



OFFENDER
MANAGEMENT
INSPECTION
INSPECTION

A report on Offender Management in
Northamptonshire

An inspection led by
HM Inspectorate of Probation

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FOREWORD

We saw in Northamptonshire, an area which has shown commitment to implementing the National Offender Management Model diligently and with due care to issues such as resourcing and planning. It has worked hard to improve overall performance and to become a robust organisation equipped to cope with future challenges such as contestability and further development of offender management. It has understood the need for the correct balance of resource and attention to offender management and interventions. In consequence, there is much to be said that is good and this report aims to reflect accurately the area's achievements. Its senior management team acts with drive and energy and has built an impressive outward-facing profile, making it a key player in local community development and the criminal justice system. However, internal communication about ongoing changes has sometimes suffered, and greater attention is needed to staff training.

Some staff have shown themselves to be capable of extremely good work and should be routinely praised for this. However, some inspection results showed pockets of poor practice at the other end of a continuum. Improvements were needed, in particular, to sentence planning and to the quality of Risk of Harm work, including victim safety. It is imperative that the area's good practice is spread so that its shortcomings are addressed. Practitioners and managers alike would benefit from a more outcome-focused approach to work with offenders, expecting progress and evaluating their results with a view to ongoing improvement.

ANDREW BRIDGES

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

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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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CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS	4
SUMMARY	6
SUMMARY OF SCORES	8
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	11
NEXT STEPS	11
SHARING GOOD PRACTICE	12
OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	14
OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN HMP WELLINGBOROUGH	15
SERVICE USERS' PERSPECTIVE	18
1. ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING	20
1.1 General Criterion: PREPARING FOR SENTENCE	20
1.2 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF RISK OF HARM	21
1.3 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD OF REOFFENDING	23
1.4 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF OFFENDER ENGAGEMENT	24
1.5 General Criterion: SENTENCE PLANNING	25
2. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS	27
2.1 General Criterion: DELIVERING THE SENTENCE PLAN	27
2.2 General Criterion: PROTECTING THE PUBLIC BY MINIMISING RISK OF HARM	29
2.3 General Criterion: VICTIMS	30
2.4 General Criterion: ENSURING CONTAINMENT AND PROMOTING COMPLIANCE (Punish)	31
2.5 General Criterion: CONSTRUCTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Help and Change)	32
2.6 General Criterion: RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Control)	34
2.7 General Criterion: DIVERSITY ISSUES	35
3. ACHIEVEMENT AND MONITORING OF OUTCOMES	36
3.1 General Criterion: ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIAL OUTCOMES	36
3.2 General Criterion: SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRESS	37
4. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	38
4.1 General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING	38
4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS	42
4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT	44
4.4 General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	46
4.5 General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION	48
4.6 General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES	49
APPENDIX 1 Contextual information	52
APPENDIX 2 Inspection model, methodology and publication arrangements	53
APPENDIX 3 Scoring approach	54
APPENDIX 4 Role of HMI Probation	55

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ACO	Assistant chief officer
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
CMHT	Community Mental Health Trust
CO	Chief officer
CRAMS	Case recording and management system
CV	Curriculum vitae
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DRR	Drug rehabilitation requirement
DTTO	Drug treatment and testing order
ESI	Effective Supervision Inspection
ETE	Employment, Training and Education
ETS	Enhanced Thinking Skills
FDR	Fast delivery report
HMI Prisons	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
IAG	Information, advice and guidance
ICT	Information and communications technology
IDAP	Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme
ISP	Initial Sentence Plan
JCP	Job Centre Plus
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
NIACE	National Institute for Adult Continuing Education
NOMIS	National Offender Management Information System
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPD	National Probation Directorate
NPS	National Probation Service
OASys/eOASys	Offender Assessment System/electronic OASys
OLASS	Offender Learning and Skills Service

OMI	Offender Management Inspection
OMIC	Offender Management in Custody
PASRO	Prison Addressing Substance Related Offending
PO	Probation officer
PPO	Prolific and other priority offender
PSO	Probation service officer
PSR	Pre-sentence report
RAG	Red, amber, green
REM	Race and ethnic monitoring
RoH	Risk of Harm
ROM	Regional offender manager
RRAP	Reducing Reoffending Action Plan
SDR	Standard delivery report
SLA	Service level agreement
SMB	Strategic Management Board
SPO	Senior probation officer
SSD	Social Services Department
TPO	Trainee probation officer
UW	Unpaid work
VCPS	Voluntary, Community and Private Sector
VLO	Victim liaison officer

SUMMARY

Assessment and Sentence Planning

The majority of pre-sentence reports were of a good standard. Proposals made in the reports for community sentences were usually followed by the courts, although the reports could be strengthened by the inclusion of an outline plan for the sentence. The assessment of criminogenic factors was generally completed well; it was encouraging to see that positive influences were identified and recorded.

A Risk of Harm screening had been undertaken in most cases, but where a full analysis was indicated some had not been completed within the required timescale and some were not of an adequate quality. Although risk management plans were prepared using the required structure, it was disappointing to find that half of them were not sufficiently comprehensive. Managers countersigning assessments were actively using the 'roll back' facility to require improvements, but this sometimes led to lengthy delays before the document was finally signed and locked. This situation required attention.

Induction arrangements ensured that offenders were aware of what was required of them and had the opportunity to identify obstacles to their compliance. Processes were in place to screen and assess literacy and numeracy levels, but it was not always evident that this had taken place. Information about educational work completed in prison was rarely available to the offender manager. Sentence planning was adequate in two thirds of cases, but could be improved by ensuring that it took a more central role in driving the content of supervision.

Implementation of Interventions

Most offenders who responded to questionnaires and who were interviewed as part of the inspection felt positive about their experience of supervision. A range of unpaid work placements and different accredited programmes were available. The approved premises played an important role in providing both constructive and restrictive interventions. Educational and employment related work was widely available and delivery was flexible to meet individual needs.

Offender managers and those delivering interventions were committed to the task and worked hard to motivate and support offenders throughout their sentence. Communication between workers was generally good. However offender managers could make better use of feedback from other workers, for example in reviewing and reinforcing progress.

There was also room to improve the liaison between prison and community based staff in order to ensure adequate preparation for release. This was particularly important for offenders who posed a high Risk of Harm to others. Whilst there was evidence of good victim contact work, issues of victim safety needed to be given a higher priority by offender managers.

Achievement and Monitoring of Outcomes

The resources allocated to each offender had been consistent with the assessed Risk of Harm and likelihood of reoffending in most cases and were generally used efficiently.

The Offender Assessment System had been rescored in two thirds of the inspection case file sample. However, there had been no obvious improvement in factors associated with offending in two thirds of these cases. Attitudes and behaviour had not improved in half of this sample. 70% of offenders had complied with their supervision and there had been some direct benefits to the community, for example through unpaid work.

Leadership and Strategic Management

The Northamptonshire Probation Area had experienced a number of changes of leadership throughout a period of significant national development. The Board and senior management team were to be congratulated for responding positively and energetically to the new challenges. Managers had developed strong links with other organisations that had a high regard for the contribution of probation to public protection and community development. As a result, the area was well placed to take an active strategic role within Northamptonshire and to benefit from inter-agency initiatives. This would make a tangible contribution to offender management and placed the area in a strong position with regard to future commissioning and contestability arrangements. The Business Plan 2006/2007 was supported by a comprehensive risk register, which was actively reviewed. An effective focus on performance improvement had ensured that the area was now meeting most of the national targets. Resources were carefully managed and redeployed where necessary. Implementation of the National Offender Management Model appeared to have been well conducted and had resolved some earlier difficulties. However, there was some evidence that vertical and horizontal communication within the organisation was not always effective and that lines of accountability needed to be clarified.

Risk of Harm

The Effective Supervision Inspection carried out in 2005 found a number of deficiencies in the assessment and management of Risk of Harm. In particular, we commented on the poor quality and timeliness of assessments and risk management plans. We recommended that the area improved the links between the Offender Assessment System and the register of high Risk of Harm cases to ensure that all relevant cases were accurately identified and referred to the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. We also recommended that minutes of panel meetings needed to lead to clear action plans.

Whilst this Offender Management Inspection shows that overall improvements have been made in many aspects of the assessment and management of high Risk of Harm work, the figures mask some extremes of practice. Although we saw well-managed cases, there were also a number where the practice was poor enough to cause concern. It was important, therefore, that the area did not rely on aggregated data to monitor progress in relation to this important work. The accuracy of tiering was crucial to ensure that cases were allocated to appropriate offender managers. The role of managers in overseeing the assessment and management of Risk of Harm was critical. Countersigning processes needed attention, and further work was necessary to improve the content of risk management plans and the links with the work of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

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 in order to assist the area. The scores that 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:

Offender Management Inspection - Northamptonshire (February 2007)

