

Information, Advice and Guidance Supporting Offenders in Custody and in the Community



Summary

In November 2003 HOST Policy Research successfully bid to conduct a research project on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council and the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit, which is part of the Department for Employment and Skills. The study was commissioned to help inform and shape the strategy which will deliver information, advice and guidance (IAG) to offenders in custody and in the community supporting the Government's commitment to quality and visibility.

From 1st August 2004 the structure of Information and Advice Services for Adults in England funded by the Learning and Skills Council has changed. Contact details may differ from those contained in the report and are obtainable by contacting LSC local offices.

The scope of the research included contact with all local IAG partnerships, Jobcentre Plus, the National Probation Service and HM Prison Service (both publicly and privately managed).

Intended recipients

Local information and advice service contractors, local LSCs, local probation services and HMP Heads of Learning and staff of JobCentre Plus

November 2004

Further information

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Executive Summary

Date:

November 2004

Subject:

Information, advice and Guidance Supporting Offenders in Custody and in the Community

In November 2003 HOST Policy Research (HOST) successfully bid to conduct a research project on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU), which is part of the Department for Employment and Skills (DfES). The study was commissioned to help inform and shape the strategy which will deliver information, advice and guidance (IAG) to offenders in custody and in the community supporting the Government's commitment to quality and visibility. The research team was supported by a steering group (whose members are listed at the end of this executive summary) consisting of the main agencies and organisations whose work involves offenders, whether they are serving sentences in custody or within the community.

Since the commissioning of this research, the LSC has undertaken a national tendering exercise "for the procurement and management of information and advice services for adults" to ensure that a consistently high standard of service is offered to individuals. With the reformed service starting on 1 August 2004, some of the terminology used in this report will now be obsolete, such as "IAG partnerships" in relation to the core LSC-funded service which provides help and advice, for those aged over 20 years, about learning and work. However, the use of the term "guidance" may still be relevant to the service delivered to offenders in custody and in the community by staff in prisons and by other agencies.

Objectives and scope

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- clarify the level and range of current IAG service delivery to offenders and funding arrangements
- identify any staff training and development needs
- provide examples of current effective delivery which could be models of good practice, and explore the current role of information and communications technology as a resource
- consider existing protocols between agencies and any barriers to effective delivery
- propose a strategy which could define, improve and develop services and recommend courses of action which could take forward implementation.

For the purposes of this research, the scope of the project has focused solely on England.

Methodology

The methodology was conducted within a timescale of five months and can be summarised as follows.

- Inception, planning and desk research took place including a review of current practice, evaluation reports and funding for development. Interviews were held with 14 key individuals nominated by the steering group, four group interviews with managers, and discussions with Prison Service, NPS and Jobcentre Plus staff.

- Managers and practitioners involved in local IAG delivery were surveyed and staff from all agencies involved interviewed, at nine separate locations, which resulted in case studies describing effective collaborative practice. Focus group interviews with 61 offenders currently serving both custodial and community sentences, and 3 individual interviews, were also carried out.
- A development workshop was delivered through a one-day consultation exercise with invited strategists, managers and practitioners to consider future strategy and developments.

Key findings from the report

Research context

The criminal justice system is a complex network of agencies with different pressures and public expectations. This research was driven by a number of government agendas in different departments which recognised a clear need for a firmer grasp of local arrangements, recognition of current interventions and the identification of barriers to effective service, as a foundation for a more meaningful future approach to IAG delivery to offenders.

Agencies which work with offenders

The roles and responsibilities of the main agencies which work with offenders have strategic and operational dimensions and future strategy will need to take account of the context of current working arrangements, the interface between organisations and the potential for service duplication. Among the plans for the forthcoming 12 months which will affect IAG service delivery to offenders is development of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The widening role of the OLSU and its team of regional advisers alongside the developing role of the Heads of Learning and Skills in the Prison Service, and the introduction of the reformed LSC IAG service arrangements, will also serve to impact on the implementation of the proposed strategy.

Issues and concerns

Professionally delivered IAG services can help to widen participation and provide access to other services. The research identified, from different sources, a number of operational situations which are holding back the delivery of a coherent IAG service. These sources were at all levels – strategic, managerial and practitioner.

The main issues cited were:

- **the absence of a recognised practice model or a quality framework** for ensuring that offenders' learning and IAG needs are assessed at recognised stages of sentence, and developed and integrated with other skills development or behavioural work
- **movements between prisons** seriously disrupting access to information and learning, with no mechanism to transfer educational records or documents that would ensure continuity
- **concern about the transition from supervision by Youth Offending Teams to mainstream NPS, or from Young Offenders Institution to adult prison** – staff reported numerous areas of confusion, and individuals whose progress was severely disrupted and led to re-offending
- **wide disparity in education funding** between prisons, resulting in striking variations in curriculum, shortage of opportunities for distance learning and prisoners having to make activity trade-offs because of poor timetabling
- **absence of protocols between NPS and IAG providers**, which caused confusion about what IAG is trying to achieve, and particularly surrounds such areas as confidentiality and disclosure
- **lack of clear direction and guidance** about what is expected from each partner, and how activities and

collaboration should be monitored and evaluated to demonstrate achievement and potential need

- **complex systems and target-driven regimes**, sometimes conflicting within the agencies involved, which may mean that a complete service is not offered to offenders even if the targets are all met – staff are unable to treat offenders as individuals with different needs because of the bureaucracy which constrains them
- **changing staff roles**, with little initial IAG training and lack of more general continuous professional development – there is no good practice evidence to draw upon.

Concerns about consistency and adequacy of funding and lack of a strategic overview were also raised.

There were a number of difficulties connected with the way prisons operate (from agencies outside the estate) such as lack of continuity from custody to community, no consistency with resettlement and education programmes, not being able to gain cooperation from prison staff, and distrust from prison staff about the nature and purpose of IAG. Prison staff referred to insufficient resources within the prisons to undertake IAG interviews with offenders in custody, or help them to investigate for themselves; and there was the added problem of little or no information and communications technology (ICT) access outside open prisons. All this was said to demotivate both staff and offenders. These issues were reported as less problematic in the NPS and IAG partnerships than in prisons.

A further problem concerned referrals and marketing, that is, the ways that clients are made aware of services and what they are entitled to receive from those services. A number of individuals mentioned that the internal (within prison) marketing to clients has not historically been encouraged. Others pointed to the way referrals are made, and the

difficulties offenders have in understanding what they are entitled to, and when.

Current delivery of information, advice and guidance

Responses from staff within the main agencies involved with delivering IAG to offenders underpinned evidence from case studies and individual interviews. This suggests that cross-agency collaboration in the delivery of IAG is being encouraged by managers in all agencies and increasingly features on strategic and operational plans.

Agencies engage in a number of ways – both formally and informally – and often collaborate to secure additional funding. The main constraints to development of IAG services were seen as:

- lack of funding (sustainable long-term finance and/or insufficient core funding)
- no meaningful (to staff) inter-agency protocols
- internal barriers connected to how the individual organisations were set up and run.

Funding to support IAG services is currently obtained from a wide range of sources in addition to core funding streams. These include Prisoners Education Trusts, European Social Fund, Drug Action Teams and local LSCs. Identifying suitable finance and sustaining initiatives after funding ceased were two major issues for staff.

The need for quality frameworks integrated into delivery was recognised with an overall 70 per cent of all respondents to the survey actively involved in achieving or working towards a recognised standard. In addition to direct assistance to clients, quality standards were seen as assisting in the identification of staff development needs.

IAG service delivery by individual agencies is very varied. A number of NPS areas contract out their IAG role to others although working closely with them and monitoring outcomes, while others deliver through in-house teams with varying levels of knowledge and expertise in IAG. In the Prison Service, IAG is delivered largely by internal staff with support from Jobcentre Plus and IAG partnerships.

The relatively new role of Head of Learning and Skills in prison establishments is assisting the development of IAG services although progress is currently slow. LSC core funded IAG providers are increasing their involvement in direct delivery of IAG to offenders and new contracting arrangements from August 2004 are expected to underline this, but few understand the criminal justice system or how the agencies within it operate.

Use of technology

There are three main issues connected to the use of technology to support delivery of IAG:

- the availability of resources to enable supervision of offenders
- lack of staff capability to use equipment
- the security of technical equipment and the supervising of offenders who use it.

Staff called for more effective links to producers and suppliers by their organisations, clear directives on the future role of technology and local licence for more imaginative use of existing technology such as video and television.

Views of offenders

Information obtained from interviews with offenders in prison establishments indicates that IAG service delivery depends on category of prison and prisoner, prison regime, levels of enthusiasm and knowledge of prison staff, availability of resource rooms for offender self-help, and offender knowledge of, and access to, staff from outside agencies. Those interviewed who were serving community sentences had also received a variable service with most only

remembering advice sessions with Jobcentre Plus or being signposted to organisations through interviews with NPS case managers.

About a third of those interviewed did not see the need for IAG at all. However, there were many who had clearly benefited from a range of interventions that had assisted (or were assisting) them towards more learning or meaningful post-sentence employment. All the offenders interviewed called for greater transparency in what they could expect, when they could expect it and greater access to information through technology or self-help routes.

Case study practice

The important message from the case studies was that effective practice is not about offering specific modes of working or adhering to a precise framework of options, but about personal flexibility, overcoming barriers through negotiation and innovation, using existing local knowledge and collaborations and building staff capacity and capability at every opportunity.

The principles which underpinned the case study examples demonstrated convincingly the importance of coherence, the use of quality standards, defined staff roles and responsibilities and systematic monitoring and evaluation of results. Additionally offenders were treated with respect, supported to explore all options, and openly acknowledged as having the capability to be rehabilitated into the community.

In most cases offender progress was subsequently monitored to identify positive outcomes and impact, and to provide evidence of a link to learning and employment.

Conclusions and recommendations

The research confirms there is a wide variation in the level and range of IAG services to offenders. While there are sound practice and effective working relationships in many areas, the provision overall is fragmented. Many of the main agencies work well at a local level through informal arrangements but this is not a substitute for firm protocols or a transparent framework.

Development work is not supported by consistent or adequate funding streams, and, where innovation has occurred, this has been dependent on local initiative, with local delivery partners (for example IAG partnership, Prison Service or NPS staff) successfully bidding for short-term funds (for example, European Social Fund). Whilst such local enterprise and networking are to be encouraged, service delivery cannot depend long term on such insecure arrangements.

On the basis of the sample of offenders interviewed, some appear to be confused about IAG and what it can offer. Those who see clear links to achievement (for example, to work and learning) have embraced it willingly. For many interviewed, IAG has become the route to a learning and education structure that they had previously not known. Many offenders made a plea for greater clarity in what they could receive and from whom.

Greater coherence may be particularly critical for short-term offenders in custody, since there is no official statutory requirement for post-release supervision, and they have the highest offending rates. This, together with a clearer focus on entitlement overall, may help to overcome some of the problems related to offenders.

It is recommended that:

- a development strategy is adopted (set out in full below) based on principles of good practice identified by this research, and which has a national, regional and local dimension
- staff training and development are carefully considered and reviewed involving the use of a skills audit to address gaps in knowledge and skill of existing staff about IAG
- the value of IAG is adequately researched and its impact on re-offending rates and links to employment are used to provide a business case for further investment

- the use of existing technologies is developed in addition to a thorough appraisal of new technological opportunities and the most cost-effective means identified to deliver elements of IAG to offenders using ICT resources.

The research calls for clear national direction, more systematic delivery, more staff development and inter-agency collaboration and cost-effective investments which are backed by defined individual entitlements and robust monitoring and review.

Proposed information, advice and guidance development strategy

Building on progress made to date, it is proposed that the IAG strategy for offenders should have three major strands.

Minimum entitlement

An IAG Strategy for Offenders should contain a minimum entitlement to IAG services for all offenders which includes a common definition of the term "offender".

The minimum entitlement should indicate at every stage of sentence from induction onwards – regardless of whether sentence is custodial or community-based – what services offenders should receive, and should be consistent with the LSC's strategy *Coherent IAG Services for Adults* (January 2004) and the DfES National Policy Framework for IAG Services for Adults.

Ways of working together should be developed for all agencies and organisations detailing the roles and functions of national organisations, and the regional and local partners concerned with IAG delivery to offenders. This guidance should include:

- definitions of IAG services to be delivered
- responsibilities (regional and area) and funding streams

- lines of accountability for different aspects of IAG services
- protocols to underpin local agreements
- arrangements with regard to quality assurance and monitoring
- clear links to other strategies such as the national IAG strategy and national rehabilitation plan.
- sufficient depth and breadth of skill are available within each delivery agency
- premises and equipment are adequate to deliver the minimum service entitlement
- there is a provision for building staff awareness and engagement through better communications.

