

OFFENDER MANAGEMENT INSPECTION INSPECTION

A report on Offender Management in Sussex

An inspection led by
HM Inspectorate of Probation

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FOREWORD

The increased focus given to the assessment and management of Risk of Harm had led to an overall improvement in the performance of the Sussex Probation Area since our last inspection. Although the roll-out of phase two needed to be accelerated, phase one of the offender management model had been implemented well, and a robust approach to performance management developed, under the visible leadership of the Chief Officer and senior management team. Offender engagement was good, with offender managers taking prompt action in relation to enforcement where necessary. Whilst provision for minority groups was limited across the county, diversity issues were usually addressed well where identified.

We found evidence of practice which required improvement. Greater attention needs to be given to sentence planning, particularly the sequencing of interventions and the quality of objectives. More work is required on challenging offending behaviour effectively and on monitoring the outcomes of such work. Most importantly, the area needs to maintain vigilance on assessing and managing Risk of Harm, and develop greater understanding of its dynamic nature. Work also needs to be undertaken, in parallel, to increase awareness of the area's role in promoting welfare in, for example, cases involving victim safety, domestic violence or safeguarding children.

The area was responsive to the inspection process and engaged positively with us in seeking improvement.

ANDREW BRIDGES

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our thanks to the Sussex Probation Board, its managers and staff for the considerable assistance received in enabling the inspection to proceed smoothly. Without their help, most especially in arranging a complicated programme of interviews with offender managers, the work could not have been completed successfully.

The inspection also depended on the contribution made by local area assessors who assisted with the offender manager interviews. Their participation and commitment were greatly appreciated.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ACO	Assistant Chief Officer
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CO	Chief Officer
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DIP	Drug Intervention Programmes
DRR	Drug rehabilitation requirement
EEM	European Excellence Model
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
ESI	Effective Supervision Inspection
ESOL	English as a second language to overseas learners
ETE	Employment, Training and Education
FDR	Fast delivery report
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
HMPS	Her Majesty's Prison Service
HR	Human Resources
IDAP	Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme
ISP	Initial Supervision Plan
JNCC	Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NAPO	National Association of Probation Officers
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPS	National Probation Service
NSMART	A sample of data collected by probation areas each month, on which the National Probation Directorate base its performance monitoring
OASys/eOASys	Offender Assessment System/electronic OASys
OGRS2	Offender Group Reconviction Score2
OMI	Offender Management Inspection
OSAP	Offender Substance Abuse Programme
PLC	Probation Liaison Committee
PO	Probation officer
PPO	Prolific and other priority offender
PSO	Probation service officer
PSR	Pre-sentence report
REM	Race and ethnic monitoring
RoH	Risk of Harm
ROM	Regional offender manager
SDR	Standard delivery report
SFO	Serious further offence
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SMB	Strategic Management Board
SMT	Senior management team
TPO	Trainee probation officer
VLO	Victim liaison officer
YOT	Youth Offending Team

SUMMARY

Assessment and Sentence Planning

Overall, preparation for sentence was good, with court reports generally written on time and of a good quality. Sentencers viewed them positively, although issues of self-harm needed to be recorded more clearly and victim issues were addressed in too few cases.

We found that the completion of the Offender Assessment System for likelihood of reoffending was timely, though the standard of assessments was variable. Offender engagement was tackled well, and there was good awareness of wider diversity issues. Improvements were needed in sentence planning and the use of generic objectives, which appeared to be restricting offender managers' responsibility to individual needs. The sequencing of interventions and clarity around the roles and liaison responsibilities of staff also required attention. There were challenges to be overcome in enabling offender managers to attend sentence planning boards in custody.

Implementation of Interventions

The induction process worked well and there were some good examples of effective offender management, involving high levels of liaison between different professionals engaged in a case. The co-location of employment, training and education and Skills for Life staff promoted such engagement. However, offender managers needed to take on greater responsibility for coordinating interventions.

Work delivered in the community often built effectively on work completed in custody, despite contact levels and the quality of information exchange between the two agencies requiring some improvement. The transfer of cases between areas also needed to be more robust.

Sufficient resources were directed to community reintegration issues, and monitoring of attendance was clearly a priority for offender managers, who on the whole made appropriate decisions about the acceptability of absences, and took prompt action in relation to enforcement.

Although sentence plan reviews were completed on time in the most cases, a large proportion was not sufficient in terms of quality. Whilst feedback from victims about the services they received was positive, insufficient attention was paid to the delivery and recording of victim awareness work with offenders. More evidence of staff effectively challenging offending behaviour was also required.

When a diversity issue was identified it was usually dealt with well.

Achievement and Monitoring of Outcomes

The resources allocated to each offender were consistent with the assessed Risk of Harm and likelihood of reoffending in most cases and were generally used effectively. The Offender Assessment System had been rescored in three-quarters of the case file sample. However, there had been no obvious improvement in factors associated with offending in half of this sample and insufficient attention was paid to the 'change' oriented objectives of the sentence. Only 58% of offenders had complied with their supervision and only 20% demonstrated increased victim awareness. Nonetheless, there had been some direct benefits to the community, for example through unpaid work, and there were also good examples of offenders being appropriately referred on to community-based organisations that could provide ongoing assistance.

Leadership and Strategic Management

The Sussex Probation Board and senior management team had an outward-looking approach to business planning, and provided clear and visible leadership for staff in the area. The plan reflected national and local priorities as well as the requirements set down in Service Level Agreements with the Regional Offender Manager.

Sussex Probation Area had reviewed its organisational structure to ensure that it was fit for purpose to deliver the offender management model. Phase one of the model had been implemented well, as evidenced by the recent stock take, though the roll-out of phase two needed to be accelerated in conjunction with Her Majesty's Prison Service.

A robust approach to performance management had been developed and sustained, underpinned by senior management support and direction, for example through 'accountability meetings' held by the Chief Officer with managers. Staff were very positive about the middle management group and there was evidence of regular supervision, often of excellent quality.

Liaison arrangements with sentencers were good and the area highly thought of by its key partners. Sussex was involved with a range of agencies and it had improved its engagement with Supporting People since the Effective Supervision Inspection.

The area's resources were managed well in the main, with external funding accessed where possible, and good partnerships set up and tightly managed. However, a shortage of unpaid work supervisors and limited evening and weekend provision presented an added challenge in respect of employed offenders. There was limited provision for minority groups area-wide, though this was an issue for all agencies, not solely probation. It was of serious concern that Sussex Probation Area was unable to employ all trainee probation officers upon qualification – a problem mirrored in a number of areas due to budgetary constraints.

Assessment data had been used well to map and meet need, and also to evaluate the factors behind areas of underperformance.

Risk of Harm

A Risk of Harm screening had been completed in almost all cases, although we had some concern that several were inaccurate and that a substantial number had been inappropriately exempted from a full analysis of Risk of Harm. We agreed with the Risk of Harm classification assigned to most cases. However, the overall quality of the analysis required some improvement. It was good to find that risk management plans followed the prescribed format, but the area needed to continue with its focus on the quality of the content.

Risk of Harm was reviewed regularly and restrictive interventions monitored closely, but importantly, the area needed to increase its vigilance in identifying, recording and acting upon changes in the Risk of Harm presented by offenders. There was also a need for greater awareness amongst staff that promoting the welfare of children and young people was a duty for all agencies.

The area had forged a positive partnership with the police in the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and was developing good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

SUMMARY OF SCORES

Outlined overleaf in Chart 1 are percentage scores for each OMI Criterion and for each of the sections 1-3.

Chart 1: Scoring of sections 1-3:

Offender Management Inspection: Sussex (July 2007)

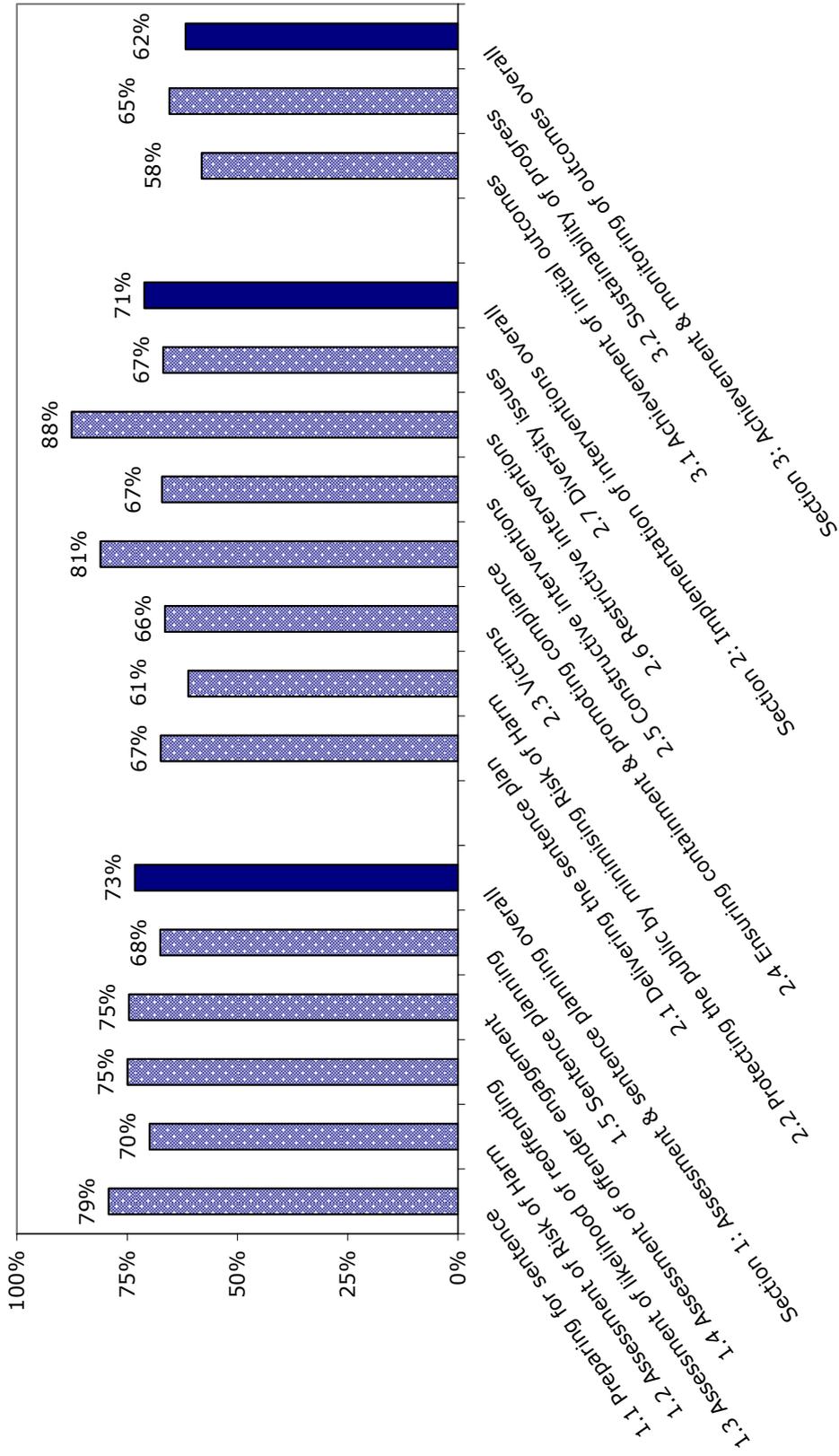


Table 1: Scoring of section 4:

Each of the criteria in the Leadership & Strategic Management section has been graded below, according to the four-point scale described in Appendix 3.

