DIPLOMA IN PROBATION STUDIES PROGRAMMES INSPECTION 2003

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Foreword

Training men and women to become probation officers is a crucial task and one that determines the ability of the National Probation Service to do its work effectively. The Diploma in Probation Studies represents a major investment in the future.

When the step was taken to replace a social work diploma with a bespoke qualification for probation officers it was a leap of faith. It was brave, some said foolhardy, to design an programme of study that integrated academic teaching with work-based supervised practice and led to a combined NVQ and Degree.

Previous inspections of the Standing Panel for the DipPS had focused on the extent to which the national framework had been implemented in nine different Consortia and how well they were working in practice. This inspection report focuses on outcomes – does the DipPS programme produce competent newly qualified probation officers? Yes it does and indeed it produces many who are operating well beyond a newly qualified level of practice.

There were some important areas for improvement – better business planning for Consortia, meeting the training needs of practice development assessors, improved preparation for supervising high risk of harm cases and finally smoother transition arrangements as trainees move into their first jobs as qualified officers.

The DipPS programme is currently subject to a range of reviews looking at the core curriculum, the occupational standards and the regulatory framework. This inspection report has and will inform those reviews. Whatever changes result from the review process they will build on what is already an effective means of training probation practitioners.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

APL   Accreditation of prior learning

CJNTO   Community Justice National Training Organisation

DipPS   Diploma in Probation Studies

HEI   Higher Education Institution

HMIP   HM Inspectorate of Probation

MAPPP   Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel

NVQ   National Vocational Qualification

NPD   National Probation Directorate

NQO   Newly Qualified Officer

OASys   Offender Assessment System

PDA   Practice Development Assessor

TPO   Trainee Probation Officer

INTRODUCTION

The Inspection – background and context

The second inspection of Diploma in Probation Studies (DipPS) programmes, commissioned by the Standing Panel for the Approval of the DipPS, was undertaken jointly by HMIP and CJNTO between January and March 2003. The Panel, which includes HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), the National Probation Directorate (NPD) and the Community Justice National Training Organisation (CJNTO), is the body responsible for ***"establishing arrangements for the approval, inspection and review of programmes."*** (Regulatory Framework-Diploma in Probation Studies, April 1999)

The overall aim of the inspection was to examine the extent to which DipPS programmes produce staff able to fulfil the role of a probation officer at a beginning level of professional practice, and who are equipped to:
- Protect the public
- Prevent crime
- Promote community safety.

(taken from Role of the Probation Officer, Regulatory Framework, April 1999)

Specific objectives included an examination of the extent to which programmes equipped new probation officers with the appropriate skills, knowledge and values to:
- Evaluate information, make assessments and provide reports to courts and others
- Manage and enforce community sentences and licences
- Bring about changes in behaviour which reduce the impact on victims and risk of harm posed to the wider community
- Manage and co-ordinate the contribution of other services
- Treat people fairly, openly and with respect
- Promote lifelong learning and a commitment to continuous professional development.

Methodology

The inspection used as its focus the employer perspective of programme outcomes. Standards and criteria (see Appendix 1) were designed to reflect the requirements of the Regulatory Framework and to ensure the overall aim of the inspection was met. A focus on diversity was integrated into the methodology. There were three main stages:

1. Documentary evidence
Prior to the visit, the Consortium was asked to submit the following:
- Annual Monitoring of DipPS programme 2001-2002
- Consortium Annual Report 2002
- HE Provider Annual Report
- NVQ Centre report for 2002 and/or External Verifier reports for 2002
- Strategy for recruitment and retention of diverse staff groups onto programmes
- Arrangements for transfer and induction of staff on completion of programmes into employment as qualified probation officer.

2. Fieldwork:

- Two day visits to each Consortium that included meetings with representatives from all the groups responsible for the delivery and management of the programme. Probation officers who had qualified from trainee cohorts 1-3 were also interviewed.
- Scrutiny of portfolios compiled by probation officers who had qualified since 2000. These included case records, supervision notes, appraisal review notes and evidence of professional development.
- Reading of additional documentary information provided during the fieldwork.
- Feedback to Consortium Managers of emerging findings.

3. Collation of findings:

- Individual reports were sent to each Consortium for comments and proposed amendments.
- Final draft documents were presented to the Standing Panel. These reports form the basis for this composite national inspection report.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengths

- All the programmes were producing officers who were able to fulfil the role of probation officer at the beginning level of practice and some NQOs showed impressive levels of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Working relationships in many of the Consortia were effective and all sought to work collaboratively with other parties involved in their programmes.
- All saw enabling trainees to develop and rehearse skills in becoming a reflective practitioner as important.
- Positive action was undertaken in every Consortium to recruit a diverse group of trainees.
- Most trainees were provided with a supportive learning environment that enabled development of the knowledge, skills and values required for professional practice.
- Most Consortia undertook ongoing curriculum development to reflect changes in the role and tasks of a probation officer.
- NVQ Assessment centres had been further integrated into the programme delivery.