Resource and capacity building

To take the strategy forward from autumn 2004, an audit should be undertaken on a regional or area basis of current provision, which should map provision against user entitlement and identify the extent of current delivery in defined areas and what is needed to bridge any gaps or capacity shortfalls to meet the minimum entitlement. It should:

- show existing contractual and partnership arrangements on a regional and local basis
- detail the integration or progression from IAG to learning and resettlement, if known.

A sustained programme which builds capacity within agencies to deliver the IAG strategy should be planned ensuring that:

Developing an investment culture

A programme of development activities should be commissioned which aims to demonstrate the benefits of IAG by:

- planning a series of development projects to allow staff to develop new service delivery models to deliver outcomes envisaged by the IAG strategy cost-effectively
- showing how a stronger focus on sequential interventions in the delivery of IAG to offenders can be economically viable as well as beneficial to individuals
- providing robust evidence of best practice and impact linked clearly to employment in order to demonstrate a business case for work with offenders.

Membership

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Section 1: Introduction

The Research Project

1 In November 2003 HOST Policy Research (HOST) successfully bid to conduct a research project on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU), which is part of the Department for Employment and Skills (DfES). The study was commissioned to help inform and shape the strategy which will deliver information, advice and guidance (IAG) to offenders in custody and in the community supporting the Government's commitment to quality and visibility.

2 The research team was supported by a steering group consisting of the main agencies and organisations whose work involves offenders, whether they are serving sentences in custody or within the community.

3 Since this research was commissioned, the LSC has undertaken a national tendering exercise for "the Procurement and Management of Information and Advice Services for Adults". The reformed service commenced on 1 August 2004 and introduced some major changes to the service; therefore, some of the terminology used in this report is now obsolete. For example, IAG partnerships are now called information and advice (IA) contractors and offer the core LSC-funded service which provides help and advice, for adults aged over 20 years, about learning and work. The use of the term "guidance" may still be relevant to the service delivered to offenders in custody and in the community by staff in prisons and by other agencies.

4 The main objectives of the research were to:

- clarify the level and range of current IAG service delivery, establishing local coordination and how different

arrangements are being funded, and any training and development needs of delivery staff

- provide examples of current effective delivery which could be models of transferable practice
- consider existing protocols between agencies and any barriers to effective delivery
- explore the current role of information and communications technology (ICT) as a resource, and how this could be better integrated
- propose a practical strategy which could define, improve and develop services and recommend courses of action which could help this strategy to be achieved.

5 This report details the findings from the research. It is accompanied by a separate document containing individual case studies. These describe a range of good practice delivered by agencies in a variety of different situations.

Background and Scope

6 The criminal justice system is a complex network of agencies and services, both national and local, which has found itself under considerable pressure in recent years. The cost of crime is estimated to be £60 billion each year, and although latest official crime figures (Home Office 2003) show a reduction in crime of between 2 and 3 per cent, neither press nor public appear to believe this and, in the results of many national polls, people think that crime is rising.

7 Press and public often demand that more offenders are given prison sentences, but the

need to segregate offenders from the community and place them in custody can be said to be of doubtful value for all but the most violent element. Large numbers of people who are sent to prison for a short period, sometimes for relatively minor offences, often re-offend within a very short time of release.

8 Evidence (Farrall 1995; 2002) does show, however, that gaining a job makes an offender less likely to re-offend, and evidence, albeit largely anecdotal, from those working within the Prison Service and IAG partnerships suggests that professional assessment and vocational advice and guidance are activities that assist offenders towards meaningful employment which supports individuals into working and community life. Offenders need to be included in the widening participation agenda now adopted by Government and the LSC. (There are a number of definitions of the terms "offender" and ex-offender". For the purposes of this report therefore, the generic term "offender" is used to mean anyone who has been found guilty by a court (other than for a minor motoring-related offence), even if they have completed their sentence.)

9 It is timely that this study has been commissioned during a major reorganisation of prison and probation services into the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) which follows recommendations for seamless case management. The issue of both the DfES national policy framework *Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults and the LSC IAG strategy Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance Services for Adults* are also relevant.

10 The approach and scope of this research has been driven by Government agendas that span a number of departments, but most notably the Home Office and DfES. By commissioning this study, the LSC and its partners have recognised the need to have a firmer grasp of current local working arrangements, better understand the needs of those both delivering and in receipt of IAG interventions and to identify and recognise both the achievements of, and the barriers to, a coherent and effective service.

11 For the purposes of this research, the scope of the project has focused solely on England.

The Methodology

12 The research methodology had nine stages:

- Stage 1: inception and planning
- Stage 2: desk research
- Stage 3: interviews with individuals in key organisations
- Stage 4: survey of practitioners and managers in IAG providers, prisons and probation services
- Stage 5: case studies of current practice in different regions
- Stage 6: group interviews with potential service users
- Stage 7: analysis and consultation day planning
- Stage 8: development workshop
- Stage 9: further analysis and final report.

Stage 1: inception and planning

13 This included a meeting with the project commissioners to discuss timetable, reporting framework, key milestones, topics for the survey and focus groups, access to information sources and contact details of key individuals and organisations for subsequent stages.

Stage 2: desk research

14 This was a review of existing information about current practice and developments including funding. HOST looked at evaluation reports of initiatives and developments and background material. All this enabled the team to begin to organise the subsequent fieldwork in terms of what should be included, and the probable level of detail required.

Stage 3: interviews with individuals in key organisations

15 Members of the research team spoke in depth with key individuals nominated by the research commissioners and the steering group. These included members of the steering group, Government departments, the voluntary sector and HM Inspectors of Prisons, a total of 14 face-to-face and telephone interviews.

16 Three group interviews were also conducted, and a number of more informal discussions, with Prison Service and NPS staff.

17 Topics raised centred on development of services, coherence, organisational collaboration and capacity, identification of current practice and innovation, protocol issues and early identification of possible case studies.

Stage 4: survey of managers and practitioners

18 Questionnaires were emailed to the main agency managers involved in the local delivery of IAG and cascaded to appropriate staff. IAG partnerships were contacted direct, but it was necessary, for security reasons, for questionnaires to the Prison Service and NPS to be delivered through their confidential internal systems. This was organised by members of the steering group. Jobcentre Plus policy managers gave an overview of the broad quantitative and qualitative issues.

19 Three versions of the questionnaire were developed. The first section contained common core questions followed by a final section specific to each of the main agencies. While the survey was primarily a quantitative tool aimed at providing numerical information, there were also many qualitative sections giving opportunities, through open questions, for respondents to comment on such things as future developments, integration, quality and the use of ICT as a working medium with the client group.

Stage 5: case studies of current practice

20 We conducted a total of nine in-depth case studies which offered a range of experiences, including an initiative which covers several prisons, probation teams (examples of both in-house delivery and contracted-out services), partnerships that included arrangements with the voluntary sector and partnerships with access to both a private and public prison. There is a separately bound report of case studies in addition to the final report.

Stage 6: group interviews with potential service users

21 Focus group interviews were conducted in different settings, and with different ages, sex and ethnicity. The groups were asked to consider, in the context of the views of others, what they need and expect from IAG services. Individual interviews were also conducted with three females serving community sentences and one female recently released from a prison sentence being supported during resettlement.

Stage 7: analysis and consultation day planning

22 The qualitative and quantitative data to date was analysed and discussed, and used to prepare the content for a one-day workshop of invited strategists and practitioners.

Stage 8: development workshop

23 An important part of the methodological approach, this consultation exercise had two main purposes – to present the research findings to date, and, through a workshop format, invite participants to consider future developments and identify specific issues. Discussion groups during the day dealt with issues on both an operational and strategic level. A two-page summary of the day was distributed, within one week of the event, to all organisations that had requested a tender specification pack – *To Procure and Manage Information and Advice Services for Adults in Local Learning and Skills Council Areas*.

Stage 9: further analysis and final report

24 Data from the consultation exercises was amalgamated with existing findings and the whole compiled as a report.

The Report

25 In addition to this section, Section 2 considers the context of the research, the agencies involved and some of the key issues. Section 3 looks at the level and range of current services, the perceptions of offenders and the role of ICT. Section 4 explores the information from the case studies and offers some principles of effective working practice. Section 5 suggests a development strategy and offers conclusions and specific recommendations.

Section 2: The Research in Context

Introduction

26 The main focus of this project was to obtain data on a range of local partnership arrangements and detail evidence of good practice. For this to be meaningful, it needs to be set in the wider context of:

- the roles of the key agencies, including current, recent and historic developments that have had impact on their function and responsibilities
- the major issues for these agencies at strategic and operational levels related to individual organisations and interface between organisations.

27 This section will offer an overview of agency responsibilities and highlight a number of critical issues, including those raised with the researchers by key agency individuals interviewed, prison and probation service staff spoken with and those identified from desk research.

Agency Roles and Responsibilities

28 One of the foundations of this research was to harness the experience and perspectives of key national agencies through nominated representatives who could offer both a strategic and an operational dimension. This, together with an extensive review of existing research, reports of specific initiatives and various inspection and internal reports, enabled the researchers to gain a stronger understanding of the context in which current working arrangements exist. This section of the report profiles the seven main agencies and organisations with a strategic and/or operational role in the delivery of IAG to offenders.

29 The LSC, which was set up in 2001, has a wide and ambitious remit. The LSC works with partner organisations at all levels to strengthen existing working relationships in the delivery of IAG and encourage greater coherence.

30 During the course of this research a national tendering process took place for the procurement and management of IAG services to adults in local LSC areas. Up to this time the LSC-funded IAG provision for adults was managed by local IAG partnerships; however, from 1 August 2004 the reformed service was in operation, consisting of a lead contractor and a network of subcontractors, to ensure that a consistently high standard of service is offered to individuals.

31 The LSC also commissioned a wide range of research into IAG provision in 2002/03 and a national development fund supported innovative work that included opportunities for IAG partnerships to develop work with offenders.

32 The LSC's strategy *Successful Participation for All* (LSC 2003), for example, refers directly to the role of education and training in reducing offending and, in 2003, a research project culminated in a guide to establish principles for use by local LSCs which focused on good practice (Parsons, Bysshe and Barry 2003). The LSC has also recently commissioned research to consider how local LSCs and their providers meet offender needs (LSDA, unpublished).

33 The National IAG Policy Framework and Action Plan (DfES, December 2003) outlines the principles of access, delivery and quality which will guide the range of future core services and the infrastructure which will support this. In particular, this document indicates that core information and advice services will be available to all adults over 20

years, with no upper age limit, in differentiated levels appropriate to the individual, and will include access to website and telephone-based services. This raises the issue of how this type of activity will be dealt with in prison environments, where it is clear that for security and other reasons access to these facilities is strictly controlled.

34 Some aspects of work-related training are the responsibility of Jobcentre Plus (through the Department for Work and Pensions), but the LSC is crucially placed to promote greater coherence in all interventions for offenders that relate to education and training, and IAG is a pivotal element of this framework.

35 The OLSU is responsible for ensuring that the Government's policy to improve learning and skills in prisons is achieved. It has been operational since 2001, and supports a strategic partnership between DfES and the Prison Service. From April 2004, it also has responsibility for the learning and skills of offenders who are supervised by the NPS, including basic skills programmes organised by the NPS, which will be routed through them to the LSC.

36 The unit was originally conceived as supporting a strategic partnership between DfES and the Prison Service, and tasked to improve the quality and quantity of prison education, but this developed into a wider remit and was extended to include offenders on probation.

37 OLSU works with key partners – most notably the NPS and the LSC – and has a team of regional learning and skills advisers who work closely with prison establishments. OLSU intends to develop a strategy related to greater IAG coherence for offenders, of which this research is one part.

38 The NPS, created in April 2001, is organised in 42 services managed by local boards and reporting to the National Probation Directorate at the Home Office.

39 The aims of the NPS are:

- protecting the public
- reducing re-offending
- the proper punishment of offenders in the community
- ensuring offenders' awareness of the effects of crime on victims and the public
- rehabilitation of offenders.

40 Each year the service supervises 175,000 offenders, of which 90 per cent are male and 75 per cent are over 21 years old. Local performance targets are set nationally, by the Home Office.

41 Probation services support a client group on Community Rehabilitation Orders, Community Punishment Orders and on licence after prison, with proportions varying locally, and they are involved in pre-sentence reporting to the courts. Resettlement needs have two main areas of targeted activity undertaken by the NPS:

- basic skills provision – with targets for screening and assessment of offenders' needs and completion of basic skills awards
- employment, training and education – the NPS is concerned with preparing offenders to take opportunities in the community offered through IAG, Jobcentre Plus and vocational training that improves their job prospects.

42 There is currently no central policy on how probation services are expected to enhance their activities in areas related to IAG. Resourcing tends to be by a variety of local arrangements – some subcontracted – but the sourcing and management are for local discretion. There are few monitoring arrangements and no formal evaluation. Under the new partnership arrangements for basic skills provision, NPS will continue to be responsible for identifying needs, but funding and service provision will be routed through the LSC.

