



OFFENDER
MANAGEMENT
INSPECTION
INSPECTION

A report on Offender Management in
Merseyside

An inspection led by
HM Inspectorate of Probation

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FOREWORD

Merseyside Probation Area benefits from strong leadership within a sound management structure. It was clear during our inspection that a very committed staff group was doing good work with offenders. All the building blocks of the national offender management model were established, although some understandably required a little refinement at this early stage of implementation.

Activity during the pre-sentence phase was of a high standard and good diversity practice was given priority at all levels of the organisation. However, assessments of offenders' literacy and numeracy needs were not being made reliably and there was evidence of unmet educational need. We viewed positively the swift provision of specialist accredited programmes such as those which addressed sex offending, but were concerned that some offenders required to attend general offending behaviour programmes had experienced lengthy waiting times. Although the area had started to collate outcome information, this was not always used to inform changes to practice. Most significantly, there needed to be further work to enhance the quality of Risk of Harm work and protection of the public.

There was much to be praised about Merseyside's creative working alongside many other key agencies. This, including a good working relationship with local prisons, augurs well for the future as the area further develops the offender management model.

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We would like to express our thanks to the Merseyside Probation Board, its managers and staff for the considerable assistance received in enabling the inspection to proceed smoothly. Without their help, most especially in arranging a complicated programme of interviews with offender managers, the work could not have been completed successfully.

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

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ACO	Assistant chief officer
ASPIRE	Assess, Plan, Implement, Review, Evaluate
ASRO/PASRO	Addressing Substance-Related Offending/Prison ASRO
ATR	Alcohol Treatment Requirement
CALM	Controlling Anger and Learning to Manage it
CARATS	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare Services
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CDVP	Community Domestic Violence Programme
CJC	Community Justice Centre
CO	Chief officer
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DAT	Drug Action Team
DIDs	Drink Impaired Drivers
DIP	Drug Interventions Programme
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement
DTTO	Drug treatment and testing order
ESI	Effective Supervision Inspection
ETE	Employment, training and education
ETS	Enhanced Thinking Skills
FCIU	Family Crime Investigation Unit
FDR	Fast delivery report
GP	General Practitioner
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
IAPS	Interim Accredited Programme Software
IiP	Investors in People
ISP	Initial sentence plan
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MPA	Merseyside Probation Area
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPD	National Probation Directorate
NPS	National Probation Service
N-SOGP	Northumbria Sex Offender Group Programme
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OASys/eOASys	Offender Assessment System/electronic OASys
OCA	Office of Classification and Allocation
OCJR	Office for Criminal Justice Reform
OMI	Offender Management Inspection
OMU	Offender Management Unit
PCT	Primary Care Trust

PO	Probation officer
PPO	Prolific priority and other offender
PSO	Probation service officer
PSR	Pre-sentence report
RRDP	Reducing Reoffending Delivery Plan
REM	Race and ethnic monitoring
RM2000	Risk matrix 2000
RoH	Risk of Harm
ROM	Regional Offender Manager
SAMM	Support After Murder and Manslaughter
SARA	Spousal Assault Risk Assessment
SDR	Standard delivery report
SFO	Serious Further Offence
SMB	Strategic Management Board
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOTP	Sex Offender Treatment Programme
SPO	Senior probation officer
TPO	Trainee probation officer
VLO	Victim liaison officer
YOI	Young Offenders Institution
YOT	Youth Offending Team

SUMMARY

Assessment and Sentence Planning

Reports were generally of a good quality and well received by the courts. The Offender Assessment System template was used effectively, although not all proposals for community orders were supported by an outline plan for the sentence. A surprisingly low number of offenders had had a skills for life screening or full assessment at the start of supervision and few had been given the opportunity to participate actively in sentence planning. However, it was clear that most were well aware of the requirements of the sentence and the penalties for breach. In the majority of cases offenders had been allocated to the correct tier.

Implementation of Interventions

Offender managers showed commitment to motivating and supporting offenders throughout their sentence. They worked hard to secure the offender's compliance but took appropriate action where necessary. There was evidence of enhanced levels of contact with prolific and other priority offenders and those who presented a high Risk of Harm to the public could access relevant accredited programmes. Approved premises provided a good range of constructive and restrictive interventions for both male and female offenders. Unpaid work placements were viewed less positively by offenders, who did not always see the value of the work to the community, although this perception was not supported by the cases inspected. There was a good level of communication between the workers involved with an offender, but aspects of communication with the offender could be improved. Attention was paid to diversity issues in most cases, and the area used a range of resources to support the individual needs of offenders.

Achievement and Monitoring of Outcomes

Nearly all of the offenders interviewed said that they were less likely to reoffend as a result of their supervision, although a quarter had done. Half had made progress in tackling the criminogenic factor most closely associated with their offending. Offender managers had responded actively to perceived changes in the Risk of Harm, and the resources allocated to cases were consistent with the assessment in almost all cases. More work could be done to ensure that offenders consolidate their learning and new skills, but where criminogenic factors could be addressed by a community-based organisation, most offenders were made aware of where they could find assistance.

Leadership and Strategic Management

The Merseyside Probation Board and Senior Management Team were rightly proud of their outward-facing approach to working in a challenging social environment. There was a long history of strong strategic relationships between organisations working within the community, and the area had capitalised on this to collaborate with partners to address the pathways in the Reducing Reoffending Delivery Plan. The area's approach to innovation had been recognised through a number of national awards. Alongside this, performance against national targets had improved substantially and most targets were now met or

'near misses'. There was an active approach to quality improvement; many of the areas for improvement identified during this inspection had already been highlighted by internal audits and appropriate action taken. The exception was in the assessment and provision of skills for life which needed further exploration and attention.

The transition to the national offender management model had been managed effectively. The area's small case management units ('pods') fitted within community and resettlement divisions. Offender managers within them were generally aware of their roles and well supported by case administrators. However, the role of probation service officers in relation to the completion of assessments and the delivery of interventions needed some clarification.

Data from the Offender Assessment System had been used to collect information about criminogenic factors and this had helped to inform the commissioning of services. There was scope to extend the use of data to analyse outcomes. Although some service user feedback was collected and collated, a strategic overview of the use of research and evaluation information would be beneficial.

Risk of Harm

A Risk of Harm screening had been completed in most cases, although we were concerned to discover that a number were inaccurate. Other cases had inappropriately been exempted from a full analysis. Sometimes this had occurred despite gaps in the offender manager's knowledge about the case, for example where safeguarding issues indicated a need to verify the offender's domestic situation.

The overall classification of risk was generally accurate, but some cases were not being managed by the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements despite being identified as presenting a high Risk of Harm. Where additional licence conditions were imposed, these were appropriate and proportionate. However, there were other cases where consideration should have been given to additional restrictive requirements. Public protection was well supported by the work of the approved premises and the resourcing of accredited programmes for sex offenders and perpetrators of domestic violence.

A mixed picture was presented of work with victims of crime: whilst some timely and sensitive work had been undertaken, the area needed to ensure that, in all cases, the safety of victims or potential victims was given a high priority. Offenders were clear that they had been made aware of the impact of their behaviour on victims but, if this was the case, the work was inadequately recorded.

SUMMARY OF SCORES

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

Chart 1: Scoring of sections 1-3:

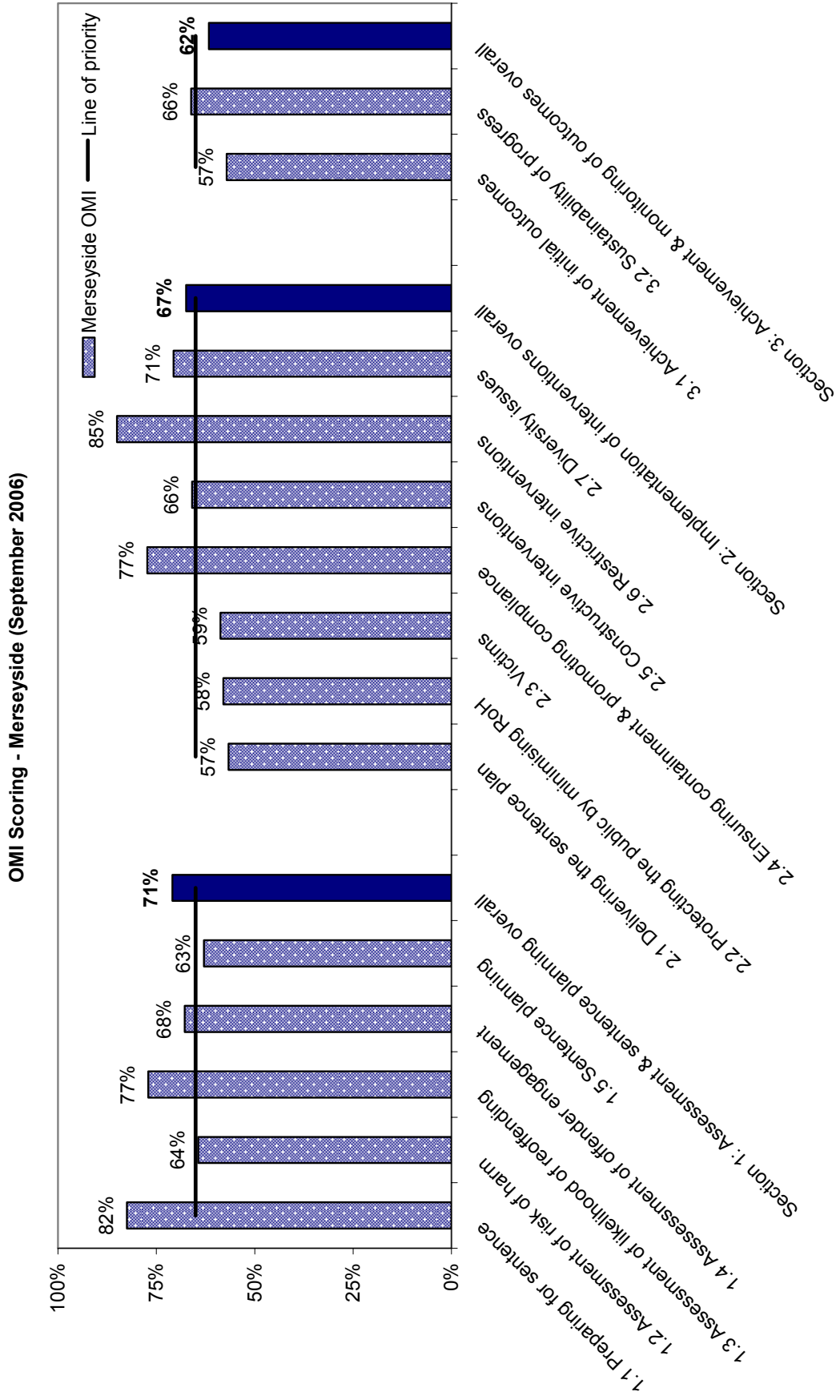


Table 1: Scoring of section 4:

4.1	General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING	Well met
4.2	General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS	Satisfactorily met
4.3	General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT	Well met
4.4	General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Satisfactorily met
4.5	General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION	Satisfactorily met
4.6	General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES	Well met

We advise readers of reports against attempting to compare scores area by area. Such comparisons are not entirely valid as the sizes of samples vary slightly, as does the profile of cases included in each area's sample. We believe the scoring is best seen as a simple summary of what we have found in an individual probation area and needs to be seen alongside the full findings and recommendations of any particular report.