4.1 General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING	Well met
4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS	Well met
4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT	Satisfactorily met
4.4 General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Satisfactorily met
4.5 General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION	Well met
4.6 General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES	Satisfactorily met

Table 2: Risk of Harm Thread

Table 2 indicates a score drawn from a range of indicators in the *Assessment & Sentence Planning* and *Implementation of Interventions* sections about Risk of Harm work. This score is significant in determining whether a further focused inspection will be carried out.

Score for Risk of Harm Thread	69%
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Full details of our *Scoring Approach* are contained in Appendix 3.

We advise readers of reports against attempting to compare scores area by area. Such comparisons are not entirely valid as the sizes of samples vary slightly, as does the profile of cases included in each area's sample. We believe the scoring is best seen as a simple summary of what we have found in an individual probation area and needs to be seen alongside the full findings and recommendations of any particular report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improvements are necessary as follows:

1. Risk of Harm screening is undertaken accurately in all cases and, where indicated, a full analysis is completed to a high standard, incorporating victim issues
2. the quality of risk management plans meets the standard defined nationally
3. there is improved evidence of effective middle management oversight of high/very high Risk of Harm and child safeguarding cases
4. sentence planning is given a higher priority and reviews are comprehensive and completed on time in all cases
5. there is an increased focus on outcomes in the work of offender managers with offenders, in order to achieve the sentence objectives fully
6. in conjunction with Her Majesty's Prison Service, the implementation of phase two of the national offender management model is accelerated
7. that the National Offender Management Service gives urgent attention to the problems faced by probation areas unable to recruit their newly-qualified trainee probation officers because of budgetary constraints.

NEXT STEPS

An improvement plan addressing the recommendations above is needed four weeks after publication.

Further focused inspections will be carried out approximately 12 months after the original OMI when HMI Probation has a serious concern about an area's RoH work.

There will **not** be a further inspection in Sussex.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Below are examples of good practice we found in Sussex.

Quality risk management planning:

**OMI Criterion:
1.2d**

Assessment of Risk of Harm

The Hastings office used an extra heading in their risk management plan, entitled 'contingency planning', which helped focus the minds of offender managers on what might go wrong in the management of an offender's RoH, and what the response should be and who should do what if it did.

Effective Problem solving:

**OMI Criterion:
2.1d**

Delivering the sentence plan

Andy was a young man whose long-standing misuse of alcohol was the main factor in his offending. Following the implementation of a number of successful interventions whilst on licence, Andy's alcohol consumption had almost ceased. In a supervision meeting with his offender manager, he revealed that he had recently met some new people and had found that he was unable to stop himself from drinking with them; he was worried about saving face and how his new friends would view him if he didn't drink alcohol. The offender manager skilfully and realistically discussed a number of practical strategies he could use if the situation arose, using new positive factors in Andy's life. The next time he met the new people, Andy was able to explain that he wasn't drinking due to his fitness training. This provided a way for Andy to manage a previously difficult social situation.

Improving compliance:

**OMI Criterion:
2.4g**

Ensuring containment and promoting compliance (Punish)

Mindful of the relatively high number of offenders who were breached within the first six months of their orders, the area had introduced a 'compliance checklist', to be completed by offender managers with offenders who had a poor history of compliance. The checklist asked questions about an individual's work patterns, transport arrangements, childcare responsibilities and whether they tended to forget appointments. Its consistent implementation in one office had encouraged the use of text messaging to remind offenders about appointments and had also provided rich information on the different characteristics of offenders who went on to be breached. Local research into compliance issues had used this information to make recommendations aimed at improving compliance (see section 4.1).

Balancing constructive and restrictive interventions:

**OMI Criterion:
2.6a**

**Restrictive interventions
(Control)**

Robert was released on licence to approved premises following a violent assault. Previous concerns around domestic violence and risks to his child were highlighted within the risk management plan. Good work by the offender manager, key worker and other professionals ensured alcohol and aggression issues were addressed, whilst Robert was enabled to start to re-develop a relationship with his partner and new baby. At the time of inspection and following a phased return to the family home, Robert had not reoffended and there had been no incidents involving alcohol or domestic violence. There were still a few months left until the end of the licence for monitoring and sustainability assessments.

Using sentencing information constructively:

**OMI Criterion:
4.1c**

Leadership and Planning

The area identified that offenders on DRR cases that went into breach were often unsuitable for a number of other requirements that would normally be made following a breach hearing. For example, many of these offenders were medically unfit for unpaid work or had such unstable accommodation that a curfew was inappropriate. For these reasons, probation staff had fewer options when making applications to court to make a DRR more onerous. This had led to most DRR cases that went into breach for the first time simply being sentenced to an extension of the requirement.

The area proposed a new specified activity requirement, 'Motivation for Compliance', as a punishment for breach in DRR cases that would promote the offender's positive re-engagement during the remainder of the order and avoid extending the length of the DRR where it was not necessary.

SERVICE USERS' PERSPECTIVE

Offenders

During the inspection in Sussex we ran two interview sessions in the community with offenders on programmes (OSAP and Think First), though only one person turned up to each interview. A further ten offenders, based either in the area's two approved premises or taking part in unpaid work, were interviewed individually.

All of the offenders across each of the settings recalled having received an induction. On unpaid work, this had included health and safety rules and expectations. The offenders on unpaid work also recalled being asked about their skills and interests in relation to unpaid work sites. Most were happy with where they were working. All offenders interviewed knew what to expect if they missed appointments. Similarly, all said that it had been very clear that discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated. The offenders on unpaid work were reminded of this every time they went out to a site. Approved premises residents made a point of saying that staff had been welcoming to them on reception.

Every offender thought that they had a sentence plan, including those on unpaid work, though the extent to which they felt involved in the sentence planning process varied. Few could remember details of what was in the plan.

All but one of the offenders interviewed felt that they had a good working relationship with their offender manager. Approved premises residents described good communication between staff, and being involved in regular three-way meetings with their offender managers and approved premises staff.

Most offenders felt that they either did not have any individual needs, or that these had been taken into account. However, three offenders across different settings felt that transport was an obstacle to them attending appointments and wanted more help from the area with this issue. Those with whom text messaging had been used as a reminder valued this service.

The vast majority of offenders felt that they were being helped by probation staff in areas such as remaining drug free or accessing appropriate housing. However, few of the offenders for whom it was relevant could describe any offence focused work, and none of the approved premises residents had undertaken any victim awareness work since being released from custody. This feedback matched the findings from our case assessments.

In terms of outcomes, almost all offenders believed that the work they were doing with probation would help them to avoid reoffending, whether this was through gaining employment or simply the deterrent effect of completing unpaid work. One offender commented that, *"it's not part of my sentence plan but probation are helping me get back into society"*. This seemed representative of what we were hearing about probation's input.

One hundred and ten questionnaires were sent to those offenders in the inspection sample, and 24 were returned. The vast majority of comments from those offenders in the community were positive. All offenders said that the rules of supervision were explained to them, and 80% recalled discussing their sentence plan to some extent. Only two offenders thought that staff involved in their case had not worked well together, and despite this, all offenders described good working relationships between themselves and their offender managers, which was encouraging. 80% had thought more about their offending as a result of work with probation, though only 66% described their attitudes to victims in the same terms. 80% of respondents reported that they were now less likely to reoffend, with a further 10% more cautiously saying they 'may be' less likely.

Of the nine offenders who had been released on licence, only one said that they had been visited in prison by their offender manager. Despite this lack of face-to-face contact, the majority of offenders were happy with the level of pre-release communication with probation staff, though several commented that it had been initiated only in the month leading up to release.

Just one offender from the custody sample returned a questionnaire. He was unhappy with his experiences so far, reporting that he did not have a sentence plan, had not been offered any courses and that nothing had been done to help prepare him for release.

Victims

Ten questionnaires had been sent out to people who had been victims of serious crime in the case sample and two were returned. The views of these two victims were almost all positive, with satisfaction expressed about the clarity of initial contact from Sussex Probation Area, and a feeling that individual needs had been taken into account. Both victims knew who to contact if they had any worries about their safety.

A further two victims were interviewed. They were both very positive about the work of the VLO. One described the difference probation had made as, *"Huge. I was not left out on a limb. I was given factual and emotional support"*. The second interviewee commented that their work with probation had, *"put my mind at rest and answered questions that I didn't know I had!"* This was extremely encouraging.

Courts

Out of the 50 questionnaires sent to sentencers, 12 were completed and returned. In addition, the Chief Crown Prosecutor (who was also Chair of the LCJB) was present at one of the inspection interview meetings held for partners of the area. The view expressed by respondents about the work done by the probation staff both for and in the court was overwhelmingly positive. All were satisfied with the quality and timeliness of both FDRs and SDRs and all sentencers thought that enforcement arrangements were working 'at least in part'. However, only two were aware that fast track provision was available for the enforcement of high and very high RoH and other priority offenders. Although just under half of the respondents felt that staffing levels in courts were not always adequate and some commented on the occasional lack of confidence of probation staff in court, overall, all were confident that court staff had sufficient knowledge and skills to do the job. There was a particularly strong and positive view expressed by all about the effectiveness of the liaison between courts and the probation area. All thought that probation managers were professional in their approach and engaged well with the LCJB.

1. ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING

1.1 General Criterion: PREPARING FOR SENTENCE

Activity in the phase leading up to sentence is timely, purposeful and effective.

79%

Strengths:

- (a) A PSR had been written in 60 of the 69 cases in the community orders and custody samples. Where the court had indicated the level of seriousness, all reports clearly took this into account.
- (b) Although local performance information showed that only 71% of reports were prepared on time, we found that all reports in the inspection sample were timely. The inspection finding may have reflected the improvements noted locally in the last two quarters of 2006/2007.

