



HM Inspectorate of Probation

AUDIT OF
ACCREDITED
PROGRAMMES

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

Report on:
Kent Probation Area – Think First

February 2002

Acknowledgements:

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

The audit team comprised:

Rosanna Heal	Andy Bonny
Christine Fiddes	<i>Deputy Audit Manager</i>
<i>Inspection and Audit Officers</i>	Alan MacDonald
Ged Bates	<i>Audit Manager</i>
<i>HM Inspector of Probation</i>	Frances Flaxington
	<i>HM Deputy Chief Inspector of Probation</i>

Glossary

ACE	Assessment, Case Recording and Evaluation System
ACO	Assistant chief officer
CO	Chief officer
DCO	Deputy 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
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OGRS	Offender Group Reconviction Scale
PO	Probation officer
PSO	Probation service officer
PSR	Pre-sentence report

Contents

	Page
Context:	3
Scoring Approach:	3
Overview:	4
Findings and recommendations:	5
SECTION A: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP	7
SECTION B: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES	9
SECTION C: QUALITY OF PROGRAMME DELIVERY	20
SECTION D: CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES	23
Next Steps:	26
Scoring summary sheet:	29

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 Joint 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 comprised four main elements: assessment of advance information; observation of randomly chosen videotaped programme sessions; case file reading; and interviews with staff and offenders.
- Interviews were held with the DCO, two ACOs responsible for accredited programmes and information systems, a manager with responsibility for effectiveness, the programme manager, as well as representatives of programme tutors, case managers, and PSR authors. Unfortunately, due to staff sickness, only a small number of the latter two staff groups were made available for interview: four case managers and four PSR authors. Three offenders were interviewed at the Thanet (Margate) site, two at Sittingbourne and three at Medway (Chatham). Limited time was available to see these offenders because all were attending evening groups that needed to commence promptly.
- Kent had been running Think First since July 2001 at eight sites: Maidstone, Medway, Folkestone, Swale, Thanet, Ashford, Sittingbourne and Canterbury. Site visits were undertaken at Medway, Folkestone, Thanet, Sittingbourne and Ashford, and checks made on resources and facilities.
- Ten videos were assessed from programmes running at Maidstone, Folkestone, Medway and Thanet.
- Two of the audit criteria were not assessed – B4.3 and D1.8. The area had not yet been in a position to access national training for experienced tutors (B4.3); and accreditation of the Cognitive Skills Booster Programme to reinforce offender learning was awaited nationally (D1.8).
- This audit report refers solely to one accredited general offending behaviour programme: Think First.

Findings:

Accredited programmes featured prominently in Kent's business plan which incorporated a clear structure to support them. The area had developed implementation plans based on sound judgements and, while it had not anticipated the extent to which the offender profile in Kent would require evening programmes, there were now plans to recruit staff who could work more flexibly.

Staff in Kent appeared committed to Think First. This was especially evident in the dedicated programmes team which placed a clear emphasis on supervision and development of practice. Treatment managers were playing a role in this respect and were beginning to give attention to identifying good practice and areas for improvement in programme delivery. However, staff with split roles as case managers and tutors risked missing out on some of the practice workshops. The area needed to ensure that this did not lead to differential standards of delivery or unhelpful divisions between the group work programmes unit and the case management division.

The role of case managers was recognised as critical to success and the area expected these staff to meet with offenders on a monthly basis throughout the group work part of the programme. It was too early to assess the effectiveness of these arrangements, but the case managers who took part in the audit were convinced of the pivotal nature of their contribution.

There were improvements to be made in the targeting of offenders, timeliness of starts and recording programme-related activity, both in relation to enforcement and supervision planning. Programme summary reports had not yet been used to effect in planning future offender supervision.

Accessibility by women and minority ethnic offenders was being approached very differently. Women offenders were only now receiving conditions to attend the programme with a view to referring them to single gender groups. They therefore had no choice in the matter of attendance at a mixed gender group. While guidelines existed in relation to singleton placements of minority ethnic offenders in group programmes, insufficient consideration had been given to ensuring that their needs were properly accommodated within current arrangements.

Recommendations

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);*
- *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);*
- *equips tutors with the skills to deal effectively with racist comments (C1.4);*
- *integrates the programme and end of programme reports into supervision planning through the use of SMART objectives (D1.1, D1.7).*

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 Business Plan 2001/2002 contained clear objectives in relation to What Works and accredited programmes and these were supported by an objective to monitor programme integrity through the use of IAPS. A review had taken place at the half-year stage.
- Minutes of effective practice development meetings, chaired by the DCO and attended by the ACOs with case management, programmes, and information responsibilities as well as the programme and effectiveness managers, showed extensive discussion of accredited programmes issues, including monitoring data.
- Area training plans revealed that attention had been given to the integration of all accredited programme-related training within the overall schedule.
- Half the senior managers had introduced or given presentations at the Think First context setting event in March 2001.

A1.2 Management structures

1

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

Strengths:

- Kent had produced an organisational chart outlining the management structures for the delivery of accredited programmes.
- Minutes from case management divisional meetings demonstrated that Think First issues were being communicated across the area.
- A decision had been made to prioritise employment and basic skills resources for offenders on accredited programmes. This showed that consideration had been given to the effective deployment of stretched resources.

Areas for improvement:

- Although competency-based job descriptions existed for tutors (POs and PSOs), these made no reference to accredited programmes nor were they linked with those in the national management manual.
- There were no specific job descriptions for case managers, programme or treatment managers.

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:

- 80% of case managers, 70% of PSOs and 77% of middle and senior managers had attended case manager training.
-

- These events had in each case been introduced by the ACO with case management responsibility who had sought to give an important message about the crucial part they played in the delivery of the programme.
- Staff interviewed were convinced of the value of Think First and were able to articulate their understanding of the importance of proper assessment of offenders.
- The file read results showed that case managers generally attended programme review meetings and the expectation of monthly contact with offenders during the programme was understood and supported (see D1.3).

Areas for improvement:

- There was evidence of inconsistent use of accredited programmes across the area. This suggested that not all staff were equally committed to the programme.
- Discussions with case managers indicated that current communication arrangements did not meet all their needs. Some said they received e-mail instructions containing conflicting advice, others that they did not receive any.

A1.4 Effective communication with sentencers

1

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

From April 2001 sentencer conferences organised by the area had replaced probation liaison committee meetings. However, financial constraints amongst the magistracy meant that future conferences were unlikely to be well attended. The CO considered it probable that no further conferences would be organised unless this was resolved.

Strengths:

- Accredited programmes featured high on the agenda on the first Probation Conference for Sentencers in June 2001 and the CO and DCO had introduced the day, putting accredited programmes in the context of What Works.
- Sentencer leaflets clearly set out the aims, content and requirements of the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Consideration had not been given to other proactive ways of communicating with sentencers, nor had an analysis of the effectiveness of the current arrangements been undertaken.
- The information needs of other stakeholders (such as defence solicitors) had not yet been addressed.

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:

- All main group rooms seen were of a good size and able to accommodate 12 offenders.
- There were comfortable chairs and adequate light at each site visited.
- Video and sound equipment were of a high quality and enabled sessions to be monitored.

Areas for improvement:

- Syndicate rooms in Sittingbourne and Ashford were too small to accommodate six offenders.
- Tutors said that traffic noise in Chatham and Thanet was distracting. Video monitoring showed that the partition between the group room and the other offices at the Thanet site allowed sound from within the building to interfere with programme delivery.
- All but the Folkestone group room were cluttered and untidy. There was insufficient wall space for flip chart material to be clearly displayed. Material extraneous to the programme was likely to detract from the proper focus of the session.
- The siting of cameras was not always checked before the session was recorded and not all staff knew how to set the time and date on the videos. This had led to some tapes containing inaccurate information about date and time of delivery which would create problems when it came to video monitoring.
- The ventilation at some sites required attention.
- Overhead projectors were not in use, as required, on at least one site (Thanet) and a comment by a treatment manager suggested that the screen there was inadequate for the purpose.

