



NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE
for England and Wales

West Mercia Board

ANNUAL REPORT

2003 - 2004

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Introduction

Foreword

2003-2004 saw further achievements in West Mercia, most notably winning the 'Midlands Equal Opportunities Employer 2003' from Midlands Excellence. West Mercia was one of only two areas that put themselves forward for external assessment this year and it was the external panel of assessors who nominated us for the award, for our role model approach to promoting diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace.

The year also saw West Mercia introduce the Intensive Control and Change Programme (ICCP) as one of the 11 pilot areas and we were particularly proud to do this in partnership with the voluntary sector organisation, Youth Support Services (YSS). YSS also help deliver the Intensive Support and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) to the Youth Courts and this collaboration has allowed us to provide a seamless service for the most troubled and troubling young offenders.

January 2004 saw the formal launch of our regional resettlement scheme for short sentence prisoners, 'Connect'. This major partnership bringing prison, probation and the voluntary sector together is surely the way ahead in the context of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

The formation of NOMS was announced following the publication of the Carter Report in January and we were pleased to welcome the Chief Executive, Martin Narey to West Mercia to open the new Shrewsbury office. A new office was also opened in Hereford during the course of the year as part of our strategy of buildings renewal.

David Chantler
Chief Officer

Patricia Bradbury
Chair, West Mercia Probation Board

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

The Home Secretary's Priorities 2003-2004

- Protection of the public from serious harm
- Reduce re-offending through the implementation of the 'What Works' Strategy
- Supervise all offenders in accordance with National Standards and take enforcement action against those who do not comply
- Reduce drug-related crime
- Improve work with the victims of serious sexual and other violent crime
- Improve the speed of justice
- Promote and champion work on diversity as an employer, service provider and within communities
- Demonstrate organisational excellence and achieve efficiency savings

Part 1: Annual Report

A. Results

Results reflect the measurable achievements of the organisation during the course of the year. These are generally set against targets devolved from the National Probation Directorate including the Home Secretary's priorities and in some instances will impact upon future funding.

Key Performance Results

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

1. 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 9: Timely risk management plans for high risk cases – 74%

SPM 24: Contact basket for high risk cases – 92%

2. 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.
- Drink impaired drivers programme. A groupwork programme targeted at drink drivers.
- A key development during the course of the year has been the introduction of the nationally accredited Enhanced Community Punishment Programme, replacing the existing community punishment arrangements. This has been

a requirement upon all 42 probation areas and was achieved in West Mercia with the minimum of disruption to staff and performance, despite it requiring a major restructuring of roles, an extensive training commitment for all involved and changes to contracts for staff.

The key elements of enhanced community punishment are the use of pro-social modelling by all staff in the course of any contact with offenders, basic skills and training provision for unemployed offenders to run alongside completion of their unpaid work hours and the development of problem solving skills for all offenders in the course of the tasks they are undertaking. The quality of the projects provided, input by staff and responsiveness to individual offenders is closely monitored. This process ensures the maintenance of high standards in line with those set for other accredited programmes which form part of the 'What Works' agenda.

Other Interventions

- A locally developed programme for the perpetrators of domestic violence. In the future an accredited programme will be offered regionally.
- Further development is underway at a national level focusing on a programme designed for working with those who abuse drugs and this will be integrated into the work of West Mercia Probation Area when it is available.
- During the course of the year West Mercia Probation Area successfully bid for Home Office funding to operate as one of 11 pilot areas introducing the Intensive Control and Change Programme which targets work with 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.

The programme provides a range of intensive interventions related to individual offending needs. During the first three months offenders have 25 hours of structured activity a week. This means intensive supervision confronting offending behaviour, promoting rehabilitation, tackling drink or drug use, looking for training/work and seven hours a week unpaid community work. At the three to six month stage offenders have a minimum of 12 hours a week of continuing structured activities.

Within West Mercia the work has been undertaken under contractual agreement 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. As a Home Office pilot the scheme is closely monitored and assessed and a report on both its quality and achievements will be completed at the end of the pilot period.

- West Mercia Probation Area was also successful in bidding for money from the European Social Fund to lead the way on a regional resettlement project. 'Connect' was launched during the course of the year and 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 offenders time in custody, however short, and continues that commitment in the crucial period after release.

