

# Breaking the Cycle

## Ruth Allan describes the Youth Justice Board's plans for Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSPs).

**A**s part of an increasing government focus on the issue of persistent offending the Youth Justice Board is investing £45 million over the next three years in the new Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP).

ISSP is a comprehensive and challenging community-based intervention programme to be run by Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). The Youth Justice Board is funding 41 ISSP schemes involving over the half the YOTs in the country and focused particularly in high crime areas. The majority of schemes are now operational and all will be up and running by the end of the year.

ISSPs will be available for those young offenders who are appearing in court either charged with or convicted of an offence and have:

- been charged or warned for an imprisonable offence on four or more separate occasions within the last 12 months and have previously received at least one community or custodial penalty;

The ISSP will be appropriate when the young offender fits the criteria, and a custodial sentence, remand in custody or remand to secure accommodation is under active consideration. The programme can, therefore, form part of a bail supervision package or a supervision or community rehabilitation order. It will also be available for young offenders serving the community element of a Detention and Training Order, if such a programme is felt to be appropriate to their needs.

ISSP is a highly structured programme based on 'What Works' research that will have two key elements: an intensive programme tackling the needs of these young offenders combined with effective community surveillance using electronic monitoring, the police and other agencies.

### Intensive supervision

The intensive supervision element of the programme is designed to tackle the key factors contributing to the young person's offending. Research suggests that to be effective programmes must be well structured, use an approach which challenges ways of thinking as well as behaviour and addresses the full range of offending related problems. It is also important to have a sufficiently high dosage of the intervention programme. (Vennard and Utting, 2000). Programmes will be individually designed after a detailed assessment of the assessed needs of the young offender using the YJB's assessment tool ASSET. But all must contain as key modules:

- a strong focus on education and training, and in particular literacy and numeracy, that ensures the young person's educational deficits are addressed. This is important not only because so many of these youngsters have problems of this nature, but also to ensure that the courses for addressing them are as strong in the community as in the secure estate;
- a restorative element, since experience in New Zealand shows direct work with victims is particularly effective with repeat offenders. If there is no individual victim who wishes to become involved, reparation should be to the community;
- intensive courses designed to change offending behaviour;
- training in interpersonal skills;
- family support.

In addition, programmes will address problems such as substance misuse or mental health issues in appropriate cases. For those on bail the programme will be broadly similar but the offending behaviour and restorative element will not be appropriate.

For those serving a community sentence the programme should last at least six months. The first three months of the programme will entail a structured supervision programme of at least five hours a day during the weekday and access to support during the evenings and weekends. Many of these youngsters do not adhere to a 9 to 5 regime and can be most at risk during the late evening and early morning as well as at weekends. Programmes must, therefore, provide out of hours work. After three months there must be provision for day to day contact with the offender for at least one hour each weekday with access to support during the evenings and weekends. This is to ensure that these young people have ongoing help and their needs and the risks they pose are managed.

### Community surveillance

The highly structured surveillance element is designed to ensure programme completion, to introduce some order into the often chaotic lives of these offenders and reduce the likelihood of them reoffending at high risk times of day.

Community surveillance can be provided by intelligence-led policing, tracking, electronic tagging or voice verification. Intelligence-led policing allows the police to monitor the movements of the most prolific young offenders. Tracking involves ancillary staff working with a small number of offenders meeting them and tracking them throughout the week



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and weekends, accompanying, supporting and reinforcing appointments. Tagging can be used to reinforce curfews, and the ISSPs are piloting voice verification which can monitor whether the young person is attending key elements of their programme using a voice print via telephone contact. ISSP areas are all pilots for the new electronic monitoring provisions of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

Under the surveillance element of the programme YOTs must ensure that the whereabouts of the young person are checked at least twice daily. There must be the facility for surveillance for 24 hours a day, seven days a week where a risk assessment suggests that this is necessary.

The YJB believes that the ISSP schemes will offer a more effective way of dealing with persistent offenders than a short period in custody. It is designed to reduce the rate and seriousness of reoffending of participants, to tackle their underlying problems in an effective manner, and to provide reassurance to the community that the behaviour of these repeat offenders is being closely monitored and that any relapse will be effectively and swiftly dealt with. The programme is being evaluated by Oxford University's Centre for Criminological Studies and the final evaluation will be completed by March 2004.

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#### References:

- Graham and Bowling (1995), *Young People and Crime*, London: Home Office.  
 Vennard and Utting (2000), *What Works with Young Offenders in the Community?*, London.

## BRITISH SOCIETY OF CRIMINOLOGY CONFERENCE 2002

### CROSSING BORDERS

17 TO 20 JULY 2002

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For further information, inquiries and suggestions please contact the conference administrator Siân Payne  
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