



HM Inspectorate of Probation

AUDIT OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES

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

*Report on:
Suffolk Probation Area – Think First*

July 2003

Acknowledgements:

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

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Glossary

ACE	Assessment, Case Recording and Evaluation System
ACO	Assistant chief officer
CO	Chief officer
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
IAPS	Interim Accredited Programmes Software
IQR	Implementation Quality Rating
LSI-R	Level of Service Inventory-Revised
N/A	Criteria not assessed
NPD	National Probation Directorate
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OGRS	Offender Group Reconviction Scale
PSO	Probation service officer
PSR	Pre-sentence report
TPO	Trainee probation officer
SPO	Senior probation officer

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Context:

Programmes achieving accredited status have undergone a rigorous process of development and scrutiny to ensure they have maximum impact in terms of reducing reoffending. Selecting well-tested programmes is however only part of the picture – without effective implementation by probation areas much of the positive influence on offenders’ behaviour may be lost.

Establishing robust quality assurance systems and independent audit arrangements for accredited programmes is therefore crucial. HMIP is responsible for auditing accredited programmes on behalf of the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel. Each probation area will be assessed against the delivery criteria given in the Performance Standards Manual June 2001, which also outlines how these criteria are to be met and evidenced.

Scoring Approach:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overview:

- The audit took place in March 2003 and focused on the quality of delivery of Think First.
- Suffolk had rolled out Think First in May 2001 and it was delivered at three sites.
- The audit comprised: video monitoring of sessions; a case file reading exercise; assessment of advance information; and a visit to the area where a wide-range of staff involved in the delivery or support of the programme were interviewed. These included the CO, senior, programme and treatment managers, tutors, case managers and PSR writers. Interviews took place with 13 offenders.
- HMIP assessed 14 Think First videos and looked at 30 files. Three sites were visited at Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft.
- One audit criterion was not assessed – D1.8. Plans were awaited nationally for the accreditation of the Cognitive Skills Booster Programme.

Findings:

The Suffolk Probation Area had worked hard to implement Think First to the required standard for effective delivery. Staff engaged fully in the audit process and were keen to review their strengths and areas for improvement.

The high priority given to accredited programmes in Suffolk had been reflected in the area's business plan. Senior managers had demonstrated commitment to Think First through their lead roles at context setting events and regular discussions of accredited programmes in Board, management and team meetings. There was an established system of communication with sentencers.

In anticipation of increasing targets, Suffolk had as part of their strategic planning recruited and trained a number of tutors who were new to the service. Whilst of benefit to the area in the long-term, it faced the challenge of providing all the training these new tutors required to develop a sound theoretical knowledge base. Staff training profiles were an important tool used by Suffolk to achieve this aim.

Although Think First commencement and completion figures had yet to reach the NPD target, managers were active in encouraging staff to refer appropriately. Case records showed that the majority of offenders referred to the programme were within the required targeting band. Managers recognised the targets for completers were challenging and had spent a considerable amount of time improving accessibility to the programme. However, insufficient attention has been given to the accessibility of Think First for female offenders.

An innovative approach had been taken to the production of translated offender leaflets. Rather than choose a few languages from the wide variety in use in the area, the decision had been taken to develop a database of leaflets in as many languages as possible. In addition, Suffolk had subscribed to the Institute of Public Service Interpreters.

The area had implemented a local recording system that integrated all aspects of an order. This was well used by programme staff to communicate the offender's progress to their case manager. Video observation of practice gave encouraging results, indicating a satisfactory standard of delivery with promise of improvement in the future. Offenders interviewed were able to articulate their learning and spoke positively of their experience on the programme.

Think First had now become an established element of probation work in Suffolk and, whilst there was still work to be done to develop further existing skills, a good foundation had been laid. The main area for improvement was the integration of programme delivery into case management, both at the initial supervision planning stage and in making greater use of end of programme reports to enhance the delivery of the post-programme phase of delivery.

