

DIPLOMA IN PROBATION STUDIES  
PROGRAMMES

Follow-up Inspection 2004

SKILLS  JUSTICE

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## FOREWORD

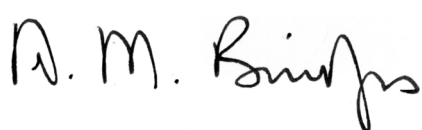
In 2003 a comprehensive inspection of the Diploma in Probation Studies programmes was carried out, focusing specifically on the quality of outcomes. We have now conducted a joint follow-up inspection. This report details encouraging progress in areas identified for improvement in the original inspection. Recommendations were met or largely met in every case – a pleasing result.

There is much evidence of Probation Training Consortia, Higher Education Providers and Probation Areas working closely and collaboratively together to continue to produce competent newly-qualified probation officers. At the time of the original inspection the Diploma in Probation Studies was already seen generally to be a successful method of equipping trainee probation officers to function fully as qualified staff emerging into the National Probation Service. This follow-up inspection has demonstrated that, in the intervening 12 months, further refinements have been made to these training arrangements.

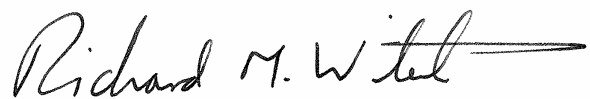
Despite the very real challenge of increased trainee probation officer numbers, Consortia, National Vocational Qualification Assessment Centres and Higher Education Providers had found the time and resources to progress action against the inspection recommendations. In aspects of work such as the professional development of practice development assessors, and increased learning opportunities for trainee probation officers in relation to high risk of harm offenders, there had been careful attention paid and some progress made.

This follow-up inspection comes at a very important time with the National Probation Service facing considerable change and the Diploma programme continuing to develop through reviews to the occupational standards. The National Offender Management Service poses the challenge of seamless supervision of offenders across the prison/probation interface, and the new Criminal Justice Act 2003 will change significantly the sentencing arrangements for offenders. The findings of this inspection support the importance of maintaining a competence-based training programme that can match the requirements of the modernised justice sector in such a time of change.

Changes to the constitution and terms of reference of the Diploma in Probation Studies Standing Panel are in hand. This report will allow the Panel to give formal approval to existing programmes for the period to September 2005. Henceforth, the processes of programme approval and inspection will be addressed rather more separately. HM Inspectorate of Probation will retain its independent role in inspecting work carried out in the National Probation Service. In relation to approval of programmes delivering post September 2005, Skills for Justice will lead on working alongside the National Probation Directorate in developing an ongoing approval process based on self-assessment.



**ANDREW BRIDGES**  
*HM Chief Inspector of Probation*



**RICHARD WINTERTON**  
*Chief Executive, Skills for Justice*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HM Inspectorate of Probation and Skills for Justice are greatly appreciative of the contribution made by the nine Consortia and the National Probation Directorate to this follow-up inspection.

### **Alan MacDonald**

HM Assistant Chief Inspector of Probation

### **Sarah Adamson**

Skills for Justice

### **Joy Neary**

Inspection Officer

### **Kate White**

HM Inspector of Probation

## GLOSSARY

BQS	Better Quality Services
CLAN	Centrally Led Action Network
DipPS	Diploma in Probation Studies
EEM	European Excellence Model
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human resources
ICT	Information and communications technology
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPD	National Probation Directorate
NPS	National Probation Service
NQO	Newly qualified officer
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PDA	Practice development assessor
PO	Probation officer
Skills for Justice	Sector Skills Council for the Justice Sector (Successor body to the Community Justice National Training Organisation)
TPO	Trainee Probation Officer

# INTRODUCTION

## Context and purpose:

The 2003 Inspection of the DipPS programme had found it to be effective in producing POs able to fulfil the role at a beginning level of professional practice. Portfolios of work by recently qualified officers were assessed, and the overall quality of these was high. It was therefore considered not necessary to examine practitioners' work further. The overall aim of this follow-up inspection was to gauge the progress made against the specific recommendations outlined in the 2003 Inspection Report. The original inspection Standards and Criteria are attached at Appendix 1.

## Methodology

We scrutinised Consortia Action Plans and reviews, requested specific documentary evidence in support of progress made, and conducted telephone interviews with Consortia Directors and other managers. We attended a meeting of DipPS programme managers from across England and Wales. We also interviewed key NPD staff.

In addition to the above documentary evidence we were provided with the following information:

- *Consortium Directors' CLAN Annual Plan 2004/2005*
- *DipPS Programme Managers' Action Plan 2003/2004*
- *Notes of DipPS Programme Managers' meeting (9.12.03 and 17.3.04)*
- *Continuing Development Award for Practice Development Assessors*
- *Learning Opportunities for TPOs in Assessment and Management of Risk of Harm*
- *National Guidance for the transfer of individuals' needs from the point of qualification*
- *Measuring and Analysing TPO Attrition Rates.*

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- All Consortia responded positively to the recommendations previously identified and showed clear evidence of progress in relation to most of them.
- Where work did remain outstanding, there was generally a need for Consortia and the NPD to ensure these aspects remained a focus of attention.
- Structures had been developed to improve collaborative working at a national level and a more consistent approach, recognising regional differences, was emerging.
- There was a need for greater ongoing strategic oversight of the implementation of national developments.
- The DipPS Programme Managers' Group made a particularly significant contribution to developments at national level.

