

Tel: Media enquiries: 020 7035 2123

HM Inspectorate of Probation • Second Floor • Ashley House • 2 Monck Street • London • SW1P 2BQ

Tel: 020 7035 2202 • Fax: 020 7035 2237

Email: HMIP.enquiries@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk • www.justice.gov.uk/inspectorates/hmi-probation/

Independent inspection of adult offending work



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OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN PRISONS – NOT JOINED-UP ENOUGH

Prison and Probation Services need to work better together to manage prisoners, said Andrew Bridges, Chief Inspector of Probation, and Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of a joint inspection into offender management in prisons.

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) aims to provide a structure to manage certain more serious or prolific offenders through their custodial sentence with probation staff in the community acting as offender managers. An offender manager's role is to assess the risk of harm to others each offender poses and the likelihood of them reoffending, and then to produce a sentence plan accordingly. By the end of 2006, offender management units had been created in prisons to manage those arrangements in custody.

Today's report, *A Joined-Up Sentence?*, reflects findings from the first 13 prison establishments inspected. Inspectors found that, even taking account of the different nature of the 13 establishments, some common themes emerged:

- despite considerable progress, there is still too much variation in the way in which prisoners are managed by the Prison and Probation Services;
- NOMS envisaged that offender managers in the community (probation officers) would be responsible for assessing the prisoner and for driving the management of the case, but this was rarely happening, and some offender supervisors (prison officers) were expected to take on this role, often without appropriate training or guidance, and sometimes with competing operational duties;
- some prisons had worked hard to ensure that all relevant prisoners had an OASys assessment, even where these should have been prepared by the offender manager, but the quality of these assessments varied, and they were rarely seen as a key document within the establishment;
- sentence planning was often driven more by the availability of activities than by the assessment;
- few establishments made strategic use of the OASys database to identify and provide for key areas of need in the prisoner population, which was disappointing; and
- information about prisoners was held in different locations within the establishment and, worryingly, public protection information was sometimes kept separate from offender management, which impeded the safe and effective management of prisoners.

The chief inspectors said:

“Despite these criticisms, we found some Offender Management Units which were well integrated into the establishment and where core custodial functions sat effectively alongside offender management. However, there needs to be considerable progress across the custodial estate before the NOMS vision of a ‘joined up sentence’ is realised and Offender Management Units operate as a hub within the establishment.”

Ends

Notes to editors

1. The report is available at www.justice.gov.uk/inspectors/hmi-probation/ from 9 March 2011.
2. *A Joined-Up Sentence?* is the first report to be published from our joint Prisoner Offender Management Inspection programme. This report draws on the findings from inspections undertaken between September 2009 and March 2010 at the following H.M.Prison establishments: Brinsford; Bristol; Exeter; Feltham; Foston Hall; Guys Marsh; Hewell Cluster; Kirkham; Liverpool; Nottingham; Swansea; The Mount; The Wolds.
3. Inspectors examined how well prisoners are being managed under phases II and III of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Offender Management model, as well as a number of cases which fell outside the model.
4. The original idea of the NOMS Offender Management Model was to provide a structure within which every sentenced adult offender (18+) would be managed through either their custodial or community sentence. An offender manager who was employed as either a probation officer or probation service officer in the community would have responsibility for planning and managing both community and custodial sentences. Their role in each case included making an assessment of the offender's *Risk of Harm to others* and Likelihood of Reoffending, and producing a sentence plan based on the assessment. However, the Model had to be introduced in stages, and at the time of these inspections not all sentenced prisoners were 'in scope' of the Model.

By the end of 2006 Offender Management Units had been created in prison establishments to manage the custodial end of the new arrangements. At the time of this inspection the following prisoners were deemed as 'in scope' of offender management: those adults serving 12 months and over who were classified as posing a high or very high risk of serious harm to the public, Prolific and Other Priority Offenders and those serving indeterminate periods of imprisonment for public protection.

For those prisoners in scope of offender management, an offender supervisor was appointed in the custodial establishment to act as a link between custody and the offender manager in the community. The idea of the Offender Management Model was that the offender manager would 'drive' the sentence, and the supervisor would carry out day to day work with or concerning the offender.

5. Andrew Bridges can be contacted by telephone on 07810 055459 or by email at andrew.bridges@hmiprobation.gsi.gov.uk