B1.2 Provision of information leaflets about the programme

1

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

Strengths:

- The information leaflets for offenders clearly set out the requirements of Think First, as well as the responsibilities and rights (including the right to make a complaint) of participants.
- The offender leaflets included comments from previous participants on the programme to engage the interest of others.

Areas for improvement:

- Neither the offender nor sentencer leaflet made reference to the needs of minority ethnic or women offenders.
- Not all offenders interviewed stated that they had received a leaflet.

B2.1 Managing attendance

1

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

Strengths:

- The area's enforcement policy referred to the importance of monitoring offender attendance at programmes as part of national standards requirements.
- Tutors' and case managers' roles in managing enforcement and attendance requirements were fully described in area guidance and understood by the staff interviewed. Both groups of staff referred to making decisions in consultation with each other.
- Attendance registers showed that attendance mostly conformed to the requirements of the programme (but see 'areas for improvement' in relation to catch-up attendance records).
- The ACO with responsibility for What Works had instituted regular monitoring of reasons for offender drop-out, at various stages through the programme, in order to be able to tackle attrition rates.

Areas for improvement:

- Not all case managers knew the maximum number of catch-ups permitted in Think First.
- Case managers commented on some offenders being confused about locally-devised 'warning' letters sent by programme tutors following a missed session. The terminology employed in these letters gave offenders the misleading impression that tutors rather than case managers were dealing with enforcement.
- File records suggested that case managers did not regularly record whether or not an offender had attended a catch-up session. Case managers said that they assumed offenders had missed a catch-up session if they did not attend the session which immediately followed. This was not a sufficiently rigorous means of their monitoring attendance.

B2.2 Avoidance of cancellation or disruption to sessions

0

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

Strength

- The frequency of sessions generally conformed to the requirements of the programme manual (but see 'areas for improvement' below).
- Monthly meetings with case managers were set up to pre-empt difficulties which might prevent an offender from attending the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- A laminated timetable gave details of the minimum number of programmes scheduled during the year, supplemented by additional programmes, details of which were distributed separately. However, not all case managers received this up-to-date information.
- The video monitoring exercise showed that on one occasion two sessions had been delivered in a two-hour slot, in order not to have a gap over the Christmas period. This was an instance of scheduling which had seriously undermined the integrity of the programme.

- Some sessions had been postponed when the number of participants was low. Consideration had not been given to delivery of these sessions by one tutor.

B2.3 Catch-up sessions/Attendance

1

Description: *Provision is made for catch-up sessions, or a 'bus stop' approach, to allow offenders who miss a session to continue with the programme. All offenders missing sessions, who are not excluded from the programme, should attend catch-up sessions, or in the case of a 'bus stop' approach be moved onto another programme within 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-ups were scheduled to take place before the next group work session and staff identified to deliver them.

Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient time had been allowed for catch-ups (30 minutes), though tutors were now aware that catch-ups needed to be delivered over 45 minutes. The tight scheduling of catch-ups during daytime groups (when two sessions were delivered on the same day) was problematic.
- Arrangements for monitoring the integrity of catch-ups were not yet in place.

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.*

High employment rates in Kent placed particular demands on the scheduling of programmes. The number of evening programmes required could only be fully staffed at present through the use of existing tutors used on a sessional basis.

Strengths:

- The area was aware of the need to improve the timeliness of starts and the working party on flexible working was investigating ways of recruiting staff who could deliver evening groups to meet the needs of offenders in Kent.

Areas for improvement:

- Of the 32 case records seen, only 17 showed that the offender was scheduled to start the programme within a calendar month of the commencement of the order/licence.
- Case records rarely gave reasons for an offender not starting the programme within the specified timescale.
- The case managers interviewed commented that in their experience offenders had a long wait before beginning the programme, so much so that case managers did not always know at what stage to undertake the pre-programme work.
- There was evidence from the file reading exercise of some offenders having started the group work element of Think First, without having completed the pre-programme work.
- The arrangements for women to attend a gender-specific group were likely to lead to longer delays for women offenders.

