



HOME OFFICE

HM INSPECTORATE
OF PROBATION



The use of Information by Probation Services

A Thematic Inspection in 4 Parts

Part 3

*Probation Services' Contribution to Crime and
Disorder Partnerships*

A study by HMIP

2000

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Claudia Lewis-Moore

Jane Furniss

HM Inspectorate of Probation

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1. Introduction

1.1 This study is based on work conducted as part of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation’s (HMIP) wider thematic inspection on “The Use of Information in the Probation Service”.

1.2 HM Chief Inspector of Probation (HMCIP) wrote to all Chief Probation Officers (CPO) in December 1999 announcing his intention to undertake an inspection with the following terms of reference:

Aims and objectives

Aims

- To examine how probation services make informed decisions in order to reduce crime and protect the public
- To examine the adequacy of systems developed nationally to support the use of information
- To highlight and promote good practice in the management of knowledge and use of information.

Objectives

- To review the progress made in the implementation of the National Probation Services Information Systems Strategy (NPSISS) vision that:

“Relevant, accurate and timely information should be accessible to all staff, where appropriate, at any location from a single source as an integral part of their working environment”
- To review the extent to which systems are meeting the core information needs of the service, the Home Office and other stakeholders
- To examine, assess and report on the use of information in relation to:
 - (a) *contributing to crime and disorder partnership;*
 - (b) *the deployment of resources;*

(c) *achieving compliance with national standards.*

- To identify aspects of good practice in the collection, collation and sharing of information within probation services.

1.3 The thematic inspection incorporated three separate studies on the use of information in relation to the probation services' contribution to the crime and disorder audits following the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the deployment of resources and achieving compliance with national standards¹. The studies, of which this is one, were published as separate pieces of work and in advance of the full thematic inspection report. This study was conducted both to provide evidence of the way services used information and because of the importance of probation services contributing effectively to crime and disorder partnerships.

1.4 An advisory group was established in December 1999 and met regularly to assist Inspectors and review the work on the full thematic inspection and the individual studies. Membership comprised individuals with knowledge and expertise in the subject matters from the Home Office, probation services and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

1.5 Ten services were selected for the fieldwork that took place in January, February and March 2000.

Hampshire, Middlesex, North Wales, Northumbria, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, Somerset, SW London, Surrey, West Yorkshire and Wiltshire.

1.6 The fieldwork was undertaken in two phases:

Phase one

- all ten services were visited for one day and a sample of case records was read
- all 54 services in England and Wales received a short questionnaire seeking details of their use of information.

Phase two

- specific and detailed documentation was requested from each of the 10 services due to be visited

¹ The National Standards for the Supervision of Offenders in the Community were first issued in 1991 and have been revised in 1995 and 2000. They set out minimum requirements in relation to the supervision of offenders particularly on assessment, supervision planning, contact levels and enforcement action.

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- all ten services were visited for two days and a programme was devised which enabled Inspectors to examine the adequacy of systems developed nationally by the Home Office to support the use of information and how well the services used information and information systems
 - during the visits groups of staff and managers, members of the probation committee and representatives of local agencies were interviewed. Inspectors used a standard interview schedule to enable comparative information to be collected across all 10 services
 - on each visit part of the programme focussed on one or two aspects of the three studies, as follows:
 - **Crime and Disorder audits** – Hampshire, South West London, Surrey and West Yorkshire
 - **the deployment of resources** – Middlesex, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, Somerset and Surrey
 - **compliance with national standards** – Middlesex, North Wales, Northumbria and Wiltshire.

1.7 Early in 2000 it became clear that the National Audit Office (NAO) was intending to conduct a study into the National Probation Service Information Systems Strategy (NPSISS). Although the terms of reference of this work were different to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's (HMIP) inspection, there was significant overlap. It was agreed that the two organisations would work together and the fieldwork in Middlesex, Northumbria, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, Somerset and Surrey was conducted on a joint basis.

1.8 Towards the end of 1999 and in early 2000, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary conducted a thematic inspection of crime and disorder reduction which was contributed to by representatives from Audit Commission, Social Services Inspectorate, OFSTED, Local Government Association and Home Office. HMIP was involved in early preparation but due to other inspection commitments was unable to participate in the fieldwork. The two Inspectorates have however exchanged findings and the two reports will complement one another.

