HM Inspectorate of Probation

AN EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION
INSPECTION PROGRAMME
THEMATIC REPORT

"An Essential Element of
Effective Practice"

An Inspection of
National Probation Service
Work on Offender
Accommodation

2005

Foreword

Our Effective Supervision Inspection programme contains a thematic element, the subject of which changes as we inspect each 'round' of probation areas. For the fourth group the thematic topic was offender accommodation. This report brings together the findings from the eight areas visited during this phase of the programme.

The inspection found that many offenders with an accommodation need also had linked drugs, alcohol and thinking skills problems. We noted the higher reconviction rates of those offenders compared with the overall probation caseload. The reoffending rates recorded in this inspection, for offenders with accommodation needs, suggest that offender accommodation issues should have a high level of priority within the National Probation Service.

We found that the leadership arrangements for offender accommodation, both nationally and at the local level, needed to be strengthened. The Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan gave a welcome and clear steer on future developments planned for this area of work.

Good practice examples were noted in many of the areas we visited. In particular, we saw several examples of Approved Premises being used to good effect to address public protection and crime reduction concerns. However, a number of key service delivery issues were not of sufficient quality. These included accommodation and risk of harm assessments, supervision plans and the focus on race and wider diversity. Access to mainstream accommodation resources, via Supporting People arrangements, varied across the areas and this was a limiting factor in the work.

The National Probation Service seeks to manage offenders in ways that reduce reoffending and protect the public. We believe this is underpinned by offenders' having access to and sustaining satisfactory accommodation. Appropriate accommodation is not just a basic need for offenders, it is also an essential element in achieving the desired outcomes from their supervision – to make them less likely to reoffend, and to protect the public.

ANDREW BRIDGES
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Acknowledgements

Contents

Glossary

CPO	Community punishment order: a community sentence requiring the offender to complete unpaid work, measured in hours
CRAMS	Case Record Administration and Management System
ESI	Effective Supervision Inspection: HMI Probation's current programme of inspection of the 42 Probation areas over three years from June 2003
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
ISP	Initial supervision plan: In a probation case record, the first formal assessment and plan for an individual offender's period of supervision
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LoR	Likelihood of reoffending
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MAPPP	Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPD	National Probation Directorate: Although a part of the Home Office, the NPD is also the 'Head Office' of the NPS
NPS	National Probation Service: Consisting of 42 Probation Areas, each run by its own Board, plus the NPD
OASys/eOASys	Offender Assessment System/electronic Offender Assessment System: The nationally designed and prescribed framework for both the NPS and the Prison Service to assess offenders, implemented in stages from April 2003.
PAGS	Probation Accommodation Grants Scheme
RoH	Risk of harm
SMART	Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Realistic – Time-bounded

1.   KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR QUALITY OF OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION MANAGEMENT

Strengths

- All areas recognised the importance of accommodation issues in the effective supervision of offenders.
- Most areas had in place policies and strategies on offender accommodation matters.
- The majority of areas had access to specialist staff working in this field.
- Partnership arrangements were generally well developed.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and prioritisation of offender accommodation issues, both locally and nationally, needed to be improved.
- Information systems (and reporting arrangements) for offender accommodation work were inadequate.
- Implementation arrangements for local offender accommodation strategies were weak.
- Staff training and support arrangements were patchy.
- Little was being done to inform sentencers of offender accommodation work and future developments.
- Insufficient time was allocated to senior managers to enable them to effectively engage with the Supporting People agenda.

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR QUALITY OF OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- RoH classifications were generally appropriate.
- The majority of cases with an identified accommodation need had been referred to a specialist worker.
- Planned interventions matched the needs of the case.
- Most cases had clear LoR scores, and supervision plans adequately addressed these issues.

Areas for improvement

- More than half of the cases did not have an adequate assessment of accommodation issues.

- Most cases did not have an adequate RoH assessment at the start of supervision and this was not routinely reviewed.

- Few supervision plans met national standards or contained SMART objectives.

- Assessments of race and wider diversity issues did not feature in the majority of the case records.

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR QUALITY OF OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION INTERVENTIONS

Strengths

- Work was directed at community integration in the majority of cases.

- Home visits were taking place in relevant high/very high RoH cases.

- In high/very high RoH cases public protection issues were acted on promptly and additional requirements were implemented.

- Reviews of ISPs at Approved Premises were being carried out in line with national standards.

Areas for improvement

- Reviews of ISPs were not carried out routinely.

- SMART objectives were not set and some staff had limited knowledge of this concept.

- In high/very high RoH cases MAPPP/risk management plans were not properly integrated with the overall supervision of the offender.

- Victim issues were not prioritised in the supervision of many offenders.

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR QUALITY OF INITIAL OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION OUTCOMES

Strengths

- Most offenders had not been reconvicted; this was particularly significant for those in Approved Premises where only 3.1% had been reconvicted during the period of supervision. The reconviction rates for those offenders who had an accommodation need, and had not accessed an Approved Premises place, was 36.3%. The reoffending rate of offenders not identified as having an accommodation need was 19.6%.

- Progress had been made on criminogenic factors.

- The accommodation status for offenders had improved.

- RoH had been managed and reduced.

- Attention was focused on long-term reintegration issues, community ties and ensuring contact with mainstream organisations to sustain the offender in the community.

Areas for improvement

- Limited housing stock in the locality and access to move on accommodation was a concern for all areas.

- Arrangements for collecting and using outcome data and information on race and wider diversity issues were weak.

- There was limited evidence that offenders were being challenged on their offending related attitudes, beliefs and behaviour and on the harm caused to victims.

Recommendations

The NPD should ensure that:

- *The level of priority for work on offender accommodation issues is made clear, and implementation of the offender accommodation strategy is monitored.*

- *Areas have guidance on the establishment and use of information systems to enable the accurate collection of data relevant to offender accommodation issues. This to include use of information in eOASys and the needs of black and minority ethnic offenders and others with specific diversity needs.*

- *Assistance and advice is given to enable areas to obtain maximum benefit from Supporting People arrangements.*

- *Information from the outcome target for offender accommodation interventions, introduced in performance measure PM4 (April 2005), is utilised to promote best practice across the NPS.*

Boards should ensure that:

- *Staff understanding of local offender accommodation strategies is improved.*

- *All relevant managers, support staff and practitioners involved in this aspect of service delivery have access to relevant training and developmental opportunities.*

- *An adequate assessment of accommodation needs is undertaken in all cases and these encompass a specific assessment of any race equality or wider diversity needs.*

- *All RoH assessments are completed on time, to an adequate standard and contain an assessment of accommodation issues.*

- *Risk management arrangements, including accommodation issues, are reviewed in all cases where the RoH increases during the course of supervision.*

- *Areas produce initial and review supervision plans that contain SMART objectives and, where necessary, fully integrate risk management plans and accommodation interventions.*

- *Senior management teams routinely report to them on the profile of accommodation needs in their areas and on outcomes from interventions in this work.*

2.   THE INSPECTION

Background

2.1   HMI Probation had previously looked at offender accommodation in 2001 through 'Shelter and Protection', an inspection of the Langley House Trust Fresh Start projects. This had resulted in a follow-up inspection in 2003. Key to this was a recommendation to the NPD to develop an Offender Accommodation Strategy. The NPD subsequently launched a number of initiatives that focused on accommodation issues. The Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan was launched in July 2004. This was followed by a Sex Offender Strategy and an Approved Premises and Offender Housing Strategy in November 2004. These developments had not, by the time of the inspection, had a significant impact on service delivery.

2.2   Alongside the offender accommodation thematic, HMI Probation has also been involved in Supporting People inspections across England and Wales and these will continue until 2007. This report comments on aspects of Supporting People, concentrating on links made with local authorities and attendance by senior managers at commissioning groups. It also became apparent during the inspection that local authorities interpreted the Homelessness Act 2002 differently and this led to differences in the way they provided services to homeless offenders.