During the course of the year significant improvement has been seen in improving our capacity for the delivery of programmes and the achievement of targets. However, maintaining the infrastructure is an on-going area of concern upon which we continue to focus in our strategic planning.

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

SDA 2: Increase the educational and vocational qualifications of offenders with 301 programme starts and 75 completions of basic skills awards

| | <i>Target</i> | <i>Achieved</i> |
|--------|---------------|-----------------|
| Starts | 301 | 122 |
| Awards | 75 | 32 |

SDA 3: Increase the number of offenders going through accredited offending behaviour programmes with 279 offenders to complete accredited programmes

| | <i>Target</i> | <i>Achieved</i> |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Completions | 279 | 192 |

3. 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 34th in performance out of the 42 probation areas nationally. This represents a decline in performance relative to others in this current period and largely reflects the national focus upon a specific areas of activity, some of which were not identified until several months into the period. Focus in activity has shifted during the year to reflect these measures. We have shown a marked improvement in these areas towards the latter end of the year and have continued high performance in a number of areas not included in the performance scorecard, including commencements for Enhanced Community Punishment, sickness absence and compliance rates.

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

SDA 4: 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% | 83% |

SPM 5: National Standards contact basket

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Target overall average – 90% | Achieved – 89% |
|------------------------------|----------------|

4. 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 outlined in 2 above, 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.

In 2003-2004 West Mercia has exceeded the targeted number of commencements set by the National Probation Directorate and this reflects the considerable amount of work which has occurred in the area in developing both these orders and positive relationships with our partner agencies.

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

SDA 6: Ensure the Drug Treatment and Testing Order commencements increases to 164 in West Mercia.

| | <i>Target</i> | <i>Achieved</i> |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Commencements | 164 | 185 |

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.

5. 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. Now with systems well established in the area, we will focus upon responding to key issues raised nationally in the HMIP report of work with victims including the level of take up from victims to whom the service is offered.

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

SPM 1: Victim contact - percentage of cases in which contact was made with the victims of sexual and violent offences within 8 weeks of the offender receiving a custodial sentence:

Target – 85% Achieved – 84%

6. 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 operates to nationally agreed targets for the timely provision of PSR reports to the courts. It also provides a short format report (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.

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

SDA: Improve the timeliness of probation service reports to the courts by:

Increasing the proportion of PSRs produced within 15 days:

Target – 90% Achieved – 65%

Increasing the proportion of reports which are specific sentence reports:

Target – 20% Achieved – 21%

Complaints

During the year a total of 14 complaints against West Mercia Probation Area were received. Of these complaints:

- 1 was not eligible under the procedures
- 1 was not pursued by the complainant
- 8 were not upheld
- 3 were upheld
- 1 was partly upheld

Of the 12 complaints processes, 4 were resolved informally (Stage One), 7 were resolved formally (Stage Two) and 1 was resolved following appeal (Stage Three).

People Results

‘What the organisation is achieving in relation to its people’.

7. 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 complex process which continues to be the subject of on-going development throughout the organisation.

A diversity week was held in December which over 150 staff attended. The programme included sessions dealing with race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, traveller community, religion and faith. It was clear that participants welcomed the opportunity to become informed about ways to address discrimination in such a wide variety of areas.

Progress has been made in relation to recruitment in order to develop a workforce more representative of the community through the use of the media to advertise opportunities for careers in the organisation via specialist publications and Asian radio. Work has been undertaken within the HR department to facilitate a more proactive response to the needs of individual staff eg provision of specialist equipment. In addition, policies have been developed to support flexible approaches to employee benefits in order to support staff with a range of commitments which might otherwise

interfere with their employment opportunities. Groups are also established within the area for employees who face particular issues in relation to diversity within the work environment and these link directly to the Chief Officer in order to be able to raise concerns.

All work in relation to offenders is based upon principles of equality and treating individuals with respect. The issues involved are often complex and we are aware that we still have work to do in order to ensure equality of access to provision of resources across the area. Many aspects of our work with offenders is regularly monitored in relation to 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 otherwise available.