43 The Prison Service, a critical part of the criminal justice system, keeps in custody those ordered by the courts. As at May 2004 (Home Office Statistics Directorate), there were 116 prisons in England and, of these, 8 are private prisons, with 73,000 individuals in prison at any one moment in time. Turnover is high: 60 per cent will be sentenced for less than 12 months and, of those released, 60 per cent will re-offend within 2 years. Privately managed prisons were introduced to the UK in the 1990s. HM Inspectorate of Prisons inspects private prisons in the same way as public sector prisons. All private prisons have a "Controller" linking them to the Home Office, and the governors of private prisons are called "Directors". Each private prison has an individual contract which includes delivery of a resettlement programme. Although there is no IAG remit explicitly detailed in any of the current contracts, they are contracted to deliver a defined number of educational hours to every prisoner in their custody. Private prisons are currently tendering for additional funding for learning and progression paths.

44 Prison Service orders set minimum standards in regard to resettlement and key performance indicators to ensure employment, training and education (ETE) places for prisoners after release.

45 The Custody to Work Unit, which itself plays a crucial role in meeting the Prison Service's key performance indicator for resettlement (achieving employment, training or education outcomes) works in partnership with other agencies. New Heads of Learning and Skills posts, funded by DfES, were created in public-sector-run prisons in 2003 to coordinate learning-related activities. These managers work with resettlement teams and sentence planning officers to offer a more accessible and defined service to prisoners, but such arrangements are still at a very early stage of development.

46 Local IAG provision is contracted to serve the needs of individual adults aged 20 and over in geographical areas coterminous with local LSC boundaries. All current contractors have attained the **matrix** quality assurance Standard

(the **matrix** Standard). Delivery is currently through networks of local partnerships, some of which are formal subcontractors, and some which are not. Local IAG infrastructures have been described as having "contrasting priorities, funding and resource constraints" (Parsons, Bysshe and Barry 2003). Nevertheless, a number of networks operate extensively with NPS and the Prison Service (which will be explored in later sections) and integrate a number of activities, making this integration visible to all users.

47 Jobcentre Plus is the nationally funded network of employment services which has local office delivery and management arrangements. Policy and guidance are set nationally for the whole of the UK. Some branches of Jobcentre Plus see themselves as peripheral to IAG provision, while in others extensive collaboration with IAG partnerships locally has been set up. Jobcentre Plus is, however, the main partner of the Prison Service and the Custody to Work Unit and provides employment and benefits advice to prisoners. Jobcentre Plus branches guarantee a New Jobseeker interview for every prisoner who needs one, and are involved in the piloting of Jobpoint and Worktrain in different areas of the UK in 2003/04, which give prisoners access to information on job vacancies electronically.

48 The Adult Offenders Rehabilitation Unit was formed to address the issues raised by the Social Exclusion Unit report of 2002 (Social Exclusion Unit 2002), although its remit now covers all offenders, not just prisoners. The unit has created an interdepartmental group (the Rehabilitation of Offenders group), which includes nine sub-groups, with one for ETE. Each sub-group has an action plan that shows the work of various departments in establishing or improving different rehabilitation services to offenders. The ETE sub-group remit includes consideration of more defined IAG services to offenders and better prison-to-community transition paths.

Current Issues

49 Professionally delivered, high-quality IAG can help to widen participation both as a provision of itself and as a conduit to other services.

50 Our discussions with key agencies suggested the current approach within different organisations is very fragmented and delivered against a background of extensive and ongoing policy changes at national and regional levels. There are also some operational tensions at many levels with remits unclear and responsibilities uncertain.

51 Individuals see a need for greater clarity about funding arrangements and more transparency about availability and eligibility for additional funding. Members of the NPS in particular are keen to develop a national strategy within the new NOMS organisation, which will still offer some degree of operational autonomy at a local level.

52 We have grouped together some of the major issues as:

- **the absence of a recognised practice model or a quality framework** for ensuring that offenders' learning and IAG needs are assessed at recognised stages of sentence, and developed and integrated with other skills development or behavioural work
- **movements between prisons seriously disrupting** access to information and learning, with no mechanism to transfer educational records or documents that would ensure continuity
- **concern about the transition from** supervision by Youth Offending Teams to mainstream NPS, or from Young Offenders Institution to adult prison – staff reported numerous areas of confusion, and individuals whose progress was severely disrupted, which led to re-offending
- **wide disparity in education funding** between prisons, resulting in striking

variations in curriculum, shortage of opportunities for distance learning and prisoners having to make activity trade-offs because of poor timetabling

- **absence of protocols between NPS and IAG providers**, which caused confusion about what IAG is trying to achieve, and particularly surrounds such areas as confidentiality and disclosure
- **lack of clear guidance** about what is expected from each partner, and how activities and collaboration should be monitored and evaluated to demonstrate achievement and potential need
- **complex systems and target-driven regimes**, which may mean that a complete service is not offered to offenders even if the targets are all met; staff are unable to treat offenders as individuals with different needs because of the bureaucracy which constrains them
- **changing staff roles**, with little initial training in how to deliver effective IAG services, and lack of more general continuous professional development – there is no good practice evidence to draw upon.

53 What have emerged strongly from these interviews, and from the secondary research, are many common concerns affecting the operational interface between organisations or establishments, and which were said by both strategists and practitioners to be currently holding back the development of a more coherent and effective service.

Overview

54 In the area of learning and employment, offenders have now become a focus for the agendas of a number of agencies that could enable IAG to have a more structured and visible profile. There are some overlaps and some gaps between organisational functions, and confusion among practitioners about agency accountabilities. Concerns about consistency and adequacy of funding, and lack of a strategic overview, were also raised.

Section 3: Current Local Information, Advice and Guidance Delivery

Introduction

55 The focus of this section is an assessment of current agency working arrangements to deliver IAG to offenders, and staff and offender perceptions of service and support. The findings were collected largely through the email survey involving IAG partnerships, the NPS and the Prison Service. (Jobcentre Plus staff were also invited to take part in the survey).

56 The survey results are summarised here, and local experience is explored in terms of:

- the type and range of services offered to offenders by each agency and collaboration between agencies
- the extent of formal inter-agency protocols, the effects of formal quality standards and sources of funding
- staff training and development issues
- the use of ICT.

57 The survey contained a number of questions which gave respondents an opportunity to express their individual views on a range of delivery issues, and these opinions are reflected throughout this section, together with opinions from advisers which were obtained from the case studies, and from practitioners who attended the development workshop in April.

58 Also included in this section are offender experiences and perceptions, together with views collated from the focus group interviews, and a review of ICT issues and responses to specific questions about ICT from the survey.

Survey Response

Profile of respondents

59 The survey approach has been outlined in Section 1. The questionnaire had a “core” of questions for completion by all agencies, and an agency-specific section in which there were questions applicable to IAG delivery solely by, or through, that agency.

60 The survey was conducted over a seven-week period, and relied on local managers identifying and cascading the questionnaire to appropriate staff. The response rate overall is therefore impossible to establish precisely. The numbers of responses from each agency that the survey secured were:

- 44 from the NPS (there are 42 probation areas).
- 38 from the Prison Service (there are 106 individual prison establishments).
- 42 from IAG partnerships (at the time of the research there were 52 IAG partnerships).

61 Although Jobcentre Plus staff were not directly involved in the response to the questionnaire, their views were included through the personal discussions during the case study interviews, workshop sessions and individual interviews.

62 Of the 3 agencies that responded, staff ratios were 60 per cent female and 90 per cent were from a white ethnic group. Of all respondents, 43 per cent were in the 46–55 age group, with personnel working within IAG partnerships reflecting a younger age range overall than the other 2 agencies.

63 Questionnaires were received from every region in England, although not all agencies were represented in each region. The details of responses are shown in Table 1. The overall response rate was weakest from the Prison Service in terms of numbers, and only one reply was received from a privately run prison. There were no replies from the Prison Service in Yorkshire and Humberside, North East or North West, and none from IAG partnerships

in Southern England. The highest number of replies was from the South East and the Midlands. From the three agencies together, there were responses from 49 managers (or equivalent grades) and 75 from advisers (or similarly positioned job roles).

Table 1: Responses to survey by region

Agency	Yorkshire and Humberside	North East	North West	Midlands	East	South East	South West	South West
NPS	1	7	7	13	3	15	2	1
Prison Service	0	0	0	6	11	9	1	3
IAG partnerships	4	8	9	7	5	10	0	4
Total	5	15	16	26	19	34	3	8

The regions in the Table 1 are based on NPS areas. The LSC is divided into nine regions: North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, East and West Midlands, Eastern Region and South East, South West and London. Source: HOST survey, 2004.

Experience of the personnel of participating organisations

64 Different levels of experience of employees within the three agencies were reported from the survey in both the total length of time employed in each organisation and the period of time in their current job role. Of the NPS personnel, 35 per cent had been employed by the organisation for more than 10 years, and a third had between 1 and 5 years’ service. In IAG partnerships, 60 per cent of those who replied to the survey had between 1 and 5 years’ service, while in the Prison Service, 58 per cent had been recruited in the previous 12 months.

65 The latter undoubtedly reflects the introduction of the Head of Learning and Skills posts in the past 12 months. Of the questionnaires received from the Prison Service, 23 were from Heads of Learning and Skills.

66 There was a greater depth of experience in working with offender groups shown by NPS than the other agencies. Of NPS employees, 68 per cent had 6 or more years’ experience working with offenders. In the Prison Service, this figure was 45 per cent, and in IAG partnerships it was 24 per cent. Of Prison Service staff, 36 per cent had less than a year’s experience of work with the offender client group, which contrasted with 28 per cent in IAG and 19 per cent in NPS.

Engagement with other services

67 Our case study and secondary evidence supports the view that there are increasing opportunities for cross-collaboration between agencies, which is being encouraged by senior managers in different organisations, and work with offenders is increasingly featuring in strategic and operational plans. The survey asked for details of existing cross-agency working relationships in the delivery of IAG to

offenders in custody and serving community sentences, and the nature of that collaboration.

68 Direct engagement with other organisations to deliver IAG to offenders was compared. Variation was evident in engagement, reflecting the roles of the NPS and the Prison Service to the different status of offender, and of IAG partnership work with both. The high level of collaboration reported with further education (FE), higher education (HE) and adult guidance services by the Prison Service and the NPS may well confirm the growing emphasis in learning and education for offenders which is being facilitated by both organisations.

69 Of IAG practitioners and managers, 72 per cent reported that they regularly engage with Jobcentre Plus in work with offenders in prison, and nearly two thirds (61 per cent) also work regularly with community, voluntary or charity groups to deliver services to offenders on probation orders. The NPS also works extensively with community and voluntary groups, and this collaboration was mentioned by 59 per cent of survey respondents. The Prison Service has some engagement with other agencies in the delivery of IAG to community sentence offenders, but a far higher rate of involvement with all the named organisations to deliver to those in custodial care.

70 Nearly 40 per cent of replies from both NPS and IAG partnerships mention informal links, twice as many times as the more formal engagements. Case study evidence confirms that while formal working relationships between organisations are increasing, informal and ad hoc meetings contribute substantially to working relationships, provide for greater transparency and enable meaningful case conferencing to take place.

71 Case study evidence and information gathered at the development workshop also highlights that specific IAG initiatives are progressively part of the working arrangements between agencies, with many now collaborating on formal proposals to secure

additional funding. However, evidence from the survey indicates that this more often involves the current IAG partnerships and the NPS than it does the Prison Service.

72 We also know from earlier interviews in the research that a number of NPS areas are choosing to contract out their IAG delivery to the voluntary sector and/or specialist agencies, although this is only mentioned by 7 per cent of NPS staff who responded to the survey. This development has had positive consequences, in that it has frequently resulted in a greater depth of experience in IAG delivery, and has also allowed NPS staff to concentrate on community sentence case work. It does, however, mean that contracts have to be monitored, which requires an allocated resource, and does not build internal capacity or offer staff additional development opportunities.

73 The Prison Service responses show that currently IAG is largely delivered to offenders in custody by their own staff, in collaboration with Jobcentre Plus, NPS, and to some extent through FE and HE (although some of these institutions may be members of the local IAG partnership arrangements), rather than solely by the current IAG partnership arrangements. With the increasing emphasis on achieving numerical targets, it has been less effective and practical for advisers to work in challenging settings such as prisons, because fewer individuals can be seen in a given time in that environment than elsewhere. New contracting with the LSC from autumn 2004 may give local IAG provision greater scope to work with offender client groups in different local arrangements.

74 IAG partnership response to this question showed a high degree of collaboration with many of the named agencies, including specific advice and guidance with Jobcentre Plus. The less-developed inter-agency working was with the Prison Service, and reasons have been suggested earlier for this. A high number of respondents again mentioned informal links as significant.

