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BUILDING A SAFE, JUST
AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

Progress made against Home Office Public Service Agreement Target 10

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Progress made against Home Office Public Service Agreement Target 10.

Target 10: To reduce the rate of re-convictions of all offenders punished by imprisonment or by community supervision by 5% by 2004 compared to the predicted rate.

Progress against target for persons released from imprisonment or sentenced to community supervision in January to March 1999.

Research Development and Statistics Directorate

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This National Statistics release shows progress made against the Home Office Public Service Agreement target of reducing the rate of reconvictions for offenders punished by imprisonment or by community service. A table showing the actual and predicted reconviction rates for 1997, 1998 and 1999 is attached, together with a copy of the technical note describing the methodology used in calculating the re-conviction rates. Progress made against the young offenders target was published as a National Statistics release on 20 June 2002 (copies are available on the Home Office website: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/reconrates.pdf>)

The main messages indicate that progress has been made towards meeting this target.

- The two-year reconviction rate for persons discharged from **prison** was 1.9 percentage points lower than predicted, in the first quarter of 1999, after allowance for changes in the characteristics of offenders between the first quarter of 1997 and 1999.
- The rate for those commencing **all community penalties** was 1.4 percentage points lower than the predicted rate.
- The **combined prison / probation** figure was 1.6 percentage points below the predicted rate.
- All the above differences outside the range due to chance variation.

Expressed in the format of the PSA 10 target of a '5% reduction against predicted', the prison reconviction rate has fallen by 3.3%, the community penalties rate has fallen by 3.1% and the combined figure has fallen by 3.2%.

A number of factors are thought to have contributed towards the improved performance. These include:

- The impact of community penalty specified activities, which were the forerunners to accredited programmes;
- Prison Service interventions, particularly accredited offending behaviour programmes;
- Improved National Standards and tougher enforcement procedures for persons under the supervision of the National Probation Service;
- Improved sentence planning whilst in prison, and better arrangements post-release supervision;
- A renewed focus on "What Works" with offenders.

Table 1

Two-year reconviction rates¹ for persons discharged from prison or commencing community penalties, 1997Q1, 1998Q1, and 1999Q1

England & Wales

	Commencing community penalties ²					Prison discharges	Combined prison and probation figure
	Community Punishment Order	Comm. Rehab. Order - Prob. centre / specified activities	Community Rehab. Order - Other	Comm. Pun. & Rehab. Order	All community penalties		
1997 Quarter 1							
Base number	12,000	3,224	10,490	4,717	30,431	15,446	45,877
Actual reconviction rate (%)	34.4	52.7	51.4	49.0	45.7	56.8	49.4
1998 Quarter 1							
Base number	12,997	3,908	11,068	5,324	33,297	17,807	51,104
Actual reconviction rate (%)	35.5	51.1	52.0	47.7	46.0	55.7	49.4
Predicted rate ³ (%)	34.9	51.6	51.8	48.4	45.8	56.7	49.4
Difference (% points)	+0.6	-0.5	+0.2	-0.7	+0.2	-1.0	0.0
Variability of the difference ⁴	+/- 0.8	+/- 1.4	+/- 0.8	+/- 1.2	+/- 0.4	+/- 1.0	+/- 0.7
Difference (expressed as a percentage)	+1.7	-1.0	+0.4	-1.4	+0.4	-1.8	0.0
1999 Quarter 1							
Base number	13,316	3,787	11,770	5,387	34,260	17,352	51,612
Actual reconviction rate (%)	33.0	50.8	52.3	48.5	44.3	55.3 ^(p)	48.0
Predicted rate ³ (%)	34.8	53.5	53.1	49.7	45.7	57.2 ^(p)	49.6
Difference (% points)	-1.7	-2.6	-0.7	-1.2	-1.4	-1.9	-1.6
Variability of the difference ⁴	+/- 0.8	+/- 1.5	+/- 0.9	+/- 1.3	+/- 0.5	+/- 1.0	+/- 0.7
Difference (expressed as a percentage)	-4.9	-4.9	-1.3	-2.4	-3.1	-3.3	-3.2

Notes:

1. Excludes 'pseudo re-convictions'
2. Excludes breach proceedings
3. The model for prediction is based on results for the first quarter of 1997
4. The variability is twice the standard error of the difference. This is an indicator of the degree of variation one might expect by chance.

