



HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report 2010-11

Independent inspection of
adult & youth offending work

75 years of public service



FOREWORD

**BY ANDREW BRIDGES CBE
HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PROBATION 2004-2011**

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HM Chief Inspector of Probation 2004-2011

Having completed my seventh and final year as Chief Inspector, I am as ever proud to introduce this Annual Report of the work of HM Inspectorate of Probation during 2010/2011 – our 75th year of public service. We independently inspect adult & youth offending work in order to help improve effective practice.

The occasion of my own final Annual Report is my opportunity to highlight the quality of the collective work of all the staff of HMI Probation during the last seven years, as evidenced by the reports we have produced. In a demanding schedule, reports have been done on time and to a high level of quality, and this has been achieved only because our inspection staff (HM Inspectors and Practice Assessors) and our support service staff (inspection support, information and other staff) have all worked as an effective team. As Chief Inspector I have received a lot of positive comments from others about our work, and I would like to confirm here, on the record, that this has only been possible because of how well all the staff of this Inspectorate have worked together on our collective enterprise.

My successor as Chief Inspector may well, properly, wish to introduce a new and perhaps different approach to the job. This is to be expected, because Ministers' expectations and other developments in the wider context in which we work will continue to unfold, as they have done before during our 75-year history. However, for those who may be weighing up future options for change, it is worth noting how the work of this Inspectorate is currently helping to improve the quality of practice, both in adult & youth offending work, and in the wider Criminal Justice System.

- We're independent, and we inspect work not organisations. As such, we intend to be seen as an authoritative source of 'fair comment'.
- We don't formally regulate or enforce, but we provide a national benchmark for what success looks like – especially valuable when providers become more diverse.
- We don't focus on compliance with procedures or rules – instead we examine a representative sample of cases in each location in turn, and we assess how often in practice the *right things were being done well enough with the right individuals in the right way at the right time*, including a specific focus on the Public Protection and the Child Protection aspects of the work.
- We do this because no one else can measure these aspects of the work. In so doing we don't duplicate the work of performance managers and auditors – instead we *complement* their work, and provide our own unique Added Value.
- Although there is a cost to the Inspectorate to 'going out to see what is actually happening with real cases' the cost to those inspected is low because we only ask them to 'show us their work', and we are very focused in what we choose to assess during each visit.

- Thus, our inspections overall are *cheap*, both for us and for the bodies whose work we are inspecting - for every pound spent on providing local Youth Offending teams across England and Wales (for example), roughly a halfpenny in total is spent on inspection¹. And because of this, it is a false economy not to retain a rolling programme that focuses on the key sensitive subject of 'public safety' – i.e. Public Protection and Child Protection.
- Because each body whose work is being inspected is also asked to provide at least one person to assist with an inspection, they each gain a person who is trained in our methodology, and in assessing against our 'national benchmark'. This should help them to improve their own practice.
- Our joint inspections employ much of the same approach to examine the quality of work in many aspects of the wider Criminal Justice System.
- Overall, we also aim to behave while inspecting in such a way that the people we work with want to improve, and are enabled to do so. We receive positive feedback that we do this well.
- For the future, the latest refinements to measuring 'Outcomes' within our inspection methodology mean that our inspections could play a key role in assisting Ministers to know whether Probation Trusts or other providers are achieving the desired results.

Our main office is located economically in Manchester (i.e. not in London), where almost all our inspection support and information staff do the project planning, organising and administration of each of our 70+ inspections each year, using software that we have designed and tailored to our specific purposes, within the infrastructure provided for us by our 'sponsoring' Department, the Ministry of Justice. They then process and quality assure the data collected, and organise the publication and distribution of each report (hard copies as well as on the website).

In these ways these excellent support service staff, including those who handle our finance and other corporate services, enable the Inspection staff (Inspectors and Practice Assessors) to do their job of visiting localities, assessing the quality of the work that they see, and aggregating the qualitative judgements that they have made. Our panel of Associate Inspectors enables us to deploy quality people on inspection visits 'as needed' while keeping overhead costs relatively low. All the Inspection staff have also been excellent in conscientiously benchmarking their judgements, teamworking well in different workgroups, and delivering the demanding schedule of the core inspection programmes on time and to a good standard.

The lead Inspector for each inspection manages the visit, collates the findings and writes the report. An Assistant Chief Inspector manages each inspection programme and also edits each report. The Chief Inspector manages the Inspectorate.

1. In round numbers each Core Case Inspection of Youth Offending work costs the Inspectorate about £24k, including overheads, and the local partnership maybe £11k, making a total of less than £35k for each one. That makes about £5.5m as the overall total cost of these inspections over three years. At c£400m per annum the cost of actually providing local YOTs comes to £1,200m over three years – and hence for every pound spent on providing local YOTs across England and Wales, roughly a halfpenny in total is spent on inspection.

Because each member of the whole Inspectorate plays their own part effectively, the whole annual programme of inspections gets delivered on time and to a good standard. We have organised ourselves so that we make the most use we can of our resources each year, while still treating our own hardworking staff reasonably decently, and I believe that we are seen by others as a lean organisation. Our developing outline plan will enable the Inspectorate to take its fair share of the wider annual budget reductions over the next four years while maintaining a worthwhile inspection programme – our current projection means that meeting the 2011/2012 budget should prove readily achievable in practice.

However, as an organisation that regularly preaches to others about the importance of continuous improvement, we are well aware that this must apply to ourselves too. Alongside our existing commitment to constantly quality assuring our own inspection judgements and wider methodology, our staff are also aware that what Ministers and/or the new Chief Inspector might ask them to do could change. They also know that continuous improvement should apply to our organisation as well as our methodology. Therefore our collective pride in what we have achieved to date is tempered by the desire to avoid complacency. Accordingly I know that they will remain committed to achieving further continuous improvement in the future, including increasing involvement in measuring outcomes if required.

As a result, since this is my final Annual Report Foreword, to be published after my retirement, I can take this opportunity to offer my congratulations and my thanks to all the staff of HM Inspectorate of Probation over the last seven years for what they have achieved, and I wish them all the very best in going wherever my successor decides to take them.

Andrew Bridges CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation