



West Mercia Probation Board

ANNUAL REPORT

2004-05

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Introduction

Aims of the National Probation Service

- To protect the public;
- To reduce re-offending;
- To provide for the proper punishment of offenders;
- To ensure that offenders are aware of the effects of their crimes on their victims and on the public; and
- To rehabilitate offenders

Foreword

During 2004-2005 West Mercia continued to develop new ways of working with offenders. Connect, a regional resettlement scheme for short sentence prisoners, has been extremely successful exceeding its target of 4000 beneficiaries. By working with volunteers on this project we have had access to the experience of many well-qualified mentors from the community. Further funding has been confirmed to continue with Connect II next year.

This year also saw the completion of a pilot for the Intensive Control and Change Programme. This programme targets persistent young offenders at risk of receiving a custodial sentence. A unique programme was devised in West Mercia in partnership with the voluntary sector organisation, Youth Support Services. West Mercia hopes to use the experience gained over the last year and continue to develop this type of intensive community sentence further to help reduce re-offending.

These two initiatives have given West Mercia a useful opportunity to prepare for the NOMS agenda in the year ahead by working with complex commissioning and partnership arrangements in order to improve provision for offenders.

During the course of the year West Mercia introduced Learndirect courses for offenders. This computer-based teaching and assessment approach has proved very successful. West Mercia is the first probation area to offer Learndirect qualifications in-house.

In addition this year, much time and resources were devoted to preparation for the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act in April 2005. This included comprehensive training for all staff and a review of related IT systems and procedures to ensure that West Mercia is best placed to meet the demands of the year ahead.

David Chantler
Chief Officer

Patricia Bradbury
Chair, West Mercia Probation Board

Part 1: Annual Report

A. Enablers

Enablers covers those aspects of the organisation which support the achievement of results. Whilst separated into five separate elements they are inevitably inter-connected in terms of organisation structure and impact.

Leadership

'How leaders develop and facilitate the achievement of the mission and vision, develop values required for long term success and implement these via appropriate actions and behaviours, and are personally involved in ensuring that the organisation's management system is developed and implemented'.

In this, the fourth year of its existence, West Mercia continues to build upon the positive steps made in the first years of operation.

There has been a focus upon improving communication throughout the area and creating more opportunities for staff to contribute to developments within the area, promote ideas and to have access to senior managers.

A staff conference at the start of the year was attended by the majority of employees and was used to develop the concept of working together towards common aims and objectives in addition to providing an opportunity for staff from all parts of the organisation to meet and discuss issues relevant to them. It proved to be an innovative and enjoyable event for all. At the annual awards ceremony which formed part of the event, a range of staff received recognition for their achievements in respect of education and qualifications and special contribution to the organisation.

It has become apparent during the year and as part of the annual staff survey that West Mercia now has an identity independent of the original amalgamating areas and staff have a clear sense of identity with the area.

Policy and Strategy

'How the organisation implements its mission and vision via a clear stakeholder-focused strategy, supported by relevant policies, plans and objectives'.

During the course of the year the area has continued to develop a structure and vision in anticipation of possible changes ahead due to the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) which will combine the work of probation and the prison service under one organisational umbrella.

It is recognised that as part of these changes we will be required to create a clear distinction in the organisation between offender management and the provision of interventions. In anticipation of such changes the area is already reviewing its structure and resource distribution. In addition, next year West Mercia will face the challenge of implementing the sentencing changes resulting from the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Work in preparation for this change is already well advanced, including the provision of comprehensive training for staff and the review of related IT systems and procedures.

People Management

'How the organisation manages, develops and releases the knowledge and full potential of its people at an individual, team-based and organisation-wide level, and plans these activities in order to support its policy and strategy and the effective operation of its processes'.

The area holds the Investors in People award across West Mercia and the Positive about Disabled Award (also known as the Two Ticks Awards), focusing on supporting the employment of staff with disability.

During the year an audit of health and safety arrangements was undertaken across the 42 areas. The findings show that West Mercia provides a safe environment for both offenders and staff and was positioned tenth in terms of overall performance against the standards set for the inspection.