Inspection standards

1.9 Prior to the fieldwork visits a set of standards by which the work being inspected would be judged was devised. These standards which appear in full in Annex 1 were based on established policy and practice expectations. The specific ones which related to Crime and Disorder were:

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- services are contributing to the statutory crime and disorder partnerships, in accordance with the requirements of the Home Office guidance manual
 - effective information systems exist that demonstrate how the probation service contributes to the process of developing and implementing strategies for reducing crime and disorder.

1.10 The findings of the inspection against each of these standards are set out in chapter 3.

2. *Background*

- 2.1 The 1984 Probation Rules stated that probation services have a statutory duty 'to participate in . . . arrangements concerned with the prevention of crime or with the relationship between offenders and their victims or the community at large. . .'
- 2.2 The Home Office National Plan for the Probation Service 1998–1999 included a section on 'Reducing Crime and Supervising Offenders Effectively' which required probation services to ' . . . continue to develop links with the police and local authorities in promoting early intervention with young offenders and promoting local crime prevention strategies.' The Plans for both 1999 – 2000 and 2000 – 2001 required services to “ contribute to the statutory crime and disorder partnerships” in accordance with the guidance issued by the Home Office.
- 2.3 Sections 5-7 and 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (hereafter the Act) placed new obligations on local authorities, the police, local authorities, health authorities and probation committees (amongst others) to co-operate in the development and implementation of a strategy for tackling crime and disorder in their area. In working with other partners, the police and local authority were required to adhere to a cycle of events, each lasting three years, which included:
- conduct and publish an audit of local crime and disorder problems, taking into account the views of those who live and work in the area
 - determine priorities for action
 - devise and publish a strategy to tackle the priority problems, including setting objectives and targets
 - monitor progress, and revise the strategy as required.
- 2.4 The Act also required local authorities to have regard to crime and disorder when considering all other matters. Section 17 required statutory partners to address crime and disorder reduction in all of their functions.

Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed upon it, it shall be the duty of each authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.

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- 2.5 This consideration of the implications for crime and disorder reduction in all an authority's functions has become known as "mainstreaming". Probation services are not listed among the authorities covered by section 17 but most of its work has the potential to contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder, for example through targeting prolific offenders, work with drug misusers and perpetrators of domestic violence and targeting community service work on crime reduction projects. The inspection findings suggested that probation services could make their contribution more explicit to their crime and disorder partners than was currently generally the case.
- 2.6 Prior to the Act excellent partnership work on tackling crime had been established in many parts of the country but the quality and effectiveness of the work had been variable and dependent on the commitment of local individuals in key roles. The Act partnership provisions aimed to ensure that all communities benefited from the improvements which effective partnerships had already achieved in some areas.
- 2.7 Partnership and empowerment principles were at the heart of the requirements for statutory partnerships to reduce crime and disorder. The Act placed a clear legal obligation on the local authority and police, in partnership, to develop and implement a strategy for tackling crime, consulting widely with other key agencies and with the community as a whole. The provisions were intended to empower whole communities to decide what should be done, how, and by whom. Experience from a variety of fields had shown that partnership arrangements could be effective - public bodies, the business, voluntary sector, and all sections of the community working together could achieve more than individual organisations on their own.
- 2.8 There was a clear recognition that each individual organisation could bring diverse resources, skills and knowledge to the partnership. However, the Home Office Guidance on Statutory Crime and Disorder Partnerships, (hereafter the Guidance) drawn up when the Act was implemented and issued in July 1998, also recognised that each organisation had its own set of corporate objectives to pursue and was required to operate within individual management systems and structures. The challenge facing the community safety partnership was to develop a local management model acceptable to all partners which ensured that the partnerships' objectives were achieved.
- 2.9 The Guidance stated that probation services would make a key contribution through their supervision of convicted offenders, especially repeat and dangerous offenders. Such activity was seen as an integral part of the local crime and disorder strategies, which the Act required. The responsibility for managing such offenders was increasingly carried out in close working relationships with key partner agencies such as the police, social services, health authorities and the local community. The Guidance indicated that probation services also contributed to community safety planning through their range of contractual partnerships with voluntary sector providers which addressed important social dimensions of crime prevention, such as drug and alcohol misuse, employability and housing. The Guidance went on to say:

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- probation services hold information about offenders and their offending, offending behaviour and related factors; this information enriches more conventional crime pattern analysis and crime prevention planning
 - community service (CS) schemes, supervising the work of offenders in the community, frequently contribute to community safety and related social and environmental improvement work
 - probation services' work with victims of crime provides valuable information and perspectives which contribute to risk assessment and management, reparation, and fear of crime strategies
 - probation services have a key role in the new youth offending teams in helping to tackle youth crime
 - their work in family courts reveals parenting issues which are increasingly recognised as a central feature of long-term criminality prevention within community safety strategies.

2.10 The Act and the Guidance therefore required probation services to make a contribution to their local community safety strategies. However the work was assumed to be 'resource neutral' by the Home Office, and no specific provision was made available through the cash limited budget for probation services to resource such work. Services took the view that the vast majority of their work contributed to the principles and spirit of reducing crime and disorder in that they were working to reduce the future offending of those already convicted and active as offenders. There was no requirement for services to specifically monitor their contribution to crime and disorder strategies over and above the general requirement on services to monitor their use and deployment of resources. The companion study in this series on the Deployment of Resources noted the inadequacy of current Home Office and probation services' systems for monitoring the use of resources and made a recommendation for improvements.

3. *Findings*

3.1 The findings of this study are based on fieldwork undertaken as part of the overall thematic inspection, as described in chapter one:

- ten services were visited for one day and a sample of case records was read in January 2000
- all 54 services in England and Wales received a short questionnaire seeking details of their use of information.
- specific and detailed documentation was requested from each service due to be visited
- ten services were visited for two days and a programme was devised which enabled Inspectors to examine how well the services used information and information systems
- groups of staff and managers, members of the probation committee and representatives of local agencies were interviewed. Inspectors used a standard interview schedule to enable comparative information to be collected across all 10 services.

Fieldwork visits

3.2 In four of the 10 services, Hampshire, South West London, Surrey and West Yorkshire the fieldwork had a specific focus on the use of information in contributing to crime and disorder partnerships. All 10 services had provided information on the crime and disorder matters in advance of the inspection visits. In addition, the questionnaire sent to all 54 services on information issues, included questions directly related to crime and disorder issues. Responses were received from all areas.

3.3 As indicated in chapter two a set of inspection standards relating to the deployment of resources was established. The main findings of the inspection in relation to these standards are set out below.

a) services are contributing to the statutory crime and disorder partnerships, in accordance with the requirements of the Home Office Guidance manual

community safety partnerships

- 3.4 Contributing to community safety has been part of the ethos and culture of the probation service over many years and tackling the issue of crime and disorder in response to the Act was a continuation of this process. Multi agency working has also been integral to the way probation services work, with their involvement with both the statutory and voluntary sectors in key areas such as the assessment and management of risk of offenders, substance misuse, employment and training.
- 3.5 All four services visited had a history of commitment to community safety that predated the statutory requirements of the Act. For example, in Surrey there was the Safer Surrey Partnership Team funded mainly by the Police Authority and the County Council. The project focused on a number of crime issues e.g. domestic violence and was staffed by secondees including one from probation. As a result of similar long standing working arrangements there was no difficulty for each of the services visited in becoming a member of their respective community partnership from the outset.
- 3.6 The number of community partnerships, which each probation service had to resource varied. In the services visited, for example Hampshire had fourteen, South West London four and Surrey and West Yorkshire each had five. Services indicated that the work was resource intensive, both in terms of funding and human resourcing commitment, in particular the time required from senior managers. The CPOs believed that the time demands on them as relatively small organisations impacted on the level of representation and quality of contributions made by their service.
- 3.7 In all four services CPOs represented their service at countywide community safety strategy groups, which were established as a direct response to the Act and were responsible for overseeing the community partnership strategy. Representation from other agencies was also at the most senior level and typically included the chief executive of the Local Authority, chief constable and other heads of key organisations.
- 3.8 The CPO in South West London also represented his service on all four local partnerships as he believed this allowed decisions affecting his service to be responded to promptly. He indicated that at least 40 per cent of his time was spent actively engaged in this work during 1999/2000. In other services there was variation in how staff were deployed to contribute to community safety partnerships. For example in Hampshire, nine senior probation officers (SPOs) represented the service at operational level across the 14 partnerships. The service estimated that on average each SPO spent at least one day per month on related meetings with additional time being spent on associated projects e.g. the development of work with racially motivated offenders and chairing domestic violence forums. This was a very

significant resource commitment for a relatively small service. In West Yorkshire (a much larger service) a decision had been taken to limit the contribution, with six senior managers being responsible for the representation of their service across the county.