Barriers to service development

75 Respondents were asked, within the core section of the questionnaire, to indicate the main constraints to the development of IAG services to offenders and if these barriers had been overcome. These were “open” questions, and consequently many different responses were offered. Nevertheless, there were many common threads to the answers which can be grouped around three main areas. These were as follows.

- a **Financial support for IAG.** This was a complex area to unpick from the answers, because there were basically three issues. These concerned:
 - i the lack of long-term funding arrangements which disrupted services to clients within special initiatives, often at crucial stages of their development
 - ii insufficient core funding to meet client needs (within NPS)
 - ii funding streams being tied to targeting, which did not allow agencies to offer the depth of advice and guidance they felt was needed by the client group.
- b **Organisation and resources.** There were a number of difficulties connected with the way prisons operate (from agencies outside the estate), such as lack of continuity from custody to community, no consistency with resettlement and education programmes, not being able to gain cooperation from prison staff, and distrust from prison staff about the nature and purpose of IAG. Prison staff referred to insufficient resources within the prisons to undertake IAG interviews with offenders in custody, or help them to investigate for themselves, and there was the added problem of little or no ICT access outside open prisons. All this was said to demotivate both staff and offenders. These issues were reported as less problematic in the NPS and IAG partnerships than in prisons.

- c **Referrals and marketing.** This concerned the ways that clients are made aware of services and what they are entitled to receive from those services. A number of individuals mentioned that the internal (within prison) marketing to clients has not historically been encouraged. Others pointed to the way referrals are made, and the difficulties offenders have understanding what they are entitled to, and when.

Overcoming barriers

76 Staff had surmounted these barriers in many different ways. Some suggested that persistence, developing better links with staff in other agencies and actively working with prison staff and Jobcentre Plus enabled some difficulties to be overcome. Probation staff reported that working with partners to secure other types of funding which were less rigid than core finance, and sharing premises and resources, were some of the ways to get around barriers.

77 Most significantly, there were many suggestions about closer collaboration with other agencies, developing formal multi-agency approaches and better networking with educational establishments. Using Prison Service Plus moneys to convert space in one prison was reported, for example, by one establishment which had problems with available accommodation. From prison staff (a point reflected in a number of case study interviews) there was eager anticipation of the part that the new posts of Head of Learning and Skills would play in defining better structures and relocating resources within prisons and overcoming prejudice about internal marketing.

Inter-agency protocols

78 Evidence from the questionnaires confirms earlier anecdotal information that protocols between agencies are currently underdeveloped. Asked if formal inter-agency protocols existed, 21 replied positively. From the survey, individuals reported that formal arrangements exist in most areas in relation to the sharing of criminal conviction information,

and there are protocols on such things as basic skills, but there are few information-sharing arrangements between agencies that deal with offenders and local Drug Action Teams.

79 In two areas where the NPS subcontracts to deliver the Progress2Work initiative, protocols are being developed by a cross-agency team. Formal service agreements between many agencies, however, continue to be reported as weak. As one respondent wrote:

I do not have documentation or policies from other agencies and I do not know how they manage and store information we share with them.

Sources of Finance and Consistent Standards

Funding

80 The survey enquired about two issues connected to funding of IAG delivery. The first concerned awareness by staff of inter-agency funding streams (cash or kind) for IAG services for offenders, and the second related to the different types of funding which organisations had sourced specifically for the offender client group.

81 There are a number of different ways in which funding supports IAG work with offenders – through core funding, through direct contracting between agencies, through specific projects, through local LSC funding of IAG networks, and through one-off funding opportunities. Funding is, therefore, a complex network of interrelated accounts which, even for some experienced managers, can be baffling.

82 Of all those who replied to the survey, 61 per cent said they were aware of specific funding for offenders through their own organisation's core funding or channelled through other agencies. From an analysis of the responses, NPS and IAG seemed more aware of funding, with very few from either agency saying that they did not know. Of Prison Service staff, 14 per cent either did not know about funding arrangements for offenders, or did not answer the question at all.

83 In some areas internal capability to deliver learning services through probation staff has been developed using non-core funding, but IAG was said to be only a very small part of this. From the survey, a number of different sources were identified, specifically:

- direct allocated budgets to the main agencies
- a variety of different European Social Fund finance streams, either direct as part of the IAG core funding through LSC, or for adult guidance pilots, or specific match-funded initiatives financed by NPS
- finance from OLSU Prison Education Trust, Prison Capitalisation Fund, and the Youth Justice Board
- Prison Service Plus initiatives, and NPS Employment Pathfinder
- funding from charitable trusts such as the Prisoners Education Trust College Scheme
- LSC funding for basic skills
- from Home Office via local Drug Action Teams.

84 Case study evidence together with comments on the questionnaire suggests that the main difficulties with funding are:

- sustaining initiatives after the funding has ceased
- funding sources which appear to be directed at anything other than client needs.

85 Also mentioned in the survey responses were concerns about funding opportunities that are prescriptive about outcomes and/or do not allow innovation. Managers and practitioners would like greater transparency in funding, and more information and guidance about applying for extra finance. As one NPS employee said:

It is a constant struggle to access sufficient external additions to core finance. Periodic re-application and lack of information about what is available creates a climate of uncertainty and impedes offender development.

Quality

86 The Government is committed to raising standards and ensuring a more consistent quality of delivery in all areas connected with learning and skills including IAG. The **matrix** Standard is a national quality standard for organisations delivering information, advice and guidance services for learning and work. For IAG contractors, the **matrix** Standard has been integrated into their delivery for some time, but this standard is relatively new for NPS and the Prison Service, although they have other standards which they must attain.

87 The importance of a recognised quality assurance standard will be essential to underpin:

- the drive for a more coherent IAG service for offenders
- guaranteed consistency of service to users.

88 Therefore, organisations delivering IAG to offenders will be actively encouraged to quality assure through the **matrix** Standard..

89 The survey questions related to quality were designed to find out primarily how many of the local organisations had achieved a quality standard in relation to IAG delivery, the additional staff needs that may have arisen because of working towards or attaining the standard and in what ways attaining the standard had actually improved services to offenders.

90 From responses, 70 per cent of NPS offices, 55 per cent of prisons and 92 per cent of IAG partnerships that completed the survey questionnaire had achieved, or were working towards, an IAG quality standard. Across the 3 agencies, a reported 39 per cent of organisations had attained, or were considering, the **matrix** Standard, and the

remainder another quality framework. The majority mentioned the Guidance Accreditation Board (GAB) National Quality Standards for Learning and Work (NQSLW), which has been superseded by the **matrix** Standard. Two individuals mentioned that they expected their organisation to transfer from the NQSLW to the **matrix** Standard from 2004, and one that the standard framework Chartermark was being considered because the Department for Work and Pensions was encouraging organisations to be accredited.

91 Staff from all the organisations felt that a number staff development needs had been identified as a direct result of the use of quality standards related to work with offenders. In particular, they highlighted:

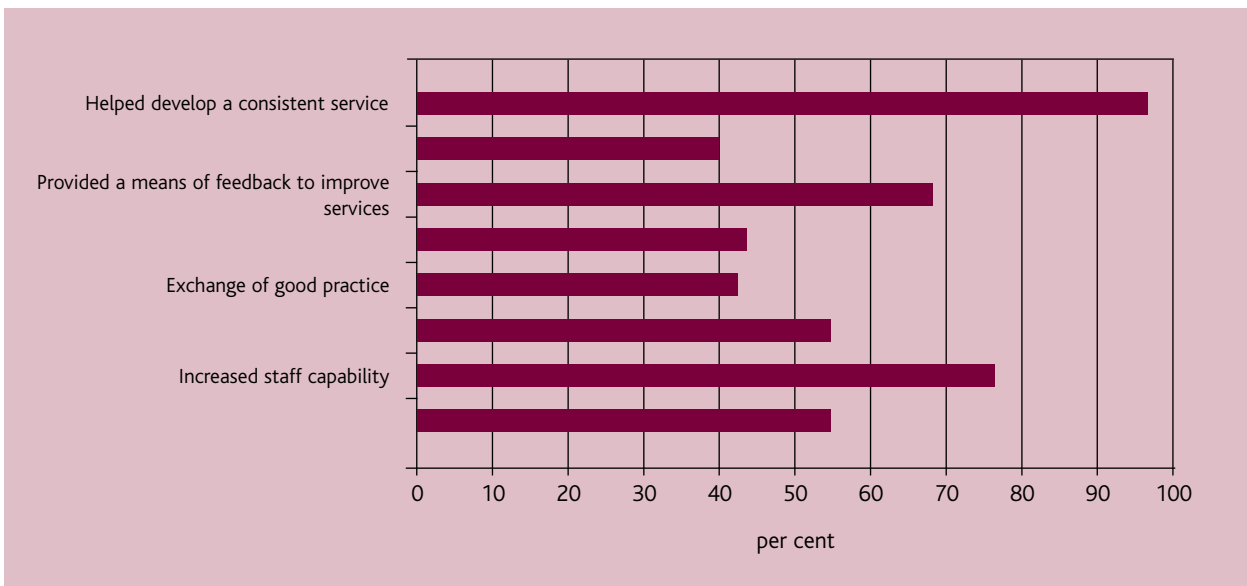
- the continuous improvement thread within the **matrix** Standard, which has enabled staff to consider new approaches to advice and guidance work; this not infrequently led to making direct links with their own performance and the need to gain further qualifications and update skills
- the need for staff working with offenders to have basic skills awareness training. This was particularly identified by those in the NPS, for whom basic skills are part of resettlement targeted activity, and the Prison Service to support offenders in custody who have literacy or numeracy problems
- the fact that quality improvement measures have resulted in more staff meetings to ensure that knowledge is updated both to understand different conviction orders and the other changes within the criminal justice system
- a greater understanding of other agency work, so that issues of confidentiality and disclosure were addressed.

92 The survey asked if quality standards improved the quality of delivery to

offenders overall and 50 per cent of NPS and 72 per cent of IAG answered positively. The messages were more mixed from the Prison Service, 44 per cent of whom did not answer the question, but 31 per cent answered yes which, in an agency where the **matrix** Standard is not yet fully embedded, could be

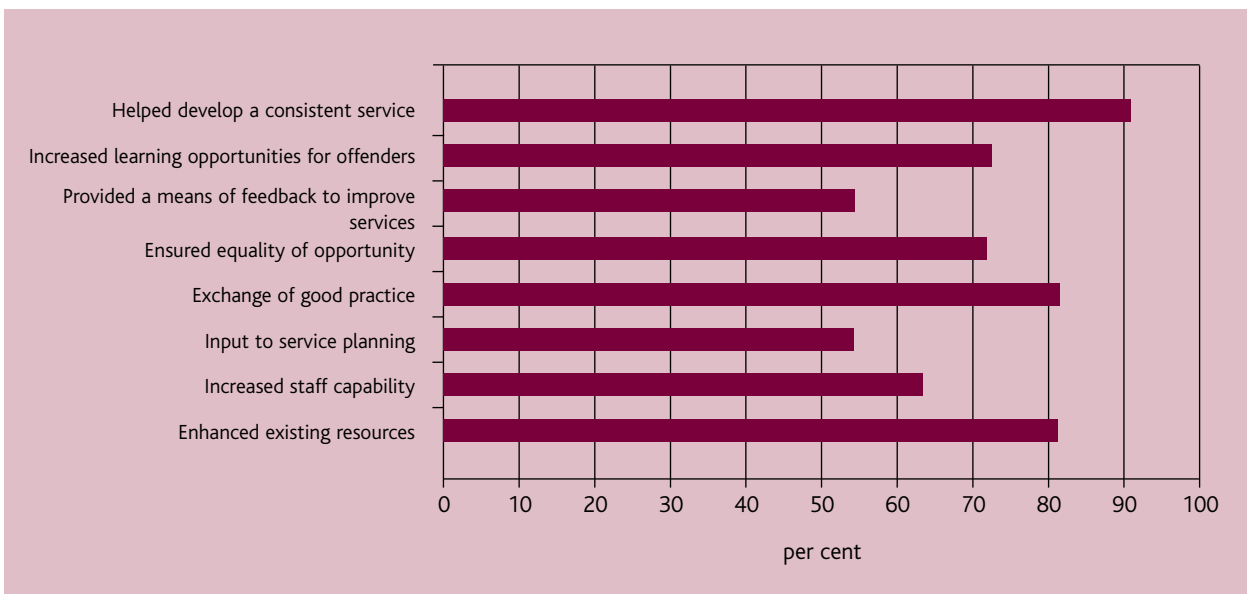
said to be a very positive reflection. A question designed to find out more precisely what these improvements were identified a number of areas of commonality between the agencies, and also areas where there was a marked difference in opinions. Figures 1, 2 and 3 show responses from each of the agencies.

