

INQUIRY IDENTIFIES DEFICIENCIES IN SUPERVISION OF OFFENDER

The Supervision of Peter Williams, the man convicted of murdering Nottingham jeweller Marian Bates, was not managed closely enough by the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and his curfew was not adequately supervised by the electronic monitoring company.

These are the findings of a report into the case by HM Inspectorate of Probation, which criticises the YOT for not acting to breach Williams quickly enough after some of his behaviour caused concern, in particular failing to attend meetings with the local YOT, a drugs worker, education staff and the police.

The report also raises questions about the role of the private contractor responsible for the electronic monitoring of offenders and draws attention to the length of time it takes for a young offender to be returned to custody following a licence breach.

Inspectors found that:

- the YOT arranged for additional conditions to be inserted in Peter Williams' release licence, but did not manage them assiduously enough and the case manager should either have instituted breach proceedings or sought the authorisation of the YOT Manager not to do so;
- even if the YOT had instituted breach proceedings within the required timescale, the enforcement would have had to have been completed within 12 working days for Peter Williams to have been in custody on 30 September 2003, less than the target rate, which is undefined for juveniles but for adults is 35 working days;
- the electronic monitoring contractor, Premier, identified several occasions when Peter Williams appeared to be in violation of his curfew, but did not notify the YOT of any of these violations until the morning of 30 September 2003 . Premier's explanations on its understanding of its role were very unsatisfactory.

This led to three key recommendations:

- the Nottingham City YOT should ensure that DTOs are enforced in accordance with national standards;

- the Youth Justice Board should clarify the enforcement target for children and young people subject to community penalties and ensure that it also applies to DTO licences;
- the Home Office should ascertain whether Premier's interpretation of the statement of operational requirements for electronic monitoring is widely held and take action as appropriate.

HM Chief Inspector of Probation Andrew Bridges said:

"The YOT would have done their job properly if the case manager had identified when Williams was in breach and had acted on it in time. Furthermore, her managers did not supervise her work effectively enough. Finally, the fact that Premier failed to notify the YOT of Williams' curfew breaches clearly shows that they had an inadequate understanding of their responsibilities.

"The murder of Mrs Marian Bates was a tragic loss to her family, her friends and the community. The findings of this case illustrate the challenging nature of the responsibilities of those supervising difficult offenders in the community."

Inspectors found that the lack of a range of suitable accommodation to meet Peter Williams' needs made it much more difficult for him to build his life on a secure base, and for the relevant agencies to work with him effectively. As well as this, the YOT did not appear to have thought through the implications of making Peter Williams subject to all the requirements of an ISSP, given the high demands of the programme and his previous failure to respond positively to other interventions.

The report also says that there was insufficient formal induction or training for new staff in the Nottingham City YOT in the period leading up to the final release of Peter Williams, and some staff were ill-equipped to deliver appropriate supervision of children and young people who had offended.

Notes to editors

1. A copy of the full report will be available online from Monday at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/probation/inspprob/recent-reports.html>

1. Andrew Bridges is available for interview. Please call 020 7035 4381 to bid.