B3.1 Staff selection

2

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

Strengths:

- Assessment procedures were clearly communicated in writing to prospective candidates.
- All candidates were also offered a workshop specifically to prepare them for the assessment centre process.
- Tutors who had previously worked as part of the area group work team confirmed that they had been aware that training for Think First involved a step change with respect to previous group programmes.

Areas for improvement:

- The area had no written policy confirming that only those staff meeting the selection criteria could deliver the programme.
- Although the area had produced a policy on support for staff who did not pass the assessment centre, it was still in draft form.

B3.2 Staff roles and competencies

1

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:

- Job descriptions for POs and PSOs working in the programmes unit existed and were competency-based.
- Staff interviewed (tutors, case managers, treatment managers and the programme manager) were clear about their relative roles and responsibilities, which were reflected in the arrangements for supervision.

Areas for improvement:

- Job descriptions did not exist for all roles involved in accredited programmes (see A1.2).
- The required competencies for cognitive skills tutors, outlined in the national management manual, had not been incorporated into existing person specifications.

B3.3 Preparation and debriefing time for tutors

1

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

Strengths:

- Session evaluation and tutor monitoring forms were completed during the debriefing period.
- The programmes unit tutors interviewed confirmed that they had sufficient time for preparation and debriefing.

Areas for improvement:

- The programme manager acknowledged that tutors with split roles did not always have sufficient time for the preparation of sessions. The full-time tutors tended to undertake the bulk

of preparatory and written work in recognition of this fact. These arrangements, although a sensible way of dealing with the status quo, risked creating an unhelpful situation where tutors with split roles had insufficient opportunity to take responsibility for the preparation of a session in the same way as their colleagues.

B3.4 Staff continuity

1

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

Strengths:

- Three tutors were assigned to each programme. This had ensured tutor continuity, which was confirmed by session reports seen and by the videos assessed.
- The majority of offenders interviewed could remember their tutors' names (three offenders had only reached session two of the programme). All three tutors assigned to a programme attended the pre-group first meeting where possible so that members of the group could be introduced to each tutor.

Areas for improvement:

- No published staff rotas existed to show 'at a glance' which tutors were assigned to which programme, or how continuity was maintained by at least one tutor having run the previous session.

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:

- The area had put forward two members of staff as national trainers. This had enabled training to take place when required, rather than depending on the availability of others.
- Records showed that Think First tutor and case manager training had taken place regularly since the implementation of the programme and that all tutors had received training prior to their first delivery of the programme.
- Staff confirmed that all new tutors underwent training in group work skills in addition to the core training.

Areas for improvement:

- All the case managers and a number of tutors interviewed said that there had been a lengthy gap between training and delivery of their first pre-group work or group work sessions. The case managers felt that they would have benefited from refresher training or workshops.

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

2

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

Strengths:

- Arrangements were in place to ensure that experienced tutors were paired with newer members of staff.

Areas for improvement:

- There was no written policy to this effect.

B4.3 Training arrangements for experienced staff

N/A

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

This criterion has not been assessed as training for experienced tutors has yet to be rolled out nationally.

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

2

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

Strengths:

- All staff groups interviewed were able to articulate clearly the programme aims and objectives and the methods used to achieve these.
- Case managers said they regularly made use of programme documentation in order to carry out their role in relation to pre-programme work.
- All staff commented on the importance of programme and treatment integrity if the aims of Think First were to be met.

Areas for improvement:

- Some case managers said that they had “*floundered along*” on their own when it came to delivering the pre and post-group work sessions because of the gap between their training and their first Think First offenders.

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

2

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

Strengths:

- Case managers, treatment managers and tutors knew what the theoretical base of Think First was and were able to refer to the research evidence.

Areas for improvement:

- PSR writers were less confident than other staff in explaining on what basis cognitive-behavioural programmes had been developed.