2.3   Until recently there had been a limited KPI agenda linked to offender accommodation and little steer on NPS performance requirements for this aspect of service delivery. This has affected the level of priority areas have placed on accommodation issues. As part of the implementation of the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan the NPS has introduced the following Measure:

PM 4 – the percentage of offenders in suitable accommodation at end of order/licence compared to start.

This measure was introduced on 1 April 2005. This should give more focus to NPS and local area work on offender accommodation issues.

Aims and Objectives

2.4   The overall aim of this inspection was:

To determine how well the NPS identifies and addresses the accommodation needs of offenders and the outcomes from this work in relation to:

- *RoH*

- *LoR*

- *successful community reintegration.*

2.5   The specific aims were:

To determine the extent to which, in respect of accommodation services, the NPS:

- *identifies all relevant cases consistently*

- *accurately assesses the risk and accommodation needs of offenders*

- *delivers effectively accommodation services which address risk and criminogenic need*

- *collaborates with other agencies sufficiently and effectively to ensure wide access to accommodation and support services*

- *reduces the RoH to victims and others*

- *addresses race, gender and other aspects of diversity for offenders with accommodation needs*

- *identifies and promotes best practice.*

Methodology

2.6   The inspection was carried out alongside ESIs in eight areas: Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dyfed-Powys, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, North Wales and Lincolnshire. The criteria for both inspections were similar and they evaluated the quality of management, assessment, interventions and initial outcomes. The sample for the thematic was selected separately and was centred on offenders who had been identified by areas as having an accommodation need. We were looking for assessments that were based on a local area offender accommodation strategy that informed both the interventions and measured outcomes from the work.

2.7   The inspection examined a sample of offenders in each area where an accommodation need had been identified who were subject to community supervision as part of a court order or as part of a post-custodial licence. The total sample size was 162 across all the areas.

2.8   We asked for a range of evidence in advance from areas and this provided much of the information upon which judgements were made about the quality of the management section of the inspection. In the larger areas we asked to see 30 cases and in the smaller ones 20. Some struggled with meeting these requirements and this was partly caused by problems in identifying and recording offender accommodation needs through eOASys.

2.9   We undertook a range of interviews with senior and middle managers who had responsibility for leading on offender accommodation. We also interviewed specialist accommodation staff, accommodation providers and Board members. Finally, we interviewed members of the NPD who had responsibility for offender accommodation policy and strategy.

3. QUALITY OF OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION MANAGEMENT

3.1 This chapter considers the contribution of management to the work of probation areas on offender accommodation issues. The inspection focused on issues of leadership, resource allocation, staff matters, partnership work and links to sentencers. Evidence came from interviews with Board members, managers, practitioners, partner agencies, offenders and key NPD staff. We also received advance evidence from the areas involved in the inspection.

> **Leadership and planning:**
> - *There is an area strategy for working with offenders with accommodation needs. Effective management structures and processes exist for delivering the accommodation strategy and managers are held accountable for its effective operation.*

Table 1: Leadership and planning

Glos	Wilts	Dyfed-Powys	North Yorks	South Yorks	West Yorks	North Wales	Lincs
PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET

3.2 The majority of Boards and senior management teams had given active consideration of the need to secure appropriate offender accommodation as an important element in the effective supervision of offenders. Many commented on the need to stabilise offenders in suitable accommodation to provide a platform for work on other matters. The central role of suitable accommodation in effective RoH management was noted, as was the need to address accommodation issues to enable work on reducing the LoR to take place. These sentiments were expressed in all the areas and at all levels of the organisations. Many front line staff commented upon the considerable amount of time and resources that were consumed when dealing with offender accommodation matters. They regularly identified the need for this aspect of work to be progressed to enable the wider aims of supervision to be tackled, e.g. protection of the public, reduction of reoffending and the rehabilitation of offenders.

3.3 One Board had discussed the differential reoffending rates of offenders with accommodation needs and noted the higher level of reconviction of this group of offenders compared to the overall caseload of the area. Other Boards and senior management teams provided evidence of their discussions on the need to give some degree of local priority to this area of work.

3.4 However, offender accommodation matters did not feature highly in the area business plans. These were produced to the national template and many areas supplemented the area business plan with local plans to reflect local priorities. We found variations in the

"An Essential Element of Effective Practice"

extent to which offender accommodation issues featured in local plans and in none of these did we identify specific targets for accommodation outcomes.

3.5   The majority of areas had policy and/or strategy documents. Some had recently been produced or where still in draft form. Others needed to be updated and broadened in scope to embrace structural, legislative and other external changes and to further integrate the wide range of issues being addressed through the offender accommodation agenda. One area developed an offender accommodation strategy following a needs survey and the strategy was drawn up in consultation with a specialist Supporting People manager and an external consultant.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The North Wales Probation Area had produced an offender accommodation strategy for the period 2003/2006. This was reviewed in 2004 and outlined the area's approach to dealing with Supporting People matters.

3.6   All the areas produced documents that contained appropriate links to local public protection policies and MAPPA processes. Some had issued practice guidelines to accompany their strategy documents. Where guidance was available it tended to be restricted to offering a resource directory for staff, to assist with identifying service providers and, occasionally, standardised referral processes and documentation.

3.7   There was in place a range of different models of service delivery across the areas inspected. Some had access to large numbers of Approved Premises bed spaces and these assisted in managing offenders, particularly those with identified RoH issues. Several areas had specialist managers or front line staff (or both), while others located the work as part of a generic approach to the supervision of offenders. Given the complex nature of the tasks associated with this work, and the necessity of accessing resources controlled by other bodies, it was no surprise to note that the approaches to addressing offender accommodation matters differed widely across the eight areas inspected.

3.8   The areas, with the exception of the Approved Premises estate, did not control the physical or support service resources necessary to address offender accommodation concerns. Access to the required resources came primarily through the local Supporting People frameworks. Consequently, the strength of the local partnership arrangements was crucial in achieving the desired RoH and LoR outcomes from work with offenders.

3.9   In all areas partnership arrangements were in place, primarily through the Supporting People arrangements. These addressed many aspects of offender accommodation work and involved complex partnership relationships, which took considerable effort to develop and maintain. There were variations between the areas in the extent to which they had been able to influence the development of, and access to relevant resources controlled by others. Other partnership arrangements complemented offender accommodation work and enabled joint work on a range of issues. These included public protection, alcohol and drugs misuse services, employment and basic skills provision.

3.10　In the course of the inspection we interviewed many staff, in a range of posts and settings, and they had varying degrees of knowledge, expertise and responsibility for working with offender accommodation issues. The overwhelming majority of staff were not familiar with their area's strategy. Some staff indicated that they were aware that a strategy existed, but very few could show how it guided their work on a day-to-day basis. None of the areas inspected could provide evidence that their strategy had been implemented in ways that ensured staff were aware of what was required and had the necessary skills to promote service delivery in accordance with the strategy.

3.11　In the majority of areas a senior manager had responsibility for leadership on offender accommodation matters. However, some unhelpful division of operational responsibilities existed in several areas. This was found when offender accommodation (primarily Supporting People arrangements) and Approved Premises were organised through separate line management arrangements. On occasions there did not appear to be a coherent overall approach to the strategic management of offender accommodation issues.

3.12　Some Boards used the expertise of its members who had experience of work in offender accommodation related fields to take lead roles on this aspect of work. This would include representing the Board at relevant meetings and acting as a link to the area senior management team or with local sentencers.

3.13　None of the areas visited had an information system that enabled the production of accurate reports on the profile of offender accommodation across their area or on the impact of the work undertaken.