Partnerships and Resources

'How the organisation plans and manages its external partnerships and internal resources in order to support its policy and strategy and the effective operation of its processes'.

West Mercia Probation Area continues to take an active part in promoting multi-agency working.

Innovative work took place in the delivery of the pilot for the Intensive Control and Change Programme, which came to an end this year, and also the Connect project, involving partner agencies in the community and neighbouring probation areas in the West of Midlands Region.

A multi-agency funded co-ordinator for MAPPA remains in position. The co-ordinator ensures a consistency of approach across West Mercia on the identification of those 'critical few' high risk cases upon which we most need to focus in order to reduce risk to the public. Further funding for this position has been agreed until March 2007.

There have continued to be on-going developments in respect of IT. During the course of the year this has included a major up-dating of software packages transferring former paper based systems into electronic systems eg offender assessment system (e-Oasys). Sound planning and preparation by the IT department has meant that this change has been viewed as positive by the majority of employees despite it making additional demands on time in terms of training and development.

Processes

'How the organisation designs, manages and plans its processes in order to support its policy and strategy and fully satisfy, and generate increasing value for, its customers and other stakeholders'.

Improvements have been made in performance due to improved systems and processes, promoting clearer approaches which in turn support more effective communication and liaison across the organisation. This has been particularly relevant in improving the area's performance against the targets for accredited programmes and basic skills awards. These have a direct impact upon the area's annual budget through the use of a national performance based funding mechanism.

B. Results

Summary of achievements by West Mercia in 2004-05

- Improvement in performance targets from 78% at the start of the year to 92%
- Exceeded target of 4000 beneficiaries for Connect project
- West Mercia Probation Trust formed to develop projects allied to the probation service for example, 'Growing out of Crime' which aims to rehabilitate the most prolific offenders in the rural parts of the area. The project will involve acquiring a smallholding and training offenders in agricultural and horticultural skills.
- The ICCP pilot, which came to an end this year, illustrated that West Mercia can work very effectively with partner agencies to provide good quality service delivery
- West Mercia is the first and currently remains the only area to offer in-house Learndirect qualifications

Customer Results

'What the organisation is achieving in relation to its external customers'

The external customers of the West Mercia Probation Area cover a wide range of groups including offenders, victims, sentencers and community punishment beneficiaries.

(i) Improve work with the victims of serious sexual and other violent crime

West Mercia Probation Area works with the victims of serious sexual and violent crime. This is in order to provide them with information about the sentencing process and the progress of the prisoner in custody and also to give the victim an opportunity to express any concerns which they may have about the eventual release of the prisoner.

Liaison with the victims of such crime also provides important information to support the risk assessment process and thus contributes, not just to protection of the direct victim of a specific crime, but also to the protection of potential future victims. Within the last year in West Mercia we have effectively achieved the national targets for relevant cases who we contact within a given time limit. We have in place mechanisms for transferring feedback on the quality of the service we provide in order to inform future improvements and contact development.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SDA VIII – level of compliance with National Standard for contact with victims or their families: contact to be made within National Standard of 8 weeks from sentence in 85% of cases involving serious sexual or other violent offence where offender is sentenced to 12 months or more.

Target – 85% Achieved – 90%

(ii) Improve the speed of justice

Local Magistrates and Crown courts, are one of the primary customers of West Mercia Probation Area. In addition to supervising penalties imposed by the courts, we provide information on individual offenders in order to assist in sentencing decisions in the form of pre-sentence reports (PSRs). This includes relevant background information about the offender, their offending history and an analysis of the current offence, in addition to an assessment of risk, discussion of sentencing options and a proposal as to how the offender may most effectively be dealt with.

In order to be most effective in terms of work with offenders there is evidence to suggest that those who are dealt with promptly through the court system are more likely to respond positively to any community penalty imposed upon them. In addition, prompt justice is also effective in terms of ensuring efficiency within the courts and thereby making best use of the public monies involved.