Good Practice examples are included in the report findings and full details are given in Appendix 2.

Areas for Improvement

Programme management
- Not all Consortia had robust business planning processes and effective meeting arrangements for the Consortium Board.
- Insufficient information was provided to line managers about the structure, operation and content of programmes.
- There continued to be an imbalance in the recruitment of male and female TPOs.

Delivery and assessment
- Assessment of the training needs, induction and ongoing development of PDAs were not being adequately addressed.

Outcomes
- Learning opportunities in relation to the management of high risk of harm cases, including resettlement work for both TPOs and NQOs, were insufficient.
- Although programmes were providing a range of inputs on diversity issues, there was evidence that more work needed to de done on developing skills.

Continuing professional development
- There was inconsistency in the arrangements for the transfer of information at point of qualification and individuals' learning and development needs were not always identified.
- Consortia had very limited, if any, opportunity to be involved in planning and delivering development opportunities for NQOs in their first six months.

Recommendations

These recommendations should be read in conjunction with the NPD's Better Quality Services Review 2002(BQS).

The NPD should ensure that in relation to:

Programme management
- Consortia business planning is based upon the framework of the Excellence Model with specified and costed business objectives that support national performance targets. (BQS recommendation)

Delivery and assessment
- A national approach is developed to meet the learning and development needs of PDAs.

Outcomes
- National guidelines are produced to enable TPOs and NQOs to undertake work with high risk of harm cases in a protected and supported environment.

Continuing professional development
- Protocols are established to formalise the exchange of information about the learning and development needs of TPOs as they complete the programme.

FINDINGS

1. Programme Management
Standard 1: Arrangements are in place for the effective and efficient management of the DipPS programme

1.1 *Written agreement*

Each Consortium had a written agreement that clearly specified the nature of its links with NVQ Assessment Centres and HEIs and their commitment towards achievement of the DipPS. There was also evidence that mechanisms were in place for robust quality assurance, which were monitored internally and externally e.g. the External Examiners and External Verifiers reports.

1.2 *Delivery and assessment*

Most Consortia had continued to consolidate their structures for managing and delivering the programme. The production of organisational flowcharts, job descriptions and programme handbooks helped to identify roles and responsibilities. Some Consortia had undertaken reviews of their arrangements and used this as a basis for further development. Where they had clearly documented business planning processes, the tasks and functions of meetings could be tracked and this enabled staff to feel more confident about the outcomes required.

Good Practice:
North East Consortium produced an Annual Development Plan that ensured the evolving needs of the Areas were addressed and the DipPS programme continually refined and updated.

North West Consortium NVQ Assessment Centre set its Annual Report against the requirements of the Regulatory Framework for the DipPS and this provided a framework for action planning.

Consortium Boards and Managers were strongly committed to developing constructive relationships throughout the programme. Some Consortium Boards had difficulty ensuring enough time was available for discussing issues at a strategic level given the growth of Consortium business beyond the trainee programme. All Consortia had networks of meetings that ensured communication of information and joint problem-solving. There was also evidence that, where PDAs were involved in teaching or co- delivering workshops with the University provider, all parties had a greater understanding of the requirements of each part of the programme.

Lines of accountability e.g. line management or to an external awarding body were clear and understood by representatives from all those groups delivering and managing their region's DipPS programme. Most Consortia reported that the Area role in the delivery and assessment of the programme had become more established, generally effective and had resulted in greater ownership of their responsibilities in relation to the DipPS programme. However, this contrasted with observations made by many line managers during the inspection visits that they did not have a clear understanding of what was required of them

locally or within the region. Consortia managers identified measures such as briefing meetings provided for line managers but clearly this needed to remain a focus of attention.

1.3 *Equal opportunities*

All Consortia had worked hard to establish a proactive approach to recruiting a diverse group of TPOs. There were close working relationships with HR staff and recruitment of trainees was part of a broader recruitment strategy. Links were developed with local community groups to encourage applications from all sections of the community. Other good practice examples included consultation with a Race Equality Council and the production of a recruitment booklet celebrating the diverse backgrounds of existing staff. Most regions had met or exceeded their recruitment targets for minority ethnic trainees and all were able to identify strategies to broaden their recruitment base.

There was evidence that all Consortia took a broad definition of diversity. Support was provided for trainees with dyslexia and other learning support needs, though concerns were expressed by PDAs that accessing additional equipment often took a long time. Many Consortia had developed a joint approach with their HE provider so that trainees could utilise University based provision. This included counselling services, support groups and, in the case of one programme, providing financial assistance regarding obtaining childcare.

Good Practice:
Midlands Consortium delivered a conference for black TPOs and PDAs as part of facilitating the developmental needs of these staff.

There remained an imbalance in the recruitment of male and female TPOs e.g. in cohort 4 25.5% were male. Most Consortia had taken steps to increase the numbers of male applicants but no region had managed to make a significant impact on numbers.

1.4 *Recruitment and selection*

All Consortia used the NPD recruitment and selection procedures from cohort 4 onwards. It was too early to produce attrition data for cohort 4&5. In relation to cohort 3 attrition was approximately 3%, indicating that the right people were selected. However, three programmes did experience a high level of withdrawals with either cohort 4 or 5. They all carried out analyses of reasons for leaving e.g. ill-health, an inappropriate career move, and this was not a feature of future cohorts.

Arrangements were in place for monitoring outcomes of recruitment and selection procedures, though subsequent use of the data varied considerably. For example, some Consortia organised workshops for assessors that focused upon consistency in assessing candidates and another circulated detailed information in their Annual Report.

Good Practice:
Midlands Consortium produced detailed monitoring information and consistently evaluated their recruitment and selection processes.

1.5 *Research, policies, procedures and practice developments*

The design of the programme structure strongly influenced the exchange of information. Most programmes convened specific meetings to address changes and developments relevant to probation practice and theory. It was evident that, where PDAs and tutors met regularly, information sharing was more proactive and effective. Joint appointments, or similar arrangements that existed in some programmes, reinforced the integration of theory and practice and also helped develop effective systems of communication between Consortia and the HE provider.

Good Practice:
Yorkshire & Humberside, Midlands, London and East of England programmes appointed probation practitioners as tutors. This had contributed to ensuring the application of theory and practice developments.

1.6 *Arrangements for quality assurance*

Quality assurance processes were a constant feature in all Consortia. Both the NVQ Assessment Centres and HE providers were subject to internal and external quality assurance requirements. Reports from External Examiners and Verifiers gave feedback highlighting good practice and identifying areas for improvement. All Consortia had mechanisms for trainees to feed back their experience e.g. one provided newly qualified officers with a questionnaire to evaluate their experience of the training. However, the action taken as a result of feedback was not always widely disseminated.

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment
Standard 2: The programme achieves a coherent and integrated vocational training and educational experience for each trainee, which is designed to enable all trainees to meet the required outcomes of competence to practice

2.1 *Knowledge, skills and values*

Each programme included a relevant knowledge curriculum. Many had curriculum development meetings that bought together Consortium staff, PDAs and tutors on a regular basis. Reviews in University reports highlighted a continued focus on the curriculum and displayed an understanding of the necessity for the knowledge curriculum to reflect changes in the National Probation Service. Unit D308 had been incorporated into the training with an increased focus on the What Works agenda.

Good Practice:
In the East of England and Midlands programmes PDAs and other practitioners delivered aspects of courses in the University. This included the joint delivery of workshops on ADP.

'Visiting tutors' with particular areas of expertise and knowledge were invited by the London programme to contribute to the academic teaching.

In three programmes there were joint appointments and secondments of PDAs and practitioners/ managers.

Completing NVQ units required TPOs to understand and integrate values supporting equality and diversity. University teaching and workshops were aimed to develop and reinforce the learning. One Consortium had developed a Valuing Diversity Workbook and anti-racist CD Rom, and also a 'Road Map' that identified learning opportunities about diversity in the academic and practice programmes. Other examples of good practice included a workbook on diversity and reflective logs that directed learning on equality and diversity. There was clear commitment to integrating equality and diversity, but opportunities for practising both knowledge and skills were described as less available. This factor was further evidenced in some portfolios that showed a lack of awareness and confidence in dealing with these areas.

2.2 *Learning support*

Most programmes provided individual or group contact and, in some the tutor met with the PDA, TPO and line manager to identify ongoing learning and development needs. In most, Consortia arrangements were deemed satisfactory. However, in two programmes problems were identified. As a result, plans to improve the situation were devised although clearly this needed to remain a focus of attention.

Arrangements were in place in all programmes for supervision and mentoring of TPOs in the workplace. The model of how PDAs and other staff were involved in delivering the practice component varied between Consortia and within regions. Some PDAs were located with trainees in local offices and others operated in a peripatetic role. Most

Consortia also used mentors and some had developed formalised arrangements for their input. There appeared to be no difference in effectiveness between the various models. More important was the quality of the PDA in providing practice based inputs and enabling the TPO to integrate theory and practice.

Good Practice:
South West Consortium had produced a practice curriculum that identified access to workplace learning requirements for TPOs and enabled TPOs and PDAs to plan for learning and development needs.

Access to computers was a concern for many of the programmes. The opportunities for greater flexibility, through computer based learning, was offset by anxiety that TPOs would struggle to have reasonable use of a computer except by making their own independent arrangements. Other learning resources including libraries were generally available, if not through the programme University then via the 'UK Libraries Plus' scheme. Some HEI providers had developed additional assistance for TPOs, such as arranging for postal loans or funding book expenditure in a regional library.

Good Practice:
South East Consortium had developed a library with completed NVQ units to use as guidance for assessors and candidates and to encourage consistency across the region.

Although Consortia had experienced a large increase in numbers of trainees with the more recent cohorts, most described being able to accommodate the growth by making changes in TPO placement e.g. placing trainees in a single centre or using specialist units, such as hostels, for periods of learning. Many Consortia reported that the increased number of TPOs had resulted in a greater ownership by Areas, especially as in some locations there were dwindling numbers of experienced probation officers. Some PDAs considered that the provision of learning opportunities was dependent upon their own efforts rather than the Area providing them as a matter of course.   There was also some concern about accommodating further large intakes e.g. in some areas access to IT facilities and office space was going to be a real problem. It was evident that ensuring appropriate learning opportunities needed careful planning.

Nearly all the Consortia provided evidence of meeting TPO learning and support needs in a manner that reflected equality and diversity. Special learning requirements, such as dyslexia and disability, were assessed and responded to. However, there was some concern expressed by PDAs that there was a considerable time gap between equipment being ordered and subsequently delivered for use by the TPO. Consortia attempted to provide support from the application stage and made arrangements regarding equipment and additional reading and writing time for candidates.

Development and support for NVQ assessors/ PDAs was consistently delivered through the NVQ Assessment Centres. However, there were clear inconsistencies even within programmes as to access to broader training and development opportunities for PDAs. A few Consortia had a structured induction and ongoing programme that included undertaking training and development NVQ units, but all requested that the provision of an accredited PDA award be explored again.

3. Programme Outcomes

Standard 3: On completion of the programme, staff are able to demonstrate that they understand their role and responsibilities and have acquired the relevant knowledge, skills and values to carry them out to the required standard.

The findings in this section are drawn from evidence collected from interviews with newly qualified officers and their line managers and from portfolios of evidence. Table 1 below shows the number of portfolios considered in each region, covering nearly every probation Area in England and Wales.

Table 1	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Portfolios Considered	9	14	10	18	22	14	12	7	17

Overall the evidence demonstrated that DipPS programmes do produce staff able to fulfil the role of a probation officer at a beginning level of probation practice. Some NQOs showed impressive levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. In the portfolios there were some examples of excellent practice.

3.1 *Assessment and report Writing*

NQOs described having both academic and practice based input on assessment and report writing. Their line managers described this area of practice as a strength.

Pre-sentence reports and structured assessments were the main items of evidence considered. Also included were some Parole Assessment, Breach, Programme and DTTO reports. Table 2 shows the average score for each region. The scoring framework ranged from very good at 1 and poor at 4. The lower the score the better the quality.

Table 2	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Scores	2.2	2.0	1.7	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.5	2.5	2.2

The standard of Pre-sentence reports was high and there were many examples of very good reports. These reports contained a good level of analysis and sufficient, relevant description. The conclusions were focused and contained a clear proposal with good descriptions of the nature and purpose of community orders, where these were proposed. Some reports, although thorough, were somewhat long. There were some examples of over-formalised language that affected the flow of a report.

Assessments were more likely to vary in quality. A variety of formats were used as the inspection pre-dated the full roll-out of OASys, the national offender assessment tool. The format sometimes affected the quality of the assessment, but of prime importance was the way in which the practitioner used the format. Weaker assessments contained insufficient analysis of the risk of reoffending and harm. Where OASys had been used, assessments tended to be more comprehensive especially the risk of harm section.

Breach reports were succinct and fit for purpose. The small number of Parole Assessment reports seen were of a good standard, although the NQOs reported that they had few learning opportunities as TPOs in relation to parole assessment.

3.2 Case management

Line managers stated that NQOs were prepared well by the DipPS programme for meeting national standards and particularly enforcement and breach. They considered that NQOs needed guidance on how to work with larger numbers of cases and for case management of a rising workload.

Under this section we looked mainly at supervision plans and contact logs. Table 3 shows the average score for each region.

Table 3	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Scores	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.2

Recording in contact logs was of a good standard. Many practitioners continued to make a detailed record of contact, which helped the reader understand what had happened in the case. There was a question as to how sustainable this approach would be with a full caseload. There were many good examples of practitioners working with offenders to gain their compliance with orders. There were a few examples of impressive efforts made with chaotic drug users, where there was an appropriate balance between engagement and enforcement.

Supervision plans were more variable in standard. The template being used had an impact on quality but, as with assessments, it was important that proper use was made of templates. The best supervision plans contained SMART objectives, linked to criminogenic factors and integrated plans to reduce the risk of harm with those to reduce the risk of reoffending. Some Areas had begun to use the OASys supervision plan format and these plans were often, but not always, of a higher standard.

3.3 Risk management

Both NQOs and their line managers identified this as an area for improvement. There was a range of approaches to providing learning opportunities in the management of high risk of harm cases e.g. one NQO had, as a trainee, supervised 2 or 3 of these cases. Others had co-worked with their PDA or another experienced PO. Others had not had any hands-on opportunity of learning about their management. This was problematic because, as qualified probation officers, they were expected to take on these cases and were not always given sufficient support and guidance.

The portfolio case material presented ranged from contact logs to supervision plans to MAPPP minutes. Table 4 shows the average score for each region.

Table 4	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Scores	2.1	2.1	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.0	2.3	1.9	2.7

Although NQOs identified this as an area of practice they felt less well prepared for by the DipPS programme, we found some examples of excellent practice. The recording on contact logs was detailed and helpful, especially liaison with professionals from other agencies. The effort put in by some practitioners in some cases was exceptional e.g. persistence in chasing other agencies to respond appropriately. There were some

particularly good examples of work with cases involving child protection concerns and of officers identifying new or raised risks and taking action to address them.

Best practice combined thorough assessment based on a range of sources, a clear commitment to monitoring risk consistently, strong links between agencies and appropriate management oversight.

Risk management plans were a weak area of practice. Even where OASys was used the plans were lacking detail and clear descriptions of risk factors, roles and responsibilities and timescales.

3.4 *Working with others*

Line managers described this as an area of strength. NQOs had developed, as trainees, a positive attitude to working collaboratively with others both within the probation service and those working in partnership.

The portfolio items scrutinised were a mixture of contact logs, supervision plans, referrals to partnership agencies and correspondence. Table 5 shows the average score for each region.

Table 5	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Scores	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.4

Evidence came from a wide range of cases e.g. child protection cases, drug using offenders, unemployed offenders and cases with a mental health dimension. Some cases involved a complex network of contacts, others involved a straightforward referral to a partner agency to meet a specific criminogenic need. There were some particularly good examples of liaison with police and/or social services in child protection and domestic violence cases.

Where cases fell down, it was often through a failure to inform relevant external agencies of new developments.

The recording of contact with other agencies was generally detailed and helpful.

3.5 Working with diversity

NQOs described receiving a range of helpful inputs from academics and practitioners on diversity issues. However, there was some concern expressed that although the input on underpinning knowledge and understanding was strong, there was less on relevant skills. This may have resulted in the lack of confidence of many NQOs that we observed during the inspection. There was a clear commitment from NQOs and line managers to ensuring that consideration of diversity issues was integrated into everyday practice, but sometimes they struggled to identify examples.

The portfolio items scrutinised included PSRs, assessments, supervision plans and contact logs. Some practitioners struggled to find two items to include in their portfolio. Table 6 shows the average score for each region.

Table 6	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Scores	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.7	2.4	2.7	2.0	2.4

NQOs chose cases using a wide definition of diversity. These included minority ethnic offenders, women offenders, those with physical disabilities, child care needs, lesbians, gay men, racially motivated offenders and those with mental health concerns.

There were examples of good practice of positive challenges to racist or sexist behaviour by offenders. In Wales there were good examples of offenders being offered supervision in the Welsh language.

Where cases were of a lower standard, it was often because the issues were covered in insufficient breadth or depth in assessments and, therefore, not reflected in the supervision of the case.

The best practice involved the identification of equality and diversity issues during assessment, these being built in to the supervision plan and then being followed through with support from relevant partner agencies where needed.