Figure 1: Identified ways quality standards have improved service to offenders (National Probation Service)



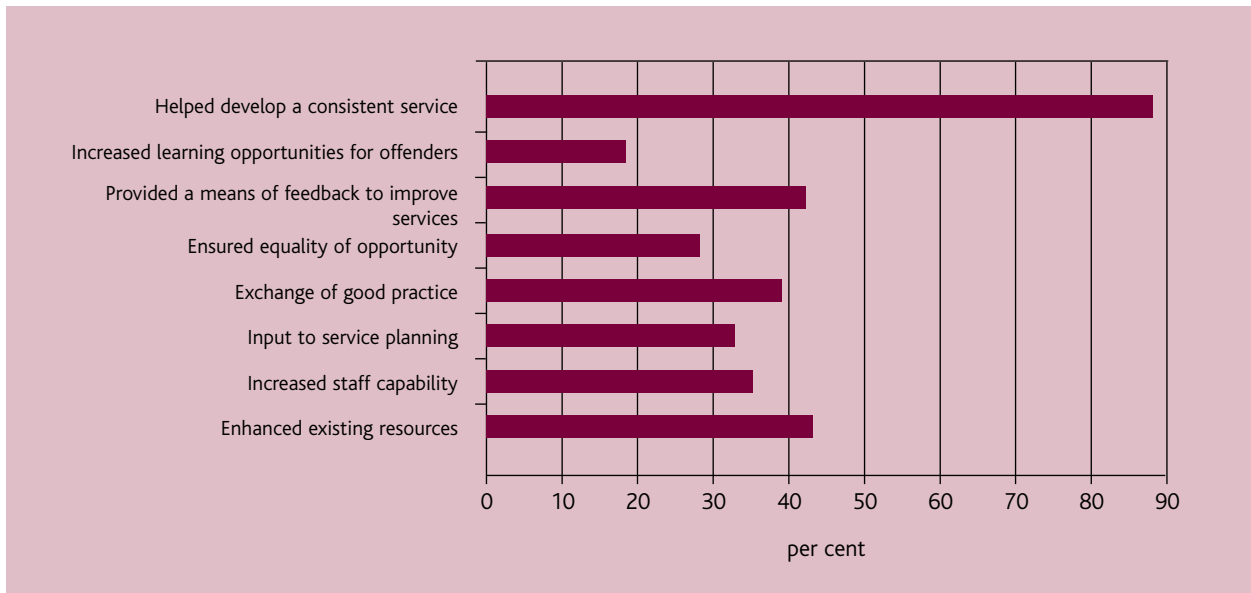
N = 25 Source: HOST survey, 2004.

Figure 2: Identified ways quality standards have improved service to offenders (Prison Service)



N = 11 Source: HOST survey, 2004.

Figure 3: Identified ways quality standards have improved service to offenders (Information, advice and guidance partnerships)



N = 27 Source: HOST survey, 2004.

93 The results show that, for individuals across all three agencies, improvement in consistency of service was the most tangible improvement to delivery that was attributable to quality standards. Providing a means of feedback to improve services, and enhancing existing resources, were also seen as favourable by all organisations. The Prison Service identified increased learning opportunities, exchange of good practice and increased staff capabilities as positive consequences, with the latter a benefit also endorsed by NPS staff.

94 Only a third of IAG respondents highlighted input to service planning as improved by operating within a quality framework. Service planning, however, was highlighted positively by the other agencies.

95 What emerges is a mixed picture, with those organisations with most experience of quality standards appearing to be less impressed with the subsequent effects of attaining a quality standard in a number of identified areas than those who have had less opportunity to consider the outcomes.

96 The importance of quality, however, was raised many times by the case study

representatives, who generally saw it as a systematic and robust way of defining what delivery is, and ensuring that data was routinely collected, client-orientated measures were put in place and organisational credibility was enhanced.

Access and Delivery

97 This section has so far considered the inter-agency issues which affect work with offenders. We now consider survey responses from each of the three agencies separately – how they operate, the services they provide for offenders and constraints to the delivery of their service.

National Probation Service

98 The survey results showed that locally the NPS delivers IAG through one of three routes. Delivery is by NPS staff (30 per cent), through a formal contract with another agency (34 per cent), or a mix of this provision through informal arrangements with other agencies. The qualitative data from the survey reveals that access to IAG services is dependent on factors such as extent of referrals by case manager, staff resourcing and availability, current operational targets or involvement in

special projects or initiatives. Some NPS areas dictate the approach to work with offenders; others rely on the expertise and experience of local staff to determine a framework. A number of individuals reported that IAG delivery was determined solely by client need. Table 2 indicates the services provided locally

through NPS areas to clients in custody and in the community.

Table 2: Services offered by NPS locally to offenders.

	Offenders in custody (per cent)	Offenders in the wider community (per cent)
Learning opportunities	23	73
Gaining employment	23	70
Career information	23	75
Benefits	23	39
Advice with housing	18	32

N = 44
Source: HOST survey, 2004.

99 As would be expected, the data shows that NPS deal more frequently with offenders in the wider community than serving prison sentences, which is in line with their major remits. Two in three of all NPS staff said that learning, work and career information and opportunities made up the bulk of services offered to offenders in the community, although they were also offered advice on benefits and housing issues.

100 Recording outcomes from IAG interventions also varies. Figure 6 shows that 72 per cent of outcomes immediately or following the delivery of IAG are formally noted, but records of outcomes after completion of sentence, and learning outcomes during sentence, are less likely to be documented, unless outcomes are needed as evidence towards targets, or (in the case of subcontractors) as part of contract audit procedures.

101 The survey asked what methods were used to keep offenders informed about IAG services. Responses showed that information was often relayed to clients through case

managers, but leaflets, workshop and therapy sessions and promotion of services during work preparation sessions also took place. Offenders who worked with the drug service on structured or informal day care programmes were also informed about IAG opportunities.

102 Key barriers to the development of IAG services within the NPS structure were seen as lack of funding, lack of cohesion between custody and community sentence officers, lack of clarity about availability of services, and poor knowledge among individual NPS staff about the importance and/or the role of IAG. Better training, more formal action planning for individuals serving community sentences, and access to knowledge about the various services and their function, were the main suggestions for overcoming constraints to effective service delivery. One person suggested that:

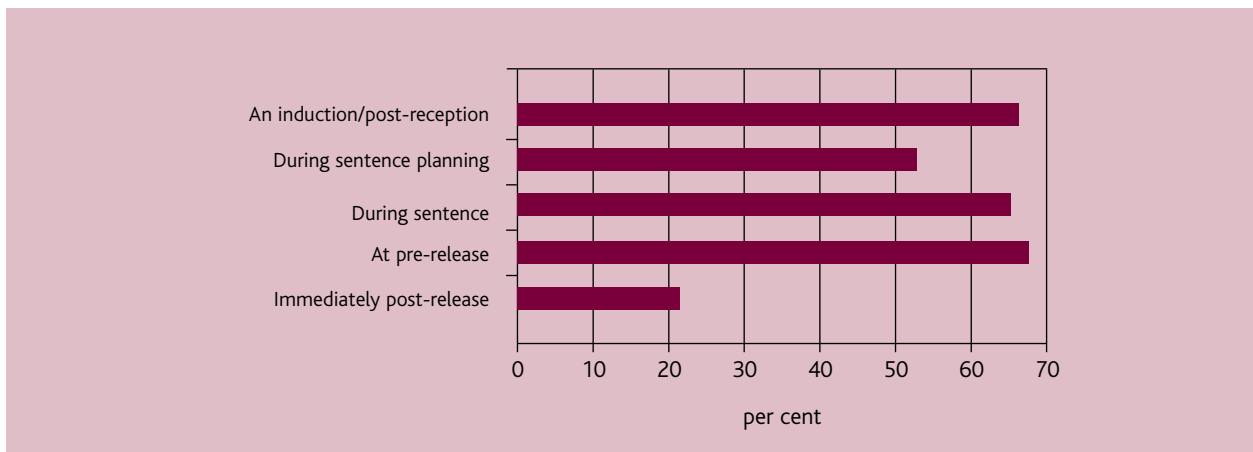
it will possibly improve when the agencies are amalgamated. Though this by itself will not guarantee cohesion, at least we shall feel we are trying to achieve similar aims.

Prison Service

103 Although there were only 36 responses from the Prison Service to the survey, there was a very even spread of prison categories represented, including high security, open prison and a female prison, although only one from a privately run establishment. Asked who they thought responsible for the delivery of IAG services within their prison, only 11 offered a response, and 8 of these suggested the Education Officer. Current delivery was provided by Jobcentre Plus staff or a mixture of internal resources and Jobcentre Plus.

104 Access to IAG services was variable, often within the same prison, and from the 36 responses none of the prisons reported access in the same way. Access ranged from weekly sessions to during-sentence planning, to twice monthly, to twice during sentence. Asked to indicate the availability of services at different stages of sentence (Figure 4), a clear pattern emerged of regular availability of provision throughout sentence. This is contradictory, and we suggest this data should be treated cautiously. For example, it is reported by over 50 per cent of respondents that IAG is available at sentence planning stage, yet those in custody for less than 12 months (often those with the highest re-offending rates) are outside the sentence planning system.

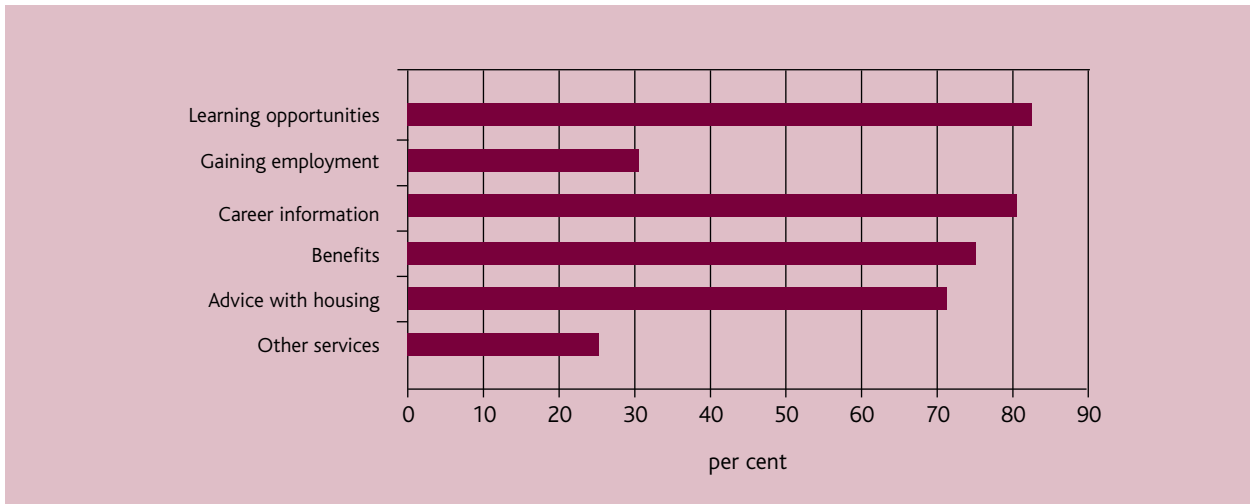
Figure 4: Reported IAG services to clients at stages of sentence



N = 36 Source: HOST survey, 2004.

105 We asked in the survey for a breakdown of actual services offered to offenders in prisons. Figure 5 shows that IAG about learning opportunities is twice as likely to be offered as information on gaining employment.

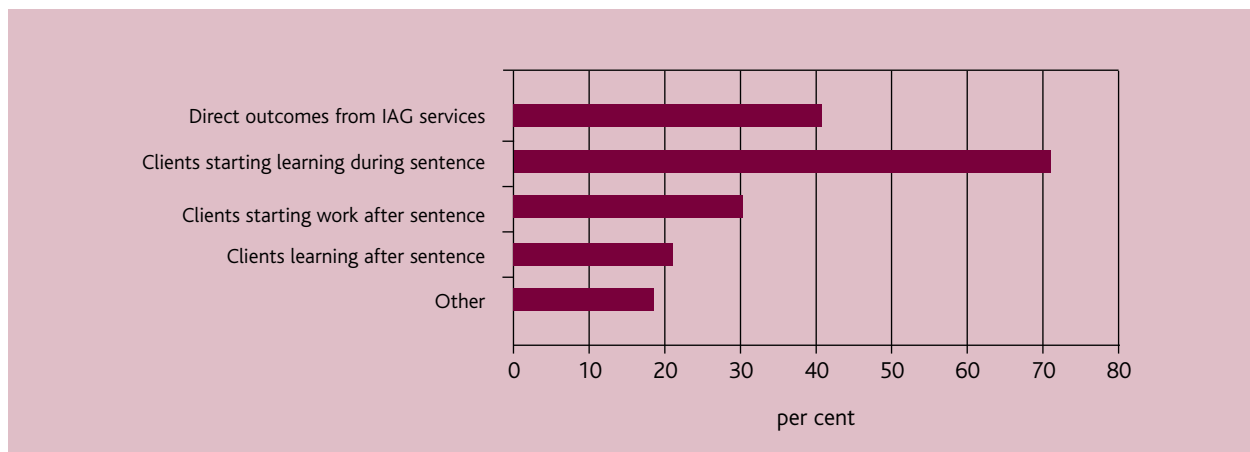
Figure 5: Reported services available to prisoners



N = 36 Source: HOST survey, 2004.