In order to support the concept of prompt justice West Mercia Probation Area strives to achieve nationally agreed targets for the timely provision of PSR reports to the courts. We also provide short format reports (specific sentence report, SSR) which can be produced in the court on the day of conviction, for those offenders who can safely be assessed by this process and who are likely to receive a penalty at the lower end of the sentencing scale. We have fallen below target in respect of the timeliness of reports produced within 15 days (national standard) but we can demonstrate that we nevertheless deliver 97% of reports to courts by the agreed adjournment date in time for sentencing.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SPM 6 – Timeliness of reports to the courts

Increasing the proportion of PSRs produced within 15 days:

Target – 90% Achieved – 66%

Increasing the proportion of reports which are specific sentence reports:

Target – 25% Achieved – 27%

(iii) Complaints

During the year a total of 21 complaints against West Mercia Probation Area were received. Of these complaints:

14 were not upheld
4 were upheld
3 complaints remained outstanding as at 31 March 2005

Of the 18 complaints completed, 10 were resolved informally (Stage One), 6 were resolved formally (Stage Two) and 2 were resolved following appeal (Stage Three).

People Results

'What the organisation is achieving in relation to its people'.

(i) **Promote and champion work on diversity as an employer, service provider and within communities**

Integrating awareness of and responsiveness to issues of diversity in all aspects of West Mercia Probation Area activities, is a priority which we will continue to develop throughout our organisation.

This year diversity events for staff were linked in with the local Criminal Justice Board's Inside Justice campaign. In addition a series of events were run by local teams linking into specific communities eg travellers and an event organised by the NPD was attended by a group of staff and offenders.

All work in relation to offenders is based upon principles of equality and treating individuals with respect. We know that we have work to do to improve equality of access to provision of resources across the area. We regularly monitor on race, ethnicity and gender to ensure that our approaches to work with offenders is equitable and that no one group is overly penalised or lacks access to the range of provisions available. We plan to extend our monitoring to include other minority communities.

Opportunities to link with communities are developed via the Race Action Group of the Criminal Justice Board. This year we have established a Diversity Advisory Group which is chaired by the Chief Officer and includes staff, Board members and members of local communities in West Mercia.

Work in relation to all aspects of diversity is on-going within West Mercia as we work to ensure that awareness of diversity issues increasingly informs all that we do.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SPM 15 - Progress against the Home Secretary's race equality employment targets aimed at increasing levels of representation, retention and career progression of people from minority ethnic groups.

- Representation: Target – 7% Achieved – 5.8%
- Retention: Target – 95% Achieved – 92%
- Progression: Target – 5% Achieved – 5.8%

SPM 19 - Proportion of PSRs on minority ethnic offenders in which there is a clear proposal - 93%

Staff in post - gender	
Females	246
Males	115
Total	361
Staff in post - ethnicity	
White	337
Mixed	1
Asian or Asian British	4
Black or Black British	16
Chinese or other ethnic group	0
Not available	3
Total	361

(ii) Demonstrate organisational excellence and achieve efficiency savings

In addition to effective work with offenders West Mercia Probation Area strives to demonstrate excellence as an organisation as a whole including in relation to robust budget management.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

- SPM 25: Sickness absence (target average of 9 days per staff year) – 12.8
- SPM 4: Approved premises occupancy – 90%

Key Performance Results

'What the organisation is achieving in relation to its planned performance'.

(i) Protection of the public from serious harm

The probation service has a key aim as an agency and in its liaison with others, to support the Home Secretary's priority to ensure protection of the public from serious harm. This is achieved by a variety of means including:-

- The provision of information to courts to assist them in their sentencing decisions in relation to individual offenders.
- Undertaking a thorough risk assessment for every offender with whom we have contact, to support the proper management of any risk which they may pose of re-offending, or causing harm towards any member of the community or to themselves.
- Working directly with offenders both in custody and the community to help them create changes in their lives and so reduce any risk of re-offending.