3.9 The probation service, as a relatively small organisation in comparison with many of the other key partner agencies such as local authorities, health or police was unable to contribute significant amounts of financial and human resources to local partnerships. These difficulties were compounded where services were required to resource several separate local strategy groups and related partnership arrangements.

3.10 However all the services visited welcomed the Act as it provided a timely opportunity to enhance existing working relationships as well as further their involvement in community safety initiatives. They summarised their main role and responsibilities as being to:

- ensure that the community safety strategy retained a focus on offenders and the causes of crime
- ensure that the community partnership understood what the probation service could contribute in terms of skills, capabilities, competencies and resources
- provide information on the profiles of offenders and victims
- provide community resources such as CS and groupwork programmes to meet the needs of offenders.

3.11 The services visited and those which provided information saw their main contribution to the partnership as being in the form of:

- management time, e.g. middle and senior managers' membership of strategy groups and committees for a number of innovative community safety initiatives
- resource generators; e.g. acquiring external funding as in the case of both South West London and West Yorkshire who used their unique position to lever in additional resources; South West London through the government's "Eco-active" new deal scheme and West Yorkshire through a Single Regeneration Bid funded the arrest referral scheme and school mediation work
- "in kind" contributions; e.g. the provision of resources through the use of office accommodation and equipment etc
- staff time; e.g. development of inter agency provision for working with perpetrators of domestic violence, sex and other dangerous offenders
- engaging offenders subject to CS orders in crime prevention work, contributing to the achievement of local strategies. The contribution is dependent upon close work between CS staff and partners in identifying how this 'direct labour' can be used.

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- 3.12 The representatives of the key agencies were positive about the contribution probation services made to the local community safety partnerships and recognised the resource constraints they faced. In this limited study Inspectors found that probation services were working within their limited resources to make an effective contribution to their community safety partnerships.

crime and disorder audits

- 3.13 The Act stipulated that each area should develop a joint crime and disorder reduction strategy shaped by a crime and disorder audit for the area. It indicated that the audit should include:

- an analysis of recorded crime and police incident data
- an analysis of data provided by other agencies such as local authority departments, health and the probation service
- the views of a wide cross section of the local community
- a review of current community safety activity in the area.

- 3.14 The Guidance stated that

"Probation services hold much information about offenders and their offending behaviour and related factors; this information enriches more conventional crime pattern analysis and crime prevention planning".

- 3.15 The purpose of the audit was to help set strategic priorities based in the reality of local crime and disorder and associated social problems. The Guidance stated that the audits could:

- assess available information and gaps in information about crime and disorder
- map patterns of crime and disorder (e.g. crime mix, levels, trends, costs hotspots)
- benchmark local problems and provide baselines for future evaluation
- identify and prioritise significant local crime and disorder problems
- assess the existing provision to deal with problems
- highlight gaps, overprovision, needs and opportunities for crime reduction
- provide options for targets and strategies.

3.16 All 54 probation services contributed to their local audits. The quality of the information and sources of data provision was wide-ranging. Of the four services visited for example,

- **Hampshire's** main source was their own internal annual census of offender's needs plus regular national standards monitoring
- **South West London's** sources were their partnership data, annual reports and findings from audits of case files.
- **West Yorkshire's** main source was the pre sentence report (PSR) monitoring data taken from a central information system and CS records
- **Surrey, Hampshire and South West London** which had the national case record and management system (CRAMS) in place at the time of the audit all commented that the system was not in a position to furnish them with the required data.

3.17 Generally all 10 services involved in the inspection were able to provide offending profile data in an aggregated format. Northumbria for example was able to contribute to the North Tyneside community partnership audit as set out in box 1.