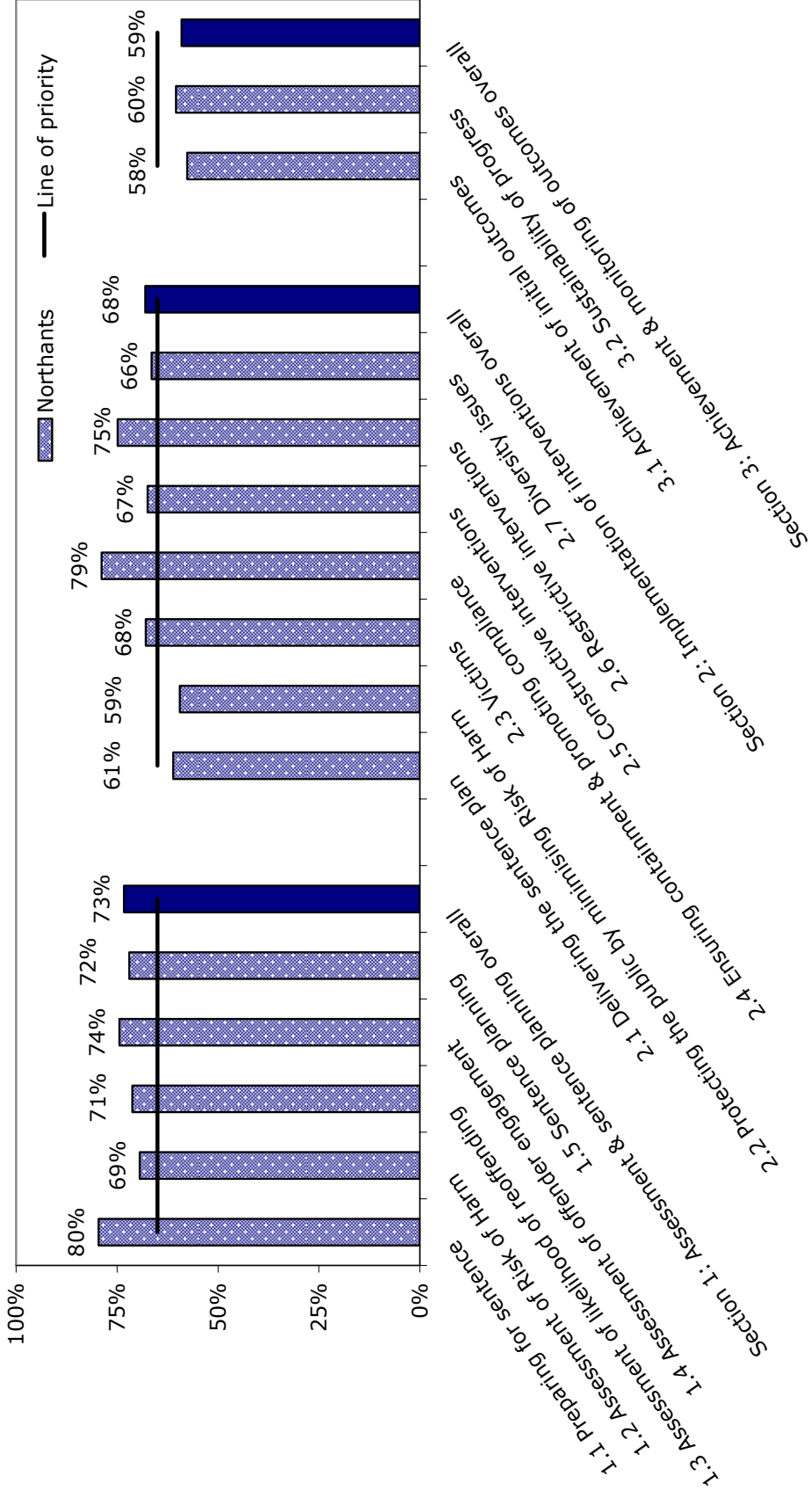


Table 1: Scoring of section 4:

4.1	General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING	Satisfactorily met
4.2	General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS	Well met
4.3	General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT	Satisfactorily met
4.4	General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Satisfactorily met
4.5	General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION	Partly 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	66%
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improvements are necessary as follows:

1. Offender Assessment System Risk of Harm screening documents are completed promptly and accurately in all cases
2. satisfactory Risk of Harm assessments are completed and regularly reviewed in all relevant cases
3. the quality and timeliness of risk management plans is satisfactory in all cases
4. management oversight of the assessment and management of Risk of Harm is timely, thorough, and effective in promoting high quality work
5. increased priority is given by offender managers to issues of victim safety, and victim awareness work appropriate to the case is undertaken with the offender
6. sentence planning is given a high priority and reviews are comprehensive and completed on time in all cases
7. there is an increased focus on outcomes in the work of offender managers with offenders, in order to achieve fully the sentence objectives.

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 Offender Management Inspection when HM Inspectorate of Probation has a serious concern about an area's Risk of Harm work.

There will not be a further focused inspection in Northamptonshire.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Below are examples of good practice we found in Northamptonshire.

Managing Risk of Harm:

OMI Criterion: 2.2 Protecting the public by minimising Risk of Harm

John was a sex offender who was on licence following a lengthy prison sentence during which he had started to attend church. On his release, the offender manager liaised with local churches to identify the safest way of him continuing to attend services. She found a church where CCTV had been installed and, working with the priest, agreed which services John could attend and where he should sit. John was involved throughout in the discussions and saw this approach as both protective and supportive.

Promoting compliance:

OMI Criterion: 2.4 Ensuring containment and promoting compliance

The Pharmacy project involved a partnership with Boots The Chemist where a private room was provided for probation staff at chemists across the county one day a week, to allow the supervision and drug testing of offenders on a DRR when they were collecting their medication. This was an innovative idea designed to improve compliance with a challenging group of offenders.

Responding to diverse needs:

OMI Criterion: 2.7 Diversity issues

The delivery of skills for life was responsive to a range of needs. Provision was available during evenings and weekends. Tuition was delivered on site at the approved premises and for those on unpaid work placements. When one offender was identified as dyslexic, arrangements were made for all documents to be printed in his preferred colour for reading. One offender was supported by an interpreter for his IAG interview. Volunteers were available to support offenders who needed specific one-to-one help in order to participate fully in ETE activities.

Improving performance:

OMI Criterion: 4.1 Leadership and planning

The area had produced a 'top tips' checklist for offender managers. This was a user-friendly document based on the principles of effective management of Risk of Harm. It highlighted the importance of OASys, of planning to manage Risk of Harm, implementing the requirements of the sentence, and of using enforcement where necessary. Offender managers were reminded that 'it's good to talk' to managers and colleagues.

**Evaluating
outcomes:**

**OMI Criterion: 4.5
Review and
evaluation**

The ROSE project was a multi-agency approach to dealing intensively with the most disruptive PPOs in Northamptonshire. The agencies involved included probation, police, prisons, housing providers, employment agencies and drug treatment providers. The project had been subject to evaluation by the Northamptonshire CDRPs; participation in drug treatment by PPOs had increased and the number of arrests of these individuals fell by 68% in the six-month period following their engagement with the project. It was calculated that over a six-month period there was a potential saving to society of £400,000. The project had received an award from the LCJB.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Planning for the introduction of the NOMS Offender Management Model had begun in 2005 and the area had provided regular implementation reviews to the ROM. The area adopted a two-stage approach, implementing Phase 1 from October 2005. The second phase involved the merging of the high-risk team and courts teams into offender management during 2006. The split of the budget for 2006/2007 between offender management and interventions was formally approved by the Board in May 2006.

The ESI, conducted in 2005, had identified some difficulties arising from the separation of the high-risk team. The new structure aimed to address these issues by absorbing high-RoH work into offender management units, ensuring that all practitioners had the appropriate skills in assessment. Within this structure, individual offender managers were identified to concentrate on the management of a higher number of the offenders who posed a RoH. Similarly, within each offender management unit, staff were identified to concentrate on PPOs, sex offenders, offenders in custody, drug requirements and the IDAP. Unit managers were responsible for clusters of staff; some had additional lead responsibility for functional areas, for example work with substance misuse, or high RoH.

Administrative staff were linked with offender management clusters. Their support role had developed and involved ensuring that processes for tiering, allocation, data input, commencement and enforcement were followed in a timely manner.

A review of staffing had highlighted an imbalance in staffing resources between offender management and interventions. This had been addressed during the year in order to increase the resources available to offender management.

OASys connectivity with prisons had been achieved, but there remained some cases where the assessments were not transmitted electronically between the prison and probation area.

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN HMP WELLINGBOROUGH

We visited HMP Wellingborough on 1 March 2007 to hear of progress with the NOMS Offender Management Model .HMP Wellingborough is a Category C training prison, holding adult men serving 18 months and above. The prison has an operational capacity of 639 and on the day of our visit 637 prisoners were unlocked. Approximately 20% of the population were local men, who would eventually be released and return to live within the area covered by Northamptonshire Probation Area. There were plans to increase the capacity of the prison by a further 360 places by building an additional two wings.

A new Governor had been appointed two weeks before our visit. He had already made it known to staff that his twin priorities were maintaining effective security and successfully implementing offender management work.

The most recent inspection by HMI Prisons was an unannounced follow-up inspection and took place in May 2005. During this inspection the establishment was assessed as 'not performing sufficiently well' in relation to resettlement. HMI Prisons found inadequate coordination and integration in meeting prisoners' resettlement needs and the work with life-sentence prisoners was assessed as poor.

Prior to the introduction of offender management work, a desktop planning exercise had been carried out. Following this, an additional £103,000 had been allocated to assist with the implementation of offender management work. These resources were used to create a new Principal Officer post to oversee life-sentence prisoners, as well as to introduce two probation service officers along with extra administrative support.

Offender management had become operational within the prison in November 2006. This area of work was overseen by the Head of Offender Management. The person appointed to this post had previously been the Head of Learning and Skills and, in this role, he had been responsible for delivery of education and training within the prison. In addition to his new role, the Head of Offender Management continued to hold responsibility for the areas of work which he previously managed.

The Head of Offender Management line managed two middle managers. These were a principal officer, who was designated the Offender Management Unit Manager, and a SPO. The rest of the team was comprised of a senior officer who was responsible for coordinating day-to-day work, two PSOs and two prison officers who acted as the offender supervisors. The offender supervisors had around 110 active cases in total. The probation staff were allocated the high and very high Risk of Harm cases, with the prison officers holding the medium and low Risk of Harm cases. All staff in the team had received training in OASys and offender management. Members of the Offender Management Unit were supported by centrally-based administrative staff. It was envisaged that by May 2007 staffing within the Offender Management Unit would have increased with the establishment of four teams, each with its own administrative support.

Managers described how the systems for identifying relevant cases, liaising with offender managers and carrying out reviews were now beginning to operate reasonably well. Specialist staff working inside the prison were familiar with and understood each other's roles. Prisoners were informed about the offender management process on

induction. Information had also been circulated to operational staff working across the establishment explaining the offender management process. This had been done through staff briefings. Written material explaining the role of NOMS and outlining the role of the offender supervisors and managers had also been displayed throughout the prison.

The managers we spoke to regarded offender management as a positive initiative. They had a clear vision about how the model should and could be introduced. At the same time however they recognised that the main challenge they faced was how to ensure that this intensive method of working could be extended to cover the majority of prisoners being held at the prison without significant amounts of additional resources.