Table 2: Risk of Harm thread

Score for Risk of Harm thread	64%
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improvements are necessary as follows:

1. RoH screening is undertaken accurately in all cases and, where indicated, a full analysis is completed to a satisfactory standard and regularly reviewed
2. the quality and timeliness of risk management plans meet the nationally defined standard
3. all relevant cases are referred as appropriate to the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
4. sentence plans and reviews are completed on time and to a high standard, and appropriately involve the offender
5. skills for life screening and assessment is undertaken at the start of sentence in all relevant cases with a view to unmet need being identified and appropriate interventions delivered
6. the role and duties of probation service officers in relation to assessment is established and appropriate training provided where necessary
7. unpaid work placements are of demonstrable benefit to the community and action is taken to ensure that offenders are aware of those benefits
8. all staff receive an annual appraisal.

NEXT STEPS

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

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

There will not be a further inspection in Merseyside.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Below are examples of good practice we found in Merseyside.

Responsivity OMI Criterion: 1.4 Assessment of offender engagement	Tina was 38 years old and had accumulated 35 convictions over 12 years due to a chronic heroin problem. When faced with a problem she tended to avoid taking responsibility; the offender manager therefore encouraged her to take action herself rather than waiting for others to help. For example, when Tina missed a doctor's appointment, the offender manager encouraged her to use the telephone to make a new appointment. Tina had started to develop confidence and was better able to structure her life.
Offender participation OMI Criterion: 1.5 Sentence planning	Janice, who had been visited in prison before her release to Adelaide House, recalled her offender manager "doing the sentence plan with me. We bounced ideas off each other and planned where I wanted to be in the future and what I would do to achieve my goals".
Motivating and supporting the offender OMI Criterion: 2.1 Delivering the sentence plan	Jack was an 18 year old with a history of offending for car related offences and violence. He had found the HMYOI difficult and when he was released on licence, his offender manager made good use of his motivation to change. She focused on consequential thinking skills and problem solving, giving Jack 'what if' situations to rehearse. She also helped him to look at his binge drinking and issues around masculinity. He started to change his behaviour by going out with different groups of friends and reported feeling calmer. In supervision he practiced 'saying no' to his old friends and the offender manager reinforced his new behaviour. She also built on the positive factors in his life – his family support and his employment goals. He broke the link with his former peer group and their heavy drinking, started to work with his father and successfully completed his licence.
Induction OMI Criterion: 2.4 Ensuring containment and promoting compliance	Offenders sentenced to unpaid work were issued with a booklet at induction. This clearly set out what to expect from the sentence and the rules and regulations of attendance. It also provided a log to record their attendance.

<p>Singleton placement</p> <p>OMI Criterion: 2.7</p> <p>Diversity</p>	<p>Robert was subject to a community order with a condition to attend the Think First programme. The offender manager checked out how he would feel if he were to be the only black participant in the group. He also offered to refer him to the mentoring scheme for black offenders to provide additional support and advice. Before the group was due to start, the offender manager found out from the tutors that the group profile was mixed in both gender and ethnic background and again he discussed this with Robert. The work showed good communication between workers and with the offender and a positive response to diversity.</p>
<p>Resources follow risk</p> <p>OMI Criterion: 4.3</p> <p>Resource deployment</p>	<p>In St Helens nominated probation representatives attended weekly meetings at the FCIU and communicated relevant information to offender managers. In addition, every Monday the unit sent the probation office details of all call outs which were cross-referenced with IAPS and the details of known cases passed to offender managers.</p>
<p>Resources support offender management</p> <p>OMI Criterion: 4.3</p> <p>Resource deployment</p>	<p>The CJC was a pioneering approach to sentencing in North Liverpool. A single Judge heard the cases sitting as both a district Judge and a circuit Judge; the court could also be convened as a Youth Court. Based on a scheme in New York, it housed a courtroom around which representatives from police, probation, youth services and advice providers were located. Each morning a pre-court planning meeting was held to discuss the status of all cases on the court list. In addition, when required, a problem-solving meeting, involving all relevant agencies, the offender and their solicitor was convened at the court site to discuss the offender's circumstances and create a package of services which was presented to inform the Judge's sentencing. Staff at the centre also engaged with the local community, responding to crime related matters of concern. The centre was a positive innovative development and was subject to ongoing independent evaluation.</p>

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN MERSEYSIDE

NOMS offender management model – North-West Pathfinder

Since November 2004 the North-West had been a NOMS Pathfinder region with the purpose of putting into operation and testing the national offender management model in both the custodial and community settings. In its early stages the pathfinder had focused on selected offenders in two HMYOIs – Thorn Cross and Lancaster Farms, and those serving community sentences in Bolton and Stockport in Greater Manchester, the Wirral in Merseyside and in West Cumbria. Later stages of the pathfinder included offenders in HM Prison Hindley and high RoH offenders and PPOs in both HM Prisons Liverpool and Risley. A female institution, Styal, had also been included since early this year.

In operating the model the pathfinder had had an open agenda on the type of staff who would become offender supervisors and on the profile of OMUs. The pathfinder had been clear, however, about the role that offender supervisors should fulfil. It had been left to Governors as to how OMUs were set up and whether seconded probation staff were either included or put into delivering interventions. It was apparent that seconded probation staff were often being used in OMUs for their RoH knowledge and assessment skills, though some units consisted entirely of prison staff.

In testing the model the pathfinder had conducted action research and a process evaluation, with plans to do an outcome evaluation next year when the pathfinder is scheduled to finish. Problems encountered and lessons learned so far had included:

- **Population management** – this had been found to be the single biggest element that could undermine the model. There needed to be a clear allocation matrix for OCA and closer liaison with offender management teams
- **Indeterminate sentence prisoners** – these needed to be seen as a distinct group as they could be subject to a discontinuity in their offender management. As with other longer-term prisoners, indeterminate sentence prisoners seemed to be far more likely to be moved around the prison estate than those serving shorter sentences
- **OASys** – the quality of the assessment was critical, with poor initial assessments affecting subsequent assessments and sentence planning. There also remained issues around who was responsible for doing the assessment and offender manager ownership of the assessments
- **eOASys connectivity** – while there were challenges with the useability of e-OASys, connectivity had been found to improve in exchanging information
- **Cultural Changes** – offender managers were being required to take on a new role with authority over cases that may be in custody as well as those in the community. It was recognised that new skills were required for this role and training provision was being considered.

There were also problems with implementing offender management in the private prison estate. They did not, as yet, have access to OASys in its full form and there were problems with what they were contracted to do, with ‘notices of change’ having to be negotiated.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN MERSEYSIDE PROBATION AREA

MPA had developed components of case management at an early stage as an integral part of the What Works initiative and, as a result, the area was well placed to implement the offender management model. All teams in the Community and Resettlement Divisions were briefed on implementing the ASPIRE approach to the sequencing of work with an offender.

The development of cross-grade sub-team groups ('pods') was cited as an example of good practice in the ESI undertaken in 2004. The roles of PO, PSO and admin support were integrated within these groups and provided a seamless experience of supervision for the offender. These had been rolled out across the area and the main elements of the model were taken up by the national offender management model and further tested throughout the North-West in the pathfinder. Wirral Probation Centre was the most established team according to the model and this team, along with Kirkdale, became pilot sites. The latter had required the physical movement of staff and building alterations to accommodate the 'pods'. Learning from previous stages of case management implementation was made available to probation areas in the National Offender Management Model Pathfinder Handbook, co-written by a member of MPA staff.

During 2003 work had begun in HM Prison Liverpool on developing case management units in a custodial setting. The model for the adult prisoner pathfinder dealing with those who presented a high RoH and prolific offenders was devised by MPA.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN CUSTODY

We visited HM Prisons Liverpool and Styal to hear of progress with the NOMS offender management model. While the custodial establishments we visit would normally be the main ones that the probation area relates to, we do consider it important that both HMYOIs and female prisons are included in our inspections. Whilst offender management activity within prison is not under the control of the probation area, HMI Probation's visits to custodial institutions offer an important early insight into plans for the 'end-to-end' management of offenders which is envisaged.

HM Prison Liverpool

HM Prison Liverpool is a Category B adult male local prison, holding remand and short-term convicted prisoners, as well as vulnerable prisoners, those undertaking detoxification and those in the first stage of a life sentence. The prison served the Merseyside area, although at the time of the inspection approximately 18% of prisoners were from the Midlands due to overcrowding in other areas.

Opened in September 2005 the OMU was staffed by a mixture of prison and seconded probation staff. A PSO worked with those serving less than 12 months, whilst two full-time prison officers worked as offender supervisors each carrying caseloads of 30 to 50 offenders serving over 12 months. The team of seconded POs worked with life-sentenced prisoners and provided RoH assessments. The unit was supported by one case administrator, but there was concern that one post would not be sufficient in the future. At the time of the

inspection the unit was working with 168 current prisoners and had dealt with around 400 men.