Box 1: Northumbria Probation Service provided the following information to assist the audit:

- Numbers of offenders commencing supervision by order type
- Offenders under supervision by postcode and ward code that was provided on disc for overlay on the local authority's Geographical Information System (GIS)
- a breakdown of offenders under supervision by age and gender
- a breakdown of offenders under supervision by type of offence e.g. Violence, sexual, burglary, theft, drugs, criminal damage and other offences
- the incidence of offending related issues amongst those under supervision e.g. alcohol, drugs, health, aggression, isolation, family influence, peer influence and unemployment
- resources available within the service e.g. groupwork programmes, CS projects, funded community partnerships projects, accommodation and employment provision, volunteers, victim liaison units and inter agency management of dangerous offenders.

3.18 Hampshire also provided to their community partnership useful research references and a collection of articles relating to the social circumstances of offenders which would help partnership members to understand the reasons for offending.

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- 3.19 Discussions with members of the community partnerships visited as part of the inspection indicated that the probation services had fully co operated with the audit process and indeed in one area (Surrey) the service was seen as being one of the most useful information providers. There was however some disappointment with the quality of information provided by probation services for two reasons. Firstly, the partnerships wanted detailed analysis on why offenders offend, but found that generally services could provide only statistical information about types of offences rather than analytical information on causes. As a result many partnerships relied heavily on police crime statistics, recognising that such data focused on the crime itself and provided only a limited perspective on crime and disorder. Secondly, there was a need for offender geo coding information (i.e. analysis of data by postcode) which would assist the partnership in identifying and developing a deeper understanding of "hot spots" within the local community. The majority of services were not in a position to supply such information; of the 10 services visited Somerset and Northumbria were the exception.
- 3.20 The weaknesses in the systems for provision of information were not the probation services alone and there was evidence that the partnerships had not made clear enough at the outset to the probation service (or other agencies) their information requirements. Of the four services visited, in only Hampshire and Surrey had an attempt been made by the partnership to specify its data requirements and even then the specification was limited to what the service stated it could provide. In the absence of direction both South West London and West Yorkshire informed the partnership group of the information they could provide.
- 3.21 The services visited had through the audit process recognised the limitations of their information systems and commented on the number of new data needs and information gaps, which the audit highlighted, including the need:
- for a long-term information strategy between the partnership to ensure data was available for future audits
 - to plan how to overcome data deficiencies
 - for clarity about data and information requirements and the use to be made of information
 - for geo coding information.
- 3.22 A common theme that emerged from meetings with community safety partnership members was that generally there had been difficulties in collecting data from the different partnership organisations in a useful format because:
- data was collected for areas with differing geographical boundaries
 - data was collected over differing time periods which did not assist benchmarking, comparisons or trend analysis
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- there was an inability to search existing IT systems for relevant information, even in cases where the information existed.

3.23 Community partnership members were of the view that such difficulties could only begin to be resolved by partners locally developing information and IT systems which were compatible and based on the same geographical units. This was required not only to identify problems in the future, but also to enable effective monitoring of progress in tackling those priorities which were identified as a result of the audit.

3.24 One of the main outcomes of the audit process had been the realisation by all agencies that this work needed greater co-ordination to ensure that resources were targeted where they were most needed and most likely to be effective. The ability to achieve this had been hampered by lack of management information in a readily accessible and comparable form in all the relevant agencies. In developing the future information strategy and system for probation services, it will be important that the Home Office takes account of the requirements on services to contribute to the crime and disorder partnership arrangements. In particular consideration needs to be given to how the information collected from service risk assessments and the new offender assessment system (OASys) can be used to inform and enrich the audit and strategy processes.

b) effective information systems exist that demonstrate how the probation service contributes to the process of developing and implementing strategies for reducing crime and disorder

information sharing

3.25 Section 115 of the Act provided that “any person can lawfully disclose information for the purposes of the Act to the police, local authority, probation service or health authority (or persons acting on their behalf), where it is necessary and expedient to do so”. There was however no requirement on agencies to share information, and disclosure therefore remained at the discretion of the agency holding the data. The Act left unresolved the issues of how information should be exchanged or how much information could be exchanged.

3.26 The Guidance stated:

probation services’ work with victims of crime provides valuable information and perspectives which contribute to risk assessment and management, reparation, and fear of crime strategies

3.27 The Guidance went on to provide advice on information sharing including a checklist for establishing information sharing arrangements and suggested that the best way to ensure that disclosure was properly handled was to operate within a carefully worked out information sharing protocol.