## **Recommendations from 2003 report**

*The NPD should ensure that in relation to:*

### ***Programme management***

- r Consortia business planning is based upon the framework of the EEM with specified and costed business objectives that support national performance targets (BQS recommendation).***

Progress: Largely met

All Consortia had developed or built on existing business planning practices to ensure this recommendation was being addressed and most plans were now EEM based. A timetable set by Consortia Directors and the NPD in 2003/2004 required that draft plans were produced in that year, followed by a finalised version in 2004/2005 based upon EEM. Arrangements were in place to provide the NPD with the plans. This acted as both a quality assurance process in terms of ensuring links to NPS targets and enabling the NPD to be aware of the content of, and differences between Consortia plans. Specifically the NPD considered that since receiving the plans financial controls had become more focused and resulted in the initiation of funding of a number of projects that met local need.

The production of a Consortium Directors' CLAN Annual Plan 2004/2005 had also assisted Consortia developments nationally. It augmented communication and collaborative working between Consortia, the NPD and regions and established effective structures. For example, the DipPS Programme Managers' Group worked to CLAN-led objectives drawn from the 2003 DipPS Inspection Report. Some other aspects addressed in the Annual Report were in relation to diversity targets that linked to national diversity strategy objectives.

The NPD identified that progress had been made and they considered the next stage would be to focus on a mesh between Consortia and regional/area plans. We also noted a much greater degree of collaboration and effective working. However, it was noticeable that lines of accountability were not always clear between the NPD and regions and the monitoring of implementation plans lacked an ongoing strategic overview.

### ***Delivery and assessment***

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

Progress: Largely Met

This recommendation had been largely met, though with further work needed on an implementation plan. The NPD had contracted the

Community Justice National Training Organisation/Skills for Justice to develop an NVQ qualification for PDAs. A report proposing a four-unit cluster Award was produced in early 2004 and sent out for consultation to Consortia Directors, Chief Officers and Chairs. The feedback indicated general support for the proposed award which has yet to be finally approved. Most Consortia regarded it as compatible with current or planned arrangements for PDA development. Where concerns were expressed these related in the main to financial and resource implications.

The Consortium Directors' CLAN also identified this recommendation in their Annual Plan and gave the DipPS Programme Managers' Group the objective of producing a national framework for PDA development that built upon the NVQ qualification structure. Although specific work had not yet been undertaken its aims had been clearly identified. There was a commitment to work collaboratively on the delivery of an Award so as to ensure that all Consortia were able to deliver development opportunities.

Most Consortia had also focused on development opportunities for PDAs at a local level and this was reflected in their business plans. There continued to exist however quite considerable differences between Consortia in terms of the availability of this resource.

It was evident that progress in relation to this recommendation had occurred regionally and nationally. However, there was no evidence of how any implementation plan would be monitored and reviewed at a strategic level. Similarly, it appeared consideration had not been fully given to ensuring that all these approaches were bought together in a tangible plan.

## **Outcomes**

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

Progress: Largely Met

This recommendation had become part of the Consortium Directors' CLAN Annual Plan 2004/2005 and was expanded to include both the production of guidance and its implementation by the end of May 2005. Subsequently, members of the DipPS Programme Managers' Group produced a draft paper clearly identifying key issues and proposing a framework. It was intended that it would be discussed and taken further at the next Consortium Directors' CLAN meeting.

The timescale ensured Cohort 7 TPOs would come under new arrangements as they progressed into phase 2 of the DipPS programme, but it did not fully address the developmental needs of Cohort 6. However, there was evidence that most Consortia were introducing



regional guidance covering the allocation of these cases to TPOs. They regarded this as useful preparation for implementing the national guidance once it was issued.

Work on this recommendation had highlighted the importance of the core curriculum being updated to ensure it matched the academic learning requirements of TPOs as they increasingly worked with high risk of harm cases. Including a stronger academic focus on resettlement work was regarded as important particularly with the advent of NOMS. The NPD considered the move to central management of the HE providers' contracts had enabled the core curriculum to be updated more effectively. They also identified that the review of the Occupational Standards would address this area of work.

### ***Continuing professional development***

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

Progress: Partly Met

A draft paper on this recommendation had been produced by a small working group of Diploma managers and was due to be considered at a forthcoming Consortium Directors' CLAN meeting. They had gathered information from all the Consortia about current transition arrangements for TPOs. Building on the best of existing practice, a proposal was emerging for a common process built around the production of an individual detailed reference for each TPO. The intention was to implement this with Cohort 5 TPOs finishing in October 2004. However, there was also recognition that the paper needed further development and that it would need to involve HR regional groups.