4. Continuing Professional Development
Standard 4: The programme supports the development of knowledge and practice for each trainee through reflection and evaluation of learning and a commitment to continuing professional development

4.1 *Accreditation of prior learning*

All Consortia had arrangements in place for the accreditation of prior learning, though the number of successful submissions by candidates varied across the programmes. There were examples of TPOs being able to submit prior certificated and experiential learning for the whole of Foundation Practice (phase1), as well as individual modules and practice requirements. Some TPOs had achieved the NVQ unit D308 at level 3, or had collected evidence through delivering accredited programmes that could be used towards submission of the unit. NVQ centre staff identified growing opportunities for APL through the development of NVQ level 3 in Community Justice in some Areas.

Good Practice:
London provided opportunities for existing staff to achieve the level 3 Certificate in Community Justice, becoming TPOs from Phase 2 of the programme. This reduced the length of time as a trainee and also showed investment in workforce and career planning.

4.2 *Reflective practice*

Newly qualified officers described the training as focusing strongly on reflective practice skills, provided through both academic input and the practice component. All programmes used reflective logs to enable the process and NQOs considered undertaking the NVQ as helping to develop these skills. NQOs provided examples of continuing to use reflective practice skills but all reported that, as workloads increased, the opportunities to build it into ongoing practice were reduced. This impacted upon how NQOs learnt from their experiences and critically analysed their work.

4.3 *Integration of theory and practice*

According to the NQOs, the training programme provided them with a good theoretical grounding and gave examples of using their theoretical knowledge once qualified e.g. in the assessment and management of sex offenders. They were concerned to maintain an up to date theoretical base but considered it difficult with high workloads.

4.4 *Consolidation of learning and continuing professional development*

NQOs described a wide variety of arrangements concerning their transition from TPO. These included three way meetings between NQO, PDA and the new line manager, end of DipPS programme reports on strengths and areas for improvement, induction and protected workloads. Some transferred smoothly from TPO status to NQO, especially where they had been a trainee in the team where they were placed once qualified. Others had a less than smooth transition e.g. where staffing shortages meant inadequate supervision and support, where they were placed in a specialist unit doing work with which they were unfamiliar and where their workload was not protected. The best practice involved a three way meeting resulting in a written report which was followed through in supervision.

Good Practice:
Trainees on the East of England programme had personal planning documents that were made available to new line managers on qualification.

In London three way meetings at the end of the programme resulted in a report on the range of work undertaken, strengths and weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The report was then passed onto new line managers to be followed through in supervision.

A specific issue arose in some regions relating to the initial placement of newly qualified officers. With increasing specialisation of teams, placements were often in units undertaking a limited range of work. The result was that some NQOs had limited opportunity to consolidate their learning. Insufficient consideration was being given to how to address this nationally and locally.

We looked at this from two perspectives, the systems and support provided by the Consortia and probation Areas to NQOs and, secondly, the commitment shown by NQOs themselves to their continuing professional development. In relation to the former, the items scrutinised included supervision notes, appraisal documents and training logs. Table 7 shows the average score for each region for the extent to which NQOs were provided with opportunities to consolidate their learning and to continue their professional development. For most regions this was an area for improvement.

Table 7	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Scores	2.4	2.0	2.3	2.4	2.8	1.9	2.8	2.1	2.7

Supervision notes varied considerably. Some of the best notes used a template that set the agenda for supervision. They managed to balance performance monitoring and accountability with a focus on training and development needs. Some line managers had a contract with their NQOs specifying expectations in relation to workload and supervision. The best of these listed month by month for the first 6 months the number of cases that the officer should hold, the number of PSRs to be allocated, as well as the types of new cases to be allocated in order to broaden experience. At the other end of the scale, the poorest supervision notes merely listed the cases that had been discussed with a brief note of the type of case and the issues covered with no sense of purpose. There were a small number of cases where it appeared that there had either been little supervision or there had been no supervision notes.

This was one of the first opportunities for Inspectors to scrutinise line managers supervision notes. We found a wide range of management styles which was reflected in the content of the notes. Although we did not always ask the question, it appeared that supervision notes were rarely scrutinised by senior managers. Appraisal formats varied. The best were succinct but managed to balance performance related objectives with assessment of competences and training and development needs. The most impressive examples integrated business needs and goals with personal ones. Others focused only on performance related objectives to the exclusion of any development of individual officers.

Good Practice:
North Wales appraisal template enabled a balance between performance and learning and development.

Some portfolios contained lists of training attended by NQOs. In general, there was an impressive array of training opportunities. Given the change agenda in the National Probation Service e.g. the introduction of OASys, it was not surprising that most training focused on organisational rather than individual training needs.

The second focus for this section was on the commitment shown by NQOs in relation to their own continuing professional development. It was clear that nearly all seen were interested in developing their knowledge skills and experience. Sometimes their ambitions were frustrated by the impact of high workloads i.e. no time to attend training, or by the organisational development agenda which may not have fitted with their own.