There had been no difficulties with any of the staff associations or unions in implementing the offender management model. Indeed managers to whom we spoke said they found them to be supportive.

Historically the personal officer role had been weak at HMP Wellingborough. In recognition of this and the important position that the personal officer played in the overall functioning of offender management work, a comprehensive programme of training had been undertaken to ensure that all staff were equipped with the necessary basic information they required to play their part. Traditionally the role of probation staff within the establishment had been to carry out risk assessments and undertake welfare work. As the offender management work began to figure more prominently, as well as assuming case work responsibility, probation staff were beginning to act more in an advisory capacity for generic staff.

Working relationships with colleagues in the field were generally described as good. At a strategic level, the Head of Offender Management met formally with his counterpart, an ACO, twice yearly. This was to review the SLA between the prison and the probation area and mainly involved discussions relating to the implementation of offender management work.

Links at the operational level were also described as positive. This was particularly the case with colleagues from the Northamptonshire Probation Area who often knew their prison-based counterparts, the seconded probation staff. Working relationships with offender managers who were 'out of area', were less good. However, overall attendance at sentence plan reviews was high, happening in an estimated 80% of all cases. There were some difficulties associated with identifying offender managers in the 'out of area' cases. Where the coordinating senior officer was unable to resolve these, one of the more senior managers became involved and was usually able to deal with it satisfactorily.

There were two accredited offending behaviour courses delivered within HMP Wellingborough. These were the generic cognitive skills ETS course and the PASRO programme, which was a specialist drugs programme. Targets were set so that 110 individuals could receive the opportunity to participate in the ETS programme and 96 in the PASRO course per annum. In addition to this, a member of the Chaplaincy team ran a victim awareness course and there were also plans to introduce a pre-release course. There was no provision for men who had been convicted of a sexual offence. We were told there were around 20 men in this category in the prison.

Staff working in the prison referred to the ROSE project very positively. This initiative dealt with local men in custody who had been designated as PPOs. Staff from the scheme visited the prison on a weekly basis and provided eligible prisoners with relevant and comprehensive support.

Apart from use of a telephone interpreting service and the very occasional use of translators for prisoners who had difficulties expressing themselves in English, there was no special provision made for individuals from a minority ethnic background within the offender management arrangements.

Because of the effects of overcrowding within the estate as a whole, staff working in the prison had difficulty managing planned transfers on to less secure establishments. Overcrowding drafts were occasionally received from establishments under severe pressure in the south of the country. This sometimes resulted in 'settled' prisoners having to be moved on to establishments further afield, causing inconvenience and perhaps inhibiting their resettlement plans. However, managers spoke positively about the support they received from colleagues in the area office to help deal with the pressures created as a result of overcrowding. Given the constraints under which they were operating, staff appeared to manage this process quite well.

In summary, implementation of offender management at HMP Wellingborough was still in its early stages. All of the basic elements were in place and the model was being introduced successfully in a systematic way. Managers in the prison had a clear vision about what was required, but they were concerned about how they would cope when the next phase was implemented. They recognised that in order for this to be successful they would have to manage scarce resources very efficiently. The lack of active involvement by some offender managers at sentence plan reviews remained a weakness, but this related to offender managers from probation areas around this country. The problem was not as acute as seen at other establishments who seem to have suffered greater disruption as a result of the overcrowding pressures within the estate.

SERVICE USERS' PERSPECTIVE

Offenders

During the inspection of Northamptonshire Probation Area we interviewed a total of 14 offenders who were attending unpaid work, on an accredited programme or living in the approved premises.

Accredited programme tutors were seen as helpful and understanding. Those on unpaid work were also very positive about the experience; they understood the work they were doing and felt proud of its benefit to the community. Skills for life training was carried out on site and this was valued and well used by the offenders.

Whilst they were positive about unpaid work, some offenders were not clear about the role of their offender manager and did not feel supported by them. Most were not aware of a sentence plan, but all knew the consequences of breaching their order. A number complained about being kept waiting when they visited the probation office and felt that they were not always treated with respect.

Offenders in approved premises were universally positive about the staff, who were described as committed. They understood and accepted that the purpose of their residence was to address their offending behaviour, as well as to deal with community reintegration issues such as ETE and accommodation. Most of those interviewed were in the approved premises following release from prison. They referred to having completed offending behaviour and victim awareness work in prison. The hostel rules were understood and were seen as supportive and protective. Despite this, the approved premises was also seen as a relaxed and friendly place. However, some wished that there was more structured activity.

Of the 98 questionnaires sent to offenders, 24 were completed and returned. Most of the comments were positive, with all stating that they had a good working relationship with their PO. The majority believed that probation staff and people from other agencies had worked well together to help them. Three quarters of those who commented, recalled having their sentence plan discussed with them. The issues most commonly tackled during supervision were their attitude to offending and emotional well-being, followed by accommodation, ETE and substance misuse. Most said that the work of the probation service had made them think more about their offending and about the victims of crime. Twenty one said that they were, or maybe, less likely to reoffend as a result of their supervision. One commented: *"the privilege of being on parole has made me realise how much I want to stay out of prison for ever"*.

Victims

Of the 16 questionnaires that were sent out to people who had been victims of crime, two were returned. Three victims were invited to attend interviews with inspection staff. Unfortunately due to a miscommunication about the venue, two were not interviewed. HMI Probation and Northamptonshire Probation Area apologise unreservedly to these individuals.

The views expressed in the questionnaires and in the interview were generally positive about the work of the probation area. The victims had received initial information in a timely manner and had been given the chance to express their concerns. However, one had not had the chance to comment on proposed licence conditions and had not felt that appropriate attention was given to their safety.

Courts

Questionnaires were sent to 20 sentencers. A small number were returned and they indicated a general satisfaction with the quality of reports prepared by the probation area. However, comments were also made that resourcing problems sometimes had an effect on staffing levels in court and the timeliness of reports.

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.

80%

Strengths:

- (a) A PSR had been written in 48 of the 60 cases in the community orders sample. Where the court had indicated the level of seriousness, this was taken into account in all the reports. A community proposal was made in all but one case and 89% of these were followed by the court.
- (b) Most reports were of the appropriate type and were completed on time using the nationally approved format. The OASys template was used in 61% of reports and in most cases this enhanced the quality of the report.
- (c) The majority of reports in the inspection sample were based on an appropriate assessment of the offender's Risk of Harm and criminogenic factors.
- (d) Overall, reports were suitably concise, objective and impartial, and free from discriminatory language. The information they contained was balanced, verified and factually accurate in 79% of cases.
- (e) A single point of contact was available for PSR authors to discuss referral to accredited programmes. This was intended to ensure that the assessment could be undertaken during the remand period and to improve the targeting of recommendations.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Within the inspection case file sample six reports were written on PPOs. There was room for improvement in some of these reports. Three reports clearly outlined the seriousness of the offence and in four cases the likelihood of reoffending was assessed. The requirement to avoid labelling the offender as a PPO was not followed in three reports, and the same number did not contain a clear and proportionate proposal for sentence. Two reports met none of the above criteria.
- (b) Where self-harm was an issue, it was clearly recorded in 17 cases. However, this still left three cases where a risk of self-harm was identified but had not been adequately recorded.
- (c) Appropriate victim information was included in only 42% of the reports.
- (d) An outline sentence plan was contained in only half of the reports where a community proposal had been made.

- (e) The identification of ETE as part of the specific activity requirement to an order was not clear enough. Assessments identified ETE as a factor in reoffending, but courts did not have enough detail to make informed decisions about an activity requirement. The activities identified were not always appropriate to an individual's employment or other needs.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

1.2 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF RISK OF HARM

RoH is comprehensively and accurately assessed using OASys in each case and additional specialist assessment tools where relevant.

69%

Strengths:

- (a) A RoH screening had been completed in 85% of the community orders. In 77% of licence cases a RoH screening was completed or reviewed on release from custody. The screening was assessed as accurate in 89% of cases. This led to a full RoH analysis in 77% of the total sample.
- (b) The overall classification of RoH appeared to be correct in 87% of assessed cases.
- (c) Where a full analysis of the RoH had been completed, this accurately reflected the risk to the public in 91% of cases.
- (d) The inspection sample included 29 community orders where the RoH was assessed as medium, high or very high. In 79% of these cases, the risk management plan was structured according to the required format. Three-quarters of the plans were completed within five working days of the order being made or the offender being assessed as presenting a RoH. A further 27 such offenders in the sample had been released from custody on licence. The risk management plan was appropriately structured in 93% of these cases.
- (e) In most cases, communication between staff on the levels of RoH posed and on MAPPA levels was appropriate. Staff from external organisations reported that they were informed about RoH issues where this was relevant.
- (f) Five offenders in the sample had been referred to approved premises. All were appropriate referrals and three were accepted.

Areas for improvement:

(a) A quarter of the RoH screening documents were not completed promptly at the start of the sentence. FDRs included the area's own document to screen for RoH. However, this was not as comprehensive as the OASys screening tool and was therefore not regarded as sufficient to meet the purpose. There was some evidence of confusion about the relationship between tiering and RoH assessment. It was reported by some staff that tier 1 and 2 cases did not require a RoH assessment, rather than the screening and analysis being used to *determine* the appropriate tier.

(b) The full RoH analysis was of a satisfactory standard in 70% of the 67 cases where it was completed. This left 20 cases where the analysis was insufficient, and a further seven cases where there was no acceptable explanation for the fact that a full analysis of the RoH had not been undertaken.

Some of the analyses failed to meet the standard because they were completed outside the required timescale. The area had introduced a more rigorous process of countersigning by managers, and in some cases this had resulted in the assessment being 'rolled back' for improvement. This could explain a slight delay in the completion of the form, but in a number of cases the assessment was countersigned two or three months later. This situation needed attention.

(A similar finding had been made by the NPS audit and assurance unit in November 2006. Their sample would have pre-dated the cases we inspected, but the timing of the report was too late to have had an impact on the cases in our sample).

(c) Although the RoH to the public was reflected in the analysis in most cases (see strength c above), risks to children, known adults and staff were adequately considered in 74% (23 of 31 cases), 78% (28 of 36 cases) and 73% (11 of 15 cases) respectively. Whilst these were not poor findings overall, it did mean that there was a significant number of cases where the risks to specific individuals were not well recorded.

(d) Although the required structure for the risk management plan was generally being used, it was disappointing to discover that nearly half of the plans (27 cases) were not sufficiently comprehensive.

(e) In 25% of cases where assessments were available from MAPPA or other agencies, including prisons and YOTs, (15 of 51 cases) they were not used to inform RoH assessments.

(f) In three of the 12 high-RoH cases, there was insufficient management oversight of the assessment. Similarly, in cases where there were child safeguarding issues, management involvement was effective in only half (10 of 20 cases).

(g) There were six cases where referral to approved premises had not been considered, although such an intervention would have enhanced the work to protect the public.

- (h) Insufficient attention had been paid to victims' issues in 37% of cases. This included a thorough assessment of victim safety issues and offender victim awareness.

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.

71%

Strengths:

- (a) In 82% of cases, an OASys score was calculated at the start of sentence or release from custody.
- (b) The overall assessment of the likelihood of reoffending was found to be of sufficient quality in 75% of cases. Criminogenic factors were satisfactorily assessed in 88% of cases. This section of OASys was informed by other assessments in 81% of relevant cases. Where positive influences, for example, supportive and pro-social factors were present, these were usually identified and recorded.
- (c) OASys and other specialist assessments were shared, where appropriate, with workers from partner organisations. This was facilitated by local protocols regarding the exchange of information.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) There were 12 PPO cases in the sample. The OASys was completed within five working days of sentence in five of these cases; in a similar number it was regarded as comprehensive. In five of the cases the assessment was neither timely nor sufficiently detailed.
- (b) Although most offender managers were competent and confident with eOASys, there were still a small number who found the use of ICT difficult and this contributed to deficiencies in their assessments.
- (c) Information on educational attainment during custody was rarely available to offender managers. Offenders who had spent long periods in custody had no record of the courses and qualification they had completed, and sometimes had to repeat assessments that had been carried out on several occasions in prison.

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.

74%

Strengths:

- (a) The offender's learning style, motivation and capacity to change were taken into account in 76% of case in the inspection sample. Full attention was paid to the methods most likely to be effective with the offender in 70% of cases.
- (b) REM classifications were seen on almost all files (98 of 99 cases).
- (c) Where factors were identified which may inhibit engagement, appropriate plans were put in place to minimise their impact in 93% of cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Although clear processes were in place to screen and assess offenders' literacy and numeracy levels, there was evidence that a skills for life screening had been carried out at the start of sentence or licence in only 54% (53 cases) of the inspection sample. Where offenders stated that they held qualifications, the offender manager tended to accept the offender's report without seeking further verification. There was some evidence that not all offenders had their literacy needs assessed before starting an accredited programme.

Where the screening had identified the need for a full assessment, this had been carried out in two thirds of relevant cases.
- (b) Diversity issues and other individual needs were actively assessed in 69% of the sample. This meant that in a quarter of relevant cases (13 of 55 cases) potentially discriminatory or disadvantaging factors were present but had not been identified. We saw cases where diversity issues were not explicitly identified at the assessment stage, although offender managers had demonstrated mindfulness of these factors in delivering supervision. The recording of these considerations needed to be improved.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

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 initial sentence plan or unpaid work assessment is designed to describe a structured and coherent plan of work for each offender.

72%

Strengths:

- (a) In 83% of the community order cases the offender was allocated to an offender manager within the required timescale. 89% were allocated to the correct tier, and in 85% of cases the sentence planning reflected the requirements of the tier in respect of work focused on punishment, help, change and control.
- (b) Steps were taken to ensure that the offenders fully understood the requirements of the sentence in 84% of the inspection sample, and the penalties for breach in 81% of cases. 78% of offenders had been given the opportunity to participate actively in the sentence planning process.
- (c) Some parts of the ISP in community orders were completed well; for example, planned contact levels for each requirement were appropriate in 93% of cases, and in three quarters of the sample it was clearly recorded who would deliver the interventions. In 73% of sentence plans it was clear that all arranged contacts were enforceable.
- (d) The roles and responsibilities of all the workers involved with an offender were clearly defined in 69% of sentence planning documents.
- (e) Sentence planning in general was given a high priority in around two thirds of cases. For example, this reflected the sentencing purpose in 72% and gave a clear shape to supervision in 63% of the sample. There was a focus on achievable change in 68% of cases but this did not always translate into relevant goals for the offender; these were set in 59% of cases. The area had recently introduced Sentence Planning Boards for tier 4 offenders and these would be attended by the offender manager, interventions staff and the offender.
- (f) Interventions to address offending behaviour were appropriately identified in 85% of relevant cases; those to promote community reintegration were included in 67% of the sample.

Where literacy and numeracy needs were identified, individual learning plans were generally flexible and well developed and informed by previous experiences.

The planning met the punitive requirements of the sentence in 65% of cases. Interventions likely to reduce or contain RoH were identified in three quarters of the relevant cases.
- (g) Plans were sensitive to diversity issues, including offender vulnerability, in 74% of the inspection sample.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Although allocation to an offender manager was generally completed promptly, and was accurate in the majority of cases, there was some evidence of tiering changes made shortly after the initial allocation. Eleven cases in the sample were assessed as inaccurately tiered; this figure may mask others where the tier was changed within the first few days.

There was some uncertainty about who made the tiering decision, particularly in the case of offenders leaving prison. It was important that tiering decisions took account of all relevant information about the offender and in complex cases was not an administrative task. We found some cases where inaccurate tiering had resulted in inappropriate allocation. Some PSOs were holding tier 3 cases; whilst many had the experience and knowledge to do so, this decision and the work needed to be overseen by a manager.

- (b) Some aspects of the ISP for offenders on community orders needed attention. In five cases, no plan was prepared and only 56% of plans were completed in the required timescale. In 45% of cases, the sequencing of requirements was not given sufficient consideration.
- (c) A standard ISP was given to offenders on unpaid work. This included a number of objectives, which for those in lower tiers, would not be delivered. This made the document meaningless.
- (d) Appropriate consideration was given to restrictive conditions designed to minimise RoH to others in only two thirds of the relevant cases. In 12 of the 29 medium, high or very high RoH cases on community orders, the ISP did not outline how the RoH would be managed, including cross references to the risk management plan.
- (e) The poor continuity of ETE work between prison and the community meant that IAG provided in prison did not always take sufficient account of the local availability of particular types of provision. Some offenders had raised expectations that, on release from prison, they would be able to train for qualifications that were not available near their home.
- (f) Aspects of target setting for skills for life and ETE were insufficient. Although many individual learning plans set clear, realistic and measurable targets, others were not specific enough. Some short-term targets were too broad, referring, for example to the achievement of full qualifications rather than intermediate skill development steps to a full qualification.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

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.

61%

Strengths:

- (a) Arrangements were put in place to prepare offenders thoroughly for interventions and to reinforce new skills afterwards in 75% and 68% of cases respectively.
- (b) Where more than one worker was involved in the management and supervision of a case, there was evidence of good communication between the offender manager and others in 70% of the inspection sample. This included accredited programme tutors, ETE workers and other organisations such as police, SSD and CMHT.
- (c) In three-quarters of cases the offender manager had clearly demonstrated commitment to their work with the offender and in 64% had motivated and supported them throughout the sentence. This was also reflected by staff delivering interventions, for example accredited programmes, unpaid work, ETE and keyworkers in approved premises.
- (d) Reviews of sentence plans integrated other plans as appropriate in 75% of cases in the sample. This included risk management and MAPPA action plans, substance misuse, or educational plans.
- (e) By the time of the inspection, 76% of sentence requirements had been fully implemented in the cases in the sample.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Sentence plans were not reviewed every 16 weeks, or more frequently where this was required, in almost half of the sample. Where reviews were completed, a number were not sufficient in terms of quality: only half contained objectives and milestones that give a clear direction to continuing supervision and 58% allowed for work with the offender to flow from it coherently. The continuing ownership of the plan by the offender was sought in 45% of cases.

Feedback from skills for life tutors was variable. Some provided clear evidence about progress towards planned outcomes, but in other cases the feedback was very general. No information about the offender's progress on skills for life in unpaid work was available. As a result, supervision plan reviews of ETE targets were vague and did not record any detail of progress or achievement.
- (b) In a third of cases with more than one requirement in a licence or order the interventions had not been sequenced appropriately according to RoH and the likelihood of reoffending.

- (c) The offender manager's role in overseeing and coordinating the input of all workers for each case was still developing. There was evidence that this task was actively undertaken in 63% of cases. In a similar number there was good communication between all relevant staff and the offender.
- (d) There was insufficient positive, proactive and timely work between prison-based staff, offender managers and others, to prepare offenders for release in the community in around two thirds of cases. A number of offender managers commented that they had been unable to visit prisons due to workload pressures. The area was planning for the introduction of the next phase of OMIC when this would change.
- (e) Work in the community did not build sufficiently on activity in prison in seven out of 23 cases. In five of these cases, work on substance misuse could have been followed through more effectively in the community. In two cases educational input in the prison could have been developed.
- (f) There was insufficient evidence that offender managers had reinforced positive behaviour in 46% of cases. This was disappointing as there were some good examples of offenders learning and applying new skills and tackling criminogenic factors. In some cases offender managers were able to describe a pro-social approach but had failed adequately to record their work.
- (g) There were nine cases in the sample that had been transferred from other areas. None were assessed as high-RoH cases. In six cases, the first appointment had been made within five working days of Northamptonshire Probation Area being notified that the offender was living in the area. Four offenders had received a home visit within ten working days. Unfortunately, in three cases the previous area had not provided Northamptonshire with a complete and current OASys.
- (h) Partner agencies delivering interventions did not enter their contact with the offender directly onto the CRAMS case record. Although communication was generally satisfactory, there maybe some efficiency saving if greater use were made of this electronic record.
- (i) Not all skills for life tutors were clear about the attendance requirements for specific orders. Ten-day orders were applied as ten one-hour sessions. The area had developed documents to explain the implications of specified activities for offenders, sentencers and offender managers, but it was not clear how widely used these were.