Opportunities to link with the community are maintained via our Race Advisory Group which is made up of members of the community from ethnic minority groups who advise upon policy development, assist in the review of certain aspects of the areas activities and have helped us establish a mentoring scheme for new black managers.

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

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

SDA 7: 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%
- 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 |

8. 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. For each year following its creation in April 2001, the area has undertaken a whole organisation self-assessment exercise in order to assess progress, identify the strengths of the organisation and the areas for improvement upon which it needs to work in the coming year. Each year the area has been able to demonstrate improvement and in order to ensure the view we have of our own progress is a valid one, we were one of only two areas to submit to an external assessment for EEM. This enabled us to set benchmarks against a range of other organisations across the whole of the Midlands area. As a result of the external assessment the Assessors nominated West Mercia Probation Area for the Equal Opportunity Employer of the Year award which we subsequently won.

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

- SDA 8: Sickness absence (target average of 9 days per staff year) – 9.32
- SPM 20: Wastage of staff – 11.36%
- SPM 22: Achievement of Investors in People award – Award achieved
- SPM 18: Approved premises occupancy – 94%
- Timeliness of information returns – 99%

Society Results

'What the organisation is achieving in relation to local, national and international society as appropriate'

West Mercia Probation Area recognises that it can make a contribution to the community beyond that of its core role and that involvement in community activities is also enjoyable and beneficial for the organisation itself.

This is the first year in which targets were set in West Mercia and all were fully achieved being one of the very few probation areas nationally to have identified relevant measures.

Achievements during the year include:-

- Received the Wyre Forest District Council's 'Crime Against Grime' award in recognition of maintaining the buildings and grounds in a tidy and pleasant manner
- Encouraged more corporately owned charity events such as the 'give as you earn scheme', donations to Childline instead of sending Christmas cards and entered a probation team in the 'Race for Life' in aid of Cancer Research
- Change of transport policy to use vehicles with reduced emissions
- Increase in re-cycling

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

The management structure has been subject to review in order to ensure it meets the needs of the organisation and this has led to changes in roles and distribution of responsibilities but the original structure has proven generally to be robust and fit for purpose.

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 self assessment exercise that West Mercia now has an identity independent of the original amalgamating areas and staff have an increasing 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 been developing 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.

The specific direction these changes will take and consequently the implications for West Mercia remain uncertain but the development of projects such as the Intensive Control and Change Programme and Connect is seen as a constructive way of aligning the area for future joint working between community agencies and the probation and prison services which it is anticipated will be the emphasis for development under NOMS.

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 achieved the Investors in People award across West Mercia, the Positive about Disabled Award (also known as the Two Ticks Awards, focusing on supporting the employment of staff with disability) and the Midlands Excellence Equal Opportunity Employer of the Year 2003 Award. These jointly reflect the extensive efforts during the year to develop an organisation which recognises the need to invest appropriately in its staff as one of our key resources and to promote an atmosphere of equality and opportunity in order to support retention and recruitment of an effective and committed workforce.

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.

As identified elsewhere innovative work has taken place in the development of both the Intensive Control and Change Programme and Connect, involving partner agencies in the community and neighbouring probation areas in the West of Midlands Region.

In addition during the year, the area has made a significant contribution to improvements in local multi agency public protection arrangements including the appointment of a multi-agency funded co-ordinator who 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.

In the course of 2003/4 the area has had the benefit of opening two new offices located in Hereford and Shrewsbury. These replace premises which failed to meet the needs of the

organisation and represents a significant improvement in environment and facilities for both staff and offenders.

There have continued to be on-going developments in respect of IT and during the course of the year a technical up-grade represented a major project across West Mercia which impacted upon all staff. It is to the credit of the sound planning and preparation by the IT department, as well as a good deal of patience and good humour that this major change programme was completed with the minimum of disruption.

Further work is now required in preparation for the transfer of existing paper based offender assessment and case record systems into electronic format in the year ahead which will result in heavy demands upon the IT department.

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'

The work of the previous year in identifying inconsistencies in the area processes has been taken forward as procedures have been revised and up-dated in key areas in order to promote a clearer approach which in turn supports 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 which in turn have a direct impact upon the area's annual budget through the use of a national performance based funding mechanism.