MPA and the prison had worked closely together to devise and implement the Adult Offender Management Pathfinder with prolific offenders and those who presented a high RoH. Offender supervisors in the unit worked with the prisoners in close partnership with the offender managers in the community. One was attached to each of the five geographical areas of Merseyside and they went out of the prison to attend planning meetings with other key workers to assist in resettlement.

OASys was the cornerstone of the work of the unit and sentence plans evolved from this and echoed the national reducing reoffending pathways. Prisoners dealt with by the unit were fast-tracked into interventions including PASRO, ETS and non-accredited programmes run by CARATS. The unit had a diagnostic suite run by Connexions to assess ETE issues. Literacy and numeracy issues were addressed to increase the prisoner's ability to attend offending behaviour programmes. At present there were no CALM or SOTP programmes, no domestic violence interventions and insufficient provision focused on alcohol misuse within the establishment.

The unit was also equipped with two video conferencing suites, in addition to the prison's main video conferencing facilities.

Staff in the unit were aware of the probation area's mentoring scheme for offenders from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and felt that there was potential for developing the scheme's links with the prison.

In common with other prisons, there were some issues with identifying cases managed by the MAPPA and PPOs. Different areas used different criteria for classifying PPOs and there was no consistent way whereby the prison was informed about an offender's PPO status.

There was support for the unit by the LCJB in Merseyside. Probation managers had worked closely with the prison and there had been good contact and communication from the ROM and the area manager. Despite the commitment of senior managers to the project, population pressures across the prison estate led to prisoner movements – both in and out of HM Prison Liverpool – and this impacted on the quality of offender management.

To promote the joint approach to the management of PPOs and high RoH offenders, probation staff had been invited to open days in the unit. In addition, some effective promotional work had taken place within the prison, overcoming concerns about offenders 'queue jumping' for places on programmes. It was clear that RoH assessment and management had become a priority for staff in the unit, rather than mere containment as in the past. One member of staff commented that "if high-risk prisoners are managed successfully it's good for all concerned as these are the men who normally create problems for staff on the wing".

In summary, the OMU staff in HM Prison Liverpool were positive and enthusiastic about the model. They recognised that the pathfinder funding had given them a head start and had enabled them to test out different approaches. They were concerned about the future viability of the unit and were frustrated about the impact of population pressures – over which they had no control – on the effective operation of the unit.

HM Prison Styal

HM Prison Styal had started setting up an OMU approximately 18 months ago in anticipation of the introduction of the offender management model. The establishment also became part of the North-West Pathfinder project at the end of last year. We visited the prison as part of this inspection to see how work with women prisoners in the North-West was progressing.

The unit had brought together all staff involved in offender management under one functional head and located in one building. This included seven prison and 14 probation staff and seven administration officers. The unit dealt with OCA and sentence calculation as well as public protection, OASys and other probation functions. The head of the unit had recognised that the key to success would be to ensure active engagement with probation staff working in the community. To this end the establishment set up training on how to chair sentence planning boards and on security matters. The approach appears to have been effective; offender managers had attended all 52 of the sentence planning boards that had taken place since the introduction of the pathfinder – an impressive outcome.

All staff in the unit had been trained in OASys and were able to complete and update the assessments. There was some concern that national issues about connectivity inhibited the joint use of OASys by prison and community staff, but most offender managers were now staying in the unit after sentence planning meetings and updating the offender's sentence plan. Video conference facilities were also now available.

The prison ran ETS and a short drugs programme; unit staff were aware that the current range of interventions would need to be extended. Families were not yet involved in the offender management process and this was a further area for development. Personal officers continued to have an important role in working with the offender and liaising with the offender supervisor. Relationships between prison departments were good and staff were getting greater job satisfaction from working closer with offenders and outside agencies.

Staff expressed frustration that in some cases offenders were transferred to an establishment where the offender management model was not yet fully operational. They felt that this undermined the work that they had initiated and the offender could not maximise their progress.

Since its inception, 152 offenders had been supervised through the unit; the caseload at the time of the inspection was 82. Probation staff in the unit were acting as supervisor to most of the MAPPA and PPO cases in the establishment. The unit had been well supported by prison and probation managers throughout the North-West, and had a good working relationship with the Merseyside ACO. They were, however, concerned that they had been asked to set up a unit without standards or guidance that would have been helpful to ensure uniformity of approach. However, they were pleased to have joined the pathfinder and were rightly proud of their achievements and keen to share their learning.

SERVICE USERS' PERSPECTIVE

Offenders

During the inspection of Merseyside we ran eight focus groups in the community setting: three with unpaid work groups; three with accredited programme groups, and two at approved premises. In total 48 offenders were interviewed.

Most of the offenders recalled having received an induction. Those on accredited programmes said that this had been repeated by the tutors. They all knew what actions to expect if they missed an appointment, although not all were clear about what would be regarded as an acceptable explanation, or what evidence would be required. All were clear that discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated. Some referred to having read notices in offices reinforcing this message.

Few, however, had been involved in their sentence plan or even remembered seeing it. The exception was in Adelaide House, where most reported that they had worked with the offender manager to develop their sentence plan. Half of them had discussed this during a prison visit in preparation for their return to the community. The residents of Merseybank had a less positive view; some felt that they were inadequately prepared for release and had been given little choice about their resettlement options. A number of offenders highlighted the general difficulties in finding suitable accommodation and would have welcomed more help with this issue.

The majority of offenders in all the groups thought that there was good communication with their offender manager. If they had a problem or wanted to discuss an issue, they thought that the offender manager listened to them, and described probation staff as 'professional and courteous'. Those on programmes spoke highly of the tutors, by whom they felt treated with respect. However, notwithstanding this, offenders in three of the focus groups raised the fact that offender managers were sometimes late for appointments, often without apology or explanation. Those in the approved premises said that there had been occasions when they had not been informed that the offender manager had cancelled an appointment. Some of those on unpaid work had experienced difficulty in 'tracking down' their offender manager.

Offenders on the Think First programme generally reported that they found the work both constructive and challenging and said that they were now more likely to stop and think about their behaviour. Most reported that work with their offender manager and programme tutors had highlighted the consequences of their behaviour for victims.

Those on unpaid work were less positive about the experience. Most felt that they were simply expected to report for work and complete their hours. They did not see the jobs undertaken as being of benefit either to the community or to their own development. Some commented that they would like to be taught new skills. Most of those interviewed had experienced at least one occasion when they had been 'stood down' because insufficient work was available or there was not enough transport to the placement. Generally they described unpaid work as an inconvenience; in this sense it was punitive and as a result they said they would be less likely to reoffend.

Out of 150 questionnaires, 13 were completed and returned. The comments included were overwhelmingly positive. All the offenders felt that the rules of supervision had been

clearly explained to them, and most recalled discussing their sentence plan to some extent. All reported that probation staff and people from other agencies worked well together. Eight offenders said that the probation service had helped them to change their attitude to offending. One commented; *"I will not reoffend but I am not complacent about this. The work I have done in and out of prison (currently with the probation service) will serve to consolidate my determination not to reoffend"*. A number had also received help with housing, education/training/employment, drug or alcohol misuse, health and lifestyle issues and thinking skills. Most said that they were more likely to think about the victims of crime as a result of this sentence, and all except one felt that they were less likely to reoffend in the future.

Victims

Twenty questionnaires were sent out to people who had been victims of crime in the case sample; unfortunately none were returned. Two of the people invited to the focus group attended; they were victims of the same offence. They spoke highly of the work of SAMM, a partnership organisation, and of the probation VLO. They felt that they had been offered emotional support and information about the offender's sentence and that their own safety had been appropriately considered. Whilst they understood that the probation scheme could not encompass contact prior to the offender's conviction, they nevertheless expressed the view that this would have been helpful.

Courts

Out of 30 questionnaires sent to sentencers, 11 were completed and returned. Overall the majority were satisfied with the work of the probation service. All respondents felt clear about which type of court report should be requested, and all who answered the question were satisfied with the quality of both FDRs and SDRs. Some, however, commented that staffing levels in court were not always sufficient and some noted that the availability of SDRs was also affected by staff availability. The majority felt that arrangements for the swift resolution of breach proceedings were working well; the remainder felt that they were working in part. Six of the respondents stated that they were kept informed about probation policy and practice; five felt partially informed. All of the sentencers who commented reported that the area's managers modelled positive and professional leadership behaviour.

1. ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING

1.1 General Criterion: PREPARING FOR SENTENCE

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

82%

Strengths:

- (a) *A PSR had been written in 73 of the 89 cases in the community sample. Where the court had indicated the level of seriousness, all but three of the reports clearly took this into account. 90% of the reports were of the appropriate type, i.e. SDRs or FDRs. All nine of the sentencers who expressed a view were satisfied with the quality of both types of report.*
- (b) *In 97% of the reports there was a proposal for a community sentence. The PSR proposal was followed by the court in 88% of cases.*
- (c) *95% of reports were completed on time and 89% used the nationally approved format. The area had taken the decision to introduce the OASys PSR template at an early stage and this had been used in 51 out of 73 cases in the sample. The area had actively attempted to address the needs of individual members of staff, and were frustrated that the OASys template was not as yet available to users of assistive technology. Internal audits had found that the template had improved the overall quality of reports. 86% of the reports in this inspection sample were based on an appropriate assessment of the offender's risk and criminogenic factors and were objective, impartial, free from discriminatory language and stereotyping.*
- (d) *Two PSRs had been prepared on PPOs; both outlined the seriousness of the offence and the likelihood of reoffending and contained a clear and proportionate proposal.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Where self-harm was an issue, this was clearly recorded in 13 cases. However, this left four cases where a risk of self-harm was identified but had not been adequately recorded.*
- (b) *In only 34% of relevant reports was appropriate victim information included.*
- (c) *An outline sentence plan was contained in only 60% of PSRs where a proposal for a community sentence had been made.*
- (d) *PSRs were judged to be concise in 59% of cases. This leaves a sizeable minority of reports that were considered overlong.*