All but one of the reports were of the appropriate type. Most were completed using the nationally approved format.
- (c) The vast majority of reports in the inspection sample were based on an assessment of the offender's RoH and criminogenic factors. However, a RoH screening was not always completed in all cases where an oral report or FDR had been prepared.
- (d) Most reports were objective, impartial and free from discriminatory language and stereotypes.
- (e) Within the inspection sample, nine reports were written on PPOs. Eight reports clearly outlined the seriousness of the offence and all nine outlined the likelihood of reoffending.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) In the 36 cases where the e-OASys PSR template had been used, there was insufficient evidence that it had enhanced the quality of the report in 36% (12) of cases.
- (b) There was room for improvement in some of the reports written on PPOs. Only five contained a clear and proportionate proposal. The requirement to avoid labelling the offender as a PPO was not followed in two of the reports assessed.
- (c) In the 32 cases where self-harm was an issue, it was clearly recorded in only 69% (22) of these cases. There was no evidence that the self-harm risk had been communicated to prison staff in either of the two relevant custody cases.
- (d) Appropriate victim information was included in only 58% of the reports.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

1.2 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF RISK OF HARM
RoH is comprehensively and accurately assessed using OASys in each case and additional specialist assessment tools where relevant.

70%

Strengths:

- (a) A RoH screening had been completed in 96% of the community and custody cases. The figure was 90% for those offenders released on licence. The vast majority of these RoH screenings were completed on time.
- (b) The overall classification of RoH appeared to be correct in 89% of assessed cases.
- (c) Where a full RoH analysis had been completed, it accurately reflected the RoH to children in 82%, the public in 84%, staff in 81% and prisoners in both of the relevant custody cases. Although these were promising findings, given the importance of specifying accurately the nature and level of RoH, there remained work to be done.
- (d) The inspection sample included 33 community orders where the RoH was assessed as medium, high or very high. In 82% of these cases, the risk management plan was structured according to the required format. A further 34 such offenders in the sample had been released from custody on licence. The risk management plan was appropriately structured in 91% of these cases.
- (e) In all but two cases, communication between staff about the levels of RoH was appropriate. Partners working with offenders reported that they were clearly informed about an offender's risk classification in referral documentation and that they had access to OASys.
- (f) Risk management plans in community orders were structured according to the required format in 82% of cases (the figure was 91% for licences). Plans were completed on time for the three high or very high RoH community cases in the sample.
- (g) Eight offenders in the sample had been referred to approved premises. All were appropriate referrals and five were accepted. We did not see any cases where a referral should have been made, but was not.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) There were 19 cases where the RoH screening was not accurate. Examples of insufficient practice included offender managers not picking up significant information from previous convictions or assessments written during earlier orders, or 'pulling through' out-of-date assessments.

- (b) The full RoH analysis was of a satisfactory standard in 72% of the 77 cases where it was completed. This left 21 cases where it was insufficient, and a further 15 cases where there was no acceptable explanation for a full analysis not being undertaken. This was of concern. Exemptions were granted on occasion, based upon inaccurate screening information. We also saw the statement, 'an exemption was sought' entered, without any explanation of the nature of the exemption. The area had recently written a revised RoH policy that detailed offences in which an exemption from completing a full RoH assessment should not be granted, but our case sample predated its introduction.
- (c) In 27% of cases where assessments were available from MAPPA or other agencies, including prisons and YOTs (20 of 73 cases), they were not used effectively to inform RoH assessments. In the 25 cases where the case had been managed under MAPPA, the level at which it had been managed was communicated to others in all but four cases. Given the importance of the information that should have been communicated, this figure represented a small but significant minority.
- (d) Insufficient attention had been paid to victims' issues in 33% of cases. Omissions included a thorough assessment of victim safety and offender victim awareness.
- (e) In only 30% of community, 53% of licence and 33% of custody cases was the risk management plan considered to be comprehensive. Although plans often contained the right information, they were generally more of a list than a plan, and subsequently, it was not clear who was responsible for what.
- (f) The risk management plan was completed prior to release in only 15% of relevant licence cases.
- (g) There was effective management involvement in the assessment of ten of the 13 high RoH cases. Whilst this was encouraging, it left three cases where the level of oversight was insufficient. The management involvement in respect of child safeguarding issues was effective in less than half of the 19 relevant cases, which was of concern. We considered that the patchy analysis and recording of potential risks to children in the full RoH analysis was an obstacle to robust management oversight of child safeguarding issues.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

1.3 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD OF REOFFENDING
Likelihood of reoffending is comprehensively and accurately assessed using OASys as applicable.

75%

Strengths:

- (a) In 85% of cases an OASys score was calculated at the start of sentence or release from custody. (There were 16 Tier 1 cases that did not require a full OASys to be completed.)
- (b) The likelihood of reoffending assessment had drawn on other relevant assessments in 79% of cases. Where positive influences were present, for example supportive and pro-social factors, they were identified and recorded in 84% of cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Criminogenic factors were satisfactorily assessed in 76% of cases. Whilst this was by no means a poor result, it suggested that more quality assurance work of the type the area was already conducting would be required to ensure that a full assessment was routinely completed.
- (b) In seven of the 16 cases where one was required, an OGRS2 was not completed. Failure to complete this assessment mainly occurred where an oral report or FDR was used to help determine the sentence.
- (c) There were 17 PPOs in the sample. A comprehensive OASys was completed within five working days of sentence in 11 of these cases.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

1.4 General Criterion: ASSESSMENT OF OFFENDER ENGAGEMENT
Potential obstacles or challenges to positive engagement are identified and plans made to minimise their possible impact.

75%

Strengths:

- (a) A basic skills screening was carried out at the start of sentence in 82% of cases. In some offices, offenders could request Skills for Life provision even if their fast track score did not indicate that they needed it.
- (b) A REM classification was seen in all but one of the 108 cases in the sample.
- (c) Diversity issues and any other individual needs were actively assessed at an early stage in 77% of cases. The area had introduced a disability checklist that was helping to highlight these needs more accurately. Where potentially discriminating or disadvantaging factors had been identified, there was evidence that plans were put in place to minimise their impact in 83% of cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) A full assessment of basic skills was completed in only 13 of the 34 cases in which it was indicated. Insufficient specialist assessment and support for those with learning difficulties contributed to this finding.
- (b) In 70% of cases, full attention had been paid to the methods most likely to be effective with the offender. Though this was a promising finding, there was room for improvement. Similarly, in only 66% of cases had the offender's intellectual ability, motivation and capacity to change been taken into account at the earliest opportunity.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

1.5 General Criterion: SENTENCE PLANNING

The offender manager plans interventions in custody and the community with a view to addressing criminogenic factors and managing any RoH to others. The initial sentence plan or unpaid work assessment is designed to describe a structured and coherent plan of work for each offender.

68%

Strengths:

- (a) In 85% of cases, the offender was allocated to the correct tier and, in a similar proportion of cases, to an offender manager within the required timescale. In 86% of cases, the sentence planning reflected the requirements of the tier to focus on punishment, help, change and control.
- (b) Steps were taken to ensure that the offender fully understood the requirements of the sentence in 93% of the inspection sample and the penalties of breach in an impressive 96%.
- (c) A number of national standards requirements for ISPs were met in an encouragingly high number of cases. For example, planned contact levels of each requirement were appropriate in 93% of cases, who would deliver the interventions was clear in 73%, and 76% of arranged contacts were enforceable.
- (d) Interventions to address offending behaviour were appropriately identified in 79% of relevant (Tier 3 and 4) cases.
- (e) ISPs were timely and drew on all other relevant assessments in 72% of cases.

Areas for Improvement:

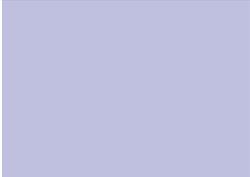
- (a) Sentence planning in general was given a high priority in around two-thirds of cases. Though this was a promising finding, there were clearly areas for improvement. For example, sentence plans gave a clear shape to supervision in 67%, focused on achievable change in 68% and reflected the sentencing purpose in 69%.

Some aspects of the ISP for offenders in the community required particular attention. In five cases, no plan was prepared. Where plans were completed, requirements were sequenced appropriately in only 56%.

The Learning Needs Analysis that was conducted as part of the area's implementation of the offender management model identified that, amongst POs, the biggest long-term development need was 'skills for selecting, sequencing and organising sentence plans'. Our findings suggested that there remained work to be done in respect of developing such planning skills.

Sentence planning meetings in custody were subject to delays in a number of cases and, as noted by the ROM's office, there were logistical problems to be resolved in offender managers chairing sentence plan reviews and being able to drive forward sentence plans actively.

- (b) Only 52% of plans were assessed as setting relevant goals for offenders. The area had sought to address some of the concerns about the quality of sentence plans raised in the ESI by producing a 'menu' of objectives that offender managers could choose from. However, an unintended consequence of using this menu was that the objectives set were not always sufficiently tailored to the individual risk and need of the offender. Staff seemed to have lost their sense of creativity and autonomy, and it was unclear, to us, for whom the plans were being written. One possible result of this uniformity was that offenders had had the opportunity to participate actively in the planning process in only 58% of cases. In addition, few of the offenders consulted during the fieldwork knew what was in their plan.
- (c) The roles and liaison responsibilities of all workers were clearly defined in only 55% of sentence plans.
- (d) The sentence plan unambiguously stated which elements were to be delivered in custody and which in the community in only four of the eight relevant custody cases.
- (e) Appropriate consideration was given to restrictive interventions designed to minimise RoH to others in 70% of relevant ISPs. In 21 of the 28 medium, high or very high RoH cases on community orders with a risk management plan, the ISP did not outline how the RoH would be managed, nor in some cases it cross-referenced to the risk management plan. This was poor.
- (f) Tiering was assessed as correct in most cases (see 'Strengths' above), and the area had undertaken substantial work aimed at improving the consistency of tiering decisions across the county.



Nonetheless, the awareness amongst offender managers of the sentencing purposes (punish, help, change and control) was less developed than expected. A greater focus on the sentence would have helped ensure that interventions planned consistently addressed the sentencing purpose.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS

2.1 General Criterion: DELIVERING THE SENTENCE PLAN

The offender manager facilitates the structured delivery of all relevant elements of the sentence.

67%

Strengths:

- (a) In 73% of cases where there was more than one requirement in a licence or community order, the interventions had been sequenced appropriately. Whilst this was not an unequivocally strong finding, it was encouraging that the majority of offender managers attempted to deliver interventions according to priorities, even though their sentence planning did not always reflect this clearly. In keeping with this finding, despite inconsistent pre-release activity (see 'e' under 'Areas for Improvement' below), work in the community was adjudged to build sufficiently on activity in prison in 82% of cases.
- (b) Arrangements were put in place to prepare offenders thoroughly for interventions in 85% of cases. However, an increased focus on pre-programme work would have improved this finding.
- (c) There was good communication between the offender manager and other workers involved in the case in 81% of cases. Partner agency staff from Creating Futures and NACRO were co-located with probation staff, enabling close contact to be maintained about an offender's progress and participation during an intervention.

