



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate
of Probation



MCSI
Inspection of
Court Services



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate
of Prisons



HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF CONSTABULARY
HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF CONSTABULARY
HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

HMIC 02/2004

17 May 2004

020 7273 2465

JOINT INSPECTION IDENTIFIES PROMISING WORK WITH PRIORITY OFFENDERS

A Joint Inspectorate report published today identifies promising initiatives in working with priority offenders whilst identifying weaknesses in the system for identifying those in need of prioritisation.

The report evaluated the Persistent Offender Scheme – the Government initiative to focus resources within the criminal justice system on the small number of offenders who are responsible for a disproportionate number of offences. It found that the scheme had helped improve work to tackle persistent offenders but that there were some shortcomings.

The scheme targeted an unmanageable number of individuals and many were convicted of less serious offences – principally shoplifting - and therefore were not priority offenders.

Despite the shortcomings identified, local initiatives to tackle priority offenders were found to be promising. Intensive supervision of priority offenders by teams of probation and police officers, along with other local partners such as drug treatment providers appeared to have a positive effect. The initiatives were seen to produce a win-win situation where offenders were either rehabilitated or returned to custody swiftly following any breach in the terms of their release licences.

Assistant Inspector of Constabulary, Tim Hollis, said:

“The Persistent Offender Scheme came into effect in April 2003 and was widely supported. However, concerns were raised by front line practitioners about the numbers and types of offenders identified by the scheme.

“Emerging findings were made available to the Government and we are encouraged to see the recommendations in the report reflected in the Prolific and Other Priority Offender Strategy, launched by the Prime Minister in April.

“Despite the concerns contained within the report, we recognise that the national Persistent Offender Scheme has acted as a catalyst for improvement in tackling persistent offenders.

“The Inspection found that there were a number of intensive supervision schemes which appeared to meet the needs of local stakeholders in tackling a small group of offenders causing particular problems in local communities”

The inspection ‘Persistent and Prolific Offenders’ made the following recommendations:

- * the current persistent offender criteria should be re-defined to identify a more limited number of priority offenders;
- * responsibility for the development of work with priority offenders should be located within Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships which should include consultation with representatives from the courts and CPS;
- * funding streams for work with priority offenders should be easy to access via the national framework, available over the medium and long term with clear monitoring requirements;
- * a national performance management framework that reflects both national and local needs and priorities should be developed and include:
 - monitoring of diversity issues, value for money and the identification and dissemination of good practice;
 - a commitment to bring to justice, rehabilitate and prevent re-offending of priority offenders;
 - local discretion and flexibility in the identification of priority offenders; and
 - the use of J-Tack to monitor a reduced number of priority offenders.

Notes to Editors

1. “Persistent and Prolific Offenders” was commissioned in October 2003 by the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors Group to provide an early assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of criminal justice persistent offenders initiatives.
2. The inspection was jointly produced by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Crown Prosecution Service, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Magistrates’ Courts Service and the Audit Commission.
3. A hard core of 5,000 prolific offenders commit around 1 million crimes each year, nearly 10 percent of all crime.
4. Copies of the report are available on the HMIC website at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/hmic.htm.