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

Strengths:

- (a) *A RoH screening had been completed at the start of sentence or on release from custody in 92% of cases.*
- (b) *Where a full analysis of the RoH had been completed, this accurately reflected the risk to children in 89%, the public in 93%, known adults in 83% and staff in 96% of cases. The overall classification of risk was correct in 91% of assessed cases.*
- (c) *Eight offenders in our sample had been referred to approved premises. Six of these referrals were appropriate and were accepted, and there were no relevant cases where the possible use of approved premises was overlooked.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *There were 14 cases where the RoH screening was not accurate. In some cases relevant previous convictions had been overlooked. In addition the inspection found 17 cases where a full RoH analysis had not been completed, although this should have been triggered by factors identified by the RoH screening. Some cases were granted exemption from full analysis despite gaps in the offender manager's knowledge of the case. The area had issued guidelines to middle managers to standardise the process of exemption from a full analysis and there was evidence that this was improving the practice of countersigning. However, this would not address the issue of inaccurate screening that also required attention.*
Where a full analysis of the RoH had been completed it was described as satisfactory in 72% of cases. However, this left 18 cases where it did not meet the required standard.
- (b) *In 28% of cases, the RoH screening and analysis did not draw sufficiently on assessments from MAPPAs and other agencies including prisons and the YOT. In cases of domestic violence a SARA had not always been completed. In several relevant cases there were gaps in the offender manager's knowledge of the offender's domestic circumstances. In some of these cases there had been an attempt to liaise with social services departments but, where a response was not forthcoming, the matter had not been pursued.*
- (c) *In 22 cases the RoH level was identified as high or very high, but only ten cases were being managed within the MAPPAs. In three of these cases the MAPPAs classification had not been clearly communicated to all staff involved in the case. The area used a process of screening cases through a "professionals' meeting" prior to referral to MAPPAs. The benefit of this approach was not clear as it appeared to involve the same parties as a Level 2 MAPPAs meeting. However the area had produced a near final draft of new procedures that made it an expectation that all high and very high RoH cases would be managed by the MAPPAs unless there were clear reasons for not doing so.*
- (d) *Insufficient attention was paid to victims' issues in 62% of cases at the assessment stage.*

- (e) *Risk management plans on both community cases and licences were comprehensive in less than a third of cases. For offenders on licence, there was insufficient evidence of risk management planning prior to release in 57% of cases. Risk management plans were prepared more promptly for offenders on community orders, with nine out of 11 relevant offenders having a plan completed within five working days of the order being made or the offender being assessed as presenting a high or very high RoH. Some offender managers had believed that risk management plans were not required for medium-risk cases. Overall, half of the plans were structured according to the required format.*
- (f) *In 38% of cases there was no evidence of effective middle or higher management involvement in the assessment of RoH issues. In respect of child safeguarding issues this figure increased to 52%.*

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

1.3 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD OF REOFFENDING
Likelihood of reoffending is comprehensively and accurately assessed using OASys as applicable.

77%

Strengths:

- (a) *In 86% of cases an OASys score was calculated at the start of the sentence or on release from custody.*
- (b) *The assessment of the likelihood of reoffending was found to be of sufficient quality in 81% of cases. Criminogenic factors were satisfactorily assessed in 89% of cases, although positive influences, e.g. supportive and pro-social factors, were less evident, having been identified in 77% of cases.*
- (c) *The OASys assessment completed on nine of the 12 PPOs in the sample was comprehensive. However, only seven of these assessments were completed within five working days of their sentence or release.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Where other relevant assessments were available these were not used to inform the content of the likelihood of reoffending assessment in a quarter of cases.*
- (b) *Where a current offender was re-sentenced to a new or a concurrent order, there was some confusion about whether to start a new OASys or review an existing assessment.*

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

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

68%

Strengths:

- (a) *In 92% of cases a REM classification had been recorded.*
- (b) *We saw some good examples of the active assessment of diversity issues and other individual needs, although unfortunately this was not the case in a third of the sample. Where potentially discriminatory or disadvantaging factors had been identified, plans were put in place to minimise their impact in 89% of cases.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *A skills for life screening had been carried out at the start of sentence in only 23% of cases. Where the need for a full assessment had been indicated, this had been undertaken in 16 out of 21 cases. The small number of assessments indicated suggested that the area was failing to identify offenders with literacy or numeracy difficulties. This was a disappointing finding as Merseyside had exceeded the targets for basic skills commencements and awards during the previous financial year. The area did not routinely use the Fast Track screening tool, relying instead on the provider to screen and assess offenders. There was some evidence that offender managers did not refer offenders who claimed to have qualifications. Without screening, their level of skill was not verified, and the decision was often inadequately recorded.*
- (b) *These inadequate processes for screening basic skills contributed to the finding that in 29% of cases insufficient attention had been paid at an early stage to the offender's intellectual ability, learning style, motivation and capacity to change. Furthermore, in 39% of cases the methods likely to be most effective with the offender were not adequately considered.*

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

1.5 General Criterion: SENTENCE PLANNING
The offender manager plans interventions in custody and the community with a view to addressing criminogenic factors and managing any RoH to others. The ISP or unpaid work assessment is designed to describe a structured and coherent plan of work for each offender.

63%


Strengths:

- (a) *In the majority of community cases the offender was allocated to an offender manager within the required timescale.*
- (b) *It was clear from the record that in over 90% of cases steps had been taken to ensure that the offender fully understood the requirements of the sentence and the penalties for breach.*

- (c) *Some elements of the sentence plan for community cases were completed to a higher standard than others. Planned contact levels were included in 98% of ISPs and in 77% of plans it was clear that contacts were enforceable.*
- (d) *Some Tier 1 unpaid work cases had been fully assessed using OASys and the area used a sentence plan template including objectives which were limited but sufficient for the purpose.*
- (e) *In 86% of relevant sentence plans, interventions were identified to address offending behaviour.*
- (f) *Sentence planning documents took account of diversity issues, including the vulnerability of the offender in 67% of cases. This figure is likely to have been brought down by the lack of a skills for life assessment at the start of supervision (see Criterion 1.4).*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *In eight of 89 community cases there was no ISP and only 48% of plans prepared had been completed within the appropriate timescale. The sequencing and timing of interventions was sufficient in 47% and 54% of plans respectively.*
- (b) *Where an offender on a community order was assessed as presenting a medium, high or very high RoH, the ISP outlined how the risk would be managed in only 40% of cases. However, where all medium, high or very high RoH cases were considered (i.e. community orders and licences), 65% of ISPs identified interventions that were likely to reduce or contain the RoH. There were 60 cases where consideration should have been given to including additional restrictive conditions or requirements in order to minimise the RoH to the public. Appropriate consideration was given to including such conditions in only 38 of these cases.*
- (c) *Although all offenders in the sample had been allocated to a tier, inspectors found that 14 had been incorrectly allocated. Some offender managers were unclear about the tiering model, and there was some uncertainty about the correct allocation of some PPOs and of unpaid work orders where there were potential RoH issues. Subsequent planning did not accurately reflect the tier in a quarter of cases.*
- (d) *In 56% of applicable cases the roles and liaison responsibilities of all workers were not clearly defined in the sentence plan. Workers from external agencies reported that they would welcome clearer information about the content of the sentence plan and their intended input.*
- (e) *There were ten community cases where the ISP failed to draw on other available assessments, including those from previous contact with the probation service, prison or YOT and post-programme reports. This represented a quarter of the relevant cases.*
- (f) *Interventions designed to promote community reintegration were identified in only 54% of relevant cases.*
- (g) *Overall sentence planning had not been given a sufficiently high priority. It had given a clear shape to supervision in only 54% of cases and had set relevant goals for 48% of offenders in the sample. In a third of cases the*



*planning did not focus on achievable change, or adequately reflect the sentencing purpose. Nearly half the offenders in the sample had not been given the opportunity to participate actively in the planning. Several offender managers referred to the difficulty of engaging an offender with an unwieldy printed version of the OASys sentence plan. It was clear that the format did not facilitate communication about the purpose and progress of the sentence. However, there was scope to involve the offender more effectively in the **process** of sentence planning by, for example, making better use of the self-assessment questionnaire.*

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS

2.1 General Criterion: DELIVERING THE SENTENCE PLAN
The offender manager facilitates the structured delivery of all relevant elements of the sentence.

57%

Strengths:

- (a) *Arrangements were put in place to prepare offenders thoroughly for interventions in 73% of cases. There were some good examples of offender managers preparing offenders for programme attendance. Offender managers had demonstrated commitment to their work with 82% of offenders and in 72% of cases had motivated and supported the offender throughout their sentence. This finding confirmed our impression of energetic and conscientious staff, committed to working hard to help offenders to change their lives.*
- (b) *There was good communication between the offender manager and other workers in 68% of cases. DIP staff reported that they were given information about RoH before carrying out assessments or interventions and they provided regular feedback to the offender manager on treatment provision.*
- (c) *By the time of the inspection all sentence requirements had been fully implemented in 82% of cases.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Although there was evidence of good preparatory work with offenders in some cases, programme tutors reported occasions when the lack of a skills for life assessment had caused problems that resulted in offenders being withdrawn from a group. In 42% of cases, offender managers had not focused on reinforcing new skills with offenders following interventions. Positive behaviour was reinforced in 55% of cases.*
- (b) *There was good communication between the workers involved with a case and the offender in 56% of the sample. This finding resonated with the mixed comments by offenders in focus groups.*
- (c) *In a quarter of cases with more than one requirement in a licence or order we did not find appropriate sequencing of interventions. There was insufficient joint work between prison-based staff and offender managers to prepare offenders for release into the community in over half of the licence cases. Where interventions had been undertaken in prison – for example relating to education or substance misuse – work with the offender following release did not build sufficiently on the previous work in 42% of cases.*
- (d) *Sentence plans were not reviewed every 16 weeks or more frequently where this was required in a third of cases. Some offender managers had calculated the date for the review from the last assessment instead of from the date of sentence or release and, as a result, the review was late. When they were reviewed, the quality was often insufficient. The reviews contained objectives and milestones that gave a clear direction to supervision in 33% of cases, and only 40% showed that the offender manager had sought continuing*

ownership of the plan from the offender. In some cases, although the review of the sentence plan had been completed, it was not supported by a review of the assessment of RoH or of the criminogenic factors. Reviews did not integrate other plans, such as post-programme reports, in 48% of relevant cases.