Nonetheless, some external key workers commented that offender managers tended to be reactive rather than proactive in their communication with them, though they put this down to workload, rather than a lack of commitment or enthusiasm.
- (d) There was evidence of good communication between all staff and the offender in 76% of cases. Most offenders consulted said that staff involved in their order worked well together.

Given that a good working relationship is a building block to effective work, it was promising that in 81% of cases, the offender manager demonstrated commitment to their work with the offender. All the offenders consulted by questionnaire and the vast majority interviewed during the inspection, reported that they had a good working relationship with their offender manager.
- (e) Custody reports were prepared in only two of the nine cases in the sample. However, both reports incorporated accurate RoH assessments and contributed to the decision-making processes within required timescales.

- (f) Sentence plans were reviewed according to the required timescales, or more frequently where this was required, in 72% of the sample. In a similar proportion of cases, the plan seemed to be shaping delivery of interventions, and work with the offender flowed from it coherently.
- (g) At the time of the inspection, sentence requirements were fully implemented in 73% of cases.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The offender manager was adjudged to have overseen and coordinated the input of all workers in 70% of cases where there was more than one worker involved. Deficits in coordination were particularly evident in some stand alone unpaid work requirements where there was limited involvement of offender managers; it was clear that the role of the offender manager was still developing in relation to unpaid work.
- (b) There was evidence that offender managers had reinforced positive behaviour in less than half of the relevant cases. This seemed to be linked to our finding that offender managers were not sufficiently oriented to what they hoped to achieve with offenders, and therefore did not recognise when offenders had 'got there'. Opportunities for celebrating success were therefore missed. Similarly, arrangements to reinforce new skills following interventions were sufficient in only 57% of cases.
- (c) Although reviews were completed on time in most cases, a large proportion were not sufficient in terms of quality: less than half contained objectives and milestones that gave a clear direction to the sentence, and the continuing ownership of the offender was not sought in a similar number of cases. We felt that the generic style of the objectives was an obstacle to ownership at times.
- (d) Reviews did not integrate other plans, such as MAPPA, individual learning or Safeguarding Children plans, in 43% of cases.
- (e) There was insufficient positive, proactive and timely work between prison-based staff, offender managers and others, to prepare offenders for release into the community, in over a third of custody and licence cases. There were, however, some good individual examples of communication; a successful short-term initiative was the appointment of probation staff in the two Sussex prisons, to assist with the development of more appropriate training in these prisons and improve the transfer of information.

- (f) There were five cases in the sample that had been transferred between areas. Four were assessed as high or very high RoH. The risk management plan had been both reviewed and updated by Sussex Probation Area within five working days of first contact with the offender in only two of these cases. A home visit was made within ten working days of the area being notified that the offender was living in the area in two of the total of five cases. More positively, the first appointment was made within five working days in four of the cases.
- (g) Seven of the nine custody cases had moved whilst in custody. This information was not communicated promptly to offender managers in three of the cases, and there was a lack of coherence to much of the prison-based movement. Only one of the offenders was moved in a way that was consistent with the sentence plan. However, in half of the cases, the move was seen as being made for legitimate operational or security reasons.

Conclusion: This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2.2 General Criterion: PROTECTING THE PUBLIC BY MINIMISING RISK OF HARM
All reasonable actions have been taken to protect the public by keeping to a minimum the offender's RoH to others.

61%

Strengths:

- (a) RoH to others had been reviewed at least every four months following the initial review in 92% of relevant cases. It had been reviewed no later than 12 months after sentence in all five of the relevant custody cases and at least every four months after release in both of the custody cases that had reached this point.
- (b) There were eight cases where the offender had been recalled in relation to RoH issues. In all eight cases, recall formed an appropriate part of the risk management process and had been actioned properly.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) RoH to others had been reviewed within the required timescales from the start of sentence in 77% of cases. Following a significant change that should have triggered a review, RoH to others was reviewed in 58% of cases. Reviews did not take place in either of the two custody cases where change had occurred.
- (b) In just two of the four relevant phase two cases had RoH to others been reviewed in preparation for release from custody. The offender manager and offender supervisor had engaged with internal risk management processes in only two of the five cases where this was required.

- (c) When a review of RoH was done, there was insufficient evidence of ongoing planning to protect children, the public, known adults and staff. On average, adequate planning was found in 60% of relevant cases, though was stronger around children and the public than that related to known adults and staff.

The category of known adults would have included the partners or ex-partners of domestic abuse perpetrators. There was evidence that some offender managers were not sufficiently confident in addressing issues of domestic abuse, particularly where the offender was not involved in the IDAP.

- (d) Changes in RoH were anticipated, where feasible, in 72% of cases, identified swiftly in 74% and acted upon appropriately in 71%. These figures, although promising, were not strong, given the importance of addressing the dynamic nature of RoH. Better analysis of the antecedents and predicted triggers to risk-related behaviour would have enhanced this area of work further.
- (e) Where the case was being managed under MAPPA, the arrangements were being used well and staff contributed to them effectively in 73% of cases. The progress chasing of MAPPA decisions and the oversight of Level 1 cases needed to improve.
- (f) Following recall, there was no evidence that two of the seven offenders had been given a clear explanation as to the reason for their re-imprisonment, or that efforts were made to re-engage them.
- (g) A purposeful home visit to high and very high RoH cases took place within ten working days of sentence or release in only one of the seven relevant cases; it was carried out appropriately at a later stage in two of the cases and repeated as necessary to keep RoH to a minimum in one. It was of concern that five cases were not visited at all without an acceptable explanation for this.

Home visits were employed effectively to monitor children's safeguarding outcomes in fewer than two-thirds of the 17 relevant cases. We encountered situations where the offender manager should have given greater attention to promoting the welfare of children and young people, for example by escalating a lack of response from Children's Social Care to a probation line manager.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

2.3 General Criterion: VICTIMS
Consistent attention is given to issues concerning victims.

66%

Strengths:

- (a) Where statutory victim contact had proceeded, all relevant victims had been offered the opportunity to comment on the proposed licence conditions, read the parole report, and had subsequently been informed of the offender's release conditions.
- (b) There was evidence that in seven of the nine relevant cases, the victim had received timely information about the offender's release.
- (c) All four of the victims, who were either interviewed during the inspection or returned a questionnaire, were satisfied with the quality of engagement that they had experienced. One commented that, *"I've been given all the options on how to deal with his (offender's) release. I feel informed. I don't feel threatened or nervous because of the VLO contact"*. Two victims rated the service received as *'10 out of 10'*.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Victim safety (including children and young people) was an issue in 49 cases. This was given a high enough priority in only 61%, meaning that the safety of 19 actual or potential victims was not as paramount as it should have been. We found cases where, although the victim contact work was well executed, the offender manager had not fully considered its relevance to their work with the offender.
- (b) There was evidence in the file that victim awareness work had been undertaken with the offender in only 45% (38 of the 84) of relevant cases.
- (c) Despite local performance information showing that an offer of face-to-face contact was made within 40 working days in 95% of cases where this was a statutory requirement, our inspection figure was less than 50%. The area was exploring the reasons for this discrepancy. In 39% of cases, the victim had not been offered information about the criminal justice system. An area for improvement from the victims' perspectives was enhanced contact arrangements with the VLO. A business card that victims could keep or an answerphone on the VLO's line were suggested.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2.4 General Criterion: ENSURING CONTAINMENT AND PROMOTING COMPLIANCE (Punish)

Contact with the offender and enforcement of the sentence is planned and implemented to meet the requirements of national standards and to encourage engagement with the sentence process.

81%

Strengths:

- (a) In all cases, satisfactory arrangements were in place during the custodial sentence to restrict the offender's liberty.
- (b) In 93% of cases, the offender was offered a full and timely induction following sentence to a community order or after release on licence. Comments from offenders in the community confirmed that they felt well informed about the requirements of their sentence and the consequences of non-compliance.
- (c) The frequency of appointments conformed to the national standard in an impressive 92% of cases and facilitated the requirements of the sentence in 83%. Reporting arrangements met any RoH considerations and supported the achievement of sentence plan objectives in 74%.
- (d) The offender manager monitored attendance across all interventions in 92% of cases and took effective action to ensure compliance in 95%. This figure was an improvement on comparable local performance information and suggested that a greater emphasis was being placed upon promoting compliance. A 'compliance checklist' had been deployed in April 2006, which was helping to overcome barriers to compliance with those offenders who had a poor history of reporting. Techniques such as text messaging were used successfully in some offices, but neither the checklist nor text messaging was yet embedded in practice across the county.
- (e) Exclusion and/or curfew requirements were appropriately enforced in eight of the 11 relevant cases.
- (f) Judgements about unacceptable absences were consistent and appropriate in 90% of cases. Where required, breach action had been instigated and resolved within the required timescales in 88% and 81% of cases respectively. Evidence from key workers interviewed and the area's own research into compliance suggested that approaches to enforcement differed both within and between offices, and in particular, between offender managers and unpaid work supervisors.
- (g) The quality of the case record was good overall, with 92% being well organised. There were clear REM details in 93%, although comparatively fewer cases (78%) contained all the relevant documentation.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) There was sufficient contact and liaison with the offender by the offender manager prior to release in 70% of cases. Whilst not a poor finding, this meant that in almost a third of relevant cases, pre-release arrangements were unlikely to promote effective offender management in the community post-release.
- (b) Only three of the five custody cases had received a full and timely induction into custody.
- (c) Despite evidence of good inter-agency work with individual offenders, of the 17 PPOs in the sample, five were not supervised with sufficiently enhanced levels of contact or through a reporting pattern that supported all the elements of their sentence.
- (d) Although in most cases the frequency of the unpaid work sessions offered to offenders met the national standard, we found a number of cases where offenders had been 'stood down', usually due to a shortage of supervisors, and particularly at weekends (see section 4.3 for more details).

The offenders on unpaid work that we interviewed recalled being asked about their skills and interests in relation to their unpaid work and were happy with their placement. However, clear evidence that unpaid work sessions had been explicitly matched to the offender was seen in only 60% of the cases in the sample, suggesting that recording may have been an issue. The area had some particularly good quality work placements, but overall, a third of placements seen in the sample were not considered suitably demanding.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

2.5 General Criterion: CONSTRUCTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Help and Change)

Interventions are delivered to identified ends and to meet the requirements of the sentence: help and change.

67%

Strengths:

- (a) Sufficient work and resources were directed at community reintegration work in 78% of cases where it was needed.
- (b) One-fifth of the cases in the sample had an accredited programme requirement. 71% of these had commenced the programme as set out in the sentence plan, although in two of the five cases where this had not happened, there was no clear and acceptable explanation for the delay.
- (c) The offender manager prepared reports and attended review hearings in accordance with national standards and court requirements in all four of the DRR cases in the sample.