Recommendations

The CO should ensure that the area:

- *develops consistent policies in relation to singleton placements for female and minority ethnic offenders (A1.3);*
- *addresses issues of access and noise levels at the Ipswich site (B1.1);*
- *improves the timeliness of programme commencement (B2.4, B6.1);*
- *further develops the quality of its information for potential tutors and produces a tutor deselection policy (B3.1);*
- *gives further attention to the sequencing of training arrangements for new tutors in order to reinforce learning from the Think First training (B4.1, B4.4, B4.5);*
- *improves accessibility to Think First for female offenders and employed offenders with childcare commitments (B6.4);*
- *formulates a strategy for improving feedback to operational staff on monitoring and evaluation data (B7.1, B7.2);*

- *consolidates improvements to programme delivery and gives further attention to the treatment style of tutors , especially when challenging anti-social comments (C1.1, C2.1, C1.3);*
- *improves the usage of end of programme reports by case managers, particularly their integration into supervision plan reviews (C1.6);*
- *integrates the programme into supervision planning, ensuring that objectives are consistently SMART (D1.1);*
- *encourages case manager attendance at review meetings (D1.2);*
- *provides a high standard of delivery of pre-programme work, the effective reinforcement of learning during and after the programme and relapse prevention in the post-programme phase (D1.3, D1.4);*
- *includes all relevant documentation in the file (D1.6).*

The NPD should ensure that:

- *LAPS is further developed as an urgent priority so that a fully operational monitoring and evaluation system is made available, in all areas, for the collection of accurate programme data (B7.1, B7.2).*

SECTION A: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

A1.1 Committed leadership

2

Description: *The senior management of the area should be openly and explicitly committed to the proper running of the programme through policy and public statements.*

Strengths:

- The Area Plan 2001/2004 contained clear statements prioritising Think First.
- Senior management minutes and What Works policy documentation evidenced a planned approach to the implementation of accredited programmes in Suffolk.
- All senior managers had attended context setting events and the CO had taken a lead role in presentations to staff.
- There had been regular communication with the Probation Board about programme issues, and there was an identified Board member linked to each team.
- The CO and Chair of the Board had made regular visits to area teams.

A1.2 Management structures

2

Description: *Effective line management structures exist for the proper operation of the programme integrating this within case management structures. Adequate time should be set aside for the effective management of the programme.*

Strengths:

- There was an organisational chart which clearly outlined the senior management structure.
- Competency-based job descriptions had been produced for all staff involved in programme delivery and case management.
- Think First issues were communicated through monthly senior, area and programme management meetings.

A1.3 Staff ownership of the accredited programme

1

Description: *There is full ownership of the programme by managers, programme tutors and other relevant staff, e.g. court personnel and case managers.*

Strengths:

- Managers had identified variable programme proposals amongst PSR writers which had impacted upon the area's Think First target. To address this, PSR writers were instructed to refer cases of offenders who were eligible for the programme, but not considered suitable, to their line manager.
- Think First staff were committed and enthusiastic about the benefits of the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Staff commitment to Think First had been undermined through the application of a policy which precluded female offenders from singleton placements on the programme. A result of this was that PSR writers had not always taken account of female offenders' suitability for Think First.
- A number of case management staff expressed concern about the high level of commitment required from the offender and queried the effectiveness of a programme heavily influenced by prison psychology. This had reduced the level of commitment they had to the programme.

A1.4 Effective communication with sentencers

2

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

Strengths:

- The area had a programme of ongoing liaison meetings with judges and magistrates. These meetings had been used to inform sentencers of the Think First programme.
- A magistrates' training event was held in July 2001 which included a What Works presentation from Suffolk staff. A further regional event was planned for April 2003.
- Probation staff had attended a court clerks' meeting to deliver a Think First presentation.

Areas for improvement:

- No work had been undertaken with advocates and none was planned.

SECTION B: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

B1.1 Resources and facilities

1

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

Strengths:

- Appropriate equipment was available at each site and locked facilities for videos were in use at all locations.
- The Bury St Edmunds site had good quality accommodation that was consistent with the Estates Standards Manual.
- New purpose-built premises were to be available in Lowestoft from late April 2003.

Areas for improvement:

- With steps to the entrance and a steep flight of stairs to the group room the Ipswich site was not suitable for offenders with limited mobility. There were no 'break out' rooms, however, use could be made of the interview rooms downstairs. Noise was also an issue as people going about the building could be clearly heard in the group room.

B1.2 Provision of information leaflets about the programme

2

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

Strengths:

- Suffolk had produced two leaflets about Think First for the use of staff and sentencers. The sentencer leaflet gave information about the programme, its content and structure and the offender group for which it was designed. Attendance and enforcement information had also been included.
- A leaflet aimed at offenders explained the content of the programme, what was required of participants and included information on the complaints procedure.
- Due to the small and diverse minority ethnic population, translated leaflets had not been commissioned. However, arrangements were in progress to produce a database of leaflets in a number of languages. In this way the area intended to provide leaflets in a wider range of languages than they could otherwise afford to produce.