106 As with NPS staff, Prison Service employees were also asked about formal recording of outcomes from IAG services. Figure 6 shows that recording learning outcomes during sentence happens three times as frequently as learning outcomes after sentence, indicating that monitoring results of IAG interventions after sentence is largely underdeveloped.

Figure 6: Recording of outcomes of IAG (prisons).



N = 36 Source: HOST survey, 2004.

107 Prison Service staff offered a number of suggestions for developing IAG services within prisons and in partnership with other agencies. Chief among these were:

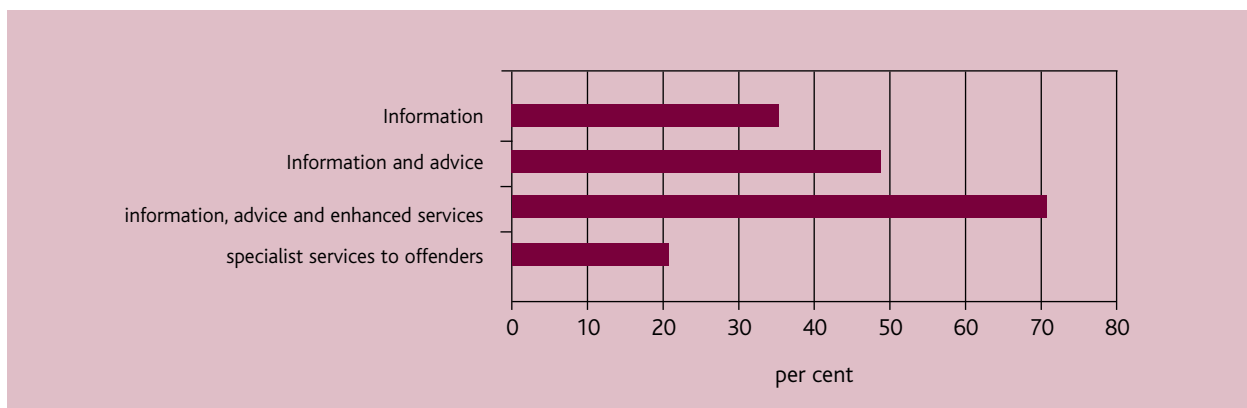
- more staff resources, or better use of existing staff and better development of staff
- better internal resources – ICT, premises, library facilities
- more integration with other services
- IAG available to all offenders in custody regardless of sentence length
- more emphasis on quality standards.

108 Staff were also asked about barriers to services and how they could be overcome, and their responses suggested that staff and offenders in custody alike were ill-informed about the nature of IAG and what it could achieve. Therefore, more knowledge about the topic and how it could be managed effectively in a prison environment were pivotal in order to extend choice and access to different classes of offenders in custody. Some also mentioned the constant turnover within prisons, which made the continuity of services difficult to establish.

Information, advice and guidance partnerships

109 Both NPS and the Prison Service are within the criminal justice system, and staff are familiar with many of the bureaucratic, and sometimes idiosyncratic, arrangements within both services. For many staff within IAG partnerships, outside the criminal justice system environment, a very different perspective may exist. Many of these are Jobcentre Plus employees who had input during case study visits. The survey asked IAG staff about the type of information delivered to offenders. Figure 7 shows the delivery within the four main categories of service. Of advisers, 71 per cent deliver information, advice and enhanced services to offenders, and 1 in 5 of IAG partnerships are offering specialist advice and guidance. (Enhanced services include individual support and guidance, in addition to the usual information and guidance services.)

Figure 7: Range of services offered by IAG partnership to offenders.



N = 42 Source: HOST survey, 2004.

110 The way in which their organisation is funded was said to affect delivery by 48 per cent of the IAG partnerships which responded to the questionnaire. It was said that primarily the amount of funding dictates the work that can be undertaken in terms of type and length of time with each client, secondly that the source of funding (that is, core, European Social Fund (ESF), special pilot) determines the range of services offered, and thirdly that the extent of collaboration involved in delivery (use of charities such as Nacro, care trusts, voluntary sector) and the skill of individuals working within this partnership also affect what is provided. Targets are also an issue for IAG partnerships. As one wrote:

There are targets to be met but if these are exceeded we will not be funded for these.

111 A number of survey respondents within IAG partnerships mentioned the changes to funding, which have been in operation since 1 August 2004, when work with adults will be targeted more specifically and especially with those who are below a Level 2 qualification, that is, a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or five GCSEs at Grades A to C. While many offenders will fall into this priority group, there will be some offenders who do not fall into this category for whom an appropriate type and level of service will be available. There was a perception among some IAG staff that sessions will be limited to one per client in many locations, and this may affect offenders, many of whom need multiple sessions.

112 Access to services and the way offenders were informed about services varied across the responses, with some joining with Jobcentre Plus for weekly sessions to meet a range of different advice needs, others who were invited into prisons for advice as demand dictated, and others who offered monthly advice sessions to prisons and worked with the NPS to deliver group IAG. Referrals to other agencies and services – often outside the spheres of learning – are common. Individual providers promote their own services. In some IAG networks, there are over 50 partnership

members, often serving different client groups – and promotion by the Prison Service and the NPS through posters, leaflets, information distributed to offenders at induction sessions and through informal inter-agency links, were those mentioned most frequently.

113 Those working for IAG partnership networks identified four main differences between working with offenders and other clients – evidence validated by many of those at the development workshop.

- The time it often takes to build trust with clients is far longer.
- Access to offenders in prison, contacting them and following up with extra information can be difficult and time-consuming.
- Established contact with offender clients is disrupted by them being moved to other prisons – often at critical stages of their development.
- Issues related to disclosure and confidentiality which have still to be resolved hinder individual offender progress and sometimes actual access to services.

114 Allied to this were questions of barriers to services and ways to overcome them. Most IAG partnership staff mentioned the lack of protocols between IAG partnerships and the Prison Service, which meant that contact was limited or restricted, and the lack of understanding and knowledge of IAG advisers about the specialist support offenders needed.

115 It was suggested that these barriers could be overcome and future development work directed towards introducing a clear identified service at specific points of sentence which were known, could be accessed freely and robustly monitored. Again, these were suggestions echoed by interviewees during case study visits, by those who attended the workshop and by offenders themselves (see below).

Support for Deliverers

116 Staff in all agencies involved in the research were asked in the survey to rank the importance of specific strategies to enable them to be better supported in their role as deliverers of IAG. Table 3 compares the responses of each agency to identified support they considered very important.

Table 3: Comparison of suggested support for staff across all agencies

	NPS (per cent)	Prison Service (per cent)	IAG partnerships (per cent)
More training of staff	45	75	62
Formal exchange of good practice between organisations	55	72	60
More cohesion or transparency in funding	55	58	50
Better directed resources	61	47	52
Formal service agreements between agencies	39	47	45
More inter-agency activities	45	58	64

*NB: Multiple response.
Source: HOST survey, 2004.*

117 Three out of every four responses from the Prison Service ranked increased staff training of major importance, suggesting that staff development issues may have a huge bearing on the future development of the service. Though this was considered very important by nearly half of NPS staff who answered the survey, better direction of resources was given a higher rating overall. Probation also seemed marginally less concerned about the importance of inter-agency protocols. IAG partnership staff also felt that inter-agency activities were an important strand for future development. Over 50 per cent of all agencies would clearly value more cohesion and transparency in funding, and more formal exchange of good practice between organisations.

Information and Communications Technology

118 ICT as a medium is increasingly being considered in relation to work with offenders. The most obvious examples concern the "Worktrain" and "Jobpoint" models piloted in 8 prisons, and then extended to 10 more in 2004/05. Evaluative findings of these two projects have indicated that using ICT, in combination with other support and encouragement, is an effective means of work preparation, and increases the likelihood of employment after release. Both these programmes use locked-down computer systems that limit the amount and type of access.

119 ICT is part of the core prison education curriculum, and all prisons have to deliver it as a national qualification. **learnirect**, the e-learning network created by Ufi, is now being

piloted in five prisons. The software will generate information on usage, prisoner test results and academic progression; pre- and post-assessment will be recorded manually.

120 In the survey, staff were asked the following questions.

- How important to them was the use of ICT?
- What were the main barriers to its use with offenders?
- How could these barriers be overcome?

121 While many managers and staff who work with offenders endorsed the importance of ICT, others were not convinced of its importance to their work with the offender group. There were some major concerns expressed about its use with offenders, and two main barriers cited.

- **Security.** Offenders needed supervision when using technical equipment, and with computer use there was the added complication of possible links to unsuitable Internet sites. A number of employees had overcome these problems of supervision by tightening procedures or using personal computers on behalf of clients. There are major issues here, but it is suggested that some of these could be overcome with locked-down systems or better organisation of group work.
- **Lack of ICT resources or expertise.** There are two issues here. One is connected to availability of technology and the limited free space both within prisons and at NPS premises. The second relates to staff capability in technical expertise. Both are resource issues, but whereas staff may need formal training and development, lack of equipment relates to availability and use of funding, and lack of space may need internal cooperation and reorganisation within existing teams.

122 A number of ways in which these barriers could be overcome were suggested. These, together with suggestions made at the development workshop and by case study interviewees, were:

- a clear lead from head offices or the new NOMS development team that technology will play a central role in future work with offenders, and that funds will be available to develop this
- more effective links to producers and suppliers of technical equipment and software by NPS and Prison Service staff to overcome security and capability concerns or shortfalls. This could involve a named staff member responsible for collating information and developing local approaches
- ICT skills to be part of every employee's personal development plan in the next two years to ensure that all staff have a core of competence regardless of job role
- greater use of laptop computers within the criminal justice system to be encouraged and developed, with a two-year implementation period evaluated for effectiveness and innovation
- more imaginative use of existing technology, for example, production of videos both as an aid to learning and information signposting. Prisons, for example, offer inmates access to televisions even if access to other technology is prohibited.

The Views of Offenders

The interviewees

123 The research team conducted 8 focus groups with offenders, interviewing a total of 61 male offenders. Of these, 36 were offenders in custody in category B and category C prison establishments, and represented offenders in custody at different stages of sentence and with different backgrounds, educational achievement levels and capabilities. In this, the HOST team was ably assisted by prison staff.

124 The remaining 25 were offenders serving sentences in the community who regularly attended therapy-style sessions. Ages ranged from 19 to 57 years. One group were all aged under 21 and were part of the NPS Intensive Change and Control Programme (ICCP). In addition to the groups, 4 individual interviews were conducted with females aged between 22 and 34 years who were on probation orders, 1 following a prison sentence. Each group interview lasted between 45 minutes and an hour and a half, and each single interview between 20 minutes and an hour.

125 The objectives of these interviews were:

- to explore offender experiences of IAG delivery (if any)
- to examine what offenders wanted from IAG, how they would ideally like it delivered and how it fitted with other educational or work-related activities they undertook
- to consider other issues which could affect the delivery of IAG to offenders (barriers, for example) and the most effective time for delivery.

Perceptions of information, advice and guidance delivery

126 The groups were not homogeneous and experiences of IAG varied considerably. Broadly, a third of all those we interviewed had received some type of IAG intervention in the past two years, some at more than one establishment. Of the 61 males and 4 females interviewed, experience of IAG could be classified in three ways.

127 Those that had experience of IAG delivery understood the concept and what it was trying to achieve. They had all received IAG on learning and work courses during their sentence. This ranged from information on learning, advice on writing CVs and interview techniques and labour market information. Most had attended Preparation for Work courses. Their experiences had been positive, assisted by the encouragement they had received from prison staff, and the clear

signposting they had at induction and/or during sentence planning. One prison had an IAG suite where offenders in custody could access, under supervision, information from the resource room. For the most part, and without regard to learning attainment levels, these were articulate individuals who had responded to resettlement and educational opportunities, and this in turn had appeared to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem.

128 As one offender in custody remarked:

The IAG suite is like a comfort zone for me.

129 Asked to suggest the best stage of sentence for IAG delivery, these individuals felt offenders in custody should be offered advice at different stages of their sentence, but it needed to be offenders in custody who chose that time, or they had to know when to expect it so they could prepare. One offender said:

People will think about their futures at different stages in their sentence. Some need time to settle in, other have to deal with lots of "stuff", others go to the Therapeutic Unit. Each case is different and people need to be seen at different times.

130 Despite their positive experience of IAG, many felt that IAG advisers could never hope to truly understand their situation and often saw things from a different perspective.