- Working closely in liaison with other key criminal justice and community agencies to develop clear arrangements for the effective management in the community of those who pose the highest risk.
- Liaison with the victims of serious sexual or violent crime to provide them with information about the sentencing process and the progress of an offender through the prison system. In addition, we provide victims with an opportunity to express any concerns they may have about the release plans for an offender. These may influence the conditions of release of the offender.
- The provision of accommodation and access to community resources such as basic skills education for some offenders, to support their successful integration into the community.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SPM 14: Contact basket for high risk cases – 93%

(ii) Reduce re-offending through the implementation of the 'What Works' strategy

The term 'What Works' relates to a series of interventions with offenders, to which is attributed a research base evidencing their effectiveness in reducing re-offending rates. Each of the 42 probation areas which form the National Probation Service, is required to implement these specific forms of intervention in order to maximise the impact the service will make upon national re-offending rates, and to ensure that all offenders are equally provided with opportunities to create positive change in their lives through the most effective means.

The interventions which form the 'What Works' strategy, largely based upon a cognitive behavioural approach to work with offenders, are nationally accredited by a central panel of assessors. They are subject to rigorous quality control and audit to ensure consistency of approach, in addition to ongoing research to measure effectiveness. Within West Mercia a number of accredited interventions are provided as the central approach to our work with offenders including:-

- Enhanced Thinking Skills (ETS) a groupwork programme targeting general offending behaviour.
- Priestly 'one to one' programme, working individually with offenders on general offending behaviour for those who would have difficulty in accessing a groupwork programme.
- Sex offender groupwork programme an extensive, long term group work programme working specifically with perpetrators of sexual crime against both children and adults. Work is on-going to establish a regional sex offender unit to enable more offenders to access the programme more quickly.
- Drink impaired drivers programme. A groupwork programme targeted at drink drivers.
- Enhanced Community Punishment Programme, replacing the former community punishment arrangements.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SDA V – the number of offenders who have completed the required number of hours of unpaid work.

Target – 534 Achieved – 592 (111%)

(iii) Other Interventions

- A locally developed programme for the perpetrators of domestic violence. In the future an accredited programme will be offered regionally.
- The first Offender Substance Abused Prevention Programmes (OSAPP) were run in the area this year.
- West Mercia Probation Area were one of 11 pilot areas for the Intensive Control and Change Programme which targets young offenders who are aged between 18 and 20, at risk of receiving a custodial sentence of less than 12 months and are at medium to high risk of further offending.

Within West Mercia the work was undertaken in partnership with the voluntary organisation, Youth Support Services, building upon their experience of developing equally intensive programmes of intervention with young offenders. This partnership approach is unique amongst the pilot areas and has been recognised as a creative and constructive way forward in order to enhance provision for the rehabilitation of offenders by the Probation Service without impacting adversely upon its own resources. The pilot came to an end this year.

- Connect was completed during the course of the year and exceeded enrolment targets. Connect aims to provide supported resettlement for young prisoners serving short sentences of less than 12 months. The project represents a partnership between prisons, probation and the private and voluntary sectors aimed at reducing the level of re-offending. Using voluntary mentors, the project makes positive use of offender's time in custody, however short, and continues that commitment in the crucial period after release. Connect II have secured funding for the year ahead.
- West Mercia is the first probation area to offer Learndirect qualifications in-house. This computer-based teaching and assessment approach has proved very successful with offenders.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SDA III: Increase the educational and vocational qualifications of offenders with 570 programme starts and 142 completions of basic skills awards

	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Starts	570	333 (58%)
Awards	142	146 (103%)

SDA IV: Increase the number of offenders going through accredited offending behaviour programmes with 267 offenders to complete accredited programmes. Whilst West Mercia has not hit the commencement targets, we can demonstrate an excellent conversion rate between those offenders who start training and achieve an award. This demonstrates effective targeting of this provision.

	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Completions	267	283 (106%)

(iv) Supervise all offenders in accordance with National Standards and take enforcement action against those who do not comply

The Home Office produces a set of basic performance standards against which each probation area's performance is monitored. These are in relation to the timeliness of information to courts and others, levels of contact with offenders, the timeliness of that contact and the response of areas to the failure of individual offenders to comply with the requirements of any community penalty imposed upon them.