3.14　The lack of information to underpin this work severely hindered effective planning on offender accommodation matters. Areas, in general, did not know the numbers and distribution of cases requiring an accommodation intervention, or the sorts of accommodation needs that existed, e.g. homelessness, public protection placements, tenancy support, etc. They did not have information on the amount of staff time and other resources consumed by this work.

3.15　Areas reported a lack of clear direction from the NPD, in recent years, on prioritisation for this aspect of work. Many respondents commented upon the absence of specific outcome targets related to offender accommodation issues. Most areas reported that the drive towards performance against the key targets contained in the national business plan, specifically those results which counted towards the weighted scorecard results, were the focus of area priorities. As offender accommodation did not feature in these targets it tended to be 'bolted on' to local plans. Consequently, it had less priority than the intuitive understanding of its importance to the effective supervision of offenders might have suggested. Guidance had been issued to areas on the Supporting People arrangements and, more recently, the Approved Premises review had been issued. Areas reported that these developments did not appear to be integrated at the centre, and were not set in an overall strategic framework which encompassed the broad agenda of offender accommodation. This has been addressed by the publication of the National Offender Accommodation Strategy, although as previously noted this had yet to have a significant impact on service delivery at the time of the inspection.

3.16   All the areas participated in regional (and national in Wales) strategic groups that dealt with offender accommodation issues. Discussions included joint probation area activity, prison/probation developments and initiatives relating to Supporting People issues. The Reducing Reoffending National Action Plan (pathway one) featured in these discussions but we did not find that significant progress had been made on that agenda.

3.17   We found that race, ethnicity and wider diversity matters had not featured highly in the majority of areas' work on offender accommodation matters. Areas, in general, had not used information on diversity issues to inform the development of policy and strategy. Some areas received routine reports via PAGS legacy arrangements and these included reporting on issues relating to diversity. Other diversity related information was gleaned from Supporting People reporting arrangements.

> **Resource allocation:**
> * ***Effective resource allocation for offenders with accommodation needs is demonstrated.***

Table 2: Resource allocation

Glos	Wilts	Dyfed-Powys	North Yorks	South Yorks	West Yorks	North Wales	Lincs
PARTLY MET	LARGELY MET	WELL MET	SATISFAC-TORILY MET	SATISFAC-TORILY MET	SATISFAC-TORILY MET	LARGELY MET	SATISFAC-TORILY MET

3.18   In all of the areas inspected the budgets allocated to securing services in respect of offender accommodation had been moved from the previous PAGS to the Supporting People programme. Areas, on the whole, did not directly contract with providers but were involved in accessing resources leveraged through Supporting People. One area continued to spend approximately 17% of its local partnerships budget to enhance accommodation related services. However, in the main, area financial resources were not allocated to the purchase of these services.

3.19   A key resource requirement was the considerable amount of management time required to service the local Supporting People arrangements and to ensure that the area made full use of the opportunities for accessing services arising from the commissioning framework. We saw several examples where an area's involvement with Supporting People had brought about a substantial increase in bed spaces and other support services compared with those that had existed under the PAGS arrangements. For those areas the allocation of their resources to service Supporting People demands could be viewed as a sound investment. Not all areas were able to quantify the changes to the access to resources that had taken place since the move to the Supporting People programme.

3.20   We saw many examples of innovative work in Approved Premises geared to enhancing public protection, reducing reoffending and successfully reintegrating offenders into their communities. Direct management of these resources by areas meant that the premises could be developed specifically to underpin their work.

3.21 We gained the impression that the demands on areas, in servicing offender accommodation work, were considerable although it was outside the scope of this inspection to quantify the resources used. Areas, on the whole, could not estimate the cost benefits aspects of this work.

3.22 All areas had deployed specialist managers and practitioners and the benefits derived from these posts were noted. Where specialist staff had been used to support day-to-day operations, they were held in high regard by supervising officers. Specialist management posts also added value to the development of a strategic focus and with developing and maintaining appropriate local partnership networks.

3.23 Some areas provided intranet facilities that contained information for the use of staff in their day-to-day work on offender accommodation issues. Practice guidelines and resource directories were provided through these arrangements and these were seen as helpful by some front line staff.

> **Management and supervision of staff:**
> * *The area's human resources policies, strategies and personnel management practice ensures the effective delivery of offender accommodation and services.*

Table 3: Management and supervision of staff

Glos	Wilts	Dyfed-Powys	North Yorks	South Yorks	West Yorks	North Wales	Lincs
PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	LARGELY MET	PARTLY MET

3.24 The inspection did not find evidence that areas had, in general, systematically addressed a broad range of human resources issues associated with offender accommodation work. We noted that several areas had employed a variety of specialist staff to take forward offender accommodation matters or had released existing staff to develop aspects of the work for the area. However, we did not find any specific workforce plans that encompassed this aspect of service delivery. There were no assessments of the levels of skills, knowledge or experience in place for managers and practitioners involved in this work. The training provided varied across the areas and the necessary practice skills were not, in general, developed through routine supervision.

3.25 Given that most staff were not aware of the corporate approach to addressing offender accommodation issues, and had not had access to recent training or other developmental opportunities, it was no surprise to find considerable variations in the approach taken to the work by individuals and teams. Practice in offender accommodation work did not appear to be a specifically managed process. In most locations the approach of practitioners to undertaking offender accommodation work was based largely on local practice culture and the experience of individual members of staff.

3.26 Where there were specialist accommodation workers in post these tended to bring a measure of consistency to the work undertaken in the area. These workers would normally be involved in the assessment of the accommodation need and progressing

referrals to relevant agencies. However, the work done through these arrangements often did not find its way onto the case records.

3.27   Most staff had received basic training in the use of eOASys, including the section on assessing offenders' accommodation needs. In discussion with staff, it became clear that the training in the completion of eOASys was not in itself sufficient to ensure that they were aware of the range of issues that should be considered in assessing offenders' accommodation situations. Given that much of the risks/needs information that is available to areas on this subject is derived from an interrogation of eOASys, some caution needed to be exercised by areas in the use of these data.

3.28   One issue of particular note was the number of occasions where staff supervising relatively low/medium-risk offenders failed to notice changes that significantly increased the risk issues in the case. Often these related to the potential for domestic violence and involved changes in the accommodation status of offenders. There was a clear need for areas to ensure that all relevant staff had an adequate understating of risk assessment issues and the links with offender accommodation.

> **Partnership/contracting out:**
> - ***Area partnership management ensures effective delivery of the offender accommodation strategy and shows effective collaboration with other agencies.***

Table 4: Partnership/contracting out

Glos	Wilts	Dyfed-Powys	North Yorks	South Yorks	West Yorks	North Wales	Lincs
PARTLY MET	LARGELY MET	SATISFAC-TORILY MET	SATISFAC-TORILY MET	PARTLY MET	SATISFAC-TORILY MET	LARGELY MET	PARTLY MET

3.29   All eight areas were actively involved in a range of offender accommodation related partnerships. These included public protection, homelessness, Supporting People resource commissioning and contract reviews. We met with representatives from a wide range of partner organisations and many positive comments were heard in relation to joint work with the probation areas.

3.30   Resourcing the Supporting People meetings was particularly demanding for the probation areas. These structures were complex and were largely local authority based. Probation managers often had to attend a large number of meetings to cover the various local authorities within their boundaries. Probation representation at these meetings was often delegated to a member of the local operational management team. This could mean that the level of representation was not at an appropriate level, with the member of staff attending the meeting not having sufficient information or decision-making powers on behalf of the area. Many managers would have welcomed further training in addressing Supporting People issues.

3.31   In general, we saw partnership arrangements that aligned with local offender accommodation strategies. Service delivery contracts were managed through Supporting People frameworks and these had relevant targets that underpinned probation work

with offenders. Contract reviews were undertaken in accordance with the local Supporting People processes and probation representatives participated in them.