- (e) Seven cases had been transferred in from other areas. Only one of these was an offender who presented a high RoH. Four of these offenders were given a timely appointment in the new area and three were visited at home within the required timescale. The high RoH offender's risk management plan was not updated within five working days as required. Merseyside was not well supported by the transferring areas as a complete current OASys assessment was provided in only three of the seven cases.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

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

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

58%

Strengths:

- (a) Where the case was being managed by MAPPA, the arrangements were used effectively in 80% of cases. Programme tutors from N-SOGP and CDVP were routinely invited to meetings.
- (b) A purposeful home visit to high and very high RoH cases took place within ten working days of sentence or release in 68% of cases and was appropriately carried out at a later stage in a further 14%.
- (c) Programme tutors examined previous convictions prior to starting a group to check for any issues that may have a bearing on the composition of the group, for example evidence of racially aggravated offending.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) RoH to others had been reviewed no later than 16 weeks from the start of sentence and again every 16 weeks thereafter in just 59% and 63% respectively of relevant cases. In 43 cases there had been a significant change which should have triggered a review of the RoH; this was completed in just over half of these cases.
- (b) Where a review of RoH was done there was evidence of ongoing planning to protect children in 67% of relevant cases; such planning was evident in relation to the public, known adults and staff in 58%, 53% and 47% of relevant cases respectively.
- (c) Changes in RoH were anticipated where feasible in 55% of relevant cases, and in 63% they were identified swiftly and appropriately acted upon.

- (d) *In six cases the contribution of offender managers and others to the MAPPA process was judged to be effective, but this still left four cases where the contribution was insufficient.*
- (e) *Children's safeguarding issues were identified in relation to eight offenders in the sample. Home visits were employed effectively to monitor these concerns in just half of the cases. The area had recently implemented a new policy on Safeguarding Children; this included a requirement that home visits were undertaken where children were present in the household.*

Conclusion: This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

2.3 General Criterion: VICTIMS
Consistent attention is given to issues concerning victims.

59%

Strengths:

- (a) *Where statutory victim contact work had proceeded, all the victims but one had been offered the opportunity to comment on the proposed licence conditions.*
- (b) *The area's contract with SAMM enabled victims to be given timely help in the period before conviction. Good relationships between the SAMM workers and the VLOs ensured effective liaison at the point when the probation area became statutorily involved.*
- (c) *A Women's Empowerment Group had recently started for women at Adelaide House approved premises. The aim was to teach women the signs of domestic violence, dealing with issues of power and control, and escape techniques.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *A written offer of face-to-face contact was made in a timely fashion to victims in 14 of the 21 cases where this was a statutory requirement. Information about the criminal justice process was provided to victims in just 12 of these cases. Where statutory victim contact work had proceeded, four of the victims had not been informed of the release conditions. There was some evidence that for a period of time changes to police procedures led to a delay in the area being provided with the information necessary to initiate victim work. However, this situation had now been resolved.*
- (b) *The safety of victims or potential victims was an issue in 58 cases. Whilst this was given a high priority in 66% of the cases it meant that there were 20 cases where this was given insufficient attention.*
- (c) *Whilst it was commendable that some offender managers were undertaking domestic violence related work with individuals who were not attending a programme, it was important that attention was also given to the safety of the victim or potential victim. This would include ensuring that the work with the offender was supported by contact with the partner or liaison with other agencies who were involved with the family.*

- (d) *There was evidence in the case file that victim awareness work had been undertaken with only 47% of the offenders in relevant cases.*

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

2.4 General Criterion: ENSURING CONTAINMENT AND PROMOTING COMPLIANCE (Punish)

Contact with the offender and enforcement of the sentence is planned and implemented to meet the requirements of national standards and to encourage engagement with the sentence process.

77%

Strengths:

- (a) *In the majority of cases the offender was offered a full and timely induction following sentence to a community order or after release on licence. Offenders completing the questionnaire and those interviewed in focus groups confirmed that they were made aware of the sentence requirements and the action taken if they were in breach. Those on programmes had discussed this with their offender manager and the issues had been reinforced by the programme staff.*
- (b) *The frequency of appointments conformed to the national standard and was sufficient to facilitate the requirements of the sentence in 91% of cases. Appointments were proportionate to RoH considerations and supported the achievement of sentence plan objectives in over three-quarters of all cases.*
- (c) *Of 12 PPOs in the sample, 11 had had enhanced levels of contact and a pattern of reporting that supported all elements of the sentence.*
- (d) *Offender managers monitored attendance across all interventions in 95% of cases and, where necessary, effective action had been taken to ensure compliance. There were some good examples of prompt and clear enforcement action which had helped to secure the offender's compliance. In 85% of relevant cases where an exclusion and/or curfew requirement was in place, they were appropriately enforced with effective liaison with the electronic monitoring provider. DIP staff were involved in the decision to breach and the sentencing proposal.*
- (e) *Judgements about unacceptable absences were consistent and appropriate in 86% of cases. Where required, breach action had been instigated and resolved within the required timescale in 91% and 73% of cases respectively. We saw examples of good use of a self-certification form for sickness, which authorised the offender manager to contact the GP. Some offenders, however, were less clear about what would constitute an acceptable absence.*
- (f) *The majority of case records were well organised and recording of information was clear and timely in over 90% of cases, but was judged as sufficiently comprehensive in fewer files (75%). In some cases the work that was clearly taking place was not well represented by the recording. Unpaid work files were marked with coloured stickers which was an effective way of highlighting relevant issues such as risk and health considerations.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *The frequency of unpaid work sessions met the national standard in less than half the sample. Placements were matched to the offender in only 23% of cases and were suitably demanding in a third.*
- (b) *In 44% of licence cases there had been insufficient contact and liaison with the offender prior to release and in most of these cases the level of pre-release contact was unlikely to promote effective offender management in the community.*
- (c) *22% of files did not contain all the relevant documentation. In one case an offender manager had not been able to obtain CPS documents on an offender on licence because the request was not related to a PSR. We also found an example of an incorrect court order; although this was not the responsibility of the probation area, it could have affected the offender manager's handing of the case.*
- (d) *Where offenders had been given appointments that coincided with a bank holiday, in some cases these had been recorded as acceptable absences instead of being rearranged. This was not acceptable practice and could have an impact on the area's compliance rates.*

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

2.5 General Criterion: CONSTRUCTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Help and Change)

Interventions are delivered to identified ends and to meet the requirements of the sentence: help and change.

66%

Strengths:

- (a) *Sufficient work and resources were directed at community reintegration in 76% of cases. We saw some good examples of work with several employment advice agencies who worked closely with the probation area. Additionally, the area's in-house ETE unit ran a variety of activities designed to help offenders gain the skills and confidence needed to access jobs. These included skills in job search and application, and personal development through challenging outdoor activities. Women only courses were available. The unit liaised closely with offender managers and IAG workers.*
- (b) *Offender managers prepared reports and attended review hearings in accordance with national standards and court requirements in all of the nine DRR cases in the sample.*
- (c) *The inspection sample included 38 offenders who were subject to accredited programme requirements. Of these, eight were undertaking domestic violence programmes. With ten CDVPs running, most offenders could start the programme relatively promptly. Similarly, places on sex offender programmes were available where required, although in one case the difficulty obtaining a mental health assessment delayed the offender starting the programme.*

(d) *There were four approved premises in Merseyside. They offered a range of constructive and planned interventions for offenders, including programmed work, skills for life and employment related work, and links with health professionals and substance misuse treatment. Help to move on to other appropriate accommodation was particularly important. The needs of female offenders were well met in Adelaide House approved premises. Offenders there spoke highly of the positive and structured regime through which they had learned new skills and developed self-esteem. Two had obtained qualifications for the first time in their lives, and were planning to go on to college.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *In 45% of cases the inspection found that constructive interventions were insufficient to challenge the offender to accept responsibility for their offending behaviour and its consequences.*
- (b) *As reported in Criterion 1.4, there were significant gaps in the timely assessment of skills for life. It was not surprising therefore to find only ten cases where arrangements were made for an appropriate intervention to be delivered. In 20 other cases a need had, at some point, been identified but no suitable intervention was in place.*
- (c) *Thirty-eight offenders were subject to a requirement that they attend an accredited programme. Overall the timing of the programme delivery was consistent with the sentence plan in 71% of cases. This figure reflected the good availability of programmes for sex offenders and those convicted of domestic violence. However, there was scope to improve the timeliness of programme commencement for those who were subject to general offending behaviour and substance misuse programmes, including DIDs.*

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

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

85%

Strengths:

- (a) *Restrictive interventions were monitored fully in 94% of cases. Whilst all reasonable actions were taken to minimise the RoH in 79% of cases, this did leave 13 cases where more could have been done.*
- (b) *Four offenders in the sample were in approved premises and in all of these cases the enhanced level of supervision was used effectively as a restrictive intervention. Offender managers and approved premises managers were clear about the role of the establishment in managing RoH.*
- (c) *Where additional licence conditions were imposed these were comprehensive and necessary in over 90% of relevant cases and proportionate to the RoH and the likelihood of reoffending in 89% and 86% of cases respectively.*

- (d) *In six of the eight PPO licence cases where offending had been related to drugs, there were additional appropriate licence conditions.*

Conclusion: Performance against this criterion was good.