B4.6 Supporting skills necessary to run programmes

2

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:

- Evidence from 1998/2001 showed that early attention had been given to training to support accredited programmes. For example, training in motivational interviewing and effective practice had taken place.
- All tutors underwent group work skills training to assist in their delivery of the programme.
- The programmes team had met together during the period between training and roll-out of the first Think First programme to discuss programme delivery, thus maintaining knowledge and skills.

Areas for improvement:

- Plans to identify the training needs of existing tutors were mentioned, but these had not yet been drawn up.

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:

- Structures were in place to ensure that tutors received supervision on their practice from a treatment manager and appraisal supervision from their line manager. Treatment managers received monthly supervision from the programme manager. Supervision of tutors was taking place regularly and at the frequency specified in the management manual.
- Treatment manager video monitoring forms showed that attention was being given both to strengths and to areas for development for each tutor.
- Tutors received monthly group supervision sessions run by the programme manager, in addition to four supervision sessions per programme with a treatment manager. Tutors also attended practice development workshops organised by the treatment managers.

Areas for improvement:

- Tutors said that they were “*still confused*” by the number of different fora in which practice development was discussed. Some streamlining of these merited consideration.
- Tutors with split roles were unable to attend all practice development meetings on a regular basis because of pressures of work. Although they received copies of notes of meetings, in the longer term this could result in full-time tutors developing their skills at a faster rate than their colleagues and thus perpetuating differential standards of programme delivery.

- Not all treatment manager video monitoring forms seen were equally rigorous in their assessment of tutor performance. The documentation did not distinguish clearly between the different procedures for the supervision and development of staff delivering accredited and non-accredited programmes.

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 form had been devised to record tutor areas for development to assist in the setting of objectives for appraisal purposes.
- Area documentation identified a link role for the programme manager, treatment managers and line managers in contributing to appraisal.
- All programme staff had a copy of Probation Circular 86/2001 which set out the deselection policy.

Areas for improvement:

- Appraisal arrangements for tutors with split roles had not yet been fully developed.

B6.1 Offender selection and assessment

0

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:

- The area had volunteered to implement OASys at the earliest opportunity and staff were being trained in its use during the audit period. This would improve targeting of offenders for accredited programmes.
- There was some evidence of targeting issues having been addressed in an e-mail to staff from the ACO with responsibility for case management. All staff interviewed were clear about the use of OGRS 2 in targeting offenders for Think First.
- The programmes unit had instituted a duty officer system to deal with queries regarding suitability for Think First.

Areas for improvement:

- Fifteen of the 32 case records examined did not fall within the targeting criteria for Think First. Until June 2001 the area had been using its own assessment tool, the Case Management Index. (This comprised of an identification of dynamic risk factors and risk of reoffending, but was not a nationally recognised tool.) Most of the case records scrutinised did contain an OGRS 2 score, but seven case records only used the Case Management Index banding.
- Where the OGRS 2 score was above the targeting band, there was not always evidence of additional structured work having been considered.
- The evaluation and monitoring tool was not always contained within the case record.

- There was little evidence (other than the duty officer system referred to above) of issues raised by staff regarding suitability having been tackled in a systematic, area-wide fashion. Monitoring of exclusions and of the suitability of referrals to the programme would lead to more consistent practice and better understanding amongst case managers and PSR authors.
- PSR authors interviewed mentioned sessional staff's lack of familiarity with OGRS 2. (The results of the file read did not distinguish between sessional and establishment PSR authors.)

B6.2 Offender knowledge and understanding of the programme requirements

0

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.*

All the offenders interviewed were at an early stage of the programme.

Strengths:

- Case managers said they explained the offender leaflet as well as the statement of understanding to the offender.

Areas for improvement:

- Case records did not always show that the requirements of the programme had been communicated to the offender on two separate occasions, verbally and in writing (12 of 32 cases), and interviews with offenders suggested that this was their experience also.
- Signed letters of understanding were not consistently on file.
- Several of the offenders interviewed said that they had not been told the exact length of the programme, nor been fully briefed about the pre-group work sessions.