TECHNICAL NOTES FOR PSA TARGET 10

Description:

Reduce the rate of re-convictions:

- Of all offenders punished by imprisonment or by community supervision by 5% by 2004 compared to the predicted rate.
- Of all young offenders by 5% by 2004 compared to the predicted rate.

A) *Offenders punished by imprisonment or by community supervision*

- The target covers England and Wales. It is calculated for sentenced persons discharged from a Prison Service establishment and persons commencing supervision by the Probation Service for either probation, community service or combination orders.
- Two-year reconviction rates¹ will be based on standard list offences².
- The predicted rate will make allowance for:
 - a) Any changes in the age, sex, offence and previous criminal history profile of discharged sentenced prisoners / persons commencing probation supervision. These factors are known to be associated with the risk of re-offending;
 - b) External factors associated with other PSA targets, which impact on re-conviction, but not on the underlying rate of re-offending - reduced delays in achieving a conviction (PSA target 8) and the increased proportion of recorded crimes where the offender is brought to justice (PSA target 6)³;
 - c) 'Offences in the pipeline' ('pseudo reconvictions'). These are subsequent convictions for offences committed prior to the offender commencing the prison or community supervision period under study.
- The target of 5% applies to the *number* of reconvictions, after allowance has been made for the above factors. Thus a base line reconviction rate of 50% for example implies a target of 47.5%.
- Two-year reconviction rates for those discharged from prison or commencing supervision by the Probation Service are a **national statistic**. They are published annually in the command paper, Prison statistics, England and Wales and a Home Office Statistical Bulletin - see <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm>. Future issues will include statistics based on the definitions used in PSA10.
- The 2 year rate will be measured annually using the data for the January to March quarter. The *baseline* will be the 2-year reconviction rate for 1997.

¹ Breach proceedings, where a further penalty is imposed, but no further offence has been committed will be excluded

² These are indictable offences and the more serious summary offences. A full list is contained in Appendices 4 and 5 of the command paper Criminal statistics, England and Wales

³ A methodology for making these allowances will be developed.

B) Young offenders

- The target covers juveniles aged 10 to 17⁴ in England and Wales.
- There are several differences in approach from the other target⁵:
 - a) Formal cautions, reprimands and final warnings will be included to reflect the high use of these disposals for young offenders, but custodial sentences will be excluded⁶.
 - b) One-year reconviction rates will be calculated to reflect the need for earlier results.
 - c) 'Reconviction' includes further cautions, reprimands and final warnings.
 - d) Recordable⁷ rather than standard list offences are proposed to enable comparisons with the Youth Justice Board indicators already being used by the local youth offending teams.
- The predicted rate will make allowance for the same factors as the prison / probation indicator.
- The target of 5% applies to the *number* of reconvictions, after allowance has been made for the above factors. Thus a base line reconviction rate of 33% for example implies a target of 31.35%.
- One-year 'reconviction' rates for young offenders will become a **national statistic**. In due course they will be published in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin or other Research, Development and Statistics Directorate publication.
- The one-year rate will be measured annually using the data for the January to March quarter. The *baseline* will be the 1-year reconviction rate for 1997.

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⁴ Age at conviction, formal caution etc.

⁵ Additional reconviction rates will be calculated, which will enable direct comparisons to be made with the imprisonment / community supervision reconviction rate

⁶ Their number is relatively small. To be consistent with the other component of PSA 10, measurement would need to be from the date of discharge. This is not possible from the data source being used - the Police National Computer. It would also require that the measure could not be as timely.

⁷ Those offences for which a crime has to be recorded on the Police National Computer.

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