Areas for improvement:

- There was no reference to cultural diversity or provision to women offenders other than a statement about the right to be treated fairly.

B2.1 Managing attendance

2

Description: *Offender attendance and absence are managed to achieve the required National Performance Management target for offender completions. Attendance is managed to achieve coherent delivery with full impact for all undertaking the programme. The maximum number of absences by any one offender is consistent with the requirements of the programme manual for the specific accredited programme.*

Strengths:

- The area had produced guidelines on managing offender attendance and enforcement, which incorporated the requirements of the programme management manual and national standards.
- Attendance registers were being completed and data relating to attrition and completion rates collected.
- Offenders were only allowed the permitted number of absences from the programme.
- Tutors and case managers were clear about their respective roles in relation to enforcement.

B2.2 Avoidance of cancellation or disruption to sessions

2

Description: *Sessions are not cancelled or disrupted owing to offender crises, high workload or other pressures, and arrangements exist to deal with crises outside of the programme session. Sessions are delivered at the frequency defined in the programme manual.*

Strengths:

- The frequency of sessions conformed to the requirements of the management manual.
- There was a published programme calendar available, with dates for programmes and pre/post-psychometric tests.
- A tutor back-up system was in place which provided cover during times of sickness or annual leave.
- Offender crises were, in general, dealt with outside the sessions by referral to case managers or partnership providers.
- On one occasion a session was cancelled due to bad weather; no other sessions had been cancelled.

B2.3 Catch-up sessions/Attendance

2

Description: *Provision is made for catch-up sessions, or a 'bus stop' approach, to allow offenders who miss a session to continue with the programme. All offenders missing sessions, who are not excluded from the programme, should attend catch-up sessions, or in the case of a 'bus stop' approach be moved onto another programme within ten working days, to ensure full delivery of the programme. Treatment managers must specify arrangements for monitoring the integrity of catch-up sessions.*

Strengths:

- Catch-up sessions were taking place and tutors felt they were given sufficient time to deliver them.
- Treatment managers and tutors were monitoring the integrity of these sessions.
- Offenders were clear about the number of catch-up sessions they were allowed during the programme.

B2.4 Timeliness

0

Description: *All offenders commence the programme, or specified pre-programme phase, within the first month of the order or within three months if other structured pre-programme work is undertaken. Occasionally, the timing may be different to permit other preliminary work to be completed, e.g. a programme of drug detoxification.*

Strengths:

- The area had routinely monitored the timeliness of Think First starts.
- Since April 2003 arrangements had been in place for offenders to be put forward for psychometric tests as soon as an order was made.
- Programme staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the benefits of swift group commencement.

Areas for improvement:

- The file read showed that only eight of 30 cases (27%) commenced within one month of the order being made.
- Of those offenders not making timely starts, only four had pre-programme planned work clearly recorded.
- Some female offenders had faced delays of several months before being allocated to a Think First programme.

B3.1 Staff selection

1

Description: *A staff selection procedure meeting the requirements of the programme manual is in place and only staff meeting the defined criteria are selected to deliver the programme.*

Strengths:

- Suffolk had demonstrated a clear commitment to the appropriate resourcing of the programme.
- All tutors who were delivering the programme had passed the assessment centre and Think First training.
- Potential tutors were supplied with full written information about the application process and the requirements of the assessment centre.

Areas for improvement:

- Those applying for the role of tutor, from outside the probation service, received very little information, either verbally or in writing, informing them about Think First or the tutor role.
- There was no written deselection policy specifically for programme tutors.

B3.2 Staff roles and competencies

2

Description: *Differences in role between grades or posts are clearly reflected in job descriptions. A defined set of competencies exist for each staff role involved in the programme, using those specified in the programme manuals and the national management manual.*

Strengths:

- All staff involved in programmes had a job description and person specification for their particular role.
- Staff at all levels evidenced understanding of their own and others roles.
- A capability procedure was in place which could be used as a mechanism for tutor deselection if competence was not demonstrated.

B3.3 Preparation and debriefing time for tutors

2

Description: *Tutors are allowed 1½ hours for preparation and debriefing for each session in addition to the programme delivery time.*

Strengths:

- All tutors were allowed a full day to prepare, deliver and debrief for each session.