3.28 All four services visited had established information sharing protocols in operation either devised by themselves or the police. There was evidence of a lack of consistency as to who were the key signatories to the protocols; for example the health authorities were not signatories to West Yorkshire, Surrey and South West London information sharing protocols, yet they were seen to be key members of the local community safety partnership groups in those areas. When asked about the effectiveness of the information sharing protocol, probation services indicated that the document confirmed the existing position and generally worked well because of long established working relationships that existed between signatories to the document.

3.29 One of the potential valuable outcomes of sharing information about offenders were initiatives to target prolific offenders. This study did not attempt to assess the quality of such initiatives but services were able to demonstrate their involvement in a number of such projects, including:

- **Hampshire** – Making Better Choices, a groupwork programme aimed at persistent offenders
- **West Yorkshire** – Keighley project on target hardening and working with prolific autocrime offenders and the MERLIN Arrest-Referral programme for the most persistent offenders
- **South West London** – sex offenders in the area were interviewed jointly with the police
- **Surrey** – Woking Drugs intensive supervision project.

At the time of the inspection both Hampshire and West Yorkshire service projects were the subject of a Targeted Policing Initiative bid to the Home Office, under the Government's Crime Reduction Strategy. Effective work by probation services and police on targeting prolific offenders has the potential to reduce volume crime and should be seen as a priority for all services in their work with their crime and disorder partnerships.

3.30 A key component to working effectively with prolific offenders was the assessment and management of risk they presented. All four services had developed comprehensive public protection protocols for working with the police and other significant partners. A common feature was the use of multidisciplinary panels, for sharing information, assessing risk and devising risk management strategies for dangerous offenders.

community safety strategies

3.31 The culmination of forming the partnership and conducting the audit was the development of a three year local community safety strategy for each partnership. The Act imposed a duty on the local authority to formulate a strategy to include :

- objectives for the police and local authorities
- objectives for the co-operating bodies or other contracted agencies (including probation)
- long-term and short-term performance targets against which to measure success.

3.32 Probation services had the potential to make a significant contribution to such strategies, illustrated by the extract from Somerset Probation Service's 'Policy and Strategy in Response to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998' set out in box 2.

Box 2: Somerset Probation Service's policy and strategy stated the service could provide:

- Experience as the only service within the criminal justice system involved at every stage from first court appearance to completion of sentence
- An increasing experience of the impact of criminal behaviour on victims which is drawn upon in work with offenders to confront them with the impact of their behaviour, and to promote reparation
- A body of understanding about why individuals offend
- an understanding of how to tackle individual's offending behaviour in an effort to change and reduce it
- a long and productive experience, through the CS scheme, of making good damage caused by offenders
- aggregated information about the profiles of those under supervision
- experience of work with each of the three levels of crime prevention; promoting education, working to design out the opportunity for crime, and directly tackling the offending of those who commit the most crime
- a growing experience of how to share information with other agencies and the public to improve community safety, whilst avoiding the counter-productive aspects of 'naming and shaming'.

3.33 In the four services visited the police or the local authority were the lead partners for the majority of their local strategy objectives. However in some cases probation services were named as the lead agency or key partners for specific targets linked to strategy objectives. For example the Bradford community safety strategy named the West Yorkshire Service as the lead agency responsible for delivering on one objective within the key priority area tackling 'house and commercial burglaries' (see CS section below for more details). They were also considered to be key partners contributing to 'tackling domestic violence' - with a target to develop (as a component of work with male perpetrators) a co-ordinated programme of support for women and children who had experienced domestic violence.

3.34 Hampshire Probation Service were seen as a key partner to a number of objectives in Southampton Community Safety Strategy as illustrated in box 3.

Box 3: Hampshire Probation Service's contribution to Southampton community safety strategy

Objective: to target racially motivated crime and harassment

Action: included developing specialist community based programmes for offenders involved in racially motivated crime.

Outcomes included reduced levels of fear amongst black and ethnic minority residents

Performance Indicators included increase to 25% those who report racially motivated crime (baseline = 1996 survey 12%)

Monitoring and Evaluation included race forum feedback.

