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Chief Inspector of Probation dedicates CBE to colleagues

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CAVERSHAM'S Andrew Bridges is the top man in his profession but his proudest moments come from his work in Berkshire.

The 55-year-old, who receives a CBE, is the Government's chief inspector of probation.

But from 1998 to 2001 he was Berkshire's chief probation officer after stepping up from the deputy's post.

Mr Bridges said: "It was one of the top-performing probation services at the time."

In 1998, after spending nine months as a part-time research fellow at Oxford University, he published a paper on the re-employment of offenders, cementing his standing as a leading authority in the field.

Mr Bridges said: "These are the things that people would recognise me for."

Married with two children, Bath-born Mr Bridges joined the probation service in 1973.

He worked in Wiltshire, Gwent and Leicestershire, before moving to Reading in 1989.

In 2001 he joined the inspectorate and was appointed deputy chief inspector in July 2003. He has been HM chief inspector of probation since April 2004.

Dedicating his CBE to his colleagues, he said: "It's a privilege to experience this recognition for the work of the service and for those who inspect the service on the public's behalf."

Mr Bridges admits probation officers are facing challenges, particularly over the treatment of offenders.

He said: "The probation service has been facing a lot of criticism, partly because some public expectations are running ahead of what it is possible to achieve.

"My job is to criticise only when it is falling short of what it should be achieving and not when it fails to achieve the impossible."