National targets, for the achievement of these standards, are set by the National Probation Directorate in conjunction with the Home Office. West Mercia has generally achieved or exceeded targets throughout the year and is ranked 37th in performance out of the 42 probation areas nationally. This represents a decline in the table even though West Mercia increased its performance this year, achieving 2% above the national target. The tables are a relative measure of performance by areas nationally with further adjustment based on 'family groupings' identified by the NPD. Prior to adjustments under family groupings, West Mercia is currently 31st within national league tables.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SDA I: Breach action to be taken in accordance with the National Standard (on or before second unacceptable failure for community sentences and on or before third unacceptable failure for licence cases).

	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Enforcement	90%	88%

Whilst West Mercia is slightly below target for the timeliness of enforcement this figure does represent an increase on last years figure of 83%.

SDA II: Level of compliance with orders and licences

Compliance	70%	85%
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(v) Reduce drug related crime

In recognition of the fact that a high proportion of crime is committed by those who abuse drugs and alcohol, increasing attention has been given to work with this group of offenders. Whilst the majority of offenders are

suitable for inclusion in the accredited programmes, a different approach is applied to those who have severe long term problems of opiate misuse. In order to work with this category of offender, Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTOs) have been devised. The emphasis is on occupying a significant proportion of the offender's time in order to create some structure into what tends to become a chaotic lifestyle which in itself contributes to dependence upon drugs. At the same time the order enables offenders to remain in the community and to work constructively on resolving and taking responsibility for their problems. This involves working with offenders specifically on their drug misuse and incorporates regular testing to identify the extent of the misuse and to monitor reductions, as well as focusing upon reducing offending. In addition, assistance in finding and maintaining settled accommodation, managing effectively in the community, improving employment prospects and constructive use of leisure will all form part of the activities in which the offender is required to participate.

Arrangements for the funding and commissioning of relevant resources for the running of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders are complex and involve West Mercia Probation Area in close liaison with the local drug action teams and community agencies.

Relevant Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) and Supporting Performance Measures (SPMs)

SDA VI: Ensure the Drug Treatment and Testing Order commencements increases to 232 in West Mercia.

	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Commencements	232	192 (82%)

The proportion of offenders who satisfactorily complete their DTTOs

Completion	35%	38%
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C. Workload and Activity Statistics

Orders	Intake 2003/2004	Intake 2004/2005
Life Sentence	6	10
Stat Post-release supervision	716	663
Custody (Pre-release)	1398	1376
Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Order	327	367
Community Rehabilitation Order	1142	1108
Community Punishment Order	850	961
Drug Treatment and Testing Order	199	194
Other	6	3
TOTAL	4644	4682

Caseload	At 31 March 2004	At 31 March 2005
Life Sentence	120	126
Adult Custody (Pre and Post)	1072	1094
Youth Custody (Pre and Post)	166	154
Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Order	312	357
Community Rehabilitation Order	1067	1151
Community Punishment Order	561	754
Drug Treatment and Testing Order	158	163
Other	4	4
TOTAL	3460	3803

Amount of PSRs written	2003/2004	2004/2005
Crown Court	933	927
Magistrates Court	2143	2055
TOTAL	3076	2982
Amount of SSRs written	2003/2004	2004/2005
Crown Court	5	10
Magistrates Court	601	737
TOTAL	606	747

Community Punishment Hours	2003/2004	2004/2005
Amount of hours ordered	125,940	138,110
Amount of throughput	71%	63% (138,110)
Victims		
Total number of victims contacted within 8 weeks of sentence	215	220

D. Names of Board Members & Official Contact Address

Mrs Tricia Bradbury MBE, JP – Chair

Mr D D Ahir, JP

Mrs Libhin Bromley

His Honour Judge J Cavell

Mr David Chantler

Mr John Eastwood

Ms Camella Flemming

Mr Martin Foley

Mr John Hillier OBE

Mr Ken Hockenhull

Dr Haseena Lockhat

Mr David Price

Mrs Valerie Reynolds

Mr David Williams MBE

Mr Michael Woolley, JP

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