3.35 However only Surrey in its three-year plan (1999/2002) and West Yorkshire in its area work plan (1999/2000) had reflected explicitly their commitments to the local community safety strategies in their corporate planning processes. In Surrey the CPO, with the probation board's approval had developed a three-year community safety strategy for the service. The document set out how the service intended to contribute to the delivery of the community safety strategies of the eleven statutory partnerships in pursuit of the Home Secretary's priorities for the Probation service 1999/2000.

3.36 Surrey distilled four aims from the eleven local strategies to which the service felt it could make the most effective contribution:

- to reduce crime and/or maintain the low levels of crime
- to reduce re-victimisation and protect vulnerable victims

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- to reduce drug and alcohol related crime
 - to improve safety on the roads (by addressing persistent disqualified and drink driving behaviour of convicted offenders through the use of specific group work programmes).

All four aims were supported by the resources the service intended to provide, the outcomes intended and performance indicators which would be used to measure performance. The document was valued by the local partnership agencies and was commended by Inspectors for its clarity.

- 3.37 All local partnerships had planned an annual review of their respective strategies to determine progress in delivering strategy objectives. West Yorkshire was the only service that was taking lead responsibility for a specific objective and therefore was required to provide information to the partnership on achievement. The other three services which were not wholly responsible for specific strategy objectives were however in a position to comment constructively on the overall effectiveness of the strategies.
- 3.38 In all the services visited, the partnerships were only just beginning to consider the monitoring process and therefore the information they would require from each key agency, including probation. To ensure that all agencies can make a continued and effective contribution to the partnerships they will need to be better placed to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their activities. As indicated above existing systems for probation services did not support this process.

Community service

- 3.39 The Guidance stated:

Community Service Order schemes, supervising the work of offenders in the community, frequently contribute to community safety and related social and environmental improvement works;

- 3.40 All four services visited commented that CS was the most visible way for them to make a contribution locally to their partnerships and with this in mind had a number of schemes targeted on crime prevention related work. However the number of CS hours each service contributed per year to community safety was not easily accessible, as such work was not generally monitored separately from other project work.
- 3.41 Hampshire indicated that between April 1999 and February 2000 approximately 25 percent of hours worked (50,000) had a community safety perspective. The service had established arrangements with community safety partnership and the police to ensure that its CS project made a quantifiable and recognisable contribution to the crime and disorder agenda. The

partnership agreed a performance target for the number of hours that CS would contribute to community safety work and established a formal process by which the work undertaken would be referred, validated and evaluated. Projects had included improving the safety of sites, ground clearance, leaflet distribution, and the removal of fly tipping and graffiti. Inspectors commended this process.

- 3.42 Surrey were able to demonstrate that nearly 2000 hours over an 18 month period had been directed at the Full Circle scheme, a joint police and probation project involved in improving the local environment. It had also contributed to a wide range of projects that helped tackle crime and fear of crime. Whilst the service had relatively little monitoring data on the effectiveness of these projects one simple but excellent example was seen during the inspection. It had involved the clearing of footpaths and short cuts used by parents and children walking to school and had resulted in a large number of letters from the schools, parents and children expressing their appreciation of the work done and how it had contributed to their sense of “feeling safe”.
- 3.43 It was disappointing that the whilst services were able to list a range of projects that directly or indirectly focussed on community safety, a strategic link between the services’ contribution to community safety and CS was not always evident. West Yorkshire and Hampshire were the only two services visited that provided examples of where their CS contribution was tied in strategically with that of their local community partnership strategies. An example from West Yorkshire is set out in box 4.
- 3.44 Some good examples were seen of the probation service contributing to community safety projects through their CS schemes. The public relations value of the free labour of offenders being used to reduce crime is significant and had greater potential than was being realised. There was scope to focus more CS placements on activities which fit with community safety partnership priorities and for those partnerships to formally identify with the probation service specific projects to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Probation services needed to ensure that their strategic planning and contribution to the community safety partnerships were more explicitly linked.

Box 4: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Action Plan 1999-2002

Key Priority: tackling house burglary and commercial burglary

Objective: to reduce the percentage of repeat victims of house burglary and commercial burglary.

Target: to engage those who are subject of community service orders in “target hardening” work to prevent repeat offences – to achieve year on year increase in the number of properties secured through this means.