3.32   Feedback from partner agencies suggested, on the whole, positive and productive working relationships with probation areas. These were mainly underpinned by appropriate protocols and relevant exchanges of information between the organisations.

> **Effective communication with sentencers:**
> - *Area communication with sentencers and justices' clerks supports delivery of the offender accommodation strategy.*

Table 5: Effective communication with sentencers

Glos	Wilts	Dyfed-Powys	North Yorks	South Yorks	West Yorks	North Wales	Lincs
PARTLY MET	NOT MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET	NOT MET

3.33   In general, offender accommodation matters did not feature highly in the communication that existed with sentencers. None of the areas had specific arrangements to address these issues. The picture tended to be one of sentencer representatives on probation area Boards acting as conduits of information exchange between their area and sentencer colleagues. All areas had meeting arrangements in place, e.g. court user meetings, and offender accommodation issues were raised through these on an ad hoc basis.

Overall findings for Quality of Offender Accommodation Management

Strengths
- All areas recognised the importance of accommodation issues in the effective supervision of offenders.
- Most areas had in place policies and strategies on offender accommodation matters.
- The majority of areas had access to specialist staff working in this field.
- Partnership arrangements were generally well developed.

Areas for improvement
- Leadership and prioritisation of offender accommodation issues, both locally and nationally, needed to be improved.
- Information systems (and reporting arrangements) for offender accommodation work were inadequate.
- Implementation arrangements for local offender accommodation strategies were weak.
- Staff training and support arrangements were patchy.

- Little was being done to inform sentencers of offender accommodation work and future developments.

- Insufficient time was allocated to senior managers to enable them to effectively engage with the Supporting People agenda.

Recommendations

The NPD should ensure that:

- *the level of priority for work on offender accommodation issues is made clear, and implementation of the offender accommodation strategy is monitored*

- *areas have guidance on the establishment and use of information systems to enable the accurate collection of data relevant to offender accommodation issues. This to include use of information in eOASys and the needs of black and minority ethnic offenders and others with specific diversity needs*

- *assistance and advice is given to enable areas to obtain maximum benefit from Supporting People arrangements.*

Boards should ensure that:

- *staff understanding of local offender accommodation strategies is improved*

- *all relevant managers, support staff and practitioners involved in this aspect of service delivery have access to relevant training and developmental opportunities.*

4. QUALITY OF OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT

4.1 In this chapter we consider the quality of assessment work undertaken in the areas, with particular focus on the assessment of offender accommodation issues. We gathered evidence on the quality of RoH and LoR assessments and sought to understand how these, together with the accommodation assessments, informed the plans for supervising offenders. We were also concerned to track how the supervision plans integrated an understanding of the race, ethnicity and other diversity requirements of individual cases.

4.2 Evidence for this part of the report came from the structured assessments of the 162 cases considered across the eight areas inspected and also from the offender and 'significant other' interviews. The sample for the thematic inspection involved the area identifying cases in which an accommodation issue had been identified. We also tracked, from the larger ESI sample, the number of cases that had, in our view, an identified accommodation need.

> **Assessment of accommodation needs:**
> - *Appropriate accommodation is satisfactorily identified and offenders are assessed using approved tools, drawing on relevant assessments, available victim information, previous convictions and knowledge of risk factors.*

> **Assessment of risk of harm:**
> - *In those cases where an accommodation need has been identified, RoH is satisfactorily identified and assessed using approved tools and drawing on relevant assessments, available victim information, previous convictions and knowledge of accommodation related risk factors.*

4.3 Table 1 gives the combined results from the case manager and file reading events for all areas for the quality of the assessments of offender accommodation needs and the RoH.

Table 6: Assessment of accommodation needs and RoH

Criteria	All areas
A satisfactory assessment of accommodation needs has taken place in line with the area strategy?	49%
The above assessment takes into account race/diversity issues?	59%
Where appropriate a referral has been made to specialist staff?	76%
The above assessment takes into account wider race/diversity issues?	67%
Was a satisfactory RoH assessment completed using OASys where available and drawing, where relevant, on MAPPA assessments, assessments by other agencies and previous probation area assessments?	
i) Start of supervision?	62%
ii) Then at least every 16 weeks?	35%
iii) Following any significant incident that might give rise to concern?	42%
The content of the accommodation assessment appropriate to the needs of the case?	85%
There was a close fit between interventions planned and RoH?	79%
A satisfactory risk management plan produced within five working days?	49%
For high/very high RoH cases, the risk management plan takes into account accommodation-related conditions?	72%
For high/very high RoH cases, there was appropriate management involvement in the assessment?	82%

4.4   We found that a satisfactory assessment of offender accommodation issues had taken place in less than half of all cases and this gave rise to some concern. The strongest performing area on this criterion was Lincolnshire with 69% of cases meeting the standard; the lowest score was 11%.

4.5   In 41% of cases there was no evidence that a consideration of race or other diversity requirements was included in the assessment of the accommodation needs. In South Yorkshire 80% of cases were satisfactory on this measure and the lowest scoring area had met this criterion in only 25% of cases.

4.6   We were pleased to note that 76% of cases had been referred to a specialist worker at the assessment stage. This ranged from 100% in Dyfed-Powys and Wiltshire, to the lowest scoring area achieving referrals to specialist staff in 50% of cases. Despite initial assessments of accommodation needs not being on record, it seemed as though many supervising officers still progressed the work through referral to specialist staff. However, it was disappointing to find that the work undertaken in conjunction with specialist staff was not routinely recorded in case files.

4.7   We noted with concern that only 62% of cases had had an adequate RoH assessment at the start of supervision. Lincolnshire achieved 81% on this measure and the poorest performance by an area was 50%.

4.8   RoH assessments were not routinely reviewed every 16 weeks. On average only 35% of reviews were completed satisfactorily. The variation in practice on this measure was considerable, ranging from 63% in Lincolnshire to 7% in the poorest performing area.

4.9 Relatively few cases experienced a significant incident that should have prompted a further review of the RoH. Of those that did, the average score across the eight areas was that 42% contained a review. 100% of these reviews were completed in Lincolnshire and the lowest score recorded was 17%.

4.10 In general we found that the risk level identified for the cases was appropriate, with only a small number being, in our view, recorded at a level that was either too low or too high.

4.11 We found that in half of all relevant cases a risk management plan had not been produced on time. There were significant differences across the eight areas on this measure; North Yorkshire achieved 100% and the lowest scoring area 0%.

4.12 Risk management plans often included a reference to accommodation issues. However, this was not adequately addressed in 28% of plans.

4.13 In most cases designated as high or very high RoH, we saw evidence that line managers had reviewed the plans for supervision. This was most commonly evidenced through eOASys countersigning and occasionally through direct entries by managers on contact logs.

Assessment of LoR:

- ***Criminogenic factors and LoR are identified and assessed using approved tools, drawing on all available information and previous assessments.***

Table 7: Assessment of LoR

Criteria	All areas
Assessment has identified the extent to which accommodation is a criminogenic factor?	71%
LoR and criminogenic factors have been satisfactorily assessed using OASys or another assessment tool?	88%
Clear identified LoR score?	94%

4.14 Most areas were well into their implementation of eOASys at the time of the inspection and this resulted in high scores in respect of satisfactory assessment and recording of LoR issues. The majority of cases had been assessed using a recognised scoring instrument.

4.15 We were satisfied that the assessment of the links between accommodation issues and the LoR had been captured in most cases.