131 About another third of those interviewed had received some form of formal IAG either through Jobcentre Plus or from education or resettlement teams. Knowledge and experience of IAG varied, with some feeling they had been rushed through interviews, and as one offender said "pushed through the system like a battery hen".

132 Others had found it useful, but it had either been delivered too late in their sentence to be of significant use, or too soon after induction when they were still becoming adjusted to prison life. Two offenders serving community sentences had appreciated the action planning which they had talked through with their case officer. Another thought the interviewing skills on the Kickstart programme

to be of particular benefit, making him practise skills he had not used for years, and forcing him to think through his situation more positively.

133 About 10 offenders had no knowledge of IAG at all and some did not understand the concept. One or two believed they did not require advice or guidance at all, just somewhere to stay on release from prison, and a job. Some were frustrated that this opportunity had been denied them, but was clearly available to some in other prisons or in other areas. Researchers felt that their attitudes to IAG were based less on experience or capability, and more because of low self-esteem.

Barriers to accessing services

134 Offenders were asked what would stop offenders accessing advice and information. Their answers suggest that marketing services to offenders may be a crucial and neglected area.

- **Not understanding what it is or knowing it exists.** This, we were told, applies to many individuals, particularly in prisons, although there had seemed to be more educational opportunities in the past six months.
- **Not seeing a need for it.** Generally those on community sentences saw the need more than offenders in custody, but they may well have had more opportunities to access services too.
- **Thinking it would be just another session that achieved nothing.** Some of the most disillusioned of those interviewed saw IAG as only another session that would offer little and take too much time.

What information, advice and guidance do offenders want?

135 A number of ideas were suggested by offenders, most notably:

- up-to-date information on training and jobs, skills shortages, qualifications required and wage levels

- information on which national employers were most receptive to employing offenders
- advice about housing and benefits given at the same time as information about work-related subjects
- opportunities to learn about offenders who had been successful in finding work or on courses, and a direct link to talk to them personally if possible
- opportunities to use computers to get information and to take computer skills courses
- Information and advice through one-to-one discussions and fewer group sessions.

136 One offender said:

I want to be an individual. Everything I do here is with others. I want to speak to someone by myself.

When do offenders want information, advice and guidance delivered?

137 Around a half of those interviewed wanted to choose the time for themselves, but if this was not possible then as early as possible and preferably when they were having the second meeting with the sentencing planning officer or case officer. Four individuals suggested that three times during their sentence offenders in custody should have one-to-one advice sessions with opportunities for access to help at other times. Many expressed the view that it mattered not when they received information and advice, but knowing in advance what they were entitled to and when they would be entitled to receive it was important.

Offender concerns

138 The majority of those we interviewed felt that the lack of continuity was the single most frustrating thing with all IAG resettlement, learning and work intervention. One remarked:

There is no continuity. There should be a database so you know when you come from another prison or area what tests you have done and what training you've had.

139 A number of offenders in custody understood the link between better planning and more information and a quicker adjustment to life outside prison, and that it enhanced their chances of not re-offending. However, they wanted more advice sessions and fewer group sessions such as attending anger management courses or "thinking" classes.

140 An offender said:

(without help), it's a bungee rope system; we bounce back in because we leave with the same prospects as we came in with.

provision, dependent on facilities at individual prisons or the robustness of arrangements organised by NPS locally. Continuity of provision and promotion of services are also two major issues.

Suggestions for a more user-friendly information, advice and guidance system

141 Suggestions included:

- more use of technology where it is possible
- resource rooms in prisons with up-to-date information
- visits from recruitment agencies at the same time as IAG advisers
- seeing an adviser (the same one) regularly.

Overview

142 This section of the report has highlighted some of the most significant findings from the survey. It indicates a very mixed picture of provision dependent on such things as funding, staff knowledge and skill, and local arrangements between agencies, and with different levels of importance attached to such things as formal outcome recording. The call for a greater transparency in IAG entitlement, and a greater and better focused exchange of information and cross-agency working was strongly expressed. Confidentiality issues were raised and the effects of quality standards recognised. The views of offenders indicate that IAG is seen by them as a "postcode"

Section 4: Effective Current Practice

Introduction

143 One of the aims of this research has been the identification of effective good practice in IAG delivery to offenders. A bound set of the nine case studies detailing evidence of the effective practice is provided separately. Table 1 in Annex A provides a summary of these case studies.

144 This section will pull together the overarching themes from the case study experience, and in particular will examine:

- how case studies were identified and chosen
- the messages emerging from their experience in relation to delivery, staff development and inter-agency collaboration
- the extent to which this good practice could be transferable to other contexts.

145 From this, identified key principles are, those which underpin good practice as demonstrated by the case studies. These principles reflect different aspects of delivery and how service might respond to individual needs as appropriate, while ensuring that providers meet quality standards.

Identifying Case Studies

146 In identifying and selecting case study good practice, the principal criterion was not to secure examples from every region but, as far as possible, to obtain a cross-section of different types of effective delivery in different contexts. Practice was considered which might be transferable to other contexts, and which demonstrated principles of sound inter-agency working. Case studies were suggested by:

- individual members of the steering group

- current IAG partnership contacts
- representatives of the Adult Learning Inspectorate
- the Chief Inspector of the Prison Service
- local Probation Office managers.

147 Each nomination was contacted for a preliminary discussion, with some rejected because, though clearly effective, they were not sufficiently developed. Table 1 in Annex A details the final selection. It summarises location, context and reasons for selection, and highlights the main effective practice points. It also indicates some of the key challenges identified by practitioners, which they saw as part of their continuous quality and improvement cycle.

Key Messages

148 An upsurge of activity is taking place within many of the agencies and organisations connected to this project: the development of NOMS; the changing contractual arrangements for IAG partnerships; the effects of sentence reform; seamless sentences; the new responsibilities of the OLSU and the need for further capacity building to meet these challenges.

149 Good practice is not about:

- an optimum management structure
- a preferred direction
- mode of interaction.

150 It does, however, demand that decisions about issues are taken, are justifiable and are clear and acceptable to those taking part. The best examples we saw were when partners were all involved in managing to some extent as well as carrying out the work.

151 Although some case studies were complex, many had common threads. One key message was that each project, collaboration or joint activity must find its own level. Many of the strongest partnership case studies dealt with several issues, for example, delivery of IAG and a range of employment programmes in Lincolnshire, and the multi-agency programmes available in Staffordshire. This called for a flexible approach and the building of working relationships over time. There is little evidence from any of the case studies that partnerships had been imposed.

152 There are many "push-pull" factors in the development of partnership arrangements. One significant opportunity is the need to cooperate when bidding for funding. Many of the collaborations illustrated by the case studies began as necessities, became mutually supportive and are now diversifying into other means of cooperation including bidding for finance in areas of delivery new to them both. This was evidenced by both the NPS team examples and the arrangements of Prison Service Plus and Bedford Prison.

153 It is also interesting that in many of the case study examples, the starting point for key staff was their determination to overcome problematic areas and their willingness to tackle new ways of doing things. Two case studies, for example, have managed to overcome the exchange of confidential information and establish precise protocols.

Transferability

154 The case studies offered examples of specific practice with scope for wider development.

155 **Co-location of multi-agency teams** was identified in two case studies (NPS Sussex and Prison Service Plus). In both examples, it was felt that this integration facilitated better communication, ensured that decisions were made quickly and decisively, that all team members felt valued and consequently took a more active role in service delivery.

156 The more successful programmes and initiatives illustrated by the case studies invariably took **a systematic approach to service delivery**, most notably in Staffordshire and Lincolnshire, but demonstrated in other areas, too. Both offenders and staff knew what was expected of them as individuals, the aims of the intervention or how achievement in one area could provide a progression to other opportunities.

157 **Building on existing foundations to advance further collaboration.** NPS Thames Valley, which is on the Management Board of the local IAG partnership, has used this to raise the profile of its activities with offenders and simultaneously develop the IAG and ETE service through co-training with network partners.

158 **The use of technology** has enabled a prison in South Yorkshire to develop its own externally delivered IAG services, and make video-conferencing links to two other prisons in the area. In most cases, it was notable that despite the need for risk assessments and supervision of offenders, practitioners were constantly looking for ways they could use technology to speed up delivery or offer new approaches to delivery.

159 A prison in South Devon **uses offenders in custody to help promote the services of IAG internally**, and has extended the library to include an IAG suite as a resource area. It is committed to the needs-based approach. The impact of these measures was support for offenders in custody when serving sentence and often progression to further learning at the end of sentence. The centre has provided a central point of contact for offenders in custody which is both informative and reassuring.

Underpinning Good Practice

160 The case studies indicate a number of actions which underpin good practice and which enable effective working practice to develop regardless of individual aims and objectives. We suggest that from these experiences have emerged **10 key principles**,

which underlie all aspects of IAG practice and are coherent with quality standards frameworks.

- There is local management of appropriate agencies committed to both the concept and the delivery of IAG services, actively supporting operational delivery and fully involved in disseminating achievements.
- Roles and responsibilities of staff across different agencies are well understood by the practitioners themselves, including the contexts under which each is operating.
- Offenders are treated and respected as individuals and supported in exploring options and making choices.
- Offenders are acknowledged as having the capability to be rehabilitated into the community and progress as individuals making use of available services and regardless of race, age, sex, or disability.
- There are effective links with employment opportunities and progression routes into learning to which offenders are clearly signposted. Offender progress is subsequently tracked to identify positive outcomes.
- Assessment of needs happens at an appropriate time, when offenders can obtain the maximum benefit from the subsequent appraisal.
- ICT is used appropriately and includes both familiar media and new technologies, and there are arrangements for sharing the results of use with other agencies (within data protection legislation)
- Systematic monitoring and robust evaluation of all activities enables impact to be judged more efficiently and results to be integrated into future planning and quality measures.

- Local agencies undertake joint activities such as training and development to enhance competence and develop existing cross-agency relationships.
- Benchmarking against standards is part of quality assurance and improvement, and resources are obtained to meet any shortfall.

Overview

161 This section has concentrated primarily on looking at the effective practice of the nine case studies. A profile of these, and the key messages which came from the practice they demonstrated, has been explored together with transferability. Ten key principles of good practice were suggested, against which practice could be measured and evidenced.

Section 5: Conclusions and Areas for Consideration

Introduction

162 A successful strategy to deliver IAG to offenders will require all organisations to work together to secure coherence and necessary improvements in service quality.

163 With regard to the development of this strategy, the creation of NOMS is highly significant in securing greater cohesion in service provision for offenders in general, and recent announcements by the DfES and LSC on IAG policy provide clear service entitlements for all adults, including offenders.

164 This final section summarises the current state of IAG provision for offenders, makes suggestions with regard to a service development model and provides recommendations to build stronger working relationships between key partners to facilitate a more integrated system.

Information, Advice and Guidance Services for Offenders: the Current Picture

165 The research indicates there is a wide variation in the level and range of IAG services to offenders.

166 Whilst we have identified some sound practice and effective working relationships within the case studies, secondary research, survey and fieldwork evidence indicate that provision overall is fragmented and appropriate standards (for example, the **matrix** Standard) are insufficiently used.

167 Furthermore, necessary development work is not supported by consistent or adequate funding streams. Too often, where innovation has occurred this has been dependent on local

initiative, with local delivery partners (for instance, IAG partnership, Prison Service, or NPS staff) successfully bidding for short-term funds (for example ESF). While such local enterprise and networking are to be encouraged, service delivery cannot depend long term on such insecure arrangements.

168 Within the Prison Service, IAG is currently often not viewed or understood by many as a coherent set of services. In some case study prisons, for example, commitment is strong and offenders clearly receive a good-quality and organised service. In the best of these (as indicated in Section 4) there is a clear commitment to a multi-agency and holistic approach. However, it was evident from the survey and other evidence that in some other establishments IAG services are hardly visible at all.

169 This situation is compounded in the estate overall because the turnover is high in some categories of prison, and offenders are subject to being moved to another prison at short notice.

170 The new Heads of Learning and Skills posts have already started to have an impact on provision. However, much further work is required to dovetail resettlement, education and learning and IAG within most prison regimes. This situation is not currently supported by a strong culture of "knowledge management" whereby the best of current practice in these areas can be freely shared and promoted.

171 In the NPS, similarly, there appears to be some confusion amongst staff about the nature of IAG and how it can make an effective contribution to resettlement. A

number of those consulted as part of the research indicated that IAG can get crowded out by other priorities and the need to achieve targets. In those areas where IAG delivery is undertaken by a contracted-out service, and/or they are not co-located with the local Probation Team, there is less opportunity to gain an understanding of what IAG is trying to achieve.

172 In some NPS areas (Thames Valley, for example), the in-house team delivery of IAG is fully integrated with local IAG services, has strong links with local businesses and has a useful ICT resource. The partnership arrangements here are strongly energised by senior management commitment, and these examples provide a strong steer as to possible ways forward for future development.