Outputs: estimate 400 properties in first 12 months target hardened.

Lead Agency: West Yorkshire Probation Service.

Monitoring and Evaluation: West Yorkshire Probation Service

The service responded by establishing a target hardening community service project, which was solely aimed at repeat victims of burglary. Referrals were accepted from the police and crime prevention officers and work undertaken included fitting security locks to doors and windows, reinforcing doors and replacing windows.

Summary of findings and way forward

3.45 Probation services had a key role to play in assisting statutory crime and disorder partnerships to achieve their strategic aims and objectives. In particular, services were ideally placed to provide partnerships with important information on what works in reducing re offending, to contribute to targeted policing initiatives aimed at prolific offenders and to provide community service labour for crime prevention projects. However, the small size of the services in terms of personnel and resources, the number of partnerships and the large geographical area to be covered by many were posing significant challenges.

3.46 The study found that:

- probation services were enthusiastic about the concept of community safety but they had been unable to resource full attendance at strategy meetings because of human resource limitations and the number of partnerships groups involved
- partner agencies believed that the local arrangements worked well and that probation made an important contribution; all areas believed there were aspects of each partnership that could be improved

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- all probation areas provided data for the partnership audits, but the incompatible and inadequate information systems in all agencies meant that the contributions were of limited value
 - in designing the new information strategy for probation services, the Home Office needed to consider the requirement on services to contribute to crime and disorder audits and monitoring of strategies
 - the use of the free labour of CS workers to target crime reduction and community safety projects had enormous potential and services needed to consider explicitly identifying CS projects which contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder
 - it was important that probation services monitored the impact of this work locally in order to report on it to their partnerships
 - services had identified specific aspects of each community safety strategy which required a significant probation input, but not all had integrated this into their strategic planning processes.

3.47 The ability to contribute to local crime reduction strategies and to provide relevant data for future crime audits was likely to present services with a continuing significant challenge for the immediate future. This small scale study provides useful pointers to the way forward.

4. Appendix 1 Inspection Standards

- 4.1 The thematic inspection on the “Use of Information in the Probation Service” used the following set of standards. Each of the three studies undertaken as part of the thematic focused on the particular and relevant aspects of the standards.

NPSISS

1. Relevant, accurate and timely information should be accessible to all staff, where appropriate, at any location from a single source as an integral part of their working environment

Core information needs

1. Services meet the requirements of the data protection act 1986
 2. Effective systems exist, and are used, to provide the probation committee with comprehensive and timely information on the performance, workload, outcomes and costs of the service in the context of local and national circumstances
 3. Staff, at all levels of the service, receive appropriate information that is used to improve both individual and corporate performance
 4. Effective systems exist to provide operational information including that required to manage the risk of harm presented by offenders, and that it is used appropriately
 5. Effective systems are in place to enable the service to respond fully, accurately and promptly to the Home Office’s regular requests for information and statistical returns, and the service responds accordingly
 6. The service is able to respond appropriately to requests from stakeholders and other interested parties for information
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Achieving compliance with national standards

1. Effective systems are in place, and are used, to monitor regularly the performance of the service against national standards
2. Effective procedures exist to ensure that managers examine the performance of staff in relation to compliance with national standards
3. Effective mechanisms exist to enable staff to know whether individual cases are meeting the requirements of national standards
4. Services are able to use the local guidelines relating to the fair, vigorous and effective enforcement of community orders and licences

The deployment of resources

1. Information that is required on the deployment of resources to achieve the service's objectives is available
2. Effective systems are in place to provide information on the cost of service activities, including staff time, and its relationship to the outcomes of the work
3. Decisions on the creation and implementation of policy are made on the basis of consideration of different costed options

Crime and Disorder

1. Services are contributing to the statutory crime and disorder partnerships, in accordance with the requirements of the Home Office guidance manual
2. Effective information systems exist that demonstrate how the probation service contributes to the process of developing and implementing strategies for reducing crime and disorder.

Glossary of abbreviations

ACOP	Association of Chief Officers of Probation
ACPO	Assistant chief probation officer
CPO	Chief probation officer
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CRAMS	Case record administration and management system
CS	Community service
HMCIP	HM Chief Inspector of Probation
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
PSR	Pre-sentence report
SPO	Senior probation officer