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

71%

Strengths:

- (a) *The identified diverse needs of offenders had been taken into account in arrangements for interventions in 77% of cases. The approved premises were seen to meet the needs of all four residents in the inspection sample. DIPs provided facilities to meet a variety of diversity needs, including for example single gender groups.*
- (b) *Offenders were clearly informed that discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated in 88% of cases. This was confirmed by the comments of offenders in focus groups.*
- (c) *Fifteen offenders presented with disabilities, including physical impairment, mental health and learning difficulties. These issues had been appropriately considered in eleven cases, but this still left some room for improvement.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Issues of literacy and dyslexia were identified in 49 cases but were appropriately addressed in only 37% of these.*
- (b) *When a singleton placement in a mixed setting had been arranged there was no evidence that the informed consent of the offender had been obtained in two out of six relevant cases.*

Conclusion: This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

3. ACHIEVEMENT AND MONITORING OF OUTCOMES

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

57%

Strengths:

- (a) *Offender managers were responsive to perceived changes in RoH. In 16 cases the offender's behaviour gave rise to an increase in restrictive interventions and in eight cases such interventions were reduced when the offender had demonstrated progress. There were also a small number of cases where the interventions delivered resulted in the offender moving to a lower or higher tier.*
- (b) *All but one of the offenders who completed the HMI Probation questionnaire, and most of those interviewed in focus groups, said that they were less likely to reoffend as a result of the work of the probation area. 72% of the sample had not been convicted or cautioned for an offence since the start of the sentence.*
- (c) *The resources allocated to 87% of cases were consistent with the offender's RoH, and 89% with the likelihood of reoffending. All but one of the PPOs were allocated sufficient resources. Resources were found to be used efficiently to achieve the planned outcomes in 82% of cases.*
- (d) *There had been some direct benefits to the community as a result of the unpaid work undertaken by 88% of the offenders in the sample.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Most offenders (62%) had complied fully with the requirements of their sentence, although this could be improved.*
- (b) *The FCIU had reported call outs to addresses linked to the relevant perpetrator in 23% of domestic abuse cases; in a further 47% there had been no call out reports. However, it was of concern to find that in 30% of relevant cases, the offender manager had not sought information from the police about call outs.*
- (c) *Ten of the offenders who completed the HMI Probation questionnaire said that they had made some progress in thinking about the impact of their offending on the victims. However, this was not supported by the cases in the sample where there was evidence in only 26% of cases that the offender had demonstrated increased victim awareness.*
- (d) *There were only a few cases where the file contained clear evidence of a reduction in the seriousness of offending, the threat to victims and potential victims or the frequency of offending.*
- (e) *OASys had been re-scored in 66% of cases; half of these showed an improvement in the score. The factor most commonly linked with offending (70% of the sample) was thinking and behaviour. This was seen as the highest priority for 44 offenders, followed by drug misuse (26) and alcohol misuse*

(22). 53% of offenders had made progress in tackling their most significant criminogenic factor.

- (f) Learning outcomes and skills had been applied in only 43% of cases. There had been an improvement in attitudes in 36% of cases and behaviour in 34% of cases.
- (g) The sentencing objective of punishment, which was applicable to all four tiers, was being achieved in 75% of all cases. Offenders in Tiers 2, 3 and 4 were being helped in 54% of cases, and 63% of Tier 4 cases were being adequately controlled. There was evidence that the 'change' objective was being met in only 33% of cases in Tiers 3 and 4.

Conclusion: This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

3.2 General Criterion: SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRESS
Results are capable of being sustained between different phases of a sentence and beyond the end of supervision.

66%

Strengths:

- (a) We found continuity in offender management. 73% of offenders had experienced just one or two offender managers, including the PSR writer. In cases sentenced at the CJC, staff based at the centre prepared the assessment for the court and transferred the case to an OMU. Where there had been three or more offender managers, this appeared to have had a detrimental effect in sustaining the progress in the case in only seven of the 40 cases.
- (b) 81% of offenders in the sample who had a criminogenic need that could be addressed by a community-based organisation had been made aware of where to find assistance. Not all offenders needed help with long-term community integration issues, but where this was relevant it was given attention in 69% of cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) In half the sample, structured sentence planning had not been given a high priority throughout the supervision.
- (b) Offender managers took sufficient action to help the offender to consolidate learning and reinforce new skills in only 51% of cases.

Conclusion: This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

4. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

4.1 General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING

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

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) *The Area Business Plan built on the prescribed template to address not only national and regional issues but also the priorities of the Merseyside Criminal Justice Board. The breadth of the work to implement the RRDP reflected the challenging context in which MPA operated, containing districts with some of the highest levels of social deprivation in the country. The Board was actively involved in the cycle of planning and reviewing the business priorities. The finalised plan was presented to staff in team meetings and was the basis for divisional and local plans.*
- (b) *The ACO group had well-defined functional roles combined with general responsibility for operations. Each objective in the business plan was assigned to an individual ACO who was held to account by the Head of Operations or the Head of Corporate Services. The structure appeared to work effectively; ACOs were positive about the combination of strategic and operational roles, and we saw some good examples of policy development supported by clear practice guidance. These were communicated to staff through Offender Services Policy and Instructions. An Offender Management Manual had been produced and updated. Most staff who took part in focus groups and meetings, and 79% of those individually interviewed, agreed that they were kept well informed about the area's policies and procedures.*
- (c) *There was evidence of active engagement with sentencers through various forums. The area was represented at an annual meeting with bench chairs and the liaison judge; local liaison meetings were held in all areas; the courts' ACO attended the Justice Issues Group and worked closely with counterparts in HM Courts Service. The Lord Chancellor's representative played an active role on the Board and in liaising with other sentencers. Probation staff had contributed to joint training on the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act (2003) and a protocol for the provision of PSRs was in place. 80% of the sentencers surveyed reported that they were satisfied with liaison arrangements with the probation area.*
- (d) *Strategic partners confirmed strong relationships with probation managers and there was clear evidence that the organisations were committed to working together to reduce offending. The CO was an active member of the LCJB and also had regular meetings with local authority chief executives to discuss partnerships that addressed pathways in the RRDP. The area was represented on the five local community safety partnerships and had provided a strong lead on tackling 'hate crime'. This involved aiming to provide a premium service to victims of such crime, as well as investigating and*

addressing the cause of under-reporting. Probation staff were seconded to multi-agency community safety teams and this ensured a joint commitment to PPOs. There were clear connections with the work of the five YOTs, who valued the single point of contact with a probation manager. Work with health authorities and DAATs had helped to ensure resources for offenders with mental health and substance misuse problems. The area's accommodation manager co-chaired the Merseyside Supporting People Strategy Group and had ensured that the accommodation needs of offenders were considered. An ACO attended all the Local Safeguarding Children Boards and the area had increased its contribution to pooled budgets.

- (e) The MAPPAs SMB was chaired by an ACO. Meetings were generally well attended and included representation from a victims' organisation and by lay members. At regional level the prison service was committed to MAPPAs, but the movement of prisoners sometimes made it difficult to guarantee appropriate representation at the panel. Where prison staff attended meetings, their contribution was valued. There was a well-established working relationship with the police and the two agencies co-chaired Level 3 panels. Where appropriate, the Customs and Excise Department had also been engaged with the MAPPAs. A single information-sharing protocol facilitated public protection and community safety work between the organisations.*
- (f) A strong commitment to promoting diversity was evident at a strategic level and was reflected in the area's approach to staffing, service delivery and work within the local community. A diversity panel reported to the Board and oversaw the work of operational subgroups focusing on women, disability, black and minority ethnic staff and sexuality awareness. Capitalising on the area's strong tradition of faith alliances, the CO had recently brought together the heads of the major faith groups to start to consider ways of working together under the RRDP.*
- (g) The area had demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement of its leadership. The European Excellence Self-Assessment process was undertaken annually; the scoring was externally validated and had shown significant improvement. MPA had been shortlisted for a North of England Business Excellence Award. The majority of staff interviewed felt that managers had a professional management approach and that they modelled positive leadership behaviour. Board members were seen as supportive to senior managers and a panel structure enabled them to use expertise and develop areas of special interest. The area was proud of its history of innovation and saw this as an integral part of forward looking leadership. There was considerable evidence of creative initiatives and since 2000 the area had won 15 awards for locally developed projects. MPA had also elected to be part of all three elements of offender management pathfinders – Young Offenders, Community Orders and Adult Prisoners.*
- (h) The area was felt to be responsive to the findings of regulatory bodies. Following the ESI in 2004, the area had made changes to staffing structures which, whilst preparing for NOMS, had also addressed the relevant recommendations in the report. Particular attention had been given to improving the rate of supervision and appraisal. The publication by HMI Probation of an independent review of a SFO committed in another probation area had led to a scrutiny of the resettlement caseload and the sharing of findings with the local police intelligence unit. Meetings were also held with*

drug treatment providers to highlight the relevant findings of the review and to hold them to account for the quality and standards of service.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *There was scope to make greater use of feedback from service users and other stakeholders. The area was in the process of developing a more comprehensive strategy for consultation with offenders, but this was in the early stages and it was not yet embedded in the business planning process.*
- (b) *The area had identified issues relating to public protection which needed further work. For example, although the recent Safeguarding Children Policy and Practice Requirements were clear and comprehensive, they were not yet fully embedded in practice. The area needed to ensure that all staff were alert to safeguarding issues and aware of local procedures. Also, the procedures for YOTs to refer cases to the MAPPAs were unclear. There was evidence of some confusion particularly in relation to Level 1 cases that would not require a multi-agency approach.*
- (c) *The area was not well served by its computer systems. We heard of a number of occasions where IAPS and/or OASys would not function or were operating very slowly. In some specific circumstances, information 'disappeared' from OASys, losing a court report or assessment. The problems combined to create considerable frustration for practitioners and managers, who felt that their attempts to record promptly and work efficiently were undermined by a situation that was out of their control. Senior managers had continued to lobby the NPD/NOMS about the problems.*

4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS

Key performance targets are consistently met, with careful attention to diversity issues throughout.