B3.4 Staff continuity

2

Description: *Three leaders should normally be assigned to each accredited programme to allow for leave, sickness and other contingencies. All sessions of the programmes are delivered by at least two of the three assigned staff. Continuity is maintained by at least one of the staff members having run the previous session.*

Strengths:

- There was an established system of assigning a minimum of two tutors to each Think First programme, with the third tutor providing back-up cover.
- Staff confirmed that the back-up system was working as intended.
- Offenders were able to name the tutors who delivered all of the sessions they had attended.

B4.1 Training arrangements for new staff

2

Description: *Training courses exist for all grades and roles involved in delivering the programme and all staff newly assigned to the programme receive training before running their first programme. The training delivered follows that defined in the programme training manual.*

Strengths:

- Suffolk had a high level of commitment to training.
- All tutors received the nationally recognised training prior to running their first programme and all treatment managers were accredited tutors.
- Treatment managers incorporated the individual training needs of tutors into their ongoing supervision.
- Training profiles existed for all staff, ensuring access to relevant training opportunities including group work skills and motivational interviewing.

Areas for improvement:

- New staff expressed their frustration that they did not always receive additional training promptly. Those staff who had received supporting skills training said that, until then, they had not realised how much the lack of training had reduced their effectiveness in delivering the programme.

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

1

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

Strengths:

- Programme managers paired new staff with experienced tutors as far as possible and tutors confirmed this was established practice.
- There was provision built into the system to ensure TPOs were paired with experienced staff.

Areas for improvement:

- Whilst there was a clear policy of pairing a newly trained tutor with an experienced colleague, given the small number of experienced tutors this did not always happen.

B4.3 Training arrangements for experienced staff

2

Description: *Competency-based booster and developmental training arrangements exist for all staff experienced in delivering the programme. All programme delivery staff are required to attend such training when they have demonstrated their competence to do so. [This will include delivering a stipulated minimum number of courses.]*

Strengths:

- Some tutors had been identified as competent for accredited training and were waiting for a course to become available.
- Managers recognised the need for booster training and were collaborating with the NPD and other areas in the region about provision.

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

1

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

Strengths:

- There was a clear record of tutors having passed Think First training.
- Most staff directly involved in the delivery of the programme demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of concepts, methods, aims and objectives.
- The area had a clear targeting policy and produced a document outlining how Think First should be integrated into case management. Case managers and PSR writers confirmed their knowledge of these documents.

Areas for improvement:

- Newer tutors, who had not yet received supporting skills training, had difficulty explaining their understanding of the concepts and methods used in Think First.

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

0

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

Strengths:

- Programme and treatment managers and a minority of tutors had sound knowledge of the theoretical and evidential basis of the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Less experienced tutors had difficulty in bringing to mind the evidence base of Think First and were unaware of research evidence about programme effectiveness.
- Most case managers and PSR writers lacked knowledge of the theory and evidence base.

B4.6 Supporting skills necessary to run programmes

1

Description: *From interview, observation, appraisal and training audits all relevant staff have supporting skills including core group work skills, presentation skills, case management, etc, sufficient for the effective delivery of the programme.*

Strengths:

- Suffolk had a training profile for all staff and provided a comprehensive range of supporting skills. There was an expectation that all staff would undertake certain training, such as motivational interviewing and group work skills.
- New tutors, who had been appointed as PSOs, confirmed that they were receiving ongoing induction both on the programme and on core work undertaken by the area. This was reflected in the PSO foundation training documentation.
- The supervision and appraisal process took account of training needs.

Areas for improvement:

- As many tutors were new to programme delivery, they acknowledged a lack of core group work skills. Whilst the area provided this training, it was not always done in a timely manner.

B5.1 Staff supervision and quality of practice

2

Description: *All staff involved in the programme receive support and supervision at a frequency specified in the national management manual. This will enable tutor skills to be developed and problems resolved within the lifetime of the current programme by supervisors familiar with effectiveness methods and the programme. The manager to have observed staff in the delivery of the programme either directly or through video prior to each supervision session.*

Strengths:

- Regular constructive supervision was delivered by treatment managers, which was practice focused making good use of video material.
- Evaluation forms and notes of supervision were made available to tutors and appropriate line managers identified good practice and areas for improvement.
- Programme managers supervised treatment managers on a regular basis.
- The area had recently moved all supervision of tutors to treatment managers with SPOs retaining responsibility for the appraisal process. Until this change, SPOs had drawn on information from the treatment management of tutors to inform their own supervision and appraisal work.
- Treatment managers and tutors had formed a 'Think Tank' in order to discuss practice issues.

B5.2 Staff appraisal

2

Description: *All members of staff involved with the programme have their competence to perform their assigned role assessed annually through the appraisal process. Staff whose performance is assessed as below the acceptable standard but making progress should be given further training and other assistance to improve their performance and a date set for review. Staff who are not making progress in achieving the required standard of performance should not take any further part in running the programme.*

Strengths:

- A pattern of regular appraisal was established in the area.
- Tutor appraisals were informed by contributions from treatment managers.
- Appraisal documents for programme staff were detailed in evidencing competence and objectives and were clearly linked to programme delivery.

B6.1 Offender selection and assessment

2

Description: *Routine monitoring results confirm the profile of those entering the programme are consistent with the criminogenic needs addressed by the programme, the level of risk of reoffending and the level of risk of harm/dangerousness.*

Strengths:

- PSR writers were using approved targeting tools for selection and assessment purposes and referenced other tools such as the basic literacy questionnaire. They were clear about exclusion criteria and consulted with programme staff if they felt a need to.
- Of the cases examined, 24 of 30 (80%) had OGRS 2 scores falling between the required 31-74%. Additional planned work had been recorded in three of the remaining six cases.
- The area kept a record of OGRS 2 scores to facilitate ongoing monitoring.
- SPOs had developed an important role in sanctioning non-allocation of suitable cases to Think First.

B6.2 Offender knowledge and understanding of the programme requirements

1

Description: *The requirements of the programme are clearly communicated on at least two occasions to each participant verbally and in writing, and there is evidence from signed consent forms, observation and/or interview that offenders know and understand the requirements.*

Strengths:

- In 21 of 30 of cases (70%) offenders were informed about the programme, both verbally and in writing.
- An information sheet was distributed to offenders at the PSR stage and most offenders remembered receiving it.
- Offender interviews showed a good level of knowledge about the programme and attendance requirements.

Areas for improvement:

- Statements of understanding were not in nine of 30 files (30%).

B6.3 Group size

2

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

Strengths:

- Groups were not starting with more than 12 or less than four offenders.

B6.4 Accessibility of group work programmes

0

Description: *If female or minority ethnic offenders are placed in mixed groups there are no singleton placements unless agreed to by the offender. Appropriate support arrangements should be evidenced for these programme participants.*

Strengths:

- Staff were aware that minority ethnic offenders had to give their agreement before being placed in a group if they were to be a singleton placement. This was made clear in area documentation.
- Programme staff consulted with female and minority ethnic offenders before and during sessions and gave examples of various methods by which they supported them.
- Managers were attentive to the staff composition of groups.

Areas for improvement:

- The area had a policy of no female singleton placements. In some cases this had resulted in long journeys to sites outside their area and in extensive delays in programme starts e.g. one female offender interviewed was sentenced in April 2002 but did not start the programme until January 2003.
- Suffolk had a high level of employed offenders and consequently ran a number of out of hours programmes; however, there was no access to childcare facilities in the evening.

B7.1 Implementation of monitoring and evaluation design

1

Description: *Interview and observation show that monitoring and evaluation arrangements are working as intended and are understood and supported by all staff involved. This should include both input and feedback of data to managers and practitioners at local level.*

Strengths:

- The area had developed in-house systems to monitor and evaluate accredited programmes.
- Monitoring and evaluation data were being reliably fed back to managers and this information was discussed at various senior and middle managers' meetings.
- Targets in relation to accredited programmes had been set at area, divisional and team level.

Areas for improvement:

- A feedback loop in relation to programme information had not yet been firmly established and tutors stated they were not receiving monitoring and evaluation data regularly.
- Overall, practitioners were not making use of what information was available.

B7.2 Practice is informed by monitoring and evaluation evidence

1

Description: *Consistent use is made of evaluation information as it becomes available by those with most direct responsibility, e.g. managers giving regular consideration to attendance and completion information, practitioners to offender feedback and attitude/behaviour change scores. Awareness/knowledge about evaluation results from the same programme operating elsewhere will be relevant.*

Strengths:

- Performance improvement issues were regularly discussed in senior and operational managers' meetings.
- Following the area's own internal audit, adjustments were made to improve the timeliness of commencements to Think First.
- Board members received regular information about the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Although there was a forum for treatment managers and tutors, this had only been used to look at their own practice and had not yet drawn on monitoring and evaluation data.
- Tutors stated they had not received feedback on the monthly returns they submitted.
- Practitioners and tutors said they would like to have received information from other areas running Think First.