B6.3 Group size

1

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

Strengths:

- Most groups in Kent had started the first group work session with four or more offenders.

Areas for improvement:

- None of the groups starting with less than four members had completed. This suggested that, in the short term, limited overbooking might be required to meet the criterion. However, increased numbers were likely as assessment and targeting of offenders improved.

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.*

For the first six months of roll-out of Think First the area had decided that proposals should not be made for women. This was made on the basis of experience and local research, which claimed that women offenders tended to 'do better' in single gender groups. Until some weeks before the audit, therefore, women offenders had been referred to the non-accredited women's programme, which the area had been running for some time. More recently, arrangements had been made with HM Prison East Sutton Park to

run Think First programmes for women in custody and in the community. All women were now expected to be referred to this programme.

Strengths:

- Arrangements were in place to refer women offenders to the programme run in collaboration with HM Prison East Sutton Park.
- Practice guidelines existed on singleton placements for minority ethnic offenders.

Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient consideration had been given to the needs of minority ethnic offenders in the area. Few examples were given by staff of ways in which offenders from a visible minority ethnic group might be supported within what was an overwhelmingly white environment. (These referred to the avoidance of singleton placements and the limited possibilities of creating a balanced group through the use of minority ethnic tutors.) Of the case managers interviewed, only one had any experience of a minority ethnic offender receiving a condition to attend a cognitive-behavioural programme. He had been referred to the Priestley 1:1 programme apparently to “help train staff” in 1:1 work.
- The policy on singleton placements for minority ethnic offenders dated from 1999 and would benefit from updating to include specific reference to accredited programmes.
- Women offenders were not being given any choice as to whether to join a mixed group, or to wait longer to attend the women-only group.
- The area had not shared its research findings with the National Probation Directorate to confirm the validity of running single gender groups.

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:

- Senior and operational managers received information about the timeliness of programme commencement, as well as monthly data showing proposals, referrals, starts and completions of the programme. Information requirements had been refined following discussion at the effective practice development meetings, with a view to identifying reasons for drop-out.
- Three of the four PSR authors interviewed were completing monthly checklists of PSR proposals and reasons for non-referral of offenders within the Think First targeting band.
- A review of administrative staff in the programmes team had increased the area’s capacity to collect and collate data and to meet some of the demands presented by the delay in the roll-out of IAPS.
- The area information management strategy addressed the principles of information management and gave a high priority to What Works.

Areas for improvement:

- While frontline staff contributed to the data collected by the area, they were receiving little or no performance information on a regular basis. This reduced the opportunity for discussion of measures which could be taken to improve performance.

- No area protocol or guidelines existed yet which outlined the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for accredited programmes or set out the responsibilities of staff in this respect, giving them a clear understanding of the purpose of monitoring and evaluation of data.

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:

- Managers were able to quote instances of practice having been changed as a result of monitoring information. For example, the location of programme sites had been altered to fit in with the source of referrals. Arrangements (such as the use of driver facilitators) to ensure the attendance of offenders living in the more rural parts of the county had been put in place.
- Changes had been made to the way in which information about starters and completers was collected, in order to provide data for analysis of attrition rates.

Areas for improvement:

- The absence of a strategy for monitoring and evaluation had limited the area's ability to tackle problems before they arose. Mention was made by treatment managers of the unsuitability of some referrals for Think First. Although plans were now in place for a duty officer to scrutinise referrals, a more systematic approach earlier in the year might have enabled the area to take area-wide action to reduce unsuitable referrals.
- There was no systematic analysis of suitability of referrals to the programme, nor did the area use the information from offender feedback reports.

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 material was covered in the correct order.
- In almost all the sessions assessed exercises were clearly explained.

Areas for improvement:

- Sessions were sometimes too short and gave members insufficient time either to discuss or practice the material. Limited discussion in the group also led to shorter sessions.
- Tutors were not always rigorous in their checking out of learning.

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:

- Offenders with literacy difficulties received support during written exercises. One of the offenders interviewed, whose literacy skills were poor, had found this helpful.
- In most cases tutors listened carefully to the answers given by group members.
- Tutors were often skilful in their challenging of offence-supporting views.