Satisfactorily met

NPS Performance Data	Target	2005/2006	
		Area	England and Wales
Enforcement – breach taken where required within ten working days: all orders/licences	90%	90%*	91%
Offender compliance including orders allowed to continue	85%	77%	81%
Appointments arranged in accordance with national standards	90%	93%*	85%
Appointments attended in accordance with national standards	65%	69%*	62%
Accredited programme completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	100%*	114%
Unpaid work completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	99%*	101%
DTTO/DRR starts: % performance in relation to target	100%	91%*	88%
DTTO/DRR completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	114%*	99%
Basic skills: % performance in relation to starts	100%	94%*	112%
Basic skills: % performance in relation to awards	100%	142%*	149%
Sickness absence: average days absence	9 days	11.0	12.3 days
Proportion of magistrates' court PSRs prepared to court's timescale	90%	96%*	97%
Accurate and timely ethnicity data	95%	98%*	97%
Home Secretary's Race Equality Employment Target for 2009	(North West Region) 5.4%	6.8%*	
Proportion of victims of serious sexual/violent offences (where offender sentenced to custody of 12+ months) offered contact within eight weeks	85%	88%*	93%
RoH assessments and plans for high RoH cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	83%*	81%
RoH assessments and plans for PPO cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	89%*	82%

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

Joint 'end-to-end' targets on enforcement for LCJB	Target	Rolling quarter April-June 2006	
		Mersey-side	England and Wales
Average time to resolve community penalty breach proceedings from relevant unacceptable failure	No more than 35 working days	47 days	44 days
Proportion of all breach proceedings resolved within 25 working days of relevant unacceptable failure to comply	50%	41%	47%

Strengths:

- (a) *The achievement of key targets was seen as the building block on which to base effective practice with offenders. During 2005/2006 MPA's performance against national targets showed improvement both against the target and in relation to other areas, and the area ended the year 25th on the weighted scorecard (NPD Performance Report 20). The subsequent report showed a further rise to 14th position.*
- (b) *In the previous year the area had not met the target for the timely completion of assessments and plans on PPOs and offenders who presented a high RoH. A performance improvement project had successfully raised the respective performance to 100% and 97% (NPD Performance Report 21). The project had also undertaken an audit of risk management plans. Some of the issues identified pre-empted those found during this inspection, and a process for quality assuring assessments had already been instigated.*
- (c) *Internal monitoring systems ensured that performance could be reported promptly to the Board, using a traffic light system to indicate areas for improvement. This system could be interrogated by divisions and in most cases by teams. Diversity issues were considered in order to ensure that targets were also met in relation to subgroups.*
- (d) *Probation areas in the North-West region worked closely together on a number of projects. For example, managers responsible for accredited programmes were collaborating to consider cross-border programme delivery.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *The area's performance improvement work on assessment was supported by a commitment to establish a single register of high RoH cases. However, this was a recent development and further work was necessary to ensure that managers felt confident that the system presented an accurate and up-to-date register of relevant cases. Additionally, the quality assurance tool used by SPOs to review OASys did not include an assessment of the quality of the review, and did not ask whether the sentence plan had been shared with the offender. Given the findings of this inspection this was an area for improvement.*
- (b) *The most recent performance report showed that the number of offenders starting skills for life programmes had dropped to 87% of the target for Merseyside. Local monitoring showed that this had increased again, but although there was no longer a target for the achievement of awards, the number obtained was still less than in a similar period during the previous year. The findings of this inspection suggested that performance had continued to deteriorate.*
- (c) *In the period April to June 2006 the area had achieved only 67% of its profiled target for placing offenders in employment. This was disappointing given the positive relationships with employment advisors observed during this inspection. It may, however, reflect the high unemployment rate of the area. Equally important, the new target required the identification of those offenders who retained employment for four weeks. Obtaining this information had proved more of a challenge, and the area needed to ensure that it had in place robust systems to report on this performance target.*

- (d) *A protocol was in place between the criminal justice agencies to ensure the timely and efficient enforcement of community orders. Although OCJR reports showed that performance had improved, the NPD's Performance Report 21 indicated that Merseyside did not meet the target of 50% resolved within 25 working days or the target of an average of 35 days to resolution. The area's performance stood at 36% resolved and a 48 day average.*

4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT

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

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) *Merseyside appeared to have achieved the transition to OMUs and Interventions Units without undue disruption to service delivery. There was evidence of robust budget management and negotiation with the NPD which had maximised the resources available to the area. Funding for the Street Crime Initiative had been used to good effect, with a reported 55% decrease in relevant crime. The area had received an unqualified value-for-money conclusion from the District Auditor.*
- (b) *Additional resources had been dedicated to work on RoH issues. The recent appointment of a middle manager as MAPPA coordinator would enable the area to continue to develop MAPPA processes, inter-agency relationships and internal quality assurance and benchmarking of RoH work.*
- The Safeguarding Children Policy and Practice Requirements was the result of a lengthy consultation process led by an ACO. A training programme was being commissioned to equip all staff to implement the new procedures.*
- In recognition of the number of MAPPA cases where mental health issues or personality disorders were identified as significant risk factors, the area had employed two mental health liaison officers who acted as advisors to the MAPPA as well as consultants to individual offender managers.*
- Restrictions on prison visiting had been relaxed in order to ensure improved preparation for release, particularly for high RoH offenders.*
- (c) *Probation staff had been seconded to work in Community Safety Units with PPOs alongside police officers. Some of the schemes were relatively new and the area would need to continue to assess the management and support needs. However they offered considerable potential to develop an effective multi-agency approach. Specialist DRR teams co-located with treatment providers were also evidence of the area's commitment to tackling prolific offending.*
- (d) *Accredited programmes for sex offenders and domestic violence perpetrators were well resourced, with the result that these offenders were able to start attending the programme relatively promptly. Women's support workers for the CDVP were employed by the area. In addition, 35 tutors had been trained to run a programme for racially motivated offenders, entitled 'Against Human Dignity'. During the past year 29 offenders had been sentenced to attend this programme. The area had clearly focused resources on programmes that enhanced public protection.*

- (e) *A number of diversity initiatives were supported by the area. A scheme to provide mentors to black offenders was funded directly by the Board, who employed two full-time mentors. The original aim was to improve the completion rate for black offenders on accredited programmes, but it had been broadened to include offenders on other orders. It was reported that the breach rate for those on the scheme was 11% and therefore significantly lower than the average for the area. The next planned step was to recruit volunteer mentors.*
- (f) *The area had played an active part in the development of the North Liverpool CJC. Managers and practitioners were fully committed to the project.*
- (g) *As part of the structural changes in the area, the staff working at court were no longer required to prepare SDRs on offenders who were not currently known to the area. Practitioners and managers believed that this had positively addressed a previous difficulty. However, a small number of the sentencers who commented felt that staffing levels were not always sufficient to ensure that they received appropriate information to aid their decision making. Although the area did not meet the new national target for the timeliness of all court reports, at 86% it was a 'near miss' and represented one of the best performing areas in the country.*

Some staff also noted that where colleagues were not available at Crown Court, the Judge's comments were not always recorded and this could have an impact on subsequent work. Increased workloads at Liverpool Crown Court may have contributed to this situation.

Specialist domestic violence courts were operational in Wirral and being rolled out across the area. An ACO was a member of the multi-agency strategy group and courts staff attended the local implementation groups. Meetings had been held to plan training, improve data collection and update information exchange protocols.

- (h) *The area had been hoping to implement the national workload measurement tool but had discovered that it did not interface with IAPS. In the interim, a local monitoring tool assisted in workload distribution between divisions but provided only limited information at team level. Comparative workloads could be measured more effectively within the administration division.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Some offenders in the inspection sample had experienced a lengthy wait before starting Think First, DIDs or ASRO programmes. The area had taken action to reduce attrition before and during the programmes in order to maximise the use of available places. However, some offenders who were subject to DRRs had not started ASRO promptly whilst, on the other hand, DIP workers were concerned that some substance misusing offenders were rushed into programmes before they were sufficiently stable. The situation was a difficult one for the area to resolve but indicated the need for a clear, well recorded assessment of the best option available for each offender.*
- (b) *To ensure prompt enforcement, case administrators were required to make-up breach packs within four days of the second failed appointment for offenders on community orders. However, in a number of cases the offender produced*

an acceptable explanation the following day; the breach was therefore not pursued and time had been wasted preparing the pack.

- (c) *Whilst it was encouraging to find that sex offenders were able to access programmes promptly (in contrast with many areas), it did raise a question about the viability of some groups that operated with low numbers. The creditable investment in this resource would be maximised if the area could establish with greater confidence the reasons for the relatively low number of referrals.*
- (d) *The co-location of teams was regarded as a positive development reflecting the commitment of a range of agencies to work together, particularly in relation to PPOs and drug misusing offenders. Unfortunately this had not always been possible; partners in the Wirral DAT expressed disappointment that the national estates strategy formula meant that for the probation area the cost of contributing to shared premises was prohibitive.*

4.4 General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Workforce planning and development leads to a good match between staff profile and service delivery requirements. Relevant diversity legislation is observed in staff recruitment and deployment.

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) *The area had been in a good position to prepare for the NOMS offender management model. Case management units ('pods') had been in place since 2004 and had been seen during the ESI as an example of good practice. These 'pods' consisted of three or four offender managers, an offender supervisor and a case administrator and had now been established in all the OMUs. MPA had led work in the North-West region to develop new job descriptions for these roles. The structure had been welcomed by most; case administrators were particularly positive about their closer links with the work of offender managers.*

Separate divisions were in place to deliver interventions, each headed by a nominated ACO. The existing staff profile had met fairly closely the profile of offenders as identified by the tiering exercise. Although resourcing all the areas of work identified within the business plan was a strategic challenge, managers generally felt that the available resources were fairly and effectively distributed. It had been recognised that the SPOs in OMUs had extensive line management responsibilities. The post of senior practitioner had been created to work alongside them, particularly to focus on quality improvements, for example in sentence planning.
- (b) *A comprehensive and costed training plan was evidence of a commitment to staff development. Priority areas were linked with the business plan and a range of training for practitioners, managers and support staff was outlined. A management development framework had been developed under the principles of Living Leadership. All managers were expected to develop a personal development plan following a 360° appraisal. A middle manager development programme had included managers from the admin division. Diversity training was given a high priority and included Disability Equality Action Training and sexuality awareness. A review of the previous year's*

training showed that most planned staff development objectives had been achieved. RoH and RM2000 training was currently being rolled out, following the identification of some gaps in these areas. The area was committed to the training and ongoing development of TPOs and to providing support to staff seconded to the YOTs.