In an area as geographically diverse as West Mercia total consistency in approach can prevent the flexible use of resources and reduce effectiveness but a review of administrative and support roles during the year has ensured that there is a common, if not identical approach with improved liaison and understanding across individual units.

Workload and Activity Statistics

| Orders | Intake 2002/2003 | Intake 2003/2004 |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Life Sentence | 9 | 6 |
| Stat Post-release supervision | 713 | 716 |
| Custody (Pre-release) | 1267 | 1398 |
| Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Order | 311 | 327 |
| Community Rehabilitation Order | 1047 | 1142 |
| Community Punishment Order | 920 | 850 |
| Drug Treatment and Testing Order | 144 | 199 |
| Other | 7 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 4418 | 4644 |

| Caseload | At 31 March 2003 | At 31 March 2004 |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Life Sentence | 99 | 120 |
| Adult Custody (Pre and Post) | 1061 | 1072 |
| Youth Custody (Pre and Post) | 204 | 166 |
| Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Order | 308 | 312 |
| Community Rehabilitation Order | 1025 | 1067 |
| Community Punishment Order | 538 | 561 |
| Drug Treatment and Testing Order | 119 | 158 |
| Other | 17 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 3371 | 3460 |

| Amount of PSRs written | 2002/2003 | 2003/2004 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Crown Court | 1001 | 933 |
| Magistrates Court | 2126 | 2143 |
| TOTAL | 3127 | 3076 |
| Amount of SSRs written | 2002/2003 | 2003/2004 |
| Crown Court | 8 | 5 |
| Magistrates Court | 412 | 601 |
| TOTAL | 420 | 606 |

| Community Punishment Hours | 2002/2003 | 2003/2004 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Amount of hours ordered | 130,965 | 125,940 |
| Amount of hours worked | 98,224 | Approx 90,000 |
| Victims | | |
| Total number of victims contacted within 8 weeks of sentence | 230 | 215 |

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

Mrs Ruth Crofts, JP

Mr David Davies (resigned)

Mr John Eastwood

Ms Camella Flemming

Mr John Hillier OBE

Mr Ken Hockenhull

Dr Haseena Lockhat

Mr David Price

Mr Colin Watkins, JP (resigned)

Mr David Williams MBE

Mr Michael Woolley, JP

West Mercia Probation Area

Head Office

Stourbank House

90 Mill Street

Kidderminster DY11 6XA

Part 2: Statement of Accounts

Foreword to the Accounts for the Year Ended March 2004

Statutory Background

The National Probation Service for England and Wales was established by the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. Local probation boards were established in accordance with the police areas to implement the functions conferred on them through the Act. Each Board is a corporate body, which came into existence on 1st April 2001.

Accounts

Each Board is required under Schedule 1, paragraph 16(1) of the Act to make a report to the Secretary of State on the performance of its functions during each financial year, and prepare in respect of each financial year of the board a statement of accounts.

Under Schedule 1, paragraph 16(2) of the Act, the Secretary of State has given direction as to:

- The information to be given in the report and the form in which it is to be given,
- The time by which the report is to be made, and
- The form and manner in which the report is to be published.

Principal Activities

West Mercia Probation Board covers the West Mercia police area, as defined in Schedule 1 of the Police Act 1996, serving a population of almost 1,157,000. During the year, the Board employed some 334 full time staff who worked from 15 buildings and 1 hostels across the area.

Each Board is to initially provide assistance to the courts in determining the appropriate sentences to pass, and making other decisions in respect of persons charged with or convicted of offences, and to assist in the supervision and rehabilitation of such persons.

The discharge of policies as established by the National Probation Directorate of the Home Office, are designed to ensure:

- The protection of the public;
- The reduction of re-offending;
- The proper punishment of offenders;
- Ensuring offenders' awareness of the effects of crime on the victims of crime and the public;
- The rehabilitation of offenders.

The Chief Officer (CO) is a statutory office holder appointed by the Secretary of State. The CO is the Accountable Officer for the Board and is accountable to the Director General in his position as the Principal Accountable Officer (PAO) for the National Probation Directorate. The PAO, in turn, is accountable to the Accounting Officer of the Home Office, who is directly accountable to Parliament for safeguarding public funds.