Items scrutinised included supervision notes, appraisals and training logs. None of these was designed to capture the NQOs' demonstration of their commitment and relied upon the line managers recording discussions in some detail. It was, therefore, one of the more difficult criteria to find evidence for. Table 8 shows the average score for each region.

Table 8	Y&H	NE	East	Wales	NW	Lon	SE	SW	Mids
Scores	2.4	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.8	2.7	2.1	2.2

It seemed to be hit and miss whether supervision notes recorded an NQOs request for specific learning and development opportunities. The best examples contained a record of the request e.g. to undertake domestic violence training, followed by a confirmation that they had attended, followed by allocation of a domestic case and further case discussion in supervision contributing to practice development. Appraisals sometimes contained a specific section for officers to comment on their development needs. These were sometimes but not always used well.

Appendix 1

STANDARD 1: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Arrangements are in place for the effective and efficient management of the DipPS programme.

Criteria

1.1 There is a clear written agreement specifying the nature of the links between the Consortium, NVQ Assessment centre and HEI(s) and their commitment towards achievement of the DipPS.

1.2 All parties who contribute to the delivery and assessment of the programme in the university and the workplace, and trainees undertaking the programme, have a clear understanding of:
   a) their own roles and responsibilities
   b) relationships between parties contributing to the programme
   c) lines of accountability.

1.3 The programme has effective equal opportunities policies in place and strategies to support recruitment and retention of a diverse staff group and particularly those from black and minority ethnic groups.

1.4 Recruitment and selection procedures ensure that all those recruited are suitably equipped to undertake all elements of the programme.

1.5 Mechanisms are in place to ensure that all staff responsible for the delivery and assessment of the programme in university and the workplace are kept up to date with relevant research findings, agency policies, procedures and practice.

1.6 Arrangements for programme monitoring and quality assurance include representation from the NVQ Centre(s), Higher Education partner(s) and each group of trainees.

STANDARD 2: PROGRAMME DELIVERY ASSESSMENT

The programme achieves a coherent and integrated vocational training and educational experience for each trainee, which is designed to enable all trainees to meet the required outcomes of competence to practice.

Criteria

2.1　The programme is designed to ensure trainees are given appropriate training and opportunity to learn relevant knowledge, skills and values by:
   - a) the inclusion of a relevant knowledge curriculum
   - b) the provision of appropriate and sufficient learning opportunities in the workplace
   - c) ensuring opportunities to develop understanding and integration of values supporting equality and diversity.

2.2　The programme is designed and delivered in a way that ensures appropriate and accessible learning support for trainees through:
   - a) university tutorial support
   - b) supervision and mentoring in the workplace
   - c) suitable access to learning resources, including libraries and ICT.

2.3　The programme ensures that learning and support needs of all trainees are met in a manner that reflects equality and diversity

2.4　The programme ensures that all staff involved in its delivery and assessment have their own leaning and support needs met to ensure that people are treated fairly, openly and with respect.

STANDARD 3: PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

On completion of the programme, staff are able to demonstrate that they understand their role and responsibilities and have acquired the relevant knowledge, skills and values to carry them out to the required standard.

Criteria

3.1　The programme equips staff with relevant knowledge, skills and values in relation to:
   - a) assessment and production of reports
   - b) management and enforcement of community sentences
   - c) management of risk and protection of the public
   - d) co-ordination of the contribution of other services
   - e) working with diversity.

3.2   On completion of the programme staff:
   a) make assessments and produce reports which meet the required standard
   b) practice in accordance with requirements of the appropriate standards for the management and enforcement of community sentences and licences
   c) work in a manner that is consistent with National Standards and procedures for management of risk and protection of the public
   d) manage and co-ordinate the contribution of other services to work with offenders and offending behaviour in a manner appropriate to their role
   e) have integrated knowledge, skills and values for equality and diversity into practice.

STANDARD 4: CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The programme supports the development of knowledge and practice for each trainee, through reflection and evaluation of learning and a commitment to continuing professional development.

Criteria

4.1   Prior achievement of recruits on to the programme is recognised and valued and, where appropriate, given credit towards the qualification.

4.2   The programme provides opportunity to develop and practice the skills of reflective practice and learning from and through experience.

4.3   On completion of the programme staff can demonstrate, through assessment, the integration of theory and practice.

4.4   Qualified staff entering employment are provided with opportunities to consolidate their learning and to continue their professional development.