- (c) The area had obtained IiP status and renewed this in 2004. Work was scheduled to reapply for the award in the forthcoming year.
- (d) Managers and Board members spoke highly of positive working relationships with staff representative organisations. There was a strong tradition of cooperation; an example was working together to develop the sickness policy.
- (e) Although the sickness target was not being met, the area had a comprehensive attendance management policy which was supported by practice requirements. All but one of the offender managers interviewed were aware of the policy. Sickness absence was monitored and reported to the Board; it could be analysed by length and type of absence and by diversity issues. The area had managed to reduce absence from an average of 16 days five years ago to 11 for 2005/2006 and 10.1 days for April-September 2006. Senior managers believed that sickness levels reflected demographic features of the local population and within their workforce.
- (f) Following the ESI the area had taken action to ensure that all staff received regular supervision and appraisal. A database allowed all line managers to log and monitor supervision and appraisal activity. 78% of offender managers interviewed reported that they had received supervision at least every six weeks over the last 12 months. The quality of supervision was described as sufficient by 60% of offender managers and as excellent by a further 30%.
- (g) The area operated with full regard to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 in relation to its responsibilities, including as an employer. The Race Equality Scheme was comprehensive. New and existing policies had been assessed for equality implications; monitoring of human resources and service delivery targets included a diversity dimension, and staff had been surveyed about their experience of discrimination.

Regional targets for the employment of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds were exceeded in all categories except senior management. Merseyside also had one of the highest proportions of disabled staff in the NPS and was building on its Disability Discrimination Act 2005 compliance plan to make reasonable adjustments in all locations. The area was committed to supporting relevant staff to undertake the national ACCELERATE programme designed to support the development of black and minority ethnic staff and those with disabilities.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Unfortunately, for financial reasons, only five out of 11 planned senior practitioner posts had been filled. This still left some SPOs with large teams to supervise.
- (b) Whilst the majority of offender managers interviewed were clear about their roles and responsibilities, there was evidence that a few PSOs appeared uncertain about their task in relation to the completion of OASys. Some told

inspectors that although they reviewed the sentence plan, they were not supposed to review or alter any of the other sections of OASys and had not been trained to do so. This meant that the assessment of the criminogenic factors and of the RoH had not been updated at the time of the review. This was not, in fact, the policy of the area, but this misunderstanding had had an impact on a number of cases.

- (c) 35% of offender managers interviewed reported that their training and development needs were not adequately met and 27% believed that insufficient attention had been paid to the provision of appropriate learning opportunities and support for their professional development.

The area had been anticipating a nationally developed generic induction/training programme for PSOs and in the interim had not been able to continue to provide a PSO development programme. However, specific training had been delivered in response to changes in roles, and a number of PSOs were working towards NVQ Level 3 awards.

- (d) Only half of the offender managers interviewed had completed an ethnic monitoring form during the previous year. However, there was evidence that the ethnic origin of all staff had been recorded at some point during their employment in MPA.
- (e) Local auditing of supervision and appraisal activity had shown little improvement in these areas. Additionally, 29% of the offender managers interviewed, for whom this question was applicable, had not received an appraisal during the past 12 months.

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

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) The views of offenders completing unpaid work requirements were collected through an exit questionnaire. These had been collated and analysed and the area had recognised a correlation between the offenders' views of the value of the work to beneficiaries and their level of motivation to complete the order. This work was in the early stages, but it was encouraging that the area was designing research that could be used to improve outcomes.
- (b) Feedback was also routinely collected from offenders completing accredited programmes and DRRs. This was largely positive and therefore did not generate information about possible improvements to service delivery. The area had recognised the need to collect feedback from those who dropped out of the programme and was considering how this might be achieved.

Offenders were surveyed about their overall experience of visiting a probation centre. The feedback was collated bi-annually and presented to managers and the Board, but it was less clear what actions were taken as a result.
- (c) The area had done some preliminary work looking at the reconviction rates of offenders. It was intended to undertake a series of reconviction studies, examining offenders on different types of community orders from two years ago. This work had stalled following advice regarding the required sample

size, but it was hoped that the project could still proceed in collaboration with other areas in order to increase the sample size.

- (d) The results of SFO reviews were presented to the SMT in a standard format. Practice processes were examined in the light of 'lessons learned' and changes made where necessary. A database of SFO learning was available to all staff who were reminded to review this on a regular basis. The Head of Operations summarised learning points at the quarterly full management group meetings.
- (e) Surveys of sentencers had been conducted in 2004 and 2005. Although predominantly positive, some of the areas for development had been clearly addressed through the training plan. In the second year, the area had attempted to increase participation, but response rates were still disappointingly low.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The significance of the unpaid work exit questionnaires was highlighted by the negative views expressed by offenders in focus groups. These findings were surprising as they did not match what, on paper, appeared to be a good range of placements that met diverse needs and offered the opportunity for skills development. The placements came from a variety of commissioning sources, one of whom described themselves to us as 'a big and grateful beneficiary'. Given the area's own recognition of the correlation between the perceived value of the placement and the likelihood of successful completion, it was important that the views expressed by offenders were explored more fully and used to make the necessary changes.
- (b) There was no evidence that the area made regular use of concordance data or evaluated the link between sentencing proposal/disposal and successful outcomes. Without this, it was difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the liaison with sentencers.
- (c) MPA's research department was a valuable resource in analysing feedback data and developing ways of capturing outcome information. The area had identified as a priority the need to improve the range and scope of data collected and analysed in order to take action to improve performance. This would strengthen the overall strategic approach to review and evaluation.

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

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) Strong working relationships at strategic level enabled the probation area to play an active role in commissioning bodies, and ensured that agencies had a shared focus on reducing offending. Representatives from commissioning bodies spoke highly of the commitment of senior probation managers.

- (b) *Close work with the five local authorities and through the Merseyside Supporting People Cross Authority Group had considerably increased the resources available for offender accommodation. The Genesis Project addressed the housing needs of people leaving custody; the Paragon Project was a floating support initiative for female offenders; the area had a working agreement with Project 8 and Nugent Care to provide bonds and deposits to allow minority ethnic and drug using offenders to access private sector accommodation.*


The accommodation team sought feedback from users of its provision; this was reported to be good. Despite the increase in resources, it was clear that the demand for accommodation for offenders still exceeded the available places. Negotiations had started with local authorities to provide accommodation surgeries on probation premises.

A good example of agencies working together to meet the needs of offenders was DAT funding of the refurbishment of accommodation owned by social landlords in order to increase the places available to drug misusing offenders.

- (c) *The ESI and Supporting People inspections had highlighted the lack of treatment provision for alcohol abusing offenders in the Merseyside area. OASys data were analysed to assess the scope of the problem and the area had secured a pilot ATR project through a joint commissioning process with the PCT. The pilot operated from the CJC where it was regarded by the Judge as an invaluable resource. An evaluation of the project was being undertaken and negotiations had commenced to continue and extend the funding.*
- (d) *MPA had brokered an arrangement whereby the Legal Services Commission funded provision by the voluntary and private sector of financial, debt and advice services in all major probation centres in the area. The need for this facility had been identified through an examination of criminogenic factors highlighted in OASys.*
- (e) *The needs of the families of murder and manslaughter victims were met through a funded partnership arrangement with a voluntary organisation, SAMM. They played an important role, providing support in difficult circumstances and liaising with VLOs. There was evidence of a good working relationship with probation managers and practitioners.*
- (f) *There were a number of examples of services developed to support work with minority groups. The mentoring scheme and specific accommodation projects have been mentioned above. Interpreters were available, including where sign language was required. Adelaide House approved premises provided a positive and valued resource for female offenders.*
- (g) *Where other services were used, offender managers regarded them as sufficient or excellent in 71% of cases where drugs or alcohol intervention was required, 70% where education or training was provided and 82% for employment related services.*

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) *Despite the positive working relationship between the probation area and prisons, there were 13 cases where some concerns had arisen which had an impact on the smooth transition of prisoners to the community. In addition to*



the concerns caused by OASys connectivity, there were some cases where offender managers had not been able to obtain information they had sought from the prison. In the case of young offenders in custody, some were moved to Lancaster Farms or Northallerton YOIs; the distance involved made it difficult for offender managers to work closely with the institution or the offender. This was a national issue arising from population pressures within the custodial estate.

- (b) *Offender managers identified gaps in service provision that impacted on the effective management of 25% of cases. The gaps covered a range of criminogenic factors, perhaps reflecting variations across the area. The most prevalent were in relation to drug or alcohol services. Education and training provision was also unavailable for a number of offenders, as highlighted earlier in this report. Psychology or psychiatry services were used in two cases in the sample; in neither case was the provision deemed to be sufficient.*

APPENDIX 1
Contextual information

Caseload at end of July 2006

Total caseload	10,359
% White	94.51%
% Minority ethnic*	4.91%
% Male	87.76%
% Female	12.24%
Number of cases subject to MAPPA:	
Level 1	Information not available
Level 2	1.14 % (118)
Level 3	0.24% (25)
Number of PPO cases	286 currently under MPA supervision
* Excluding cases for which ethnicity information is not available.	

Merseyside had different definitions of a PPO depending on the priorities of the local authority. The above figure is based on a generic definition of 'anyone classified by a local PPO scheme as a prolific and priority offender'.

Total revenue budget in 2006/2007: £26.556m

Approved Premises: Canning House – capacity 16
 Merseybank – capacity 24
 Southwood – capacity 29
 Adelaide House (voluntary) – capacity 20

APPENDIX 2

Inspection model, methodology and publication arrangements

Model

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

Methodology

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

Publication arrangements

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

APPENDIX 3

Scoring Approach

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

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

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

Section 1: Assessment and sentence planning

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

Section 2: Implementation of interventions

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

Section 3: Achievement and monitoring of outcomes

- 3.1 Achievement of initial outcomes
- 3.2 Sustainability of progress

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

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

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

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

Section 4: Leadership and strategic management

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

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

APPENDIX 4

Role of HMI Probation

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

Home Office Objectives

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

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

Role

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

Code of Practice

HMI Probation aims to achieve its purpose by:

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

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

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2 Monck Street
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