Work related to the recommendation was also occurring at a regional level where this issue had been followed up in some individual Consortium Inspection Reports. Those Consortia had reviewed their procedures and were introducing new practices or consolidating existing ones. All intended to work with the national guidance once agreed.

## **FURTHER FINDINGS**

All Consortia had made progress in relation to many of their respective identified areas for improvement. This has been detailed in individual feedback reports (unpublished) to each Consortium. Some work did remain outstanding, however, and Consortia and the NPD needed to ensure that these aspects remained a focus of attention.

Whilst work on a national level ensured increased consistency and collaboration there was also evidence that good practice was continuing to be developed regionally. It was additionally pleasing that this was being undertaken at a time of managing large cohorts of trainees and in some cases working through the process of change to a new HE provider.

### ***Programme management***

Consortia continued to show a strong commitment to developing constructive relationships within their regions and were establishing clear networks to share and exchange information.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE:**

*Wales Consortium, in revising its structure, had increased its commitment to being an all-Wales body, and this had led to a more comprehensive commitment from the four constituent Areas at both strategic and operational levels.*

#### **GOOD PRACTICE:**

*The DipPS Programme Managers' Group was developing a Power Point presentation for delivery to line managers locally in order to enhance knowledge levels. The Group had also issued a draft paper that aimed to establish a common system for measuring and analysing TPO attrition rates through the introduction of a DipPS Leavers' Questionnaire. This would be taken forward through consultation with HE providers and regional HR representatives.*

### ***Delivery and assessment***

Most Consortia had progressed in developing learning and development opportunities for their PDAs, though mindful that a national approach was also awaited. It continued to be evident, however, that access to opportunities varied considerably even within regions and this remained to be a matter of concern.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

Yorkshire and Humberside Consortium had set up a training sub-group which had met twice since the inspection and which ran training events.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

Midlands Consortium had developed a post-qualifying programme for PDAs and other relevant staff in conjunction with Birmingham University.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

North West Consortium had designed a modular development programme for PDAs that used action learning sets as a medium for integrating theory and practice.

Learning support for TPOs by both Consortia and HE providers had been identified as an area for improvement for two programmes in the 2003 Inspection Report. Plans to improve the situation were being acted upon.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

The development of the TPO Representatives' Group as part of the South East Consortium programme had been a major step forward in providing a means for TPO concerns regarding academic matters to be raised.

**Outcomes**

Nearly all Consortia had focused upon developing opportunities for TPOs to work with high risk of harm cases, either through involvement in the establishment of national guidance or via local plans. For some Consortia this meant updating local guidance whilst ensuring that they were able to act upon national guidance once it was available.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

London had helpfully compiled a co-working contract for joint work on high risk of harm cases between trainees and qualified colleagues.

Opportunities to provide TPOs with experience and knowledge in resettlement work had also begun to be developed.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

Trainees in the North East Consortium were offered an introduction to resettlement work and the Consortium was organising a regional conference on this aspect of practice.

Working with diversity had continued to be a central part of the programme for deliverers. They described making ongoing efforts to ensure integration of knowledge into practice from the induction stage through to qualification. Evaluation of training events tested the link between skills and knowledge.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

The Midlands Consortium post-qualification questionnaire to former Cohort 4 TPOs now included reference to skills in diversity. 96% of the respondents had been satisfied with how they had been prepared for this aspect of practice.

***Continuing professional development***

The 2003 Inspection had identified a 'less than smooth transition from TPO status to NQO' for some staff. There was evidence in subsequent Consortia Action Plans that attempts were being made to improve arrangements or in some cases establish them. National guidance had become an objective for the DipPS Programme Managers' Group and it was intended that this would enable Consortia to move forward. However, it was an aspect that needed to be worked upon.

Most Consortia had also looked with the Areas in their region at how they might be involved in post-qualifying development opportunities. This had been positively received and indicated continuing closer working relationships throughout regions.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

South West Consortium had made a commitment to resource the development of a common induction programme for all NQOs across the region.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

The East of England Consortium had revised the timing of post-qualification workshops to ensure learning on high risk of harm work took place prior to completion of the DipPS.

**GOOD PRACTICE:**

Midlands Consortium had devised a 'Personal Plan' for NQOs and line managers that identified key objectives and associated learning and development needs for the first six months in post.

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Standards and Criteria**

### **Standing Panel for the Approval of the Diploma in Probation Studies**

### **Programme Inspection 2003**

#### **A1.1 STANDARDS AND CRITERIA**

##### **Overall Aim**

To examine the extent to which programmes produce staff who are able to fulfil the role of POs at a beginning level of professional practice and who are equipped to:

- protect the public
- prevent crime
- promote community safety.

##### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives are to examine the extent to which programmes equip new POs with the appropriate knowledge, skills 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 coordinate the contribution of other services
- treat people fairly, openly and with respect
- promote lifelong learning and a commitment to continuous professional development.

***Standard 1: Programme management***

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

- 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), HE partner(s) and each group of trainees.

***Standard 2: Programme delivery and 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.**

- 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 learning 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.**

- 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) coordination 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 coordinate 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.**

- 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 staff demonstrate their commitment to their own continuing professional development.