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.

59%

Strength:

- (a) Four offenders had been recalled to custody in relation to RoH issues. Recall was used as an appropriate feature of the risk management process and was implemented properly in each of these cases. Following the recall, all but one of the offenders received a clear explanation as to the reason for the action.

Police representatives interviewed during the inspection highlighted examples of good practice in dealing jointly and swiftly with emergency recalls.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) RoH to others had been reviewed no later than 16 weeks from the start of sentence in just 57% of the sample. Subsequent reviews were completed in 46% of relevant cases (16 of 35 cases). Where there had been a significant change that should have triggered a review, this had been undertaken in 47% of cases (15 of 32 cases).

- (b) Where a review of RoH was completed, there was evidence of ongoing planning to protect children, known adults and staff in 48%, 45% and 33% of cases respectively. As with the original assessment (see criterion 1.2), risk to the public was adequately addressed in a higher proportion of cases (70%).

The category of known adults would include the partners or ex-partners of domestic abuse perpetrators. There was some evidence that, despite recent training, some offender managers lacked confidence in dealing with issues of domestic abuse.

- (c) Seventeen offenders were managed within MAPPAs. The arrangements had been used effectively in ten cases. Offender managers and other staff contributed appropriately to the MAPPAs in nine cases. This left a number where the MAPPAs could be used more effectively. In some cases in the inspection sample, the MAPPAs minutes were not sufficiently oriented towards action planning. Some offender managers were unclear about the role of the MAPPAs and tended to delegate responsibility for decision making to the MAPPAs. However there was evidence that recent changes in the resourcing of the MAPPAs were already having a positive impact.

- (d) Increases in RoH were not anticipated where possible, swiftly identified or acted upon in 11 cases – almost half of the relevant sample.

- (e) A purposeful home visit to high or very high-RoH offenders took place within ten working days of sentence or release in a third of cases; it was carried out appropriately at a later stage in a further 42%. Home visits were repeated to keep RoH to a minimum in half of the relevant cases. However, where children’s safeguarding issues were identified, home visits had been more reliably undertaken.
- (f) The overall quality of any reasonable action taken to protect the public from harm now or in the future was assessed as sufficient in 61% of cases.

Conclusion: This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

2.3 General Criterion: VICTIMS **68%**
Consistent attention is given to issues concerning victims.

- Strengths:**
- (a) Statutory victim liaison had been offered in 17 cases. In all but one, the victim had been offered information about the criminal justice process.
 - (b) Where relevant, all victims had been offered the opportunity to express their views about proposed licence conditions for the offender. However, in three out of eight relevant cases, the victim had not been given the opportunity to see the parole report.
 - (c) In 82% of relevant cases (9 out of 11), there was evidence that the victim had received timely information about the offender’s release.

- Areas for Improvement:**
- (a) A written offer of face-to-face contact was made within 40 working days of sentence to victims in three-quarters of cases where this was a statutory requirement.
 - (b) The safety of victims or potential victims was an issue in 56 cases. This was given a high priority in only 52% of cases. This finding echoed the mixed views of victims contacted during the inspection. We found cases where although the victim contact work was well executed, the offender manager had not fully considered the relevance of this to their work with the offender.
 - (c) There was evidence in the case file that victim awareness work had been undertaken with the offender in only 38% (30 of 80) of relevant cases.

Conclusion: This criterion represents a 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.

79%

Strengths:

- (a) In 85% of cases the offender was offered a full and timely induction following sentence to a community order or after release on licence. The area had undertaken some work to improve the induction process to help improve compliance. Comments from offenders confirm that they felt well informed about the requirements of their supervision and the consequences of non-compliance.
- (b) The frequency of appointments conformed to the national standard in 81% of cases and was sufficient to facilitate the requirements of the sentence in 72%.
- (c) The offender manager monitored attendance across all interventions in 97% of cases and effective action had been taken to ensure compliance in 95% of relevant cases.
- (d) An exclusion and/or curfew requirement was in place in 12 cases. Enforcement took place with effective liaison with the electronic monitoring provider in all six cases where this was required.
- (e) Judgements about acceptable and unacceptable absences were consistent and appropriate in 90% of relevant cases (77 out of 86). Where necessary, action on breach had been instigated and resolved within the required timescales in 97% and 84% of cases. The area had revised the enforcement manual in the light of recommendations from the HMI Probation report published into 2006 into the supervision of Hanson and White.
- (f) Case records were well organised in 88% of the sample and had REM details in 82%.
- (g) Most unpaid work placements were suitably demanding and of benefit to the community.

Fewer placements (62% or 18 of 29) were matched to the individual offender, perhaps reflecting a number of tier 1 cases where matching assumed less significance. Offenders reported that they did different types of work, often finding out on the day where they were going.

The area had set a target that 7.5% of beneficiaries of unpaid work would be from diverse groups. There were some good examples of work with local organisations for minority ethnic residents. In another project, offenders were refurbishing tools to be sent to developing countries. The offenders we interviewed were positive about the experience of unpaid work. Those working on an allotment were aware that the produce would be donated to a local home for older people and they saw this as a worthwhile project.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Of the 12 PPOs in the inspection sample, three were not supervised with enhanced levels of contact or through a reporting pattern that supported all the elements of their sentence.
- (b) In 46% of cases, the frequency of appointments offered did not meet RoH considerations and in 37% would not support the achievement of sentence plan objectives.
- (c) Although we saw some good examples of contact with offenders in custody, the liaison by the offender manager prior to release was insufficient in two thirds of cases. In these cases, the pre-release work was less likely to promote effective offender management in the community.
- (d) The majority of records were clear and timely, but a third needed to contain more detailed information. Some contact logs were seen as discursive instead of providing evidence of progress against the plan of work with the offender.
- (e) Although in most cases the frequency of the unpaid work sessions offered to offenders met the national standard, we found a number of cases where offenders had been 'stood down'. This had been a particular problem during the period from August to November 2006 and had therefore affected the cases in the inspection sample. However, local monitoring showed that the problem had now been resolved.

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.

67%

Strengths:

- (a) Whilst sufficient work and resources were directed at community reintegration issues in 79% of cases, it was found that there were gaps in provision to tackle alcohol misuse. However, this had recently been addressed by a project run in partnership with Aquarius, a voluntary organisation dealing with substance misuse.
- (b) Access to skills for life provision was good and available on a flexible basis. Offenders were able to receive literacy and numeracy support during the day, evening and at weekends. Mobile ICT was provided by the Tresham Institute at each centre. Tutors worked supportively with individuals and small groups in differentiated ways to meet their individual needs. All offenders observed during the inspection were fully engaged in skills for life learning interventions.

Effective skills for life training was available at unpaid work locations and counted for up to 20% of the offenders unpaid work hours. To

facilitate continuity of learning, these offenders were allocated to the same work project for the duration of their programme. Accommodation for this on-site provision was not ideal, but tutors made good use of the available premises and effectively used laptop computers to support learning.

- (c) The offender manager prepared reports and attended review hearings in accordance with national standards and court requirements in four of the five DRR cases in the sample.
- (d) Three offenders in the inspection sample had been in approved premises for at least six weeks. There was evidence that a range of constructive interventions were being delivered with these residents. This included skills for life provision delivered at the approved premises by a tutor. ETE advisers were able to provide information about courses available at local colleges, and where licence conditions prevented attendance, alternative arrangements were made. Residents interviewed during the inspection had welcomed help with education and the preparation of CVs and saw this as a valuable part of their preparation for the future.

Probation key workers also helped offenders to develop their social and life skills through courses such as money management and budgeting. However, there was scope to make more effective links between the interventions delivered and the needs identified, by more explicit objectives in the sentence planning documents.

- (e) Effective IAG was provided by two qualified ETE workers. The area had achieved MATRIX accreditation for its in-house 'nextstep' IAG. (MATRIX is the quality standard for IAG services). ETE advisors and other staff were found to be proactive in motivating and helping offenders to find work or identify opportunities for further training. Where there were financial implications for training needs, information about support was provided. Advice was given on a range of problems that may form barriers to gaining employment. Good use was made of external agencies to help with problems such as debt and money management. Offenders were supported to produce a CV and, where appropriate, a disclosure statement to submit to prospective employers. ETE staff worked closely with offender managers to identify appropriate employment opportunities.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) In 67% of cases it was found that constructive interventions encouraged the offender to accept responsibility for their offending behaviour and its consequences. Most offenders who commented to the inspection felt that they had given further thought to their behaviour.
- (b) In view of the range of skills for life provision, it was disappointing to find that in 30% of cases where a need had been identified, arrangements had not been put in place for an appropriate intervention to be delivered.

- (c) The inspection sample included 27 offenders who were subject to accredited programme requirements. In a third of these cases the programme had not commenced as set out in the sentence plan. A clear and acceptable explanation was recorded in only half of the cases.
- (d) A range of unpaid work placements was available. These included work on an allotment, building renovation and environmental conservation work. Unfortunately however, none of the projects had established links with accredited qualifications to recognise the skills developed through the work. The information provided about external vocational courses was limited. The area was in negotiation with the LSC to secure funding for vocational skills training through local providers.

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.