Case management:

- ***Supervision plans/CPO assessments incorporate appropriate accommodation services designed to minimise assessed risk, address associated criminogenic needs and take account of relevant victim/diversity issues.***

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Table 8: Case management

Criteria	All areas
ISPs meet the content and timing requirements of national standards and, where appropriate, draw on MAPPA assessments and any other relevant assessments?	49%
Accommodation interventions have been planned that are appropriate to the case?	68%
SMART objectives set in the ISP?	34%
Appropriate interventions are identified to address offending behaviour and community reintegration?	73%

4.16   We were concerned to note the poor quality of many supervision plans. 51% were not completed on time and did not meet national standards. Dyfed-Powys achieved 70% on this measure and the lowest scoring area had 11%. Often the plans did not specify the objectives of supervision.

4.17   Whilst the supervision plans were not generally described with outcomes in mind, the majority of cases did have appropriate interventions identified. This related both to the general package of interventions and their relationship with the risk/needs identified in the cases and also to specific accommodation interventions.

4.18   Many supervision plans did not contain adequate records of risk management plans. Where these were available, they often featured as a separate part of the case record and were not linked to the plan.

4.19   The inspection found that most areas had in place processes to ensure the content of supervision plans were discussed with offenders and the requirements of the orders and licences made clear.

4.20   We noted a lack of information relating to liaison arrangements for the various strands of work being undertaken with the offender.
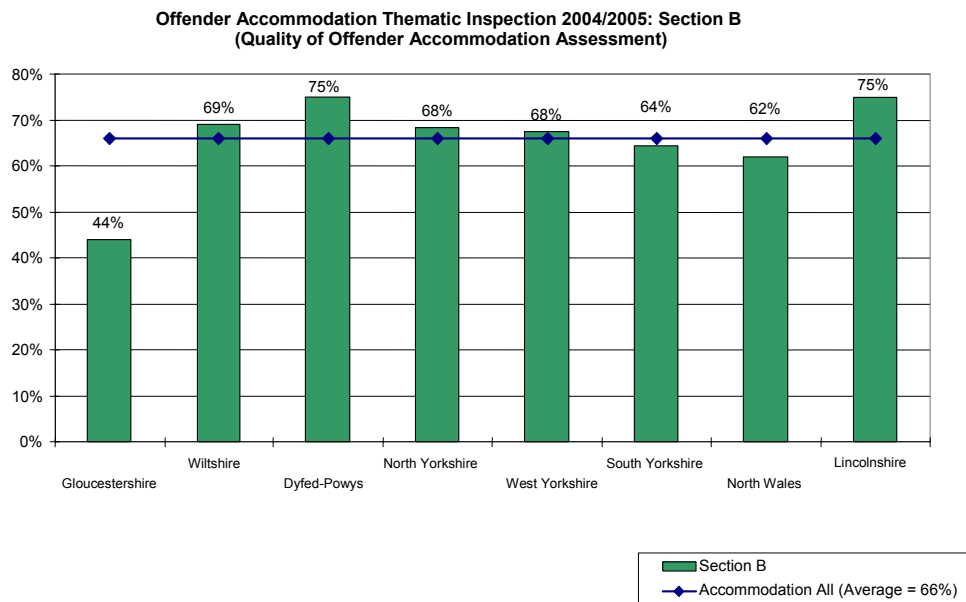
> **Documentation:**
> - *All relevant documentation is available, satisfactorily completed and appropriately stored.*

Table 9: Documentation

	All areas
Case records well organised and complete?	62%
Recording of information is clear and sufficient?	84%
There was a clear record of accommodation plans and interventions?	62%
Quarterly reviews incorporate accommodation elements on the offender's supervision?	47%

4.21   Most of the case files looked at during the inspection were organised satisfactorily. We could locate relevant papers and the range of documents and information normally expected from a file. The majority of areas used a standardised folder layout and this assisted in the inspection.

4.22   There were a variety of approaches to case recording in evidence across the areas. The majority used typed entries onto CRAMS contact logs. These were generally satisfactory and most supervising officers had found an acceptable balance between minimising the time spent on record keeping and capturing the key issues.

4.23   One aspect of recording that did not meet our expectation was the number of review documents that failed to incorporate updates on the progress of offender accommodation interventions. Over half of all cases did not have this information on the file.

Offender Accommodation Thematic Inspection 2004/2005: Section B
(Quality of Offender Accommodation Assessment)

Overall findings for Quality of Offender Accommodation Assessment

Strengths

- RoH classifications were generally appropriate.
- The majority of cases with an identified accommodation need had been referred to a specialist worker.
- Planned interventions matched the needs of the case.
- Most cases had clear LoR scores, and supervision plans adequately addressed these issues.

Areas for improvement

- More than half of the cases did not have an adequate assessment of accommodation issues.
- Most cases did not have an adequate RoH assessment at the start of supervision and this was not routinely reviewed.

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- Few supervision plans met national standards or contained SMART objectives.

- Assessments of race and wider diversity issues did not feature in the majority of the case records.

Recommendations

Boards should ensure that:

- *an adequate assessment of accommodation needs is undertaken in all cases and these encompass a specific assessment of any race equality or wider diversity needs*

- *all RoH assessments are completed on time, to an adequate standard and contain an assessment of accommodation issues.*

5. QUALITY OF OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION INTERVENTIONS

5.1 In this chapter we describe work undertaken with offenders, including the extent to which accommodation services have been delivered and coordinated to ensure supervision objectives have been met. We look at the role of case managers in preparing and motivating the offender in accommodation related interventions and how work was reinforced. Interventions related to criminogenic factors are examined, together with diversity needs and the management of the RoH.

> **Delivering appropriate supervision:**
> - ***Accommodation services are delivered and coordinated to ensure supervision and risk reduction objectives are met.***

5.2 The table below shows how well criteria in relation to the delivery and coordination of interventions were met.

Table 10: Delivering appropriate supervision

Criteria	All areas
Progress against the objectives in the supervision plan (including any changes made) have been satisfactorily reviewed every 16 weeks in line with national standards, or more frequently where necessary. Any decisions to depart from the plan have been recorded and justified?	44%
SMART objectives are set in the supervision plan review documents?	35%
Accommodation interventions have been appropriately carried out, with the timing and sequencing reflecting the offender's risk of harm and likelihood of offending?	81%
There has been a regular review of progress towards achieving the accommodation objectives?	57%
The case manager prepares and motivates the offender to engage with accommodation interventions?	75%
The case manager, where relevant, utilises specialist resources?	87%
Appropriate action to implement additional requirements?	90%
Victim issues, in general, are properly addressed?	42%
Work has been carried out to raise the offender's awareness of the victim?	40%
Work and resources are directed at community reintegration?	87%
The case manager motivates the offender by reinforcing the work undertaken by others (including arranging sufficient contact while the offender is on an accredited programme) and by engaging the offender to prevent reoffending?	87%
The case manager liaises with others providing interventions to the offender?	86%
The interventions challenge the offender to accept responsibility for the offence and its consequences?	60%
In high/very high RoH cases reviews integrate MAPPA action plan from another risk management meeting or child protection conference?	47%

5.3 Lincolnshire was performing well in reviewing ISPs every 16 weeks. However, in many areas we found that the reviews were completed beyond the national standards timescales. Staff in some areas said this was due to the pressure of work which affected

their ability to complete reviews. SMART objectives were rarely incorporated in reviews and across the eight areas this ranged from 14%-50%, with an average of 33%. Many staff lacked skills in setting SMART objectives. It was apparent that many were still trying to familiarise themselves with eOASys, and making plans SMART was not always a priority.

5.4   We found that where an offender had secured suitable accommodation case managers did not always review this in subsequent assessments.

5.5   We noted the higher levels of quality of the reviews of assessments that had been completed on offenders in Approved Premises.