Appointments

The Chair, the Chief Officer and other members of the Board were all appointed by the Secretary of State in line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' "Guidance on Appointments to Public Bodies". The emoluments of these persons are paid for through Home Office funds.

The Lord Chancellor appointed His Honour Judge Cavell to the Board from among the judges of the Crown Court. The emoluments of this appointee are paid for from the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Employees of the Board are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. Details of pension arrangements are set out in Note 1 to the Accounts.

Public Interest

The Board operates a policy of equal opportunities, regardless of gender, race, disability or sexuality.

The Board observes the principles of the CBI "Prompt Payment" Code and aims to pay all approved invoices within 30 days. In 2003/04, 66% of undisputed invoices were paid within 30 days (*comparative: 68%*).

Management

The operational management throughout the year was carried out by the Management Board, which consisted of the following members:

David Chantler (Chief Officer), Patricia Bradbury (Chair), and

D D Ahir, Libhin Bromley, Ruth Crofts, David Davies (resigned), John Eastwood, Camella Fleming, John Hillier, Kenneth Hockenull, Haseena Lockhat, David Price, Colin Watkins (resigned), David Williams, Michael Woolley (as members).

Remuneration of the Board members is disclosed in Note 3 to the Accounts.

Post Balance Sheet Events

On 8th January 2004 the Home Secretary announced the creation of the new National Offender Management Service (NOMS). From 1st June 2004 the prison and probation services, were brought together in this new service. Proposals for the new structure are

currently being prepared for Ministers to enable new legislation to be drafted and possibly enacted in 2005.

External Accountability

Under paragraphs 16-17 of Schedule 1 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, the Board is required to send to the Secretary of State a report on the discharge of its functions during the year and its audited accounts. The Annual Report and Accounts will comply with the specific accounts directions issued by the Secretary of State with the consent of HM Treasury.

The Audit Commission has appointed PricewaterhouseCoopers as the external auditor for the West Mercia Probation Board.

David Chantler
Chief Officer and Accountable Officer
for the Board
27th October 2004

Mike Weaver
Treasurer to the Board
27th October 2004

Statement of Accountable Officer's Responsibilities

Under Schedule 1, paragraph 17(1)(b) of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, local probation boards must prepare a statement of accounts in respect of each financial year, in conformity with an Accounts Direction issued by the Secretary of State.

The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the affairs of the Board at the year-end, the net operating costs, resources applied to objectives, recognised gains and losses, and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accountable Officer is expected to comply with the National Probation Service Resource Accounting Manual (RAM), which is an adaptation of Treasury guidance, and in particular to:

- Observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Secretary of State, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the Accounts;
- Prepare the accounts on a going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Probation Board will continue in operation.

The Secretary of State has appointed the Chief Officer as Accountable Officer of the Board. The responsibilities of an Accountable Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accountable Officer is answerable, for the keeping of proper records, and for safeguarding the Board's assets, are set out in the Accountable Officer's Memorandum, issued by the Secretary of State.

Statement of Internal Control

As Accountable Officer, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of Home Office priorities, aims and objectives, set by the department ministers, whilst safeguarding the public funds for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Government Accounting.

The system of internal control is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of the failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify the principal risk to the achievement of departmental policies aims and objectives, to evaluate the nature and extent of those risks and to manage them effectively, efficiently and economically. These processes have been in place for the year ended 31.3.04 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accords with Treasury guidance.

As Accountable Officer, I also have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The Board has established the following processes:

- A Strategic Group, comprising the Chief Officer, Board Chair and senior officers which meets monthly to consider the plans and strategic direction of the Board.
- Regular reports from the Chair of the Audit Committee to the Board including, when appropriate, internal control.
- Regular reports by internal audit, to standards defined in the Government's Internal Audit Manual, which include Internal Audit's independent opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of the Board's system of internal control, together with recommendations for improvement. These reports have included:
 - Financial Control Framework
 - Policy Implementation
 - Risk Management
 - Accredited Programmes
 - Victims' Services
 - Business Continuity Planning
 - Corporate Governance (Assurance Stocktake)
 - Board Expenses
 - I.C.C.P.
 - Risk of Harm (Offenders)
 - Follow up reports from previous year

In addition a report has been commissioned and is due to be received early in the financial year on "Connect", the major ESF resettlement project on which West Mercia is leading on behalf of the region.