75%

Strengths:

- (a) For the three offenders placed at approved premises, their residence was being used effectively as a restrictive intervention. This was fully understood by the offenders we interviewed during the inspection.
- (b) Licence conditions were comprehensive in 83% of cases, necessary in 79%, and proportionate to the RoH and the likelihood of reoffending in 83% and 88% respectively. In all five PPO licence cases where offending had been related to drug misuse, there were additional appropriate licence conditions.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Restrictive interventions were not monitored fully in 27% of relevant cases and nearly half the cases lacked evidence that every reasonable action was being taken to minimise RoH.
- (b) Licence conditions were regarded as proportionate to the protection of victims in only 46% of cases.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

Strengths:

- (a) Arrangements for interventions took into account the diverse needs of offenders in 81% of cases. The approved premises were seen to meet the needs of all three residents in the sample. Issues of disability were appropriately addressed in 73% of relevant cases. Programme staff showed sensitivity to the need to tailor their input to the needs and learning styles of individual offenders.
- (b) Offenders were clearly informed that discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated in 84% of cases.
- (c) Six offenders who returned questionnaires as part of the inspection reported that there were aspects of their lives that may have made it more difficult to take part in supervision sessions. In most of these cases, the issue was discussed and taken into account, with some citing child-care responsibilities, transport difficulties and health problems.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Issues of literacy and dyslexia were identified in 41 cases, but were appropriately addressed in only 56% of these.

Some offenders were not benefiting sufficiently from accredited programmes because of poor literacy and comprehension skills. Where a literacy support need was identified during a programme, integrated support was not available.
- (b) Informed consent to a singleton placement in a mixed setting had not been obtained in three out of five cases. Attention had been paid to staff composition and to arrangements to support the offenders' engagement in only two 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.*

58%

Strengths:

- (a) There was evidence of responsiveness to changes in the RoH posed by offenders, with an increase in restrictive measures imposed in five cases in the inspection sample.
- (b) Twenty-two offenders had been reconvicted since the start of their order or licence and a further one had been cautioned. 70% of the sample had complied with the requirements of their sentence.
- (c) There had been some direct benefits to the community, including unpaid work carried out in 28 cases in the sample.
- (d) The resources allocated were consistent with the offender's RoH and likelihood of reoffending in 79% and 87% of cases respectively. In nine of the 12 PPO cases, the resources allocated were consistent with the offender's status. Resources were also found to be used efficiently to achieve planned outcomes in 86% of cases.
- (e) From April 2006 to January 2007, 42% of offenders who started a skills for life course achieved an award. A third of offenders from unpaid work were successful in gaining a literacy or numeracy award, mostly at levels 1 or 2.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) There were no cases where restrictive interventions were decreased as a result of an improvement in the offender's behaviour, and no cases where the interventions delivered resulted in the offender appropriately moving to a lower tier. None of the 17 cases managed by the MAPPAs had moved to a lower level. It is not possible to state conclusively whether there were cases where any of these actions should have been considered, however it would be usual for an inspection to find a small number of cases moving to less intensive supervision as a result of identified progress.
- (b) The police domestic violence unit had reported call outs to addresses linked to a domestic abuse perpetrator in only one case. In a further six cases there had been no call outs. However, it was of concern to find that in nine cases there was no evidence that the offender manager knew whether or not there had been any police call outs related to the perpetrator. This issue was a source of some frustration to IDAP tutors.
- (c) Increased victim awareness had been demonstrated in only 24% of the relevant cases in the sample, although the majority of offenders reported that their supervision had made them more conscious of the effect of their behaviour on victims.

- (d) OASys had been rescored in 63% of cases. Where it had been undertaken, there had been no improvement in two thirds of cases. The factor most commonly linked with offending was thinking and behaviour, affecting 71 cases in the sample, followed by ETE (50 cases), attitudes (44 cases) and lifestyle and associates (45 cases). Alcohol misuse affected 42 offenders – higher than drug misuse at 32 cases. Emotional well-being and accommodation were each identified in 39 cases. 51% of offenders had made progress in tackling their highest priority factor.
- (e) There was evidence that offenders were able to apply the learning and skills acquired during their order in their daily lives in just 35% of cases.
- (f) In half of the cases in the sample there was insufficient evidence of a positive change in either attitudes or behaviour.
- (g) The sentencing objective of punishment, which was applicable to all four tiers, was being achieved in 94% of cases. Offenders in tiers 2, 3 and 4 were being helped in 58% of cases, and 61% of tier 4 cases were being adequately controlled. There was evidence that the 'change' objective was being met in only 37% of cases in tiers 3 and 4.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent 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.

60%

Areas for improvement

- (a) Thirty-one offenders had had three or more offender managers; in nearly half of these cases this was felt to have had a detrimental effect on sustaining the offender's progress.
- (b) In 37% of cases, structured sentence planning had not been given a high priority throughout the supervision.
- (c) There was evidence that offender managers had taken sufficient action to consolidate learning and reinforce new skills in just 54% of cases.
- (d) Two thirds of relevant cases showed that attention had been paid to long-term community reintegration issues. In a similar number the offender had been made aware of community organisations that would help with their criminogenic needs.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent 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.

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) At the time of this OMI, Northamptonshire Probation Area's CO had been in post for five months. During this period, the Board and senior management team had engaged energetically with the development of the next year's business plan. The planning process had involved close regional collaboration between the five probation areas in the East Midlands Probation Region, in order to meet the requirements set down by the ROM and to develop SLAs as part of the NOMS commissioning process. A regional forum was established, consisting of individual COs and Board Chairs. This group sat as the Business Development Board specifically focusing on regional probation actions and initiatives in response to the Government's commissioning and contestability agenda. Within the East Midlands region there were five working groups focussed on public protection, business development, interventions, offender management and corporate services. The CO from Northamptonshire chaired the corporate services group.

A summary of the business plan had been produced as a cost-effective and accessible way of communicating the area's key priorities to an external audience. A more extensive document was used to monitor and report on progress against objectives and areas for improvement. A staff conference was being planned to focus on the delivery of the business plan and to consider the findings of this inspection.

- (b) Northamptonshire Probation Area was playing a full and positive role in relation to the LAA. In addition to working on the reduction in offending target, it was also using knowledge of offenders to lead on the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund. There were positive links with the Neighbourhoods agenda through unpaid work projects cleaning up graffiti. The area was represented on the four CDRPs in the county and had made a significant contribution to partnership projects relating to domestic abuse, homelessness and work with young people.

The CO was chair of the LCJB and the LSCB and attended the Supporting People commissioning body. Strategic partners confirmed their appreciation of the active role probation had taken in relation to multi-agency initiatives.

At a more local level, the approved premises had worked hard to build good links with the community; a liaison group included a local councillor and a magistrate.

- (c) There was evidence that the area had taken a strong strategic role with other relevant organisations to address public protection. Positive developments in the MAPPA were valued by other agencies. A police officer, MAPPA coordinator and administrator were now co-located in the Dangerous Person's Management Unit, hosted by the police. Multi-agency work on domestic abuse had linked well with the police's murder prevention strategy.

Police particularly valued the strong information sharing protocols that enabled prompt action to be taken where necessary. Regular meetings were held between police and probation senior managers to resolve any barriers to effective operational work.

- (d) The Business Plan 2006/2007 was supported by a comprehensive risk register. ACOs and middle managers were identified as risk owners and there was a clear and annually reviewed Risk Management Policy in place. Progress against required actions was assessed quarterly and subject to independent review of progress by at least two ACOs (and more often the full senior management team). The risks were then reported to and reviewed by the Audit Committee and Board. The risk management process had been independently audited on an annual basis and had received good control assurances from internal and external auditors since its inception.

There was evidence that the risk status was actively considered and was increased or decreased accordingly, using the Home Office recommended matrix and RAG system. Unit managers with risk areas identified as red or amber were required to submit action plans and to attend senior management team meetings to discuss progress and performance issues.

New risks had been added to the register following audit reports, the Board and Audit Committee meetings and the monitoring of internal and external pressures.

- (e) A diversity manager had been appointed in 2006, following a period when the post had not been filled. Her role was to provide strategic leadership in relation to diversity through work within the organisation and in the interface with other relevant groups in Northamptonshire. The Board retained a strong interest in diversity issues; the Chair was the area's diversity champion.

A comprehensive diversity action plan had been developed, incorporating the Race Equality Scheme and the Disability Equality Scheme. It also included gender, sexuality, age and faith with a view to new and developing legislation. The area had an agreed staff consultation processes, including PEARL (a professional advisory and staff support group for black and minority ethnic employees), the Disabilities Issues Group and a sexuality forum. Impact assessments or reviews had been conducted on all the area's policies. Community

engagement events had been held to ensure that the impact assessment process was robust.

The external work on diversity was highly regarded by other organisations, some of whom had expressed an interest in learning from the area's approach.

- (f) Twelve probation liaison meetings were held each year with local magistrates, and the area was represented on magistrates' strategy meetings. Probation staff contributed to the initial training of new sentencers. Court staff were able to communicate with the resident judge by email. Plans to appoint a district judge were supported by the area. This would facilitate consistent communication with magistrates.
- (g) Policy and practice guidance documents were comprehensive and available to staff through an Intranet. Hard copies were also available and were used in team meetings and in individual supervision and appraisal.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The arrival of the new CO was the third change of leadership the area had experienced in two years. Coming alongside a period of major national changes, it had been challenging for the area to adapt again to a new style of leadership. The area's strong and appropriate commitment to an outward facing business plan had taken time and energy and the process had not been perceived as consultative. Although there was evidence that developments had been communicated to staff, they did not appear to have been fully understood, perhaps because of the speed of change. Having taken into account feedback from staff, members of the senior management team had increased their presence in local offices by spending part of their working week based in different locations.

Offender managers interviewed during the inspection expressed mixed views about managers in the area. The question posed encompassed both senior and middle managers and some staff commented that it was difficult to give an overall answer because they had different views about individual managers. Overall however, 37% felt that managers did not demonstrate professional management approaches, and 42% felt that they did not model positive management behaviour. Some referred to a lack of praise and feeling pressurized to take additional work.

- (b) The report of the ESI was published in August 2005 and the area responded with a detailed action plan. However an internal audit of work with high-RoH offenders undertaken in May 2006 confirmed similar findings to our own the previous year. There remained discrepancies between risk registrations on CRAMS and the OASys assessment. By then, tiering of cases had been introduced and some were found to have been incorrectly allocated to tiers. The audit also considered contact levels, enforcement and the completion of assessments, and sentence plans and reviews.

Performance in a number of areas remained unsatisfactory and action points were noted.