- (d) Four offenders in the inspection sample had been in approved premises for at least six weeks. There was evidence that there was a range of constructive interventions being delivered for these residents. Examples included help in accessing and maintaining employment, and support in finding appropriate move-on accommodation. Probation key workers also encouraged offenders to develop their social skills, worked on relapse prevention and helped offenders to access health services.

It was good to see that almost all of these interventions were linked to objectives in the offenders sentence plans.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) In only 53% of cases was evidence found that constructive interventions challenged the offender sufficiently to accept responsibility for their offending and its consequences. Nonetheless, 80% of the offenders who completed a questionnaire reported that they had reflected on their offending as a result of their work with the probation area, suggesting that offender managers needed to evidence their work better.
- (b) A total of 30 cases required some input in relation to basic skills. In half of these, the arrangements for a suitable intervention had not been set up.
- (c) Immediate action had not been taken following the offender's reception into custody, to preserve employment, accommodation and family ties, in any of the four relevant custody cases. Supportive and protective factors were evident in two of the four cases, but evidence that offenders had been given help to enable positive community links to be preserved was found in only one case. Promoting community reintegration within a custodial setting demanded good communication links between custodial and probation staff to be in place right from an offender's reception. These findings need to be seen in the light of the relatively recent introduction of phase two.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

2.6 General Criterion: RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS (Control)
Interventions are delivered to identified ends and to meet the requirements of the sentence: control.

88%

Strengths:

- (a) Restrictive interventions were monitored fully in 85% of cases. Whilst all reasonable action was taken to minimise the RoH in a creditable 83% of cases, more could have been done in the seven outstanding cases.
- (b) For the four offenders in approved premises, their residence was being used effectively as a restrictive intervention. Offender managers and approved premises managers were clear about the role of the establishment in managing RoH and we saw good liaison between staff to ensure that information was exchanged promptly.
- (c) Additional licence conditions, where imposed, were comprehensive, necessary and proportionate to the RoH and risk of reoffending in almost all cases seen. However, conditions were proportionate to the protection of victims in a less robust 78% of cases.
- (d) In all seven PPO licence cases where offending had been related to drug misuse there were appropriate licence conditions.

Conclusion:

Performance against this criterion was good.

2.7 General Criterion: DIVERSITY ISSUES
Full and proper attention is paid to diversity issues.

67%

Strengths:

- (a) The identified needs of offenders had been taken into account in arrangements for interventions in 82% of cases. The approved premises was seen to meet the needs of three out of the four residents in the sample. The one approved premises resident who reported having any diversity issues said that staff had helped him to develop a routine for his medication that stabilised his mental health. Two of the three offenders who reported in their questionnaires that they had individual needs said that these had been picked up and dealt with by their offender managers.
- (b) We could see from our inspection of cases that offenders were clearly informed that discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated in 96% of cases. This was borne out by the offenders interviewed who were very clear that this had been their experience too.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Issues of literacy and dyslexia were identified in 38 cases but were appropriately addressed in only 61% (23).
- (b) In three of the six cases where a singleton placement in a mixed setting had been arranged, there was no evidence in the offender manager's file that the informed consent of the offender had been obtained. Attention had been paid to staff composition in only one of these cases and arrangements made to support engagement in half the relevant cases seen.
- (c) In part due to the area's good screening of disability, 32 offenders in the sample had disclosed disabilities including physical impairment, mental health and learning difficulties. These issues had been appropriately addressed in 63% (20) of cases, although overcoming obstacles presented by the physical environment of the area's offices was dependent on funding and estate management dealt with from the centre of NOMS rather than at a local level.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

3. ACHIEVEMENT AND MONITORING OF OUTCOMES

3.1 General Criterion: ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIAL OUTCOMES *Planned objectives are efficiently achieved.*

58%

Strengths:

- (a) OASys had been rescored in 75% of cases. This provided Sussex Probation Area with a promising source of data from which to explore the effectiveness of its interventions; a process it had embarked upon.
- (b) Offender managers were generally responsive once a perceived change in RoH or likelihood of reoffending had been identified, and there was evidence of the intensity of supervision being appropriately reduced as a result of progress made. For example, in four cases, the offender's behaviour resulted in restrictive interventions being reduced and two of the cases managed by MAPPA moved to a lower level. There were also a small number of cases where the interventions delivered resulted in the offender moving to a lower tier, and in one case a child had been taken off the Child Protection Register as a result of an improvement in the offender's behaviour.
- (c) Twenty-three offenders had been reconvicted since the start of their order or licence. 86% of offenders who responded to the HMI Probation questionnaire said that they felt that they were less likely to offend as a result of the work of Sussex Probation Area.
- (d) 88% of cases where unpaid work was undertaken had been of demonstrable benefit to the community.
- (e) The resources allocated were consistent with the offender's RoH and likelihood of reoffending in 83% and 92% of cases respectively, suggesting that allocation procedures were ensuring that the right people were working with the right offenders in the vast majority of cases. In 15 of the 17 PPO cases, the staffing resources allocated were consistent with the offender's status. Resources were also found to be used efficiently in 80% of cases.
- (f) Offenders achieved well in literacy and numeracy. In 2005/2006, some 1100 offenders were referred to Skills for Life. 85% (367) of the 432 offenders who were registered achieved the qualification, mainly at Level 1. Similarly, Sussex Probation Area had significantly overachieved against its targets for outcomes such as offenders into employment, further education or training. For example, Progress to Work job entry stood at 138%, whilst NOMS job starts were at 143%.
- (g) Evidence for the achievement of sentencing objectives was mixed. 94% of offenders in all tiers experienced punishment and 82% of Tier 4s were adequately controlled.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The oversight and engagement of offender managers with domestic abuse cases required improvement. In eight of the 30 relevant cases, the offender manager did not know whether the police Domestic Violence Unit had received any call-outs to addresses linked to the offender.
- (b) Increased victim awareness had been clearly evidenced in only 20% of the relevant cases in the sample, although the majority of offenders consulted reported that their supervision had made them more conscious of the effect of their behaviour on victims.
- (c) Only 58% of offenders complied with the requirements of the sentence. This was despite some of the emerging work that we saw being done to promote compliance. The area recognised that maintaining compliance throughout the life of an offender's order or licence was a priority for improvement, and planned to implement some of the recognised techniques to improve compliance.
- (d) In 53 cases there had been no demonstrable benefit to the community from the sentence e.g. a reduction in the frequency of offending or reduced threat to victims and potential victims.
- (e) Where a review of OASys had been undertaken, there had been no improvement in the score in just over half the cases. 39% of offenders had made progress in tackling the most prevalent factor, thinking and behaviour. Drug misuse was the second priority factor with offending, and alcohol misuse the third.

We felt that offender managers would benefit from maintaining a sharper sense of their ability to help offenders change. The monitoring and recording of an offender's progress towards identified outcomes did not have a high enough priority.
- (f) There was evidence that offenders were able to apply the learning and skills acquired during their order in their daily lives in just 28% of cases.
- (g) In 61% of cases, there had been no demonstrable change in the offender's attitude or behaviour.
- (h) Offenders in Tiers 2, 3 and 4 were being helped in 64% of cases. There was evidence that the 'change' objective was being met in only 24% of cases in Tiers 3 and 4. Limited evidence of attempts to challenge offending behaviour contributed to this finding.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents an urgent priority for improvement.

3.2 General Criterion: SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRESS
Results are capable of being sustained between different phases of a sentence and beyond the end of supervision.

65%

Strengths:

- (a) Not all offenders required help with long-term community reintegration issues, but where this was relevant, it was given attention in 74% of cases.
- (b) 81% of offenders in the sample who had a criminogenic need that could be addressed by a community-based organisation had been made aware of where to find assistance at the end of their sentence.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) In over a third of cases, structured sentence planning had not been given a high enough priority throughout the sentence.
- (b) Twenty-six offenders had had three or more offender managers. In nearly half of these cases, this was felt to have had a detrimental effect on sustaining the offender's progress. Breaks in the continuity of offender management were compounded in some cases by 'new' offender managers not taking sufficient ownership of assessments made by previous offender managers. This lack of continuity may have obstructed a clearer focus on outcomes in some cases.
- (c) There was insufficient action taken by offender managers to consolidate learning and reinforce new skills in half of the cases seen.

Conclusion:

This criterion represents a priority for improvement.

4. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

4.1 General Criterion: LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING
There is active leadership in the implementation of national policies via local policies and procedures which are regularly monitored and reviewed, through proactive planning with other key agencies, and by promoting the diversity agenda.

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) The Sussex Business Plan was based on national and regional imperatives and the requirements of the area's SLAs with the ROM. The area had an outward-looking approach to developing the plan: the plan was informed by stakeholder feedback on local priorities, as well as the findings of the area's annual cross-grade EEM self-assessment. The plan was supported by a risk register categorised by the likelihood and potential impact of the risk. The register was reviewed quarterly and urgent action initiated by the risk owner if necessary.
- (b) Each objective in the business plan was assigned to a lead senior manager, and the members of the SMT were clear about their individual responsibilities. Objectives in the plan were communicated to staff at all levels of the organisation through 'team plans', which were pre-populated with relevant targets from the business plan. Policies and procedures were reviewed and updated according to a timetable, and their contents communicated to staff via e-mails and through supervision and team meetings. Although managing and making sense of the amount of information disseminated was an issue for several staff members interviewed during the inspection, overall 81% said that they felt well informed about policies and procedures that operated in the area.
- (c) Liaison arrangements with sentencers were set out in protocols between Sussex Probation Area, the magistrates' court services in Sussex and the Crown Courts at Lewes and Hove. Work was underway to implement PC12/2007 and protocols were being revised to reflect this. Each of the four court areas held regular PLC meetings to discuss all aspects of the area's work in the courts. Senior managers attended an annual meeting of PLC Chairs in the area, and there were occasional invitations to whole bench meetings, most recently one in Crawley. Staff were involved in training for new magistrates, and good relationships were said to be in place with sentencers, including the liaison judge, and the Head of the Courts Service, who also now covered the Surrey area. All 12 sentencers who returned a questionnaire reported that the liaison arrangements with Sussex Probation Area were effective. The area was also involved in plans for a specific drugs court in Brighton and Hove, to meet the demands of this growing group of offenders in the city.