5.6   Where accommodation related interventions had been planned, we generally found that these were being carried out. Many offender accommodation providers were offering support in resettlement, budgeting/lifeskills, motivational work and pro-social modelling. In 90% of cases they also focused on resettlement work. However, case managers were not always aware of the programmes of work that the providers carried out. There was also significant gaps in attendance by case managers in three-way meetings with providers where joint supervision reviews/care plans were agreed. Progress and review of accommodation interventions were not carried out consistently, this ranged from 44%-63% across the eight areas.

5.7   Accommodation providers, along with case managers, were actively engaged in enforcing licence/orders and ensuring that offenders attended interventions. In a large number of cases, case managers were pivotal in preparing and motivating the offender to engage in interventions and that was reinforced by accommodation providers. Wiltshire Probation Area demonstrated this in 100% of cases. Case managers were also successful in utilising the specialist interventions that were available in the areas. These included basic skills work, criminogenic issues and work on drugs misuse.

5.8   Liaison with others providing an intervention was strong. However, accommodation providers noted that this was dependent upon individual case managers who needed to be more proactive and share necessary information when appropriate.

5.9   On average over half of the interventions challenged the offender to accept responsibility for the offence. It was evident that more could be done on challenging offending behaviour. In some areas, due to the difficulties in finding appropriate accommodation, time that could have been spent on offending behaviour work was spent on securing accommodation.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> During the inspection we noted several examples of innovative developments in service delivery operating in the area's Approved Premises. The individual units approached the task of working with residents through the common aims of protection of the public, reducing reoffending and the successful community reintegration of residents. There were in place a broad range of processes to support each of these aims and we saw evidence of an integrated and holistic approach to work with residents. This included provision of numerous 'wrap around' services intended to promote positive change for residents. To illustrate this approach the partnership arrangements underpinning services to drugs misusing residents are worthy of note. The arrangements were common to all the Approved Premises in Leeds. They operated through complex partnership agreements with the Leeds Addiction Unit, Burley Park Medical Centre and the Leeds Area Health Authority. The project had a Drug Counsellor who spent specific time in the Approved Premises each week working with residents towards the goal of total abstinence from drugs. The scheme was complemented by regular visits by a local Doctor who could enable prompt access to medical resources and relevant medication. It was estimated that some 75% of residents required services in respect of drugs misuse, and referral rates to specialist services reflected the high proportion of residents with these needs.

5.10   We found a strong focus on community integration of offenders with links made with partners to support this work. Both Dyfed-Powys and Wiltshire demonstrated this in 100% of cases, with the remaining areas ranging between 81% and 95%.

5.11   There was little evidence that work was being carried out to deal with victim issues. The key exception was Wiltshire where this work was done in 100% of cases. Work to raise offender awareness of the impact of offending on victim(s) was generally inadequate.

5.12   In general, areas implemented additional requirements of orders and licences. However, in one area we found a large number of cases where attention had not been paid to implementing additional requirements.

5.13   There was little consistency in the integration of supervision plan reviews with MAPPA or other risk management plans. Gloucestershire was the only area that was doing this routinely. In other areas we found that MAPPA meeting information and decisions were not integrated into reviews. Risk information was held in different parts of the file and appeared disjointed.

> **Meeting diversity needs:**
> - *Accommodation related service delivery meets diversity needs and appropriate support arrangements are in place.*

5.14   The table below shows the results for the criteria in this section.

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Table 11: Meeting diversity needs

Criteria	All areas
Issues of literacy and dyslexia have been appropriately addressed?	79%
The arrangements for interventions have taken into account race equality and wider diversity issues?	90%
The accommodation interventions are sensitive to race equality and diversity issues?	84%
Delivery of interventions have been sensitive to race equality and diversity Issues?	88%

5.15   We found that although race and diversity issues had not always been examined at the assessment stage, when it came to the arrangements and delivery of interventions the issues were being addressed. The inspection found a strong focus on literacy and dyslexia in work with offenders.

5.16   Accommodation interventions were generally sensitive to race and diversity issues with a large number of providers supporting this work. A number of areas identified a need to provide particular interventions for black and minority ethnic offenders to ensure that they were not isolated and had links with local communities.

> *Good practice example:*
>
> Across the West Yorkshire Probation Area, a set of practice guidelines were in place relating to work with Black and Asian residents in Approved Premises. These were comprehensive and offered many best practice suggestions. The approach was supported by a specialist Black and Asian support worker post. The post provided direct services to residents and supported the work of colleagues. Residents would routinely meet with staff and discuss and plan for relevant cultural, religious, dietary and other diversity issues within one week of taking up residence in an Approved Premises.

> **Management of risk of harm:**
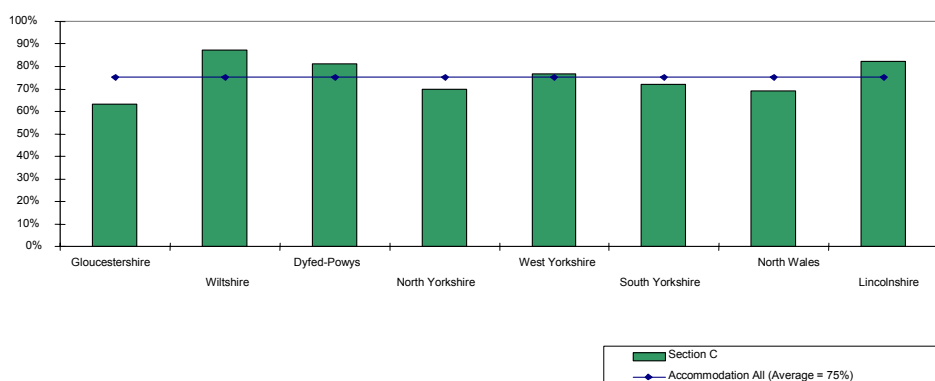> - ***RoH is actively managed in collaboration with others.***

5.17   The table below covers criteria that referred to the management of RoH.

Table 12: Management of RoH

Criteria	All areas
Interventions and their level appropriate to the assessment of the RoH?	92%
Accommodation interventions and their level appropriate to the assessment of the RoH?	85%
Where relevant, changes in RoH have been identified and managed, taking into account victim issues?	73%
For high/very high RoH cases:	
a) a good quality risk management plan has been produced under the MAPPA or other inter-agency arrangement?	55%
b) The risk management plan is being executed appropriately with effective liaison between agencies on accommodation issues?	68%
c) The risk management plan has been appropriately reviewed?	69%
Where relevant, probation involved in child protection arrangements?	94%
For high/very high RoH cases, where a public protection issue has arisen including a failure to meet additional licence conditions, appropriate action has been taken?	100%
There is management oversight in line with area and national policy?	73%
A home visit has taken place?	86%
There is liaison with the NPD Public Protection Unit and or the Prison Service Lifer Unit?	100%
Any of the accommodation interventions or/and change in the offender's accommodation status given rise to any potential risk of harm consideration, action has been taken to ensure that risk is kept to the minimum level?	69%

5.18   In all areas we found a clear match between the intensity of interventions and the level of RoH. Changes in the RoH were also identified and managed. In a small number of cases victim issues were not fully taken into account when risk levels changed and there needed to be better communication with victim liaison officers.

5.19   For high/very high RoH cases practice and management oversight varied and we found two areas where this needed immediate attention. In all but one area, it was concerning that risk management plans had either not been produced or were not being effectively executed.

5.20   The majority of areas were carrying out home visits in high/very high RoH cases.

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Offender Accommodation Thematic Inspection 2004/2005:
Section D (Quality of Offender Accommodation Interventions)

Section C
Accommodation All (Average = 75%)

Overall findings for Quality of Offender Accommodation Interventions

Strengths

- Work was directed at community integration in the majority of cases.
- Home visits were taking place in relevant high/very high RoH cases.
- In high/very high RoH cases public protection issues were acted on promptly and additional requirements were implemented.
- Reviews of ISPs at Approved Premises were being carried out in line with national standards.