In November 2006 the Audit and Assurance Unit of the NPD undertook an audit of work with high-RoH cases. The unit identified clear policies and procedures to guide staff and these had been well communicated through the intranet and within teams. ISPs were being prepared promptly in 98% of cases. However, some were not reviewed and countersigned by the manager as required. The audit found processes in place to ensure that offenders were being correctly identified as high RoH and registered as such. The overall conclusion of the audit was that this area of work was adequately controlled.

Probation Circular 15/2006 required probation areas to implement recommendations made in the HMI Probation inquiry into the supervision of Hanson and White. Progress in Northamptonshire was assessed by the regional manager in December 2006 and the need for further work was identified. A subsequent audit reported that considerable progress had been made in a short time. However it was too early to be confident that practice improvements were embedded.

- (c) The difficulty, for all agencies, of adequately resourcing the demanding and growing area of work covered by the MAPPAs was highlighted. It was important that the distribution of costs was agreed at a strategic level. This was being tackled as part of the ongoing budget discussions which formed part of the SMB negotiations.
- (d) An annual sentencers' satisfaction survey had been conducted and as a result of the 2005 survey, an additional court post had been created. The area had also attempted to drive up the use of FDRs; 40% of reports were now prepared at court. However, the increasing number of reports was still seen as a business risk as there was a tension between preparing these and delivering offender management and interventions. SPOs had now started to prepare reports themselves. The diversion of their time away from staff supervision and management presented further risks. This was an example of an area where middle managers felt torn between operational priorities.

The area was optimistic that recent work with the courts would lead to increasingly effective engagement. Northamptonshire had also been chosen as one of three probation areas, to participate in a project to examine key processes in order to reduce the costs of court work.

4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS

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

Well met

NPS Performance Data	Target	April-December 2006	
		Area	England and Wales
Enforcement: breach taken where required within ten working days: all orders/licences	90%	85*	92%*
Offender compliance: proportion of arranged appointments attended in first 26 weeks	85%	82*	82%*
Accredited programme completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	105*	104%*
Unpaid work completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	123*	108%*
DTTO/DRR starts: % performance in relation to target	100%	98*	95%*
DTTO/DRR completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	97*	111%*
Skills for life: % performance in relation to starts	100%	112*	114%*
Sickness absence: average days absence	9 days	11	11.6
Court report timeliness	90%	90*	78%
Accurate and timely ethnicity data	95%	98*	97%*
Home Secretary's Race Equality Employment Target for 2009	(East Midlands Region) 7.2%	11.1%*	
Proportion of victims of serious sexual/violent offences (where offender sentenced to custody of 12+ months) offered contact within eight weeks	85%	98*	93%*
RoH assessments and plans for high RoH cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	99*	93%*
RoH assessments and plans for PPO cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	97*	95%*
Offenders into employment: % performance in relation to target	100%	164*	132%*
Offenders into employment, retained for four weeks: % performance in relation to target	100%	97*	117%*

Joint 'end-to-end' targets on enforcement for Local Criminal Justice Board	Target	April-December 2006	
		Area	England and Wales
Average time to resolve community penalty breach proceedings from relevant unacceptable failure	No more than 35 working days	39 days	44 days
Proportion of all breach proceedings resolved within 25 working days of relevant unacceptable failure to comply	50%	51%*	48%*

* Asterisk indicates met target or 'near miss'.

Strengths:

- (a) During the year before the ESI, the area had worked hard to improve its performance on key targets and, as a result, had seen significant improvement in its place on the weighted scorecard. However, it appeared that this may have been achieved at the expense of attention to the quality of some work, particularly in relation to the assessment and management of RoH. In the interim period, the area had attempted to address issues of quality whilst maintaining work to improve performance against targets.

The area's position on the weighted scorecard had, however, slipped and Northamptonshire was 26th in Performance Report 22 (November 2006). In response, the area had focussed once again on achieving the key targets. As a result, the area's performance had improved in both absolute and relative terms, and Northamptonshire had moved to 10th place on the weighted scorecard linked with Performance Report 23 (February 2007). All targets were now being met or nearly met, with the exception of average sickness absence and the average time to resolve community penalty breaches.

Performance was actively monitored by the Board, using the RAG framework. Scrutiny forums focused on the quantitative measures and Board members visited units to ensure that quality was kept on the agenda.

- (b) Enforcement had been a problematic area, with performance falling below the national target during 2006. A lead administrator was nominated to track the timescales for required actions and send reminder emails where necessary. This proved to be a successful approach to raising performance on enforcement; it had also been used effectively to meet the targets related to PPOs and high-RoH assessments. Substantial improvements in the end-to-end enforcement targets had been achieved through internal work and an increased profile of this target within the LCJB.

The area had also invested in work on compliance measures in order to ensure that offender managers were clear regarding processes and had evidence of appointments offered against appointments attended.

- (c) Throughout the previous year there had been a regional programme of quality improvement in relation to OASys audits. This had built upon the joint training on OASys with the prison service and continued work from RoH workshops in supporting middle managers. The area also took part in a regional public protection forum that met quarterly.

- (d) The area's performance management framework included a number of objectives related to diversity. Each objective was supported by actions, and progress was reported to the Board on a quarterly basis. The report encompassed the completion of impact assessments, diversity training, the profile of unpaid work beneficiaries, and profile monitoring of staff and offenders.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Sickness levels had decreased substantially but the national target had still not been met. In view of the risks associated with high rates of sickness, this remained an area for improvement.
- (b) The area had an embryonic framework for collecting data to compare the achievement of ETE targets by diversity groups, but this was not yet established as a regular process.

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.

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) As part of the implementation of the NOMS offender management model, a review of staffing highlighted that the allocation of resources between offender management and interventions in Northampton differed from other areas in the region. The area had also made good use of regional comparative data to consider unit costs. This work had supported the need to redress the balance in favour of offender management and to ensure, in advance of contestability exercises, that the cost base of interventions was as low as possible. The 2007/2008 budget realigned resources accordingly. This was particularly important in view of the additional demands of introducing OMIC. It also allowed for the provision of an additional PO post for court work.
- (b) The budget was monitored carefully and both the potential performance bonus and the impact of the job evaluation scheme had been accurately predicted. For several years the area had managed to balance its resources within 0.5% of budget allocation and had received unqualified audit opinions on the accounts. In addition to funding core service delivery and work on performance targets, resources had been committed to supporting community reintegration issues. For example, the area contributed financially to Supporting People in order to facilitate access to floating support for high-RoH offenders. Additionally, four members of staff were seconded to the YOT.

Resources had been directed to VCPS initiatives in line with the national, regional and local priorities, and the VCPS plan had been signed in accordance with the required timescale. In 2006/2007 the minimum 5% level of sub-contracting had been exceeded and plans were in place to exceed the 10% level for 2007/2008.

Resources were also committed to diversity initiatives, including the post of diversity manager. Northamptonshire had seen an increase in the number of offenders for whom English was not the first language. The area had taken the view that managing the risk to the public meant that these offenders should have access to the

most appropriate sentence, and therefore factored in an increase in the cost of using translation services.

- (c) Although the high-RoH team had been disbanded, the area had retained a MAPPA coordinator and an SPO with a public protection lead responsibility. The MAPPA now had an administrative post and this was regarded as a positive development. There were good links between the YOT and MAPPA processes; the YOT felt well supported by the arrangements.

There was also a commitment to the joint funding of the ROSE project for work with PPOs. Strategic leaders of the organisations involved were rightly proud of the achievements of this project with some of the most disruptive adult offenders.

The area had contributed to multi-agency work to tackle domestic abuse, by accessing a grant which had been made available by the NPD as funding for women's safety work to support the delivery of IDAP.

- (d) Northamptonshire was one of five probation areas to bid successfully for Home Office sponsorship to work in partnership with Aquarius, to assess offenders with alcohol misuse problems and deliver brief interventions. The project aimed to address a gap in provision that had been identified through the use of OASys data. A screening tool had been developed and was used to assist offender managers to assess the nature and extent of alcohol misuse by offenders. The information was collated and was now providing a more detailed profile of the caseload. The project was coming to an end and the area had approached the local CDRPs through the LAA for future funding.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The area had an agreed statement of workload priorities. This had been used, on occasion, to inform decisions about the redeployment of resources. However, there was some evidence that it was not always used sufficiently to support middle managers in dealing with pressures at times of staff shortage. Several people commented to us that 'everything is a priority'.
- (b) The unpaid work unit had lost a post as a result of the split between offender management and interventions. However, the offender management role with offenders on unpaid work (especially in the lower tiers) was unclear. This was having an impact on service delivery: screening for RoH was not always completed, staff who were employed as interventions staff were not completing sentence planning documents, and offenders were not clear who was their offender manager. These issues were being addressed; new arrangements for the delivery of unpaid work were being implemented, including clarification of the roles and responsibilities of offender managers and interventions staff.

- (c) Managers were aware that at times, staffing courts adequately had been a challenge, particularly in a way that did not undermine the integrity of end-to-end offender management. The fluctuating volume of court work had made it difficult to use resources in a cost effective way. Priority had been given to meeting the high level of SDRs requested. The area had approached the DAAT to consider additional funding to supplement court staffing at times when a large number of offenders were arrested at once, for example in relation to drugs offences. There was no easy solution to the problem, but it was under active consideration.

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

- (a) The process of realigning resources between offender management and interventions had involved communication with staff consultative bodies. Job descriptions for offender management posts had been drawn up and agreed with the relevant unions. 84% of offender managers interviewed during the inspection said that they felt clear about their role within the offender management model.
- (b) NOMS implementation plans were reviewed in 2006 by the Audit and Assurance Unit of the NPS. Good project management was confirmed and consistent progress had been made in most areas. The one outstanding area – the merging of courts and high-risk teams into offender management – was subsequently achieved. Appropriate job descriptions were in place for posts within offender management. The ACO responsible for implementing the changes had ensured that staff were kept informed about the strategic approach and about changes to practice and the allocation of offenders.
- (c) All new staff received diversity training within three months of the commencement of their employment as part of the induction process. Other staff received training as part of a core development programme. Career progression and retention/resignation information was broken down by ethnicity. The area was also developing measures in relation to the employment and retention of staff with disabilities.
- (d) Rates of completion of staff supervision were reported to the Board. The area’s policy stated that staff with direct offender contact should have supervision twice a quarter. Local monitoring showed an 80% rate of achievement for this objective. This was confirmed by the staff interviewed during the inspection; 62% had received monthly supervision and a further 17% had been supervised at least every six weeks. Contingency arrangements had been put in place to

cover for absent managers. 81% of staff interviewed reported satisfaction with the quality of their supervision, with 29% regarding it as excellent.