- (d) The CO of Sussex Probation Area was Vice Chair of the LCJB and also chaired the enforcement sub-group. The area contributed to each of the other sub-groups and had undertaken work in respect of warrant enforcement, evidencing its involvement in the wider work of the LCJB, not solely in activities specific to its own remit. The area was well represented at senior management level on Supporting People, the three YOT Management Boards, DAAT and CDRPs, and had contributed productively to these partnerships. For example, one of the ACOs had led the review of DIP provision in West Sussex, whilst another member of the SMT was involved in the re-commissioning of drug treatment services (non-clinical) in Brighton and Hove.
- (e) Partner agencies interviewed as part of the inspection were very positive about the attitude of probation toward partnership work, and commented that the area's approach was, *"sincere, not tokenistic"*. A 2006 Supporting People inspection of Brighton and Hove Council described probation's involvement as, *"impressive, with appropriate and proactive representation at operational and strategic level meetings evident"*. The level of involvement with Supporting People in West Sussex was assessed following inspection as being sufficient overall. With regards to the Sussex LCJB, all sentencers consulted, as well as the Chair, felt that the area engaged effectively.
- (f) Sussex Probation Area was committed to enhancing public protection in Sussex and led on MAPPAs. An ACO jointly chaired the SMB, alongside a Detective Superintendent from Sussex Police. The launch of the Pan-Sussex Procedures for Safeguarding Children had made the links between MAPPAs and child protection structures more explicit, which had resulted in clearer procedural guidance for probation staff. Probation was represented on the LSCB and there were strong links between it and the MAPPAs SMB, each including the other as a standing item on their respective agendas. A series of joint training events were planned to further mutual understanding of each other's work. Strong links were also identified between MAPPAs, the LSCB and the Sussex LCJB, where there was a good degree of continuity in representation. A LCJB member commented that, *"it was clear how local agencies were joined up at MAPPAs level"* and it was noted how helpful this was in promoting the public confidence agenda of the LCJB.
- (g) The area had a Diversity Plan for 2006/2007 that set out challenging targets for the SMT to enact. Progress against the plan was reviewed by the cross-grade Diversity and Equal Opportunities Group, which was chaired by a member of the Board. Gender, race and diversity equality schemes had been produced, and the targets for delivery against these schemes embedded in the area's business plan, to ensure that they were given the highest priority in the forthcoming year.

All new policies and procedures were assessed for their potential impact on diversity and equality issues. In addition, the area ensured that diversity was an integral part of strategic planning through the explicit expectations it placed upon partner agencies in SLAs.

- (h) A broad programme of service user surveys had been implemented by the area, and managers considered user feedback when planning changes to processes. The area also linked its findings from all customer surveys into its annual EFQM self-assessments. A particular example of offender views being taken into account in planning processes was the area's research into rates of compliance. Twenty-nine offenders from three offices had been interviewed as part of the study, and a questionnaire was sent out to a further 104 offenders who had been breached, though the return rate was low. An ACO was leading on the delivery of an action plan based on the findings.
- (i) The ROM's office reported that very positive relationships had been developed between the ROM and the area, with Sussex Probation Area being very willing to share information and enable ROM representatives access to a wide variety of practice linked to the offender management and interventions SLAs. The Chair of the Board had sought early contact with the ROM and had been actively involved in the SLA process and negotiations. The Board had taken a lead in encouraging constructive contact between the commissioning team and area staff; an example being the involvement of the ROM in local events with sentencers and staff.
- (j) The ESI described Sussex as a *'well managed area with clear leadership exercised by the Board, Chief Officer and SMT'*, and this remained the case. The area had adopted the Living Leadership model that aimed to enable excellence in leaders, and had run quarterly leadership days to support this and other initiatives. The SMT was highly visible within the organisation, and 90% of respondents in the area's staff survey knew who its eight members were. The area's managers expressed a commitment to being responsive to staff ideas and this was borne out in the annual staff survey. In addition, 82% of staff interviewed during the inspection reported that their senior managers demonstrated professional management approaches and 78% said that they modelled positive leadership behaviour. The CO drew a parallel with the offender management model as an example of how all staff had a leadership role to play in the organisation.
- (k) Sussex Probation Area had shown itself to be receptive to the findings of regulatory bodies by acting on the findings of the ESI and HMI Probation's independent investigation into the Hanson and White SFO to improve its performance in relation to the assessment and management of RoH posed by offenders under its supervision. Following her audit of the implementation of the recommendations from the Hanson and White report, the Improvement and Development Manager had described the area's MAPPA work as 'excellent'.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Though middle managers confirmed that the business plan was shared with them and cascaded through team plans, there appeared to be limited involvement of these managers in contributing to the development of the plan, unless they were involved in specific task groups. Some middle managers also felt that the range of meetings provided did not meet their particular needs. For example, one comment made was that the area managers' meetings were too large to be suitably interactive.
- (b) The area, in partnership with Sussex Police, had not yet refined its audit and monitoring of the effectiveness of MAPPA in managing RoH at each of the three levels. The area recognised this as a challenge for the SMB and was working with its key partners, in particular the police, to identify resources and develop suitable arrangements to ensure sufficient strategic oversight. This was in keeping with the relevant objectives in the 2005/2006 MAPPA Annual Report.

4.2 General Criterion: PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TARGETS

Key performance targets are consistently met, with careful attention to diversity issues throughout.

Well met

NPS Performance Data	Target	April 2006-March 2007	
		Sussex	England and Wales
Enforcement: breach taken where required within ten working days: all orders/licences	90%	93%*	92%*
Offender compliance: proportion of arranged appointments attended in first 26 weeks	85%	92%*	83%*
Accredited programme completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	100%*	114%*
Unpaid work completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	122%*	111%*
DTTO/DRR starts: % performance in relation to target	100%	78%	99%*
DTTO/DRR completions: % performance in relation to target	100%	103%*	119%*
Skills for life: % performance in relation to starts	100%	116%*	125%*
Sickness absence: average days absence	9 days	10.7	12.0
Court report timeliness	90%	71%	80%
Accurate and timely ethnicity data	95%	98.7%*	98.2%*
Home Secretary's Race Equality Employment Target for 2009	(South East Region) 6.2%	5.3%	
Proportion of victims of serious sexual/violent offences (where offender sentenced to custody of 12+ months) offered contact within eight weeks	85%	95%*	93%*
RoH assessments and plans for high RoH cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	91%*	94%*
RoH assessments and plans for PPO cases completed within five working days of start/release	90%	97%*	96%*
Offenders into employment: % performance in relation to target	100%	143%*	128%*
Offenders into employment, retained for four weeks: % performance in relation to target	100%	87%	115%*

Joint 'end-to-end' targets on enforcement for Local Criminal Justice Board	Target	April 2006-March 2007	
		Sussex	England and Wales
Average time to resolve community penalty breach proceedings from relevant unacceptable failure	No more than 35 working days	48 days	45 Days
Proportion of all breach proceedings resolved within 25 working days of relevant unacceptable failure to comply	50%	38%*	48%*

* Asterisk indicates area has met target or is 'near miss'.

Strengths:

- (a) The achievement of key national, regional and local targets was a high priority for the area, and at the end of 2006/2007, Sussex was ranked 14th in the weighted scorecard (Performance Report 24), a marked improvement on 28th at the end of 2005/2006 (though not up to the high of 4th achieved in 2004/2005). The area had maintained an upward trend for enforcement and the figure for the percentage of appointments attended by offenders was now the best in the country. Other notable achievements included unpaid work completions and the timeliness of RoH assessments and plans for PPOs.
- (b) The area had a strong focus on monitoring performance, with monthly and quarterly performance reports produced against key targets and broken down by team. These reports were available to staff through the intranet and were communicated to the Board's Performance Management Panel. The CO held regular accountability sessions with middle managers to review progress against targets as set out in the reports, and agree necessary further actions. It was of note that the consensus of staff and managers was that the breakdown of data by team had introduced 'healthy competition', characterised by the sharing of good practice and mutual support between teams.
- (c) The performance and excellence team produced a comprehensive six monthly report that analysed the area's performance by ethnicity, age and gender, enabling interrogation of these figures to determine whether minority groups were being disadvantaged. Research into PSR outcomes had indicated that there was no disproportionate impact on black and minority ethnic groups, once outcomes were broken down by offence type.
- (d) The ROM's regional commissioning team received regular performance information from Sussex Probation Area, and the high quality of presentation had been used as a template for performance returns for the other four areas in the region.
- (e) To help drive improvement, the area had introduced a number of 'quality measures' focused in particular on the assessment of RoH and likelihood of reoffending. The criteria that guided middle managers' scrutiny of practice were drawn from the benchmarks set by HMI Probation, and significant improvements in OASys quality had been recorded across the county.

- (f) Probation COs and Board Chairs met quarterly in a regional forum (that now included pan-London strategic managers) and there was a strong contribution from Sussex Probation Area to regional groups and networks to evidence its claim that the area 'punched above' its weight in the region. The CO was the Senior Responsible Officer for the Regional Pathfinder to get high risk offenders into employment, a project modelled on ideas that emanated from Sussex; three ACOs chaired regional networks on performance and quality, approved premises and public protection respectively, and the area was also the lead for the Government Office South East on PPO work. Work undertaken by the area in respect of consistent identification of PPOs across local authorities had now been launched region-wide.
- (g) A quarterly Performance Improvement Plan was commissioned by the SMT, which provided an analysis of performance, and recommended action for the short and medium term. This had helped drive improvement in several areas, such as Skills for Life referrals.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Although Sussex Probation Area had met its target for DRR completions, it had not consistently met its DRR commencements target. Nonetheless, work directed at improving performance following detailed analysis of team specific data had recently started to pay dividends (see 4.6d).
- (b) Despite improvements over recent months, court report timeliness for SDRs remained below target and it was hoped that the new national guidance on PSRs would allow the area greater flexibility and reduce the negative impact of limited SDR writing resources. The main area for improvement in relation to the SLAs with the ROM was compliance (cases reaching six months without breach), where Sussex achieved 65% against a target of 70%.

4.3 General Criterion: RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT
There is a strategic approach to deploying resources to deliver effective performance and support diversity initiatives and there are positive indications in relation to value for money.

Satisfactorily met

Strengths:

- (a) Partly in response to a recommendation in the ESI report, Sussex Probation Area had further developed its own model to compare resourcing within offender management and public protection teams (the 'Predictive Resource Allocation Model', PRAM). It had been tested through a multi-grade steering group, which included middle managers and union representation. The model was not finalised, but it had already been used to move staff resources within a division to cover shortages. Although managers were aware of the model, it was not yet familiar to other staff. The intention was that its working would become more transparent once the consistency checks on tiering and levels of RoH had been completed across the area.
- (b) The area had structured itself to ensure that resources followed risk. High and very high RoH offenders, including sex offenders, were managed by three public protection teams and RoH was integrated into the allocation model (see 4.3d). Partner agencies identified that probation had taken a very active role in the development of the PPO strategic partnership, where they were the lead agency. In conjunction with the police and YOTs in the county, the area was involved in ensuring a county-wide consistency of approach by first identifying a definition of a PPO that was sufficiently similar across the county to enable an accurate picture of the resources required to emerge. An inter-agency 'Premium Service Protocol' had recently been completed, and PPOs featured as a target in the LAA. Performance was reported as being on schedule to achieve its target this year. Partners concluded that they had a "very fruitful" strategic working relationship with probation around this group of offenders.
- (c) One partner representative commented positively on the work of the probation area's Diversity and Equal Opportunities Group in involving members of the community. It had considered the support needs of both staff and offenders in relation to racism and sexism, and had produced guidance for staff in connection with reallocating offenders to different offender managers in particular circumstances.