Areas for improvement

- Reviews of ISPs were not carried out routinely.
- SMART objectives were not set and some staff had limited knowledge of this concept.
- In high/very high RoH cases MAPPP/risk management plans were not properly integrated with the overall supervision of the offender.
- Victim issues were not prioritised in the supervision of many offenders.

Recommendations

Boards should ensure that:

- *risk management arrangements, including accommodation issues, are reviewed in all cases where the RoH increases during the course of supervision*

- *areas produce initial and review supervision plans that contain SMART objectives and, where necessary, fully integrate risk management plans and accommodation interventions.*

6. QUALITY OF INITIAL OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION OUTCOMES

6.1   In this chapter we focus on assessing the initial outcomes of supervision plans and report on progress made on offenders' accommodation status, linked to the management of risk and community integration.

> **Interventions are delivered with the desired outcomes:**
> - *Accommodation related objectives are achieved and RoH/reoffending is demonstrably reduced.*

6.2   The table below shows the initial outcomes achieved during the first 12 months of probation supervision.

Table 13: Interventions are delivered with the desired outcomes

Criteria	All areas
Any convictions since commencement of the order/licence?	30%
OASys score reassessed since the initial assessment?	51%
Improvement of original OASys score?	53%
Progress on criminogenic factors?	73%
Progress on offenders' accommodation status?	71%
Evidence of a positive change in attitudes, beliefs and behaviour in relation to offending, and an increased awareness of the offence on the victim(s)?	37%
For high/very high RoH cases:	
a) Evidence of a reduction in risk of harm?	63%
b) Evidence that risk of harm has been successfully maintained?	89%
Evidence of an improvement in community ties?	66%
Evidence that learning outcomes/skills have been applied?	50%
The offender has attended all or nearly all planned appointments/work sessions?	72%
The offender complied to date with conditions of the order/licence, including any additional requirements?	71%
Attention has been given to long-term accommodation and community reintegration issues?	78%
Appropriate links made with community resources/family in order to sustain the offender in the community?	78%
Attention has been given to ensuring that the offender maintains contact with mainstream organisations to address criminogenic needs, where required?	78%

6.3   In just under a third of the case sample offenders had been reconvicted of a further offence. In the cases that had been reassessed and rescored using OASys, 53% showed an improvement over the original score.

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6.4   The key criminogenic factors highlighted by case managers across the eight areas, for the offenders in the sample, were thinking skills, drugs misuse and accommodation.

6.5   All areas showed improvements over the period of supervision of the status of the offender's accommodation situation. A key issue concerned sustaining the offender in their accommodation. Many areas identified the need for floating support and work towards moving an offender into independent accommodation. All areas identified lack of move on accommodation as a major concern.

6.6   Overall, there was limited change in the offender's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour about their offending and little improvement in their awareness of victim issues.

6.7   In over half the cases the RoH had been reduced and had been successfully managed. Across all the areas, we found effective partnership working with the police and other agencies to manage risk.

6.8   Offender attendance at appointments or work sessions and their compliance with conditions and/or additional requirements of orders, was satisfactory in over 70% of cases. However, in two areas, over half of the sample had not complied with their orders fully and had not reported in line with national standards.

6.9   Learning outcomes and skills had been applied in half of the cases and improvements in community ties and social circumstances were satisfactory across all the areas. There was generally in place a positive focus on long-term community integration and appropriate links were being made with family/community resources to sustain the offender in the community.

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<u>Outcomes of interventions are assessed and reviewed using available data</u>:
- ***Outcome data are used to evaluate area effectiveness and inform future policy and practice.***

</div>

Table 14: Outcomes of interventions are assessed and reviewed using available data

Glos	Wilts	Dyfed-Powys	North Yorks	South Yorks	West Yorks	North Wales	Lincs
PARTLY MET	NOT MET	PARTLY MET	NOT MET	NOT MET	NOT MET	PARTLY MET	PARTLY MET

6.10   Limited progress had been made by areas on using service delivery outcome data and some did not prioritise data collection. Information contained within the accommodation sections of eOASys also varied.

Overall findings for Quality of Initial Offender Accommodation Outcomes

Strengths

- Most offenders had not been reconvicted; this was particularly significant for those in Approved Premises where only 3.1% had been reconvicted during the period of supervision. The reconviction rates for those offenders who had an accommodation need, and had not accessed an Approved Premises place, was 36.3%. The reoffending rate of offenders not identified as having an accommodation need was 19.6%.

- Progress had been made on criminogenic factors.

- The accommodation status for offenders had improved.

- RoH had been managed and reduced.

- Attention was focused on long-term reintegration issues, community ties and ensuring contact with mainstream organisations to sustain the offender in the community.

Areas for improvement

- Limited housing stock in the locality and access to move on accommodation was a concern for all areas.

- Arrangements for collecting and using outcome data and information on race and wider diversity issues were weak.

- There was limited evidence that offenders were being challenged on their offending related attitudes, beliefs and behaviour and on the harm caused to victims.

Recommendations

The NPD should ensure that:

- *information from the outcome target for offender accommodation interventions, introduced in performance measure PM4 (April 2005), is utilised to promote best practice across the NPS.*

Boards should ensure that:

- *senior management teams routinely report to them on the profile of accommodation needs in their areas and on outcomes from interventions in this work.*

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7. EMERGING ISSUES

7.1   This chapter explores issues arising out of the inspection findings and considers future developments on offender accommodation work.

Management

7.2   In was generally the case that Board members and senior managers saw the necessity for effective work on offender accommodation issues to underpin effective case management. We saw considerable effort being devoted to the management and service delivery aspects of this agenda, particularly in relation to servicing the Supporting People programme. However, many areas reported experiencing a lack of clarity and priority from the NPD on offender accommodation work.

7.3   None of the areas had a developed approach to using information on offender accommodation outcomes to inform action. Areas, generally, were preparing to interrogate eOASys as a useful source of information. However, problems arsing from variations in the definitions of accommodation need being used across and within areas, and variable levels of experience of staff undertaking the assessments, ran the risk of compromising this source of information.

7.4   There was a common need, shared by all the areas, to address some significant human resources issues relating to this aspect of work. There were differing approaches to the use of specialist staff across the areas and these reflected local developments. However, for both managers and practitioners, there was a need to ensure that staff had access to relevant training and development opportunities and were supported by appropriate facilities and services.

7.5   Many well-developed partnership arrangements were in place, these addressed offender accommodation issues via the Supporting People arrangements and integrated local MAPPA practices satisfactorily.

7.6   Links with sentencers, specifically on issues relating to offender accommodation matters, were not well established. This was common across all the areas visited. Information exchanges tended to come via Board members who acted as links to local benches and ad hoc discussion through existing court liaison arrangements.

Assessments

7.7   Many cases did not have an accommodation assessment at the start of supervision. A key failing was that practitioners were generally unaware of the local strategy and plans for addressing offender accommodation issues. Where the assessments had been done, they tended to lack focus on race and other diversity issues.

7.8   However, the majority of cases with an identified accommodation need were referred to a specialist worker for assessment of those needs and advice on the available resources.

7.9   RoH assessments were absent from a significant number of files at the start of supervision and this gave rise to concern. When these assessments had been done, we were in agreement with the majority of the risk classifications. In general, there was concordance between the interventions planned and the identified RoH, with the scope and intensity of planned work matching the assessed RoH.

7.10   Overall, there were few supervision plans that met national standards. In particular the problem of supervision plans containing SMART objectives was common to all the areas. In discussion, many staff had difficulty in identifying the desired outcomes from their work with offenders and they focused on the planned interventions and inputs into the case. The majority of cases could show that appropriate interventions had been planned.

