy delays to offenders beginning programmes. Such was the problem that a Think First Structured Preparation Group, run by case managers, had been put in place to engage with offenders during this phase. Uncertainties about when to deliver the set pre-programme sessions had persisted and, in a number of cases, psychometric tests had to be re-administered, their validity having expired.

B3.1 Staff selection

2

Criterion fully met at original audit.

B3.2 Staff roles and competencies

1

- Tutors, the programme manager and treatment managers demonstrated a full understanding of their roles and of the boundaries between their respective areas of responsibility.
- Job descriptions for tutors and treatment managers had been drafted and circulated to staff. These contained firm links with community justice, administration, learning and development and information technology standards.
- There remained no job description for the programme manager post.

B3.3 Preparation and debriefing time for tutors

1

- Delivery staff showed a clear commitment to spending appropriate time on preparation before sessions and debriefing afterwards.
- Problems remained in respect to some tutors, particularly semi-specialist and sessional staff, being available at suitable times to plan and debrief with their co-worker.
- These issues were more problematic for evening groups and for daytime groups where catch-ups had to be delivered beforehand.

B3.4 Staff continuity

2

- Three tutors were allocated to each programme on the delivery schedule.
- If a fourth tutor was needed to cover staff absence, they were introduced to the group at the earliest opportunity.

B4.1 Training arrangements for new staff

2

Criterion fully met at original audit.

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

2

Criterion fully met at original audit.

B4.3 Training arrangements for experienced staff

N/A

Criterion not assessed at original audit.

B4.4	Staff knowledge of the concepts and methods used in the programme <i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	2
B4.5	Staff knowledge of the theoretical and evidential basis of the programme <i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	2
B4.6	Supporting skills necessary to run programmes <i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	2
B5.1	Staff supervision and quality of practice <i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	2
B5.2	Staff appraisal <i>Criterion fully met at original audit.</i>	2
B6.1	Offender selection and assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPOs in case management units had a role in checking PSR proposals. Treatment managers were playing an active part, post-sentence, in ensuring the accurate targeting of offenders onto Think First, and in checking sequencing of additional structured work for those above the top of the targeting band. • File read results indicated an improvement in the accuracy of targeting for Think First. Of 33 cases, 24 (73%) were within the acceptable targeting band. • Those cases which had an OGRS 2 score above the targeting range, rarely had a clear record of the required additional structured work being both planned and carried out. • There was no systematic means of checking whether exclusion criteria were being applied correctly and of monitoring levels of ‘missed’ referrals. 	1
B6.2	Offender knowledge and understanding of the programme requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutors, in their capacity as link officers with case management units, offered to hold a pre-programme three-way meeting with case managers for offenders who might require additional support or explanations because of specific needs. • There remained inconsistent practice relating to how offenders were informed about the programme. In only 15 of 33 cases (45%) was this done both verbally and in writing. • Statements of offender understanding were not always on the case file. 	0
B6.3	Group size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups consistently started with more than four members and less than 12. • A system of limited overbooking of offenders was being operated responsibly, resulting in groups of an appropriate size starting the programme. 	2

B6.4 Accessibility of group work programmes

2

- Mixed gender groups had been piloted.
- There was evidence of offenders from minority groups being consulted about their preferences e.g. singleton placements. Staff were confident about discussing these issues and provided appropriate additional support as required.
- The role of third tutor had evolved to include giving one-to-one help in the group work setting to those offenders with literacy difficulties.
- The area had drawn up a helpful diversity statement for accredited programme work.
- Training run for tutors and treatment managers on motivational interviewing included an emphasis on diversity issues.

B7.1 Implementation of monitoring and evaluation design

1

- Senior managers were readily able to access Kent's programme related performance data.
- A number of staff had found it useful to receive Think First information from across the south-east region.
- Two editions of a *Groupwork Programmes Newsletter* had been circulated to all staff. This gave headline monitoring information, e.g. current programmes running in particular venues.
- Data were not being fed back in a regular and accessible format to all practitioners involved in programme delivery.
- Work was just beginning on analysing the information needs connected with programme delivery, and no future strategy for monitoring and evaluation had been put in place.
- In the absence of fully-operational IAPS, information systems remained complicated and were not clearly understood by all parties.

B7.2 Practice is informed by monitoring and evaluation evidence

1

- Treatment managers were staffing a duty officer system to provide advice to PSR writers in an effort to improve targeting and secure suitable referrals for Think First.
- Following high levels of attrition, treatment managers had begun to monitor reasons for drop-out, particularly checking the OGRS 2 scores of those failing to complete the programme.
- Both treatment managers and tutors showed a sophisticated level of knowledge about the change control system for the programme, and gave examples of issues which they had processed through the system.
- Tutors highlighted the lack of analysis of psychometric data and the fact that offender feedback incorporated in session 22 of Think First had not been collated or fed back.
- The continuing lack of an information strategy for programmes made it very difficult to use evidence to improve practice.

SECTION C: QUALITY OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY

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

The CO should ensure that the area:

- *equips tutors with the skills to deal effectively with racist comments (C1.4).*

▶▶ **Fully met:** There was much evidence that delivery staff were now competent and confident in dealing with discriminatory remarks in the groups.

C1.1 Adherence to programme manual

2

- Material was routinely delivered in the correct order and without the addition of inappropriate extras.
- Helpful explanations were given to offenders about exercises.
- There remained some problems with timing, including beginning and ending sessions on time, and fitting all the material into the sessions.

C1.2 Adherence to treatment style

2

- Tutors were seen to be challenging offence-supporting views.
- Group members were encouraged to articulate their views and explain their ideas.
- Staff enabled offenders to draw links between specific exercises and the general aim of the sessions.

C1.3 Group work skills

2

- Tutors were clearly spoken and used appropriate language.
- Praise and encouragement were used positively in the group setting.

C1.4 Programme delivered addressing race equality and diversity issues

2

- Tutors and treatment managers showed greatly improved confidence about addressing a wide range of diversity issues positively and appropriately when delivering Think First.
- Following a training event delivered to tutors and treatment managers on motivational interviewing, guidance had been compiled outlining for staff possible interventions after discriminatory remarks or behaviour.
- Treatment managers had held a workshop in September 2002 focusing on diversity issues in the context of programme delivery.
- Staff were able to give a number of examples of both challenging discriminatory behaviour and modelling a positive approach to diversity.
- Tutors had made appropriate adaptations to course material to make it more relevant, e.g. to a women's group of which some members were in custody.
- Attention had been given in performance planning documents to staff needing to enhance their skills in the area of race equality and diversity, and these issues had featured as agenda items at tutors' group supervision events.

C1.5 Programme integrity checklist

2

Criterion fully met at original audit.

C1.6 End of programme summary reports

1

- End of programme reports were being reliably produced by tutors.
- Tutors felt they wrote thorough reports but conceded that they were possibly overlong, without necessarily covering the required component elements in specific enough detail.

SECTION D: CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

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

The CO should ensure that the area:

- *integrates the programme and end of programme reports into supervision planning through the use of SMART objectives (D1.1, D1.7).*

► **Not met:** There remained a need to integrate the programme into ongoing supervision and to make full use of end of programme reports when planning subsequent interventions.

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

0

- There had been some improvement in the linking of assessment and planning processes. Supervision plans evidenced the full use of assessment information drawn from OASys in 14 of 33 cases (42%).
- In only nine of 33 cases (27%) was Think First fully and appropriately integrated into the overall supervision plan for offenders.
- In 20 of 33 cases (61%) supervision objectives set in relation to Think First were not fully SMART.
- Whilst most cases had programme-related objectives of some kind, these were not set in context alongside broader supervision objectives.
- The regular review of Think First supervision objectives was evidenced in only seven of 30 applicable cases (23%). Many supervision plan reviews were completed late or not completed at all.

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

1

- Tutors were using a set written format to feedback to case managers on the review held with offenders at Think First session 14.
- In just 15 of 31 applicable cases (48%) was there satisfactory two-way liaison between case managers and tutors. Both groups of staff reported the need to continue improving communication.
- Case managers attended a post-programme three-way meeting in ten of 16 applicable cases (63%).

D1.3 Supporting the offender through all phases of the programme

1

- Case managers were engaging with problems concerning offender attitude and motivation to a limited extent. In 12 of 25 applicable cases (48%) there was proactive work to secure participation in the programme.
 - An area policy of case managers seeing offenders on a minimum monthly basis remained in place, although workload issues meant these appointments were not always being prioritised.
-

- There was little evidence of case managers working to reinforce the learning of offenders during and after Think First. In only three of 21 applicable cases was this pursued satisfactorily.
- Pre-programme sessions had not been delivered in a timely and satisfactory way in 18 of 33 applicable cases (55%).

D1.4 Understanding and knowledge of programme methods 1

- Case managers had been provided with booster training events, supplementing their knowledge of Think First.
- They showed a clear understanding of the programme model and some knowledge of the methods used.
- Case managers were confident in delivering the pre-programme sessions, but did not feel so well equipped concerning post-programme work.

D1.5 Monitoring of attendance and enforcement 1

- The wording of warning letters had been improved to aid clarity for offenders.
- Programme attendance was monitored consistently and in an integrated way in 18 of 32 applicable cases (56%).
- Timely enforcement action was taken in 15 of 26 applicable cases (58%).

D1.6 Documentation 0

- All relevant programme documentation was found on file in 13 of 33 cases (39%). This represents an improvement, but it was still of concern that documents such as offenders' statements of understanding and supervision plan reviews were not reliably present.

D1.7 End of programme review 0

- Case file evidence showed an increased attention to community reintegration in the post-programme phase.
- There was a high incidence of supervision plan reviews not being completed.
- Of the 13 cases where a supervision plan review had been produced, two had drawn sufficiently on the post-programme report (15%).
- In only one of 12 supervision plan reviews (8%) were there SMART objectives linked to post-programme work.

D1.8 Reinforcement and relapse prevention work N/A

Criterion not assessed at original audit.