As a result of the audit on Risk Management the Board has reviewed the operation of the policy and a number of internal audit days for 2004/05 have been allocated to respond to business risk identified through the updated process.

My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of internal audit, the external auditors and H.M.I.P., as well as the executive managers within the Home Office who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework. In addition to the internal audit reports referred to earlier, and to the external auditors' management letter upon which I have based my assessment of the robustness of the systems of internal control, I have also taken account of the following external scrutinies of the West Mercia Probation Area:

- The report of the EQFM assessment team. West Mercia was one of only two Probation areas to submit to an external audit.
- The decision of that team to follow up their assessment by nominating the area for an "excellence award"
- Winning that award from "Midlands Excellence" and becoming Midlands Equal Opportunities Employer of the Year 2003 in competition with the voluntary, private and public sectors in the region.
- The award of Investors in People to the area
- The award of the "Two Ticks" Positive About Disability status to the area.

In relation to Business Continuity Planning, the overall conclusion of the internal audit was that the system was "less than adequately controlled" as West Mercia had not developed a BCP and service delivery was vulnerable if a loss of information systems, accommodation, key labour or third parties services occurred. There were positive findings related to data back-up and environmental and security controls in the server facility and there was on-going dialogue with the NPD and its contractors concerning accommodation and IT. Recommendations to develop BCP procedures were made and accepted, and considerable progress has been made during the year.

In addition, the Board has received information about the business planning cycle, how that plan links with national and regional plans and in turn is broken down into plans for the operational divisions and the teams. The planning process is built around the "areas for improvement" identified in the EFQM exercise, so there is an integrated planning and review process which is the responsibility of a dedicated Assistant Chief Officer, who stands outside the service delivery line of account so as to be able to operate the system with transparent integrity.

David Chantler
Chief Officer and Accountable Officer for the Board

27 October 2004

Auditor's Report to the West Mercia Probation Board

We certify that we have audited the financial statements which have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of certain fixed assets and the accounting policies.

This report is made solely to West Mercia Probation Board in accordance with Part II of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 54 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies, prepared by the Audit Commission.

Respective Responsibilities of Accountable Officer and Auditor

As described, the Accountable Officer is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for ensuring the regularity of financial transactions. The Accountable Officer is also responsible for the preparation of the other contents of the Annual Report. Our responsibilities, as independent auditors, are established by statute, the Code of Audit Practice, and guided by the Auditing Practices Board and the auditing profession's ethical guidance.

We report our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position and result of operations of the board and are properly prepared in accordance with *the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000* and directions made there under by the Secretary of State, and whether in all material respects the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them. We also report if, in our opinion the Foreword is not consistent with the financial statements, if the Board has not kept proper accounting records or if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We read the other information contained in the Annual Report, and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. We consider the implications for our certificate if we become aware of any apparent misstatements of material inconsistencies with the financial statements.

We review whether the statement reflects the Board's compliance with Treasury's guidance *Corporate Governance: Statement on Internal Control*. We report if it does not meet the requirements specified by Treasury, or if the statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information we are aware of from our audit of the financial statements. We are not required to consider whether the Accountable Officer's statement on internal control covers all risks and controls, or form an opinion on the effectiveness of the Board's system of internal control. Our review was not performed for any purpose connected with any specific transaction and should not be relied upon for any such purpose.

Basis of Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with the *Audit Commission Act 1998* and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission, which requires compliance with the relevant auditing standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board.

An audit includes an examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures and regularity of financial transactions included in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Board in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Board's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by error, or by fraud or other irregularity and that, in all material respects, the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conformed to the authorities which govern them. In forming our opinion, we have also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion:

The financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of West Mercia Probation Board at 31 March 2004 and of the net operating costs, recognised gains and losses and cash flows for the year then ended, and have been properly prepared in accordance with the *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000* and directions made there under by the Secretary of State;

In all material respects the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of accounts in accordance with the requirements of the *Audit Commission Act 1998* and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission.

Signed:.....

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Cornwall Court
19 Cornwall Street
Birmingham
B3 2DT

Date:.....

APPENDIX 1