SECTION C: QUALITY OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY

C1.1 Adherence to programme manual

1

Description: *All sessions of the programme should be delivered in line with the instructions of the programme manual and demonstrate close adherence to the aims and objectives. There should be evident commitment to follow the intention/purpose of the exercises used, including repetition/reinforcement, where these are designed parts of the programme.*

Strengths:

- Programme tutors consistently covered the session material in the correct order.
- Exercises were set up and run correctly.
- Inappropriate extras were not added to the programme sessions.

Areas for improvement:

- There were timing problems, with some exercises being given too much time to the detriment of others.
- Exercises were not always explained clearly.
- Aims and objectives were not consistently explained and tutors missed opportunities to link learning to the session objectives.

C1.2 Adherence to treatment style

1

Description: *From direct observation or video evidence, programme tutors make competent and appropriate use of the techniques specified. There will be evidence of effective communication of the material, offender understanding and engagement. Pro-social attitudes are skilfully modelled by workers and are predominant in the group. This includes challenging pro-criminal or anti-social attitudes and behaviour.*

Strengths:

- There were good examples of summarising and reflecting back.
- Tutors demonstrated good practice in relation to listening and allowing for answers.
- Awareness of responsibility issues was evident within the group setting.

Areas for improvement:

- Open questions were not always sufficiently used nor were group members consistently encouraged to explain and validate ideas for themselves.
- In some instances instructions were given rather than encouraging offenders to participate.
- Offence supporting views were not challenged appropriately or not challenged at all, resulting in inconsistency.

C1.3 Group work skills

1

Description: *Programme tutors demonstrate effective management of the group, including effective co-working to facilitate learning by offenders and modelling pro-social behaviour. Disruption by participants is minimised.*

Strengths:

- Tutors used appropriate language and were clearly spoken.
- There were good examples of co-tutoring.
- Generally, groups were managed satisfactorily with all members included in exercises.

Areas for improvement:

- Handovers were not always well integrated into delivery.
- Whilst there were good examples of praise being given to the whole group, there was limited use to individuals and, on occasion, those examples were diluted by the use of sarcasm.
- Sessions were not consistently introduced or ended well.

C1.4 Programme delivered addressing race equality and diversity issues

2

Description: *From direct observation or video evidence, issues of racism and sexism are effectively addressed whether arising within programme delivery or offender response. Staff are alert to race equality and diversity issues, they always respond appropriately and show that they have considered and developed strategies for responding, e.g. relevant resources and arguments, clarity about boundaries, approaches that may promote perspective taking.*

Strengths:

- The area had made the decision to subscribe to the Institute of Public Service Interpreters.
- Transport difficulties had been addressed through the use of taxis for those offenders living outside town boundaries.
- Tutors were mindful of the needs of offenders with literacy difficulties.
- Programme and senior managers were aware of the need for tutor staff selection to reflect diversity within groups.
- Tutors were alert to issues of gender, race and cultural diversity and gave examples of having appropriately adapted session material to reflect these, e.g. language had been adapted to make sessions more relevant.

Areas for improvement:

- Some tutors were waiting for diversity training.
- There was only one minority ethnic tutor in Suffolk; however, senior managers were actively looking at how this number could be increased.

C1.5 Programme integrity checklist

2

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

Strengths:

- Tutors were completing programme integrity information after every session delivered, including catch-ups.
- Records showed that tutors paid attention to offender engagement and levels of understanding.

C1.6 End of programme summary reports

1

Description: *The case record shows that at the end of the programme delivery staff prepare a summary for the case manager indicating:*

- *participation in the programme*
- *progress made*
- *an assessment of risk, including the identification of factors relevant to the individual concerned*
- *an assessment of the offender's coping skills*
- *likely scenarios for relapse, including immediate precursors and triggers which might give prior warning*
- *identification of remaining treatment needs.*

Strengths:

- Reports were written promptly and specific time had been set aside for their preparation.
- Post-programme reports were on 28 of 30 files (93%).

Areas for improvement:

- A template, which did not routinely prompt likely scenarios for relapse, was used to prepare reports, the result of this was reflected in the file read with nine of 30 cases (30%) not containing clearly identified treatment needs.