Areas for improvement:

- There were good examples of open questions, but these were sometimes followed with closed questions if tutors did not get a quick response from group members.
- Tutors did not often enable offenders to elicit self-motivating statements and use of praise was not used to try to encourage this.
- Although tutors remembered to make the link between exercises and the session, they did not always encourage group members to do so.
- Tutors did not summarise or reflect back frequently enough.

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:

- A non-threatening and purposeful environment was created in which offenders could learn.
- Tutors were clearly spoken and generally used appropriate language.
- Groups were well managed.

- In all but one session, group members appeared well engaged in the process.

Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient consideration had been given to ways of using praise to encourage learning.
- The introduction and ending of exercises merited attention.
- Co-working was at times unimaginative. For example, use could have been made of co-tutors for scribing while the other tutor delivered their part of the session.

C1.4 Programme delivered addressing race equality and diversity issues

1

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:

- PSR authors screened all offenders for basic skills deficits. This meant that by the time they attended the programme, tutors were alerted to any difficulties they might have had. Video monitoring showed that this support was offered in a discreet and helpful manner.
- Treatment managers said that factors such as childcare and transport arrangements, and issues arising from the referral of minority ethnic offenders on the programme, were discussed in supervision.

Areas for improvement:

- There was some evidence, both from discussion with tutors and from the video monitoring, that instances of racist comments were discouraged through suppression or threats of suspension from the group. Tutors' and case managers' awareness of the very topical issues of racism against asylum-seekers in Kent had not resulted in the development of a wide-range of skills to challenge offenders appropriately. Use of the skills taught in the programme to counter such views merited consideration.
- In discussion tutors were unable to demonstrate specific ways in which they addressed issues of diversity and race equality, except by reference to the group rules.

C1.5 Programme integrity checklist

2

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

Strengths:

- Tutors were completing programme integrity checklists for each of the sessions they delivered.

Areas for improvement:

- Scrutiny of the checklists suggested that tutor self-assessment could be overgenerous and did not always distinguish one element sufficiently from the next. This was likely to improve as planned benchmarking exercises became part of tutor supervision.

C1.6 End of programme summary reports

0

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

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

The area had been using its own standardised end of programme summary reports until the latter part of 2001.

Strengths:

- Some of the reports seen were considered and informative.

Areas for improvement:

- None of the case managers interviewed had seen an end of programme summary report, even though they were responsible for supervising some offenders who had recently completed the programme.
- A number of the reports did not identify risk factors or triggers for relapse in a specific enough manner.
- Treatment needs were often too general to be of use to a case manager, nor were objectives for future supervision SMART; for example, 'practice problem-solving skills' or 'identify risk situations and ways of dealing with them'.

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:

- Most case managers were including Think First as a supervision objective.

Areas for improvement:

- Only nine of the 32 case files assessed *fully* integrated Think First into the overall plan of work for the offender.
- Specific SMART objectives were only set in a minority of case records.
- There was little evidence of the use of OGRS 2 to inform assessment and practice did not appear to have been enhanced in the few cases where the local assessment tool had been utilised.
- In more than half of the relevant cases the objectives were not reviewed.

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

1

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

Strengths:

- Case managers were, in most cases, attending three-way review meetings. They said that these meetings were helpful, and recognised the key part they had to play in the development of the work of the group through supervision following the programme.
- Recently a decision had been made for written records on the progress of each group member to be forwarded to the case manager. (IAPS records would eventually obviate the need for this measure.)

Areas for improvement:

- Case managers said that their experience of liaison with tutors was inconsistent. In some cases it had been comprehensive, in others they had received no information about the progress of the offender on the programme until the final review meeting.
- In discussion, case managers also said that, despite the link officer arrangements which meant that tutors were attached to each case manager unit for consultation purposes, they did not always have access to advice when they needed it (for example, to discuss suitability of a particular offender for Think First).