- (e) 88% of the staff we interviewed reported that they were clear about the procedures the area had in place to address the issue of staff sickness absence.
- (f) The development of the role of case administrators appeared to have been well received. Staff in these roles reported feeling valued, well informed about the work of the area and adequately trained to perform their role. Those interviewed during the inspection felt that they formed a strong and effective team and felt proud of their work.
- (g) In preparation for the introduction of OMIC, the area had undertaken some joint training and shadowing arrangements between prison and probation staff. This had been well received by both groups of staff.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The ESI in 2005 had identified some discontinuity and inconsistency in the management of high-RoH offenders. Although the structural changes with the area had addressed some of the issues, there remained some confusion about lines of accountability. High-RoH work had been absorbed into units, but some offender managers were still unclear about the respective roles of their unit manager, the MAPPA manager and the managers with lead responsibility for high RoH.

Middle managers were committed to working together to resolve difficulties as they arose. However, the structure did not facilitate this. A forum for discussing operational matters between middle and senior managers had been disbanded as it was believed that it did not provide an efficient and effective use of management time. Although this was replaced by accountability meetings, SPOs reported that there was now no process for formally resolving day-to-day issues. There were situations where middle managers working together were reporting to different ACOs, who may have different approaches and priorities.

- (b) The area had in place a training and development plan based on local and national priorities. However, at the time of a review of the plan in December 2006, some identified areas had not been met. For example, planned child protection training had not been delivered due to changes made by the provider. It was anticipated that the training would be reinstated within the near future. Although it was reported that training and development needs were discussed in supervision and appraisal sessions, only 58% of the staff we interviewed as part of the inspection felt that these needs had been met, with 9% reporting this as poor. 17% of staff felt that insufficient attention had been paid to providing appropriate learning opportunities and support for their professional development. Some

staff felt that they had lost track of recent developments following a lengthy period of absence from work. Managers were conscious that training resources had been allocated according to the emphasis on core training, with the result that personal development needs had at times been deferred.

- (c) Sickness levels had fallen to an annual average of 11 days per person. This was a substantial improvement on the 14.4 days reported at the time of the ESI. However, it was still above the national target of nine days. We found an impressive degree of commitment to ensuring that key tasks were undertaken on behalf of absent colleagues, however, offender managers and unit managers reported that the need to reallocate or cover work was a significant source of stress.
- (d) Individual performance and planning documents were clearly linked with the area's key objectives and improvement priorities. However, a third of relevant staff we interviewed (12 of 39) said that they had not been subject to a formal appraisal during the last 12 months. In view of the range in the quality of offender management seen during this inspection, it was important that the area ensured effective use of individual performance management to identify and target areas for improvement.

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

Partly met

Strengths:

- (a) Offenders who were subject to DTTOs and DRRs had completed a questionnaire designed to ascertain their views of supervision. Forty responses had been received and the results summarized to examine issues that may affect engagement at different stages in the order. Actions were being taken to address these, for example, an induction pack had been developed, offenders were sent text reminders of appointments, and workshops were developed to deal with practical issues such as employment and healthy eating. This was a good example of feedback from service users being used to address barriers to compliance. The area's DTTO/ DRR completions had risen from 84% (Performance Report 22) to 97% (Performance Report 23).
- (b) The area had put in place a register to record and monitor serious further offences. At the time of the inspection, managers were due to receive training on serious further offences, and processes were in place to disseminate learning points. There was also evidence that managers engaged with other agencies to review child protection incidents and to take appropriate action within the probation area. Drug related deaths of offenders under supervision were also subject to an internal review.
- (c) The ROSE project had produced an impressive analysis of outcome information. This considered the number and nature of crimes

committed by those supervised under this project and included a cost benefit analysis of the identified changes. The initial conclusion was that the project was having a positive impact on offending behaviour and, as such, had the potential for substantial monetary savings to society.

Areas for Improvement:

(a) Outcome information was not routinely reported to staff. However, we found that there was interest in the results of national research about the effectiveness of interventions. The area could capitalise on this culture of curiosity by developing the local use of information from OASys.

(b) Notwithstanding the evaluation of the ROSE project, it was important that the effectiveness of other inter-agency initiatives was monitored. This would include the need to introduce more robust processes to monitor the effectiveness of MAPPA in managing RoH.

Partners recognised that more work collecting and analysing data was required to ensure that good practice could be identified and publicised.

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) The five areas in the region had worked collaboratively in response to the Regional Commissioning plan. In preparation for the introduction of contestability, the regional Business Development Board and Business Development Team took part in the first mock contestability exercise on unpaid work. The learning from this exercise was to be shared through a pathfinder on unpaid work and a project on the regionalisation of approved premises. This work would develop a framework for establishing costs and quality information.

(b) The region had developed a RRAP entitled Changing Ways. The CO for Northamptonshire Probation Area represented the five regional COs on the RRAP Board. Strategic partners within Northamptonshire confirmed that they were fully aware of the regional plan and were committed to the seven pathways. The area was reviewing its approach to gaps in service provision and had identified and prioritised proposals for sub-contracting in line with the pathways. Funding had already ceased for some non-core sub-contracting arrangements. Other contracts would be considered for market testing in two stages, commencing during 2007/2008.

- (c) Skills for life and ETE provision was well established. The area worked closely with the Tresham Institute. Skills for life tutors met frequently with the ETE team and worked together to meet individual learners' needs. Links with the JCP were being developed to enhance continuity of support. Reciprocal staff training was planned, to train JCP staff in work with sex offenders and probation staff in benefits awareness. A protocol for the exchange of sensitive information was being developed. Clear SLAs were in place with the local college and Action for Employment and would shortly be established with JCP. The area was actively engaged in regional developments for an OLASS co-financing project to engage with employers and provide appropriate accreditation for employability and work skills. A newly developing partnership with a local company, celebrating its centenary in 2008, would support six young offenders with financial support for training. The area and JCP planned to work jointly to identify the recipients.
- (d) A NIACE funded project had provided resources to enable a wide range of e-learning activities, including driving theory preparation, job search, CV production and digital photography. Offenders were additionally well supported by trained volunteers who ensured that activity such as photography could take place with appropriate support and supervision. There had been an increase in learning participation since the start of the project, with 15 offenders attending a typical session. Since the start of the project, 152 offenders had engaged in e-learning activity. Nearly half had progressed to a qualification course provided by the local college. Nine learners had achieved awards that would contribute to full qualifications and 13 had started employment. Use of the Tresham Institute mobile ICT bus had increased by about 20% during the period the project had been operating.
- (e) The Pharmacy project involved a partnership with Boots The Chemist, where a private room was provided for probation staff at chemists across the county one day a week to allow the supervision and drug testing of offenders on a DRR when they were collecting their medication. This was an innovative idea designed to improve compliance with a challenging group of offenders.
- (f) The first phase of the implementation of OMIC in the area had been launched, as required, in November 2006. A steering group had been established to support future developments and the implementation plan was subject to frequent review. The area was undertaking a costing exercise to inform the development of the second phase.
- (g) The ROSE project was an excellent example of agencies working together to deliver a service to PPOs. Police, probation, drug treatment agencies, prisons, employment agencies, housing providers and CDRPS had all worked together to establish, fund and manage this project. The evaluation included case studies; comments from offenders highlighted the constructive balance between enforcement, and support and encouragement.

- (h) In the inspection sample, where provision for alcohol or drug misuse had been used, it was regarded as sufficient in 70% of cases. ETE services were sufficient in 79%. In all seven cases where health or leisure services were accessed the arrangements were satisfactory and psychological or psychiatric services were sufficient in ten out of 15 cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Gaps in provision were identified in 27% of cases in the inspection sample. A number of these related to a lack of alcohol provision, which had impacted on the management of the case. This gap had been identified and addressed by the Aquarius project.
- (b) Concerns about the working arrangements between prisons and probation were identified in 41% of cases in the inspection sample. In some cases, offender managers had not been able to gain access to the OASys prepared in the prison until after the offender's release. This made it difficult to update assessments and to complete risk management plans and sentence plans in a timely way. A number of offender managers had been diligent in finding ways around this problem by, for example, getting the prison to print and send them the OASys. This meant that the offender manager either had to re-input the data in order to open a new OASys or to write up-dated information on the paper copy. As a result, the completion date and ownership of the document was confusing.

Under future OMIC arrangements, well documented and defensible planning would be important to enable prison and probation staff to work together to prepare for an offender's release. A resolution of the current difficulties in sharing assessments had therefore become critical.

APPENDIX 1
Contextual information

Caseload at end of September 2006

Total caseload	2,338
% White	95.6%
% Minority ethnic*	4.4%
% Male	88.1%
% Female	11.9%
Number of cases subject to MAPPA:	
Level 1	123%
Level 2	42%
Level 3	12%
Number of PPO cases	69%
* Excluding cases for which ethnicity information is not available.	

The local definition of a PPO case, on which the above figure is based, is:

Prolific offenders are those individuals who are locally identified as people who are demonstrated to be committing high levels of acquisitive crime, namely robbery, burglary or vehicle theft.

Priority offenders are those who have been identified as being responsible for causing serious disruption to local communities either by anti-social behaviour or criminality that does not fall within the criteria for prolific offenders. Examples of this include drug dealing, prostitution or repeated anti-social behaviour.

Total revenue budget in 2005/2006: £7.658 m

Total revenue budget in 2006/2007: £8.300 m

Approved premises: Bridgewood (capacity 23)

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 re-inspection 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 interviews 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 HM Inspectorate of 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 YJB, 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
London SW1P 2BQ