The area ran a scheme to reimburse offenders who were in receipt of state benefits and who had to travel more than three miles to get to their reporting office. This helped alleviate hardship for those eligible.
- (d) Overall, sentencers were satisfied with the service they had received from the area. Nonetheless, several expressed concern that, on occasion, the amount of probation resource in court was overstretched, which impacted on the ability of staff to provide them with appropriate information to aid decision making.

- (e) Sussex Probation Area had adapted the national tiering model, ensuring that medium RoH was clearly a determinant of allocation, to avoid PSOs holding medium and higher RoH cases (or at least not as an offender manager). There were current negotiations with trades unions about PSO roles in relation to RoH work. Staff had a strong sense of how the tier linked to allocation decisions and Sussex Probation Area had recently produced guidance on workload prioritisation. Although it was too early to say whether this had been fully embedded in practice, decisions to depart from national standards were defensible and evidenced.
- (f) The area had a successful record of accessing external funding partners to add value to its services over the last 12 years. The European Social Fund, Jobcentre Plus and LSC funding had enabled Sussex Probation Area to improve offender skills training and support into employment, latterly in collaboration with the Sussex prisons. The value of this input was £450,000 in 2006/2007. External audits suggested that the area offered good value for money.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) The difficulty, for all agencies, of adequately resourcing the demanding and growing area of work covered by MAPPA was highlighted by all partners.
- (b) Although there was undoubted commitment by senior managers to diversity, as evidenced by the introduction of the disability checklist and attendance at the Brighton and Hove Racial Harassment Forum, for example, this did not consistently translate into a range of diversity initiatives to meet the needs of offenders in the area.
- (c) Sussex Probation Area 'over-listed' some unpaid work groups as a means of maximising the impact of its limited supervisor resource. The poor compliance rates in the area meant that this practice did not normally result in offenders being 'stood down' without notice. However, in some parts of the county, and at weekends in particular, when the pressure for places was greater, over-listing had resulted in stand downs. In addition, the practice meant that the area had less incentive to improve offender compliance rates when an increase in attendance figures could be 'contrived' through over-listing. Though unpaid work interventions staff had recently taken responsibility for allocation and listing, and subsequently there had been no recorded stand downs (due to over-listing) since May 2007, we strongly advised the area to stop this practice.
- (d) The provision of Skills for Life learning for those offenders in approved premises or on unpaid work was inadequate. There were no discrete Skills for Life classes or individual tuition for learners in approved premises, and no support on unpaid work sites. Similarly, there was no provision to access such support after 17:00 or at weekends.

<p>4.4 General Criterion: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT <i>Workforce planning and development leads to a good match between staff profile and service delivery requirements. Relevant diversity legislation is observed in staff recruitment and deployment.</i></p>	<p>Satisfactorily met</p>
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Strengths:

- (a) The area achieved a 'green' status in the recent phase one offender manager implementation stock take. At the time of this scrutiny exercise, conducted by the Improvement and Development Manager, 96% of community orders were tiered and an action plan was in place to achieve 100%.
- (b) Sussex Probation Area produced a costed annual training plan based on the needs identified through the business/team planning and appraisal process. It included a broad range of learning and developmental activities focused on the needs of staff in all roles, as well as training courses, modelled on the structure recommended by the Chartered Institute of Personal Development. Each year, Sussex Probation Area provided in excess of 1800 training days. The area also supported its staff, including managers, in pursuing academic and management qualifications. Since the ESI, a focus of training for all staff had been on the assessment and management of RoH, through the roll-out of the national RoH training, action learning sets for middle managers and the shadowing of members of the public protection team. 82% of staff we consulted said that their training and development needs were met. This figure equated to that in the area's staff survey, which represented a big improvement from the 39% recorded in 2002.
- (c) The area had been successful in implementing the NVQ Level 3 in Criminal Justice, with nine staff achieving a cluster award and progressing to the full award, becoming the first area in the region to do so. In addition, Sussex Probation Area had won an award at the London Excellence Awards in 2006 for its approach to 'Innovation and Learning', and were finalists in both 2006 and 2007 for the 'People Involvement and Development' category.
- (d) Staff role boundaries were transparently defined within the offender management arrangements in Sussex. The allocation system determined which cases should be managed by PSOs, POs and 'specialist' teams, and 94% of staff interviewed were clear about their roles in these arrangements. (The area's own figure from its staff survey was 97.5%.)
- (e) Area managers held regular meetings with UNISON and NAPO in a joint management/trades union forum. Items which could not be addressed in this forum were referred to a Board level JNCC. It was a measure of the success in resolving matters that JNCC meetings were rarely necessary. Examples of effective joint working included the cooperation of the unions in implementing the job evaluation scheme in 2006/2007 and ongoing work in developing the Sussex Probation Area workload measurement tool.

- (f) 94% of staff interviewed reported that they received supervision at least every six weeks, with two-thirds receiving it on a monthly basis. The timing of supervision was variable according to the experience of the offender manager, with TPOs and PSOs typically being seen more frequently. What was particularly impressive was that a third of staff considered the quality of their supervision to be 'excellent', with mention made of a particular focus on individual cases, training needs or responsiveness to new ideas, for example. Nobody thought their supervision was poor.
- (g) Once teams had produced their own plans by the 31 March, managers were required to complete appraisals and personal development plans with every member of their team, ensuring that objectives were cascaded. A full copy of the business plan was available on the area's external website. 97% of staff had had an appraisal in the last 12 months and, of those, 99% confirmed that it was linked to the business plan.
- (h) The area operated with full regard to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. A Disability Equality Scheme was in the process of being launched and a Race Equality Scheme had been implemented for 2006-2009. Sussex Probation Area had increased the proportion of its workforce who were from black or minority ethnic backgrounds over the past three years.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) Although the area had shown itself capable of driving forward major organisational change in the implementation of phase one of the offender management model, the roll-out of phase two needed to be accelerated. We found that some offender managers involved in the delivery of phase two of the offender management model were not sufficiently familiar with the requirements. There had been briefings but there was an acknowledgement from middle managers that the roll-out had taken place differently in different teams, and this had led to varying levels of knowledge. Senior managers explained that they had been waiting for the national training materials, which had come later than expected and not been as useful as had been hoped.

The area attended a strategic group with relevant HMPS Area Managers, and some joint training with prison service colleagues had taken place, but challenges remained for the area in working with the differential response to phase two of the offender management model across the prison estate, as well as in bringing its own staff up to speed. Sussex Probation Area was undertaking a review to assess where the current gaps were, and recognised that solutions would have to be found in collaboration with prisons.

- (b) Sickness levels had fluctuated over the past 12 months but worked out at an average of 10.6 days per person. This was an improvement on the 11.9 days reported at the time of the ESI and was also better than the national average of 12 days. 93% of staff reported that they understood the procedures the area had in place to address staff sickness absence. Nonetheless, the current figure of 10.6 was still above the national target of nine days.
- (c) There was a high degree of commitment to ensuring that key tasks were undertaken on behalf of absent colleagues, and attempts were often made to manage workload within an offender manager 'pod' until the work could be reallocated. However, offender managers reported that the need to cover work was a source of stress. This was borne out by the staff survey, in which over half of the offender manager respondents felt that absenteeism was not dealt with effectively at work. This figure rose to over two-thirds when the question asked about stress.
- (d) Although the majority of the TPOs interviewed were happy with the learning opportunities and support that they received, four of the 11 were not. One contributory factor to this finding was that fifteen TPOs were due to qualify in 2007 but Sussex, like many other areas, was unable to employ all of them due to budgetary constraints. The position was not set to improve and Board members stated that this had been an extremely difficult decision and cause of great regret. The HR section had liaised with NOMS over the conduct of a selection process involving references and an assessment centre, in order to ensure that the correct procedures were followed. TPO staff that were unsuccessful in securing one of the eight posts available had been offered individual meetings with HR staff and were being advised to consider vacancies elsewhere within the region.

4.5 General Criterion: REVIEW AND EVALUATION

Outcomes of interventions are assessed and reviewed using available data.

Well met

Strengths:

- (a) Sussex Probation Area conducted a wide range of annual surveys, and the views of service users were routinely collated and often used to improve service delivery. For example, the disability monitoring questionnaire employed by the area had arisen from an offender survey, which indicated that 20% were affected by a disability. The next step, as part of the Disability Equality Scheme, was to use the outcomes of the monitoring to identify exactly what the particular needs were. Some changes had already been made to buildings, such as the provision of ramped access, following the Disability Discrimination Act compliance survey.

- (b) The area monitored and analysed completion data regularly and provided the courts with a quarterly report broken down between East and West Sussex. The area had commissioned an internal study of reconviction rates for offenders receiving community sentences or sentences of less than 12 months imprisonment between April 2001 and May 2002. This sample of over 2000 offenders was then followed up to compare their two year reconviction rates, using factors such as race, gender and OGRS score.
- (c) Aggregated information on outcomes was routinely collated by the performance and excellence team and used to inform practice. A recent example was the study into compliance commissioned by the SMT, and involving analysis of NSMART data and interviews with both offenders and staff. The subsequent report made a number of recommendations, including the need for wider use of text messaging and prioritising those offenders at greater risk of breach for ETE interventions.
- (d) The area periodically set up short or medium term working groups to ensure that a wide range of staff were involved in monitoring and evaluating performance information, with a view to generating ideas for improvement. Examples included the OASys improvement group and the high RoH working group. Staff were also involved in process reviews. Internal research into performance often entailed talking to staff to identify problems and potential solutions.
- (e) The regional public protection network, chaired by a Sussex ACO, reviewed SFOs via quarterly reports, which were also submitted to the SMT. Twice-yearly reports went to the Board, and the responsible ACO integrated actions from these reviews into the area's RoH action plan. Practice guidance, based on the findings from local SFO reviews as well as nationally prominent SFOs, was issued to staff and initiatives had included line manager endorsement of reduction in RoH from 'high' to 'medium', and revisions to protocols with YOTs in the area.