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

1

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

Strengths:

- The area policy on case manager contact with the offender was a minimum of monthly meetings throughout the group work element of Think First. This was an effective way of ensuring that any problems with motivation and attitude could be picked up at an early stage. Case managers were committed to this arrangement and spoke with enthusiasm of the benefits to offenders and to their own understanding of the programme of these arrangements. They expected to see offenders more frequently than monthly if any particular issues were raised by the tutors between meetings.
- Case records bore out that case managers addressed problems of offender attitude and attendance on the programme.

Areas for improvement:

- In some cases, in order to avoid delay, case managers had arranged for offenders to commence the group work programme before completing all the pre-programme work.
- There were few examples recorded of case managers reinforcing learning during the programme.

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:

- Comprehensive case manager training had taken place at regular intervals throughout the previous year and the case managers interviewed spoke authoritatively about programme aims and methods.
- Motivational interviewing training had taken place to enhance the skills of case managers.

Areas for improvement:

- There had not been any attempt to gauge the effectiveness of training in meeting the needs of case managers, particularly in view of the long gap in some cases between training and practice with a Think First offender. Case managers said they had not felt especially well equipped to undertake the pre and post-work with offenders in the early stages of roll-out (see B4.4).

D1.5 Monitoring of attendance and enforcement

0

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:

- Area policy guidelines on the monitoring of attendance and enforcement were unambiguous and understood by staff.
- Offenders who were asked about the consequences of missing sessions were clear about them.

Areas for improvement:

- Enforcement action did not always take place within national standards timescales. This happened in only 13 of 28 case records reviewed.
- It was not evident how case managers would come to know of an offender's non-attendance at catch-up under the current arrangements, nor was it sufficient to assume that the offender had attended catch-up if he attended the following group work session.
- Offender attendance, non-compliance and enforcement action were clearly recorded in only 20 of 32 case records examined. Acceptable and unacceptable absences were not always noted.

D1.6 Documentation

0

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

Strengths:

- The area had begun using IAPS paper-based documents where possible. This would familiarise staff with their format and content.

Areas for improvement:

- Only eight case records contained all relevant documentation. For example, offender letters of understanding and post-programme reports were frequently absent from the files.
- Some documentation was kept in programmes boxes to which case managers did not have access.

D1.7 End of programme review

0

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:

- Case managers had obviously recognised the benefit of the final three-way meeting. This was a good base upon which to emphasise the necessity of using end of programme reviews for the planning of future supervision.

Areas for improvement:

- In the ten cases which had reached this stage in the programme, end of programme reviews had influenced the supervision plan reviews in only three instances.
- Specific SMART objectives were rarely present in review documents.
- Attention to community integration issues was only recorded in about half of the cases read.

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. Kent was awaiting the development of the Cognitive Skills Booster Programme to reinforce learning. In the meantime, use was being made of the relapse prevention modules which had been in use for some time in the area.

Next Steps

HMIP will employ a three-tier follow-up process, depending on a probation area's performance rating:

Level 1 follow-up

A level 1 performing area will have met or exceeded the agreed IQR figure of 70%. (This figure rises to 75% for year 2 and 90% for year 3). The follow-up will normally be conducted within one year of the audit report being received by the probation area, and will usually be limited to a desktop exercise, depending on the advance information received, focusing on the areas for improvement for criteria that were not fully met in the original audit.

Level 2 follow-up

A level 2 area will not have reached the 70% quality rating for programme delivery, but will have attained at least 40%. The follow-up will combine a request for written information and a one-two day visit to the probation area with HMIP auditing further videotapes and case files. This will normally take place within one year of the audit report being received by the probation area.

Level 3 follow-up

A level 3 area will have scored less than a 40% IQR. The follow-up will involve a fresh audit of the probation area and will normally be completed within six months of the audit report being received by the probation area.

Kent Probation Area achieved an IQR of 53% and is a **level 2 area**. A limited follow-up audit will be carried out in one year's time. The area should pay particular attention to mandatory items, which have not been fully met.

This audit report and the IQR will be received by the Joint Accreditation Panel in October 2002.