



News Release

Media enquiries: 020 3681 2775

HM Inspectorate of Probation

1st Floor, Manchester Civil Justice Centre, 1 Bridge Street West, Manchester M3 3FX
0161 240 5336 www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmi-probation



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OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN PRISONS: WORRYING LACK OF PROGRESS, SAY INSPECTORS

Little progress has been made in offender management in prisons and a fundamental review is needed, said Liz Calderbank, Chief Inspector of Probation, and Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons. Today they published the report of a third joint inspection into offender management in prisons. The lack of progress is concerning, they added, as it casts doubt on the Prison Service's capacity to implement the changes required under the Transforming Rehabilitation strategy designed to reduce reoffending rates, especially for short-term prisoners.

Offender management is the term used to denote assessment, planning and implementation of work with offenders in the community or in custody to address the likelihood of them reoffending and the risk of harm they pose to the public. Community-based offender managers and staff in prison Offender Management Units have joint responsibility for undertaking or co-ordinating work with prisoners to address the attitudes, behaviour and lifestyle that contributed to their offending.

Today's report reflects findings from 21 prison establishments inspected during 2012 and 2013. Inspectors found that, even taking account of the different nature of the establishments, some common themes emerged:

- organisational changes to offender management units have failed to address the culture of poor communication or mistrust between prison departments that undermines the potential of offender management, illustrated by their failure to use one central electronic case record;
- there have been some modest improvements in practice but these are inconsistent;
- prison officer offender supervisors continue to lack guidance and supervision;
- community-based offender managers still have insufficient involvement overall to be able to drive sentence planning and implementation;
- there are too few structured programmes available within prisons designed to challenge offending behaviour and promote rehabilitation;
- while some prisons offered a reasonable range of accredited and non-accredited programmes for their population, some offered no programmes at all whereas others were running down their provision; and
- provision for offender management was particularly poor at two of the prisons accommodating foreign national prisoners.

The chief inspectors said:

“We have come to the reluctant conclusion that the offender management model, however laudable its aspirations, is not working in prisons. The majority of prison staff do not understand it and the community-based offender managers, who largely do, have neither the involvement in the process or the internal knowledge of the institutions to make it work. It is more complex than many prisoners need and more costly to run than most prisons can afford. Given the Prison Service’s present capacity and the pressures now facing it with the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation and an extension of ‘through the gate’ services, we doubt whether it can deliver future National Offender Management Service (NOMS) expectations. We therefore believe that the current position is no longer sustainable and should be subject to fundamental review.”

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

1. The report is available at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmi-probation/inspection-programmes-adult/prison-offender-management-inspections-pomi-2> from 17 December 2013.
2. This is the third report to be published from our joint Prisoner Offender Management Inspection programme. This report draws on the findings from inspections undertaken between April 2012 and March 2013 at the following HM Prison establishments: Buckley Hall, Bullingdon, Bullwood Hall, Canterbury, Channings Wood, Drake Hall, Forest Bank, Frankland, Full Sutton, Gloucester, Highpoint, Huntercombe, Leeds, Leyhill, Lewes, Lincoln, Lindholme, Northumberland, Onley, The Verne and Winchester.
3. OASys (Offender Assessment System) is the nationally designed and prescribed framework for both probation and prisons to assess offenders. It makes use of both static and dynamic factors. Static factors are elements of someone's history that by definition can subsequently never change (ie, the age at which they committed their first offence). Dynamic factors are the factors in someone's circumstances and behaviour that can change over time.
4. The NOMS Offender Management Model had introduced an 'end to end' approach to managing offenders from assessment through planned interventions to review. The intention was that a community-based offender manager (probation officer or probation service officer) would have responsibility for both the assessment and planning for all sentenced adult offenders in custody and for their eventual release under supervision in the community. The offender managers would work in teams with offender supervisors in prisons who would undertake most of the face to face work and case administrators. They would use other key workers as necessary to deliver interventions.
5. Offenders 'in scope' of the offender management model were originally restricted to those supervised in the community subject to community orders and on licence on release from prison. Prisoners serving 12 months or more and classified as posing a high or very high risk of harm to the public, prolific and other priority offenders and those serving indeterminate periods of imprisonment for public protection were included later in phases II and III.
6. The government's Transforming Rehabilitation strategy can be found here: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/transforming-rehabilitation>
7. For further information or to speak to Liz Calderbank or Nick Hardwick, please contact Jane Parsons on 07880 787452.