Area for Improvement:

- (a) Whilst it was undoubtedly positive that the area had received increasingly favourable survey results from staff and offenders over the last few years, it needed to guard against complacency and endeavour to draw learning from those individuals less satisfied with the service, however small the figure they represented in percentage terms. For example, although all 62 respondents to the unpaid work beneficiaries survey indicated that they would work with the area again, four said that they were 'very dissatisfied' with the speed and efficiency with which problems were dealt with. The area had not attempted to explore the factors behind this finding.

4.6 General Criterion: COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES <i>There is efficient provision of effective services to support offender management outcomes and to ensure equal access to provision for offenders.</i>	Satisfactorily met
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Strengths:

- (a) Probation commissioned services from a range of external partners and was one of the first areas to look at outsourcing the probation element of drug treatment and ETE delivery in advance of the move to commissioning. The area had increased its percentage spend on sub-contracting and was also carrying out a series of best value reviews into areas such as unpaid work and accredited programmes, to consider the benefits of further contracting out.
- (b) The partnership strategy was managed by the lead ACO, and operationally by a middle manager. The partnership manager worked closely with finance and performance colleagues to monitor the quality of commissioned services. Judgements about value for money were informed both by quantitative and qualitative targets and the area had taken action in the past when a commissioned service had fallen below the specified level of provision.
- (c) There was evidence of effective partnership-working to extend ETE and other provisions for offenders. Sussex Probation Area had effectively identified funding sources and providers and secured contracts that had extended the range of supportive interventions for offenders. In relation to Skills for Life provision, Sussex Probation Area was regarded as being strongly involved in trying to secure services for offenders, both in terms of accessing funding for specific provision and in trying to engage offenders in mainstream services.

Sussex Probation Area’s attitude to ETE work and the interest shown in the wider work of its education allies was noted positively by partner agencies, who also commented that the area was, *“prepared to challenge choices and decisions where these were not going to reflect offender and public protection needs”*. The consensus of partners was that joint commissioning was, ‘still aspirational’, primarily due to a reported lack of resources across the county.
- (d) OASys data had been used to identify need in relation to alcohol provision in Brighton and Hove. Data were also being monitored to compare proposal rates for DRRs in court reports against the number of offenders scoring four and over in the relevant section of OASys, as a means to identify patterns of referrals and so increase commencements.

At the request of the ROM, the area had recently generated an offender needs profile, based on data from OASys and a corresponding map of current provision, to help the ROM’s office conduct a gap analysis. This was with a view to the area recommending how services could be re-aligned or commissioned to address unmet need.

- (e) Good provision had been developed to meet the employment needs of Tier 4 offenders through a Regional Pathfinder, led by the Surrey/Sussex prison area and the Probation Sub-Regional Board. Whilst there had been delays in the implementation of the project, it was getting some positive results from offenders for whom the more traditional approaches had not worked.
- (f) Offender managers rated education and training services as sufficient in 79% of cases; drug and alcohol services as sufficient in 85%; and psychological services as sufficient in six of the seven cases where this input was required.
- (g) In accordance with its business plan objectives around diversity, the area was starting to develop its communication with black and minority ethnic groups in the county, raising the profile of the work of the area in the process. In one case, a meeting had led to an article on the work of Sussex Probation Area appearing in a local black and minority ethnic newspaper. Senior managers indicated that the most significant diversity issue they faced currently was the rapid increase in migrant workers. The area was working with CDRPs to target new arrivals with information about drink driving and other alcohol-related crime in particular.

Areas for Improvement:

- (a) There were concerns arising about the working arrangements between prisons and offender managers in 30% of cases inspected. The limited information flowing from prison to probation, for example concerning basic skills assessments or work undertaken whilst in custody, was creating problems for some staff and offenders. Probation staff worked hard to gain information, but much depended on the relationships between individuals rather than formal structures.
- (b) Although there was limited evidence that the user perspective was a key factor in commissioning, maintaining or decommissioning services, the area had plans to develop this work and had already surveyed users of Skills for Life services and the beneficiaries of unpaid work.
- (c) The provision of alcohol treatment varied across the county, and offender accommodation was a particular challenge in Brighton and Hove. Employment services for offenders were rated as sufficient in only four of the seven relevant cases. Offenders also reported that more support was needed in gaining employment.

Some partners noted that there were delays in accessing domestic abuse accredited programmes for offenders, in part caused by difficulties (experienced nationally) in accessing tutor training programmes.

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- (d) Overall, there was insufficient evidence that services had been developed area-wide to support work with minority groups. For example, despite the area increasing the budget for interpretation services against a background of funding constraints, the provision for those offenders in LSC funded services needing ESOL assessment and support in some parts of the county was insufficient. The area was looking to the next LAA to reflect the financial demands and outline future funding arrangements.

APPENDIX 1
Contextual information

Caseload at end of March 2007

Total caseload	4,885
% White	87.2
% Minority ethnic*	12.8
% Male	86.4
% Female	13.6
Number of cases subject to MAPPA:	6.6 (%)
Level 1	256
Level 2	58
Level 3	7
Number of PPO cases	92
* Excluding cases for which ethnicity information is not available.	

The local definition of a PPO case – on which the above figure is based – is *offenders under the supervision of Sussex Probation Area, identified by local PPO schemes, using the agreed Sussex targeting matrix (which brings together previous convictions, OASys assessment, DIP information and police intelligence).*

Total revenue budget in 2006/2007: £14.365 million

Total revenue budget in 2007/2008: £ 14.965 million

Approved premises:

Brighton – capacity 16.

APPENDIX 2

Inspection model, methodology and publication arrangements

Model

- The OMI programme started in May 2006. All NOMS areas in England and Wales are being inspected over a three year cycle, region by region. We hope to identify and promote effective work with offenders and disseminate information about good practice.
- Probation areas are being assessed on how well they have met defined inspection criteria, focusing on:
 - assessment and sentence planning carried out on offenders
 - implementation of interventions delivered to offenders
 - achievement and monitoring of outcomes
 - leadership and strategic management.Particular attention will be given to RoH issues – it is performance against these measures which will determine whether a re-inspection is carried out.
- The inspection takes account of the regular NOMS performance data. These are produced by NOMS, which is responsible for their collection and quality assurance.
- Each inspection takes place over one week. The area is asked to identify a random sample of 110-120 offenders (more in the largest areas) who have been managed by a probation offender manager for approximately six months. We then ensure that there is a minimum number of the following types of cases: high/very high RoH; PPOs; approved premises residents; statutory victim contact; black and minority ethnic offenders. The cases are drawn from community orders, licences, and those in custody.

Methodology

- During the inspection we examine the probation case file and carry out an in-depth interview with the offender manager. We also interview offenders, victims, keyworkers and case administrators. We send questionnaires to offenders and victims whose cases arise in the sample and to a selection of magistrates, judges, and legal advisers involved in sentencing.
- We interview senior and middle managers, Board members of the probation area, and partners.
- Inspection of about a third of the cases in the sample is carried out by area assessors, experienced staff/managers of the probation area being inspected. We think this provides a positive experience both for the area and the staff directly involved and that it increases ownership of the findings.

Publication arrangements

- Summary verbal feedback is given to the area at the end of the inspection week.
- A draft report is sent to the area for comment four to six weeks later. Publication follows approximately 12 weeks after inspection. A copy is sent to NOMS HQ and copies are also made available to the press and placed on our website.
- Reports on offender management in Wales are published in both Welsh and English.

APPENDIX 3 Scoring Approach

This describes the methodology for assigning the scores to each of the general criteria, to sections 1 to 3 and to the *RoH Thread*. A fuller detailed description is on HMI Probation's website at:

<http://www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation>

For each of the **general criteria in sections 1 to 3** – i.e. those sections based on the scrutiny of the case sample – that is:

Section 1: Assessment and sentence planning

- 1.1 Preparing for sentence
- 1.2 Assessment of risk of harm
- 1.3 Assessment of likelihood of reoffending
- 1.4 Assessment of offender engagement
- 1.5 Sentence planning

Section 2: Implementation of interventions

- 2.1 Delivering the sentence plan
- 2.2 Protecting the public by minimising risk of harm
- 2.3 Victims
- 2.4 Ensuring containment and promoting compliance (Punish)
- 2.5 Constructive interventions (Help and Change)
- 2.6 Restrictive interventions (Control)
- 2.7 Diversity issues

Section 3: Achievement and monitoring of outcomes

- 3.1 Achievement of initial outcomes
- 3.2 Sustainability of progress

The score is based on an average, across each of the questions in the Offender Management Tool for that criterion, of the proportion of relevant cases in the sample where the work assessed by that question was judged sufficient ('above the line'). (In the calculation, the results for the individual questions and for the summary question are weighted 80/20. Further details are given in the description on the website.)

The **score for each of sections 1 to 3** is then calculated as the average of the scores for the component general criteria.

The **score for the RoH Thread** is calculated as an average, over all the questions in the Offender Management Tool in sections 1 and 2 relating to RoH, of the proportion of relevant cases where work was judged 'above the line'.

For **each of the general criteria in section 4**, that is:

Section 4: Leadership and strategic management

- 4.1 Leadership and planning
- 4.2 Performance against national and regional targets
- 4.3 Resource deployment
- 4.4 Workforce planning and development
- 4.5 Review and evaluation
- 4.6 Commissioning of services

A score of either **well met, satisfactorily met, partly met** or **not met** is assigned on the basis of the performance across the specific criteria which make up that criterion. (Details are given in the description on the website.)

APPENDIX 4

Role of HMI Probation

Statement of Purpose

HMI Probation is an independent Inspectorate, funded by the Ministry of Justice and reporting directly to the Secretary of State. Our purpose is to:

- report to the Secretary of State on the effectiveness of work with individual offenders, children and young people aimed at reducing reoffending and protecting the public, whoever undertakes this work under the auspices of the NOMS or the YJB
- report on the effectiveness of the arrangements for this work, working with other Inspectorates as necessary
- contribute to improved performance by the organisations we inspect
- contribute to sound policy and effective service delivery, especially in public protection, by providing advice and disseminating good practice, based on inspection findings, to Ministers, officials, managers and practitioners
- promote actively race equality and wider diversity issues, especially in the organisations we inspect
- contribute to the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system, particularly through joint work with other inspectorates.

Code of Practice

HMI Probation aims to achieve its purpose and to meet the Government's principles for inspection in the public sector by:

- working in an honest, professional, fair and polite way
- reporting and publish inspection findings and recommendations for improvement in good time and to a good standard
- promoting race equality and wider attention to diversity in all aspects of its work, including within its own employment practices and organisational processes
- minimise the amount of extra work arising for Probation Areas or YOTs [those inspected] as a result of the inspection process.

The Inspectorate is a public body. Anyone who wishes to comment on an inspection, a report or any other matter falling within its remit should write to:

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