Interventions

7.11   With the exception of one area, ISPs were not being reviewed in line with national standards. We rarely found that reviews incorporated SMART objectives.

7.12   Where offenders had been successful in securing accommodation between the ISP and its review, we found, in general, that accommodation matters were not then monitored. Some case managers were unable to understand that accommodation needed to be monitored throughout supervision to ensure that the offender sustained the provision. We noted a higher level of quality in the case reviews of offenders in Approved Premises.

7.13   Planned accommodation objectives were being addressed across all the eight areas. We found activity directed at resettlement, budgeting/lifeskills, motivational and pro-social modelling work with offenders.

7.14   It was disappointing to find that case managers were not always aware of the interventions that were being provided by others involved in the case. Case managers attending three-way meetings with providers could have improved this situation and added to the quality of joint plans.

7.15   More work needed to be done on challenging individual offenders to accept responsibility for their offences and on victim awareness issues. Some case managers explained that at times this work was difficult to do, as finding suitable accommodation for offenders was extremely time-consuming.

7.16   The incorporation of MAPPA and other risk management plans was not evident in all case files and information was not integrated into ISPs or reviews. All areas needed to focus on greater assimilation of information and the production of good quality risk management plans.

7.17   Management oversight of high/very RoH cases varied greatly and in two areas this needed urgent attention.

Outcomes

7.18   We were pleased to find, in just over two-thirds of the cases, that offenders had not been reconvicted. It was significant that for offenders in Approved Premises the figure for non-reconviction was 96.9%. This added weight to the suggestion that the use of structured and supported accommodation, which is matched to the needs of offenders, can assist with maintaining an offence free lifestyle.

7.19   Caution was needed when offenders were placed in accommodation with a package of floating support. The definition of floating support varied widely and, where it did not match to offender needs, it could adversely affect the ability of offenders to sustain the accommodation and successfully reintegrate into the community.

7.20   Rescoring of OASys occurred in just over half of cases, with over half of these showing decreased LoR from the original score.

7.21   Progress was made on the accommodation status of many offenders and this mainly centred on addressing homelessness crises. Securing long-term independent accommodation was more problematic for areas and less progress had been made on this issue.

7.22   Areas were successfully reducing and managing risk in a number of cases and there was generally a strong focus on public protection.

7.23   In general areas were making little use of data to help with improvements in the delivery of accommodation services. The quality of information contained within the accommodation sections of eOASys varied greatly.

7.24   The need for settled and suitable accommodation is a basic requirement for successful living within a community. Many offenders experience particular challenges in obtaining and sustaining their accommodation. These difficulties, when compounded with linked criminogenic factors, can create a situation in which the risk of reoffending is increased and public protection concerns are heightened. Many of the developments in probation practice in recent years have been specifically geared towards assisting areas to reduce both RoH and LoR. Stable accommodation for offenders forms a necessary platform for other constructive interventions to have the desired outcomes. Arguably, the management of RoH is enhanced by the ability to access suitable accommodation that contributes to risk management plans. Therefore, it is important that probation areas, under the leadership of the NOMS and the NPD, have effective strategies for addressing offender accommodation matters.

7.25   The data from the inspection found significant differences between the reported reconviction rates for offenders identified as having an accommodation need, compared to those who did not have such a need. The level of reconviction during the period of supervision for those in the accommodation sample was 48 from a total of 162 cases, giving a reconviction rate of 29.6%. We compared this with the results from the separate core ESI sample across the eight areas. From 649 cases, 127 offenders had been reconvicted, a rate of 19.6%. There were many variables in the collection of the data that we were not able to control and thus a note of caution most be used when considering this information, However, there remains a significant difference in the levels of reconviction noted for these groups. Those offenders identified as having an

accommodation need were reconvicted during the period of supervision at a rate of 151% of those not identified as having an accommodation need. The statistical significance (Chi Square test) of this difference is in the order 0.01, meaning that the likelihood of the difference being due to chance was less than 1 in 100.

7.26   A further finding of note, for those in the offender accommodation sample, was that a striking difference in the reconviction rates was found for offenders in Approved Premises, compared to those accessing mainstream services via the Supporting People programmes. For those in Approved Premises the reconviction rate was 3.1% (1 of 32 cases). From the separate group of offenders accessing Supporting People services, the reconviction rate was 36.6%. Whilst the sample sizes were relatively small in these instances, the ten-fold difference in reconviction rates was striking. It points to the effective use of Approved Premises in reducing the LoR and to the need for more focus from probation areas in accessing suitable resources via the Supporting People framework. The NPS could usefully further explore the differences in reconviction rates noted above, with a view to establishing a more developed understanding of the relationship between offender accommodation issues and reconviction rates than was possible in this inspection.

7.27   The reconviction outcomes noted in this inspection lends credence to the view that the ability to tackle offender accommodation issues lies at the heart of the strategic purpose of the NPS, i.e. reducing crime and protecting the public. Therefore, offender accommodation issues could reasonably be viewed as a priority in the effective supervision of offenders. Whilst HMI Probation would not claim a causal link between offender accommodation needs and reoffending, we noted a strong co-relation between the two. Arguably, progress on accommodation issues helps many offenders to make the changes that will reduce the risk of further reoffending.

7.28   The inspection found something of a disjointed approach to addressing offender accommodation issues at the national level. With the advent of NOMS, the approach to providing leadership on this agenda at the national level was further complicated. At the time of the inspection it was not clear how responsibility for this area of service delivery would be shared between NOMS and the NPD, although we noted that work was in hand to address this matter. Some issues requiring clarification under the new leadership arrangements are:

- the level of priority that offender accommodation should have at a national level and in area business plans

- arrangements for ensuring areas maximise the opportunities for accessing appropriate resources via the Supporting People arrangements

- the allocation of sufficient resources to, and by areas to service offender accommodation work.

Developments are also required in the use of eOASys to ensure that front line staff have consistent assessment criteria to enable an accurate recording of offender accommodation issues to take place.

7.29   During the inspection we noted the central role of the case manager in delivering effective services. In cases where a long-term perspective on the work was absent there was a tendency to focus on short-term crises issues. We saw lots of time and energy

being spent by supervising officers dealing with housing crises. For many offenders the difficulties with achieving suitable move on arrangements meant that they presented several times during the course of supervision with requests for emergency housing assistance. Few of those cases got access to accredited programmes or other specialist interventions geared towards equipping them with the skills and resources for successful community reintegration.

7.30   We were struck by the number of offenders with accommodation difficulties who also had other complex problems. Taken together they added up to a package of needs that required a holistic approach led by the case manager. Many had experienced their difficulties over a number of years and it was unlikely that probation areas would be able to generate a 'quick fix' in these circumstances. Offenders had great difficulty in avoiding 'revolving door' experiences, of repeat episodes of accommodation crises, relapses on other criminogenic factors and repeat offending. The work done was often time-consuming, involving complex liaison and inter-agency arrangements and resting upon probation accessing resources controlled by external organisations.

7.31   Offender accommodation work had to be resourced adequately and staff needed the skills, tools and support to deliver results in this area of practice. The key case management skills necessary for this work were consistent with those outlined in the national case management model and were skills which could be applied in addressing other aspects of criminogenic need. For managers the requirement was confidence, expertise and time to operate effectively in the multi-agency Supporting People environment. Often probation managers felt that they were from relatively small organisations and this diminished their standing in the various fora. They often had offender accommodation as part of a large portfolio of responsibilities, whilst colleagues from other agencies have a specialist interest in this subject.

7.32   Access to physical and support resources were pivotal in achieving positive outcomes in offender accommodation matters. For many offenders this would be obtained via the Supporting People programme. Probation areas had to ensure that local Supporting People plans enabled those under supervision to access services that were geared to their needs and that local provision, both in quantity and quality, reflected the diverse needs of those subject to supervision.

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