4.5   Qualified officers demonstrate their commitment to their own continuing professional development.

Appendix 2

Good Practice Examples

East of England
- The development of personal planning documents to inform the new line manager as trainees made the transition to PO, drawing on their past experience and identifying current and future learning and development needs.
- A Senior Lecturer at De Montfort University attended PDA meetings, undertaking Internal Verification quality assurance on the NVQ and development work on Foundation Practice. This bought an academic perspective to the process.
- Workshops on anti-discriminatory practice run jointly by tutors and PDAs, enabling both skills and knowledge to be integrated into the content and delivery.
- The delivery of post qualifying workshops for new probation officers in managing increased workloads, working with high risk offenders and sex offenders, that addressed their learning and developmental needs at this stage.
- Publication of a monograph by an ex-TPO based upon her DipPS research project on enforcement.

London
- Three way meetings at the end of programme resulted in a report on the range of work undertaken, strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. The report was then passed onto the new line manager to be followed through in supervision.
- Information about the London DipPS programme was available in a Handbook identifying the roles and responsibilities of PDAs, Line Managers, University staff and Consortium Managers.
- The allocation of one Line Manager for a group of NQOs in the same location ensured a focus upon consolidation of learning.
- LPA provided opportunities for existing staff to achieve the level 3 Certificate in Community Justice, becoming TPOs from Phase 2 of the programme. This reduced the length of time as a trainee and also showed investment in workforce and career planning.

Midlands
- Overall strength of the TPO recruitment and selection process that was reinforced by the production of detailed monitoring information and consistent evaluation of the processes by the Consortium Operations Manager.
- The production of a Valuing Diversity Workbook and CD Rom on anti-racism to support trainees and PDAs in exploring diversity.
- A 'Road Map' document that identified learning and personal development opportunities about diversity throughout the programme.
- Research study 'Probation Officer Development and Retention' being undertaken by University and Consortium staff to track the professional development of probation officers who qualified through the DipPS.
- Delivery of a conference for black TPOs and PDAs – 'Learning and teaching from a black perspective' as part of facilitating the developmental needs of these staff.

North East

- An Annual Development Plan written by the Consortium and University that ensured the evolving needs of the Areas were addressed and the DipPS programme continually refined and updated.
- A booklet produced by the Consortium to broaden its base of recruits was an attractive and accessible way to advertise the work of Probation Areas.
- The development of Learning Cells provided an opportunity for both reviewing a trainee's development during the programme and gathering evidence for NVQ unit F307.
- Northumbria had a system for reviewing progress at six months after qualification and producing a report that focused upon learning and development needs.

North West

- NVQ Assessment Centre annual report that was set against the requirements of the Regulatory Framework for the DipPS and provided a framework for action planning.
- Development by PDAs of a modular programme for TPOs addressing diversity – 'Fit for Difference' to support their learning and development.
- Practice Development Assessors were provided with a Guide to assist them in understanding their role, to understand the overall delivery of the North West DipPS programme, and to ensure consistency across the region.
- Evidence from portfolios identified good examples of work on cases involving child protection concerns.

South East

- An Area invited applicants who failed the TPO recruitment and selection assessment centre to gain experience in probation practice by working as a PSO. This showed good evidence of workforce and career planning opportunities.
- The development of a library with completed NVQ units to use as guidance for assessors and candidates provided a resource tool and encouraged consistency across the region.
- There were good examples of practitioners succinctly recording offender compliance and using equitable and timely enforcement processes.

South West

- The production of a practice curriculum that identified access to workplace learning requirements for TPOs during the programme and enabled PDAs and TPOs to plan for learning and development needs.
- Development of a Learning Contract to be completed from stage 1 by TPO, PDA, Tutor and Line Manager and identifying strengths and areas for development.
- One Area used a pro-forma that required an assessment to evaluate the impact of training undertaken on subsequent practice.
- Critical incident presentation by TPOs as part of assessment procedures for the level 3 Integrated Study that utilised reflective practice skills.

Wales

- North Wales appraisal template that enabled a balance between performance and learning and development.
- A leaflet advertising the Trainee Probation officer scheme in Wales that succinctly summarised key information for applicants.

- Strong focus on recruiting a diverse trainee group using the REACH project and South Wales Diversity Advisor by both South Wales and Dyfed and Powys Areas.
- Induction for new officers in South Wales included providing information and support through an induction pack.

Yorkshire & Humberside
- Consortium operational management structures that had developed the role of the DipPS Programme Manager to ensure communication within the programme was clear and effective.
- Appointment of probation practitioners as tutors on the programme had contributed to ensuring a current curriculum and its application to practice.
- The HE provider was funding the development of a research project to further integrate the NVQ and academic accreditation.
- Supervision plans that used a helpful template had SMART objectives and were very focused.
- The design of a template to aid trainees in developing skills in reflective practice.