SECTION D: CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

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

0

Description: *The supervision plan integrates the programme into the overall plan of work for each offender. Specific objectives are set in a sequence appropriate for the offender and are recorded in the initial supervision plan and regularly reviewed. Assessments should be based on OASys when available, or ACE or LSI-R before then.*

Strengths:

- Case managers had made use of the relevant assessment information to shape supervision plans.

Areas for improvement:

- Programme-specific objectives were not set in 18 of 30 cases (60%).
- Although there were a few good examples of SMART objectives integrating programme work in the supervision plans, most were not SMART and 21 of 30 plans (70%) either did not mention the programme or simply stated programme attendance as an objective.

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

0

Description: *The case records show, and interviews with selected staff indicate, the existence of effective arrangements for liaison, handover and communication. This should include the three-way meetings between the case manager, programme staff and the offender at the end of the programme.*

Strengths:

- Tutors were liaising with case managers to report attendance and other programme-related issues, and case managers had responded promptly to this information.
- Case managers who had attended the three-way meeting spoke positively about its usefulness.

Areas for improvement:

- The area had a policy of offenders being seen on a monthly basis whilst on the programme, but this was not adhered to. In 25 of 30 cases (83%) there was no evidence of reinforcement of learning being undertaken.
- Although most case managers attended session 22 they did not put a high priority on attending session 14, with only nine of 30 files (30%) showing evidence of attendance.
- Case managers conceded that, although they found the three-way meeting informative, they did not make active use of the report for supervision planning. This was reflected in that only nine of 30 supervision plan reviews (30%) had clear links to the post-programme report.

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

0

Description: *The case manager is responsible for preparing and motivating the offender prior to their participation on an accredited programme and for reinforcing learning during the programme.*

Strengths:

- The area had produced clear guidance outlining the role of the case manager in supporting the offender through the programme.
- In the majority of cases, case managers had responded well, if alerted by the tutors, to offender crises.

Areas for improvement:

- Only 15 of 30 of cases (50%) had evidence of all the required pre-programme work being completed.
- There had been little proactive work on the part of the case manager to promote engagement and learning by offenders during their attendance at the group.

D1.4 Understanding and knowledge of programme methods

1

Description: *Interviews with case managers demonstrate they have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the programme and that they either have the requisite skills to undertake reinforcement, follow-up and/or relapse prevention work, or the ability to refer to staff possessing these skills.*

Strengths:

- Case managers confirmed that they had attended Think First and supporting skills training, for example motivational interviewing and pro-social modelling.
- A sound knowledge of programme methods, aims and objectives was demonstrated by operational staff.

Areas for improvement:

- Whilst most cases had some mention of follow-up work, explicit links to post-programme work were not evident.

D1.5 Monitoring of attendance and enforcement

2

Description: *Responsibility for the monitoring of attendance and the enforcement of orders is clearly defined with appropriate systems in place. There is evidence of effective enforcement in all cases.*

Strengths:

- An enforcement policy was in place which staff were aware of and used appropriately. In 25 of 30 cases (83%) enforcement action had been taken within national standards timescales.
- Staff and offenders were clear about attendance requirements.
- In the majority of cases there was evidence that attendance had been monitored.

D1.6 Documentation

1

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

Strengths:

- In 17 of 30 of cases (57%) all the relevant documentation was in the file and a further ten cases (33%) contained the majority of the required paperwork.

Areas for improvement:

- A signed contract or letter of understanding was not included on 12 of 30 files (40%).

D1.7 End of programme review

1

Description: *The supervision plan review for each offender shows that at the end of the programme appropriate individual objectives are identified to strengthen and build on the progress made, and to achieve successful community reintegration.*

Strengths:

- In the majority of applicable cases attention had been paid to community reintegration issues.
- There was evidence that some supervision plan reviews had been informed by post-programme reports.

Areas for improvement:

- In a significant number of cases supervision plan review objectives were not SMART and did not appear to have been influenced by post-programme reports.

D1.8 Reinforcement and relapse prevention work

N/A

Description: *There are specific arrangements in place to reinforce learning and for relapse prevention work, including booster programmes where required by the programme, delivered by appropriately trained and skilled staff.*

This criterion has not been assessed due to the non-availability of the Cognitive Skills Booster Programme at this stage.

Next Steps

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

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

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

IQR score

The Suffolk Probation Area achieved an IQR of **66%**.

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