173 Within local IAG partnerships, there is frequently a lack of knowledge about the criminal justice system and how it operates. Work with offenders is often undertaken exclusively by one or two staff, and/or delivered by the voluntary sector.

174 Overall, a lack of experience of sustained inter-agency working (caused in large part by lack of consistent funding and guidance) linked with a lack of a shared appreciation or understanding of the potential of IAG in enabling effective progression, have ensured that sustainable development in this area remains largely a policy aspiration rather than an actuality.

Offender Needs and Expectations

175 On the basis of the fieldwork undertaken, many offenders appear to be confused about IAG and what it can offer.

176 However, when they see clear links to achievement (for example, to work and learning), they embrace it willingly. For many we interviewed, IAG has become the conduit to a learning and education structure that they had previously not known. Many offenders made a plea for greater clarity in what they could receive and from whom, and indicated

that they saw IAG as a significant extension to other existing support.

177 Greater coherence may be particularly critical for short-term offenders in custody since there is no official statutory requirement for post-release supervision, and they have the highest re-offending rates. Current sentencing policies have made fewer distinctions between different types of offender in terms of assessing education and learning needs. Better coherence, together with a clearer focus on offender entitlement, may help to overcome some of the problems related to this category of offender.

Proposed Information, Advice and Guidance Development Strategy

178 Building on progress made to date, it is proposed that the IAG strategy for offenders should have three major strands.

Minimum entitlement

179 The IAG Strategy for Offenders should contain a minimum entitlement to IAG services for all offenders.

180 The minimum entitlement should indicate at every stage of sentence from induction onwards – regardless of whether sentence is custodial or community-based – what services offenders should receive, and should be consistent with the DfES National Policy Framework and Action Plan.

181 Guidance should be developed for all agencies and organisations detailing the roles and functions of national organisations, and the regional and local partners concerned with IAG delivery to offenders. This guidance should include:

- definitions of IAG services to be delivered
- responsibilities (regional and area) and funding streams
- lines of accountability for different aspects of IAG services

- protocols to underpin local agreements
- arrangements with regard to quality assurance and monitoring.
- providing robust evidence of best practice and impact to demonstrate a business case for work with offenders.

Resource and capacity building

182 To take the strategy forward an audit should be undertaken on a regional or area basis of current provision. This should map provision against the user entitlement, identify the extent of current delivery in defined areas and what is needed to bridge any gaps or capacity shortfalls to meet the minimum entitlement. This should:

- show existing contractual and partnership arrangements on a regional and local basis
- detail the integration or progression from IAG to learning and resettlement, if known.

183 A sustained programme which builds capacity within agencies to deliver the IAG strategy should be planned ensuring that:

- sufficient depth and breadth of skill is available within each delivery agency
- premises and equipment are adequate to deliver the minimum service entitlement
- there is a provision for building staff awareness and engagement through better communications.

Developing an investment culture

184 A programme of development activities should be commissioned which aims to demonstrate the benefits of IAG by:

- planning a series of development projects to allow staff to develop new service delivery models to deliver outcomes envisioned by the IAG strategy cost-effectively
- showing how a stronger focus on sequential interventions in the delivery of IAG to offenders can be economically viable as well as beneficial to individuals

Recommendations

185 To assist the LSC and OLSU to work with other key agencies and partners to develop and implement a practical IAG strategy, we make the following seven key recommendations:

- adoption of a development strategy
- increased ICT or telephone access to IAG for offenders
- greater use of existing technologies
- review of work by providers in the light of the new contracting arrangements
- establishment of a tracking team to operate at regional and national levels
- review of staff training and development needs
- research into the value and impact of IAG on re-offending rates.

These recommendations are detailed in paragraphs 186 to 193.

186 **A development strategy** (as set out in Table 4) is adopted based on the 10 key principles for good practice set out in Section 4. This would have four key themes:

- reviewing current departmental policy or strategy in this area
- achieving greater coherence
- meaningful collaboration
- service quality.

187 As indicated in Table 4, this strategy has national, regional and local dimensions and decisions will need to be made as part of the IAG strategy about how each are managed.

188 As new IAG services develop as part of national service development plans, offenders will need increased **ICT or telephone access** and NOMS will have to consider how this can best be effected.

189 Furthermore, in considering how to deliver IAG most cost-effectively, a **greater use of existing technologies such as television** is recommended as one method of delivering some elements of IAG to offenders.

190 The new contracting arrangements for **IAG provision** at a local level offer **fresh opportunities** for organisations concerned to **review their work with offenders**, many of whom are within the core target group with qualifications below NVQ at Level 2. At the same time, the type and level of service requirement for those with higher-level qualifications need to be considered and determined.

191 A **tracking team** is established which could operate at a cross-regional and national level to ensure that offenders' IAG needs are being met and progression routes identified.

192 **Staff training and development** needs to be carefully considered and reviewed and a skills audit undertaken of existing capacity and measures to address both identified skill shortages (which affect recruitment) and skill gaps of existing staff.

193 The **value of IAG** in addressing offenders' learning needs and facilitating their progression should be adequately researched through the identification and dissemination of good practice, and **its impact on re-offending rates** identified to provide the business case for further investment.

Table 4: Suggestions for improvement in IAG strategy or delivery

Theme	National	Regional	Local
Review of policy or strategy	Protocol framework for exchange of information Audit of transition arrangements between young people and adult services	Development of protocols to fit with regional strategy Mapping of current ICT provision to consider transferable practice	Review of existing IAG arrangements for short-term offenders in custody on release or intermittent custody Ensure sentence planning policy in line with IAG
Achieving greater coherence	Regional practitioner forum to include Jobcentre Plus	Audit of existing delivery services to consider current gaps and overlaps	Consideration given to co-location of IAG delivery with NPS staff
Meaningful collaboration	Strategies to ensure better joint working arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and criminal justice system agencies	Development of multi-agency partnerships to deliver IAG and learning, education and basic skills	Heads of Learning and Skills, Resettlement Managers and ETE Probation Managers meet regularly with IAG providers and local LSCs to consider delivery issues
Service quality	Guidance on quality standards framework. Review of continuing professional development for those in criminal justice system	Regional forum for exchange of effective practice	Development of learning passports for offenders Robust monitoring and evaluation to determine impact and improve processes

Source: HOST Policy Research, 2004.

Overview

194 The research calls for a clear national direction, more systematic delivery, more staff development and inter-agency engagement, to deliver an IAG service for offenders which has defined entitlements, backed by robust monitoring and review.

195 The further development of consistent high-quality IAG provision for offenders has the potential to be a highly cost-effective way of maximising NOMS' investment in offender learning and skills development and in potentially reducing rates of re-offending.

Annex A: Summary of Case Studies

Table 1: Summary of the case studies

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
1	South Devon	<p>Channings Wood, a category C prison with 650 offenders in custody, therapeutic unit for drug abuse and sex offender treatment programme.</p> <p>Collaborates with other agencies and partners to offer comprehensive information, advice and guidance (IAG) and educational facilities</p>	<p>Extensive resource room shared with Education Department</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), IAG and Progress to Work hold regular surgeries</p> <p>Prison-centred rather than target-led</p> <p>Prison has matrix Standard accreditation</p> <p>Offenders have IAG support at defined stages of sentence</p> <p>Use of information and communications technology (ICT) by offenders in custody encouraged under supervision</p> <p>Impact evaluation being developed</p>	<p>Transition arrangements which have not been fully finalised</p> <p>Developing stronger links with other prisons</p> <p>Producing video to promote IAG services internally which will take time and resources</p>	<p>Realistic planning setting achievable goals</p> <p>Developing offenders in custody as volunteers and orderlies within the IAG suite encourages self-confidence</p> <p>Networking very advanced, enables variety of specialist help through active collaboration with other agencies</p> <p>Creative approach to staff development including work-shadowing and secondments</p> <p>Learner experience reviewed systematically in line with quality standard recommendations</p>

Table 1: Summary of the case studies (Continued)

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
2	Bedfordshire	HM Prison Bedford, a category B local prison with a capacity of 464	<p>A broad range of IAG and learning provision including peer learning, personal support for self-esteem, skills development delivered by internal staff with specialist help from Jobcentre Plus and Nacro</p> <p>Resettlement has a high profile and development included working with an accelerated learning consultant who has been engaged to assist both staff and offenders in custody</p>	<p>Turnover of offenders in custody – between 6 and 20 in any single day</p> <p>Resettlement challenges concerned with finding offenders in custody accommodation</p> <p>Managing prisoner expectations</p>	<p>Development of learning styles to further all skills development including basic skills</p> <p>Effective use of recording information linked to use of Offender Assessment System (OASys)</p> <p>Mentoring and peer learning systems which have been linked to basic skills needs</p>
3	Prison Service Plus (managed from Cheshire)	A major ESF-funded project which operates across 28 establishments in the prison estate	<p>A multi-agency approach managed from Warrington and involving secondees from all major agencies, including Nacro and Connexions</p> <p>Key elements of the Prison Service Plus programme include basic skills screening, assessment, motivational interviewing, job search skills, careers advice, and housing advice pre-release</p> <p>Currently senior National Probation Service (NPS) officer attached to the management team. From 2004, includes stronger links with NPS</p>	<p>Next stage of programme which will enlarge team and activities</p> <p>Securing funding for longer-term stability of the programme</p> <p>Offering programme to more offenders</p>	<p>Co-location of team at same site</p> <p>Work of team in the prison is fully integrated with existing programmes seeking to enhance and not compete</p> <p>Expectations of both staff and offenders are clear at delivery outset ensuring fewer disappointments at later stages</p> <p>Programme constantly looking for ways to improve, offer greater flexibility and link to other partners or programmes</p>

Table 1: Summary of the case studies (Continued)

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
4	Lincolnshire	A charitable organisation, Lincolnshire Action Trust (LAT) working with NPS, HM Prisons and Lincolnshire Youth Offending Team (Yot) to provide specific IAG and related support to those serving both community and custodial sentences. Prisons include both category D and category B prisons	<p>IAG services to offenders delivered by non-prison and non-probation staff, but working in close harmony with their staff</p> <p>IAG leads on to a range of employment-based programmes organised by the same teams, including the Employment Skills programme, Kickstart and Skilled Up (the latter for the YOT clients) as well as induction and pre-release work</p> <p>LAT awarded national quality mark for its advice and guidance provision, which is flexible and client-needs-led</p> <p>Team developing a form of learning passport which can be taken by offenders in custody from establishment to establishment</p>	<p>More systematic evaluation to prove impact and need</p> <p>Dealing with cultural resistance within prisons to the delivery of IAG to offenders</p> <p>Securing better premises within prisons to deliver services and use for interviews and supervised ICT delivery</p>	<p>Clear service level agreements agreed by all agencies, including protocols for exchange of information</p> <p>Monitoring and formative evaluation procedures in place</p> <p>Using specialist IAG practitioners has facilitated a knowledge and skills transfer to other agencies</p> <p>Transition stages between YOT and adult services have a clear procedure</p> <p>Good links with local employers and professional bodies</p> <p>Goal setting central to longer-term achievements of offenders</p>

Table 1: Summary of the case studies (Continued)

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
5	South Yorkshire	HM Prison Moorland, a category D prison and Open Prison contracting out IAG services to an organisation which also has contract for Connexions and IAG partnership locally	<p>Substantial systematic programme of IAG services offered to offenders in custody largely funded from core budget and Connexions</p> <p>Two major programmes for offenders in custody delivered during sentence. Induction programme for 20 new offenders in custody per week, and 1 in 6 of discharged offenders in custody take part in pre-release programme</p> <p>Appropriately qualified IAG team. Gateway to Release programme recognised as example of good resettlement practice by Home Office</p> <p>Part of the Jobpoint pilot scheme operates in this prison, which links with all IAG work</p> <p>matrix Standard achieved by delivering organisation</p>	<p>Methods for measurement of impact of IAG and subsequent learning</p> <p>Developing a learning portfolio for clients to take when transferred to another prison</p> <p>Increasing numbers of participants in programmes currently available only to some</p>	<p>IAG deliverer works with prison staff, also SOVA, to deliver holistic service to offenders</p> <p>Video conferencing facilities links with two other local prisons</p> <p>Regular meetings and communication between all agencies and parties involved in delivery</p> <p>Working with South Yorkshire Offender Partnership to submit joint bids for additional funding</p> <p>Mainstream provision follows up inmate progress post-release to identify impact and job outcomes</p>

Table 1: Summary of the case studies (Continued)

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
6	Thames Valley	NPS delivery of IAG by in-house team who have formal contract with local IAG partnership	<p>IAG services delivered across area by qualified in-house team</p> <p>Recognised development opportunities offered to staff who are all qualified guidance workers</p> <p>Innovation with some use of ICT</p> <p>Offenders all have action plans with short and long-term goals</p> <p>Some IAG delivery by group work</p> <p>Continuity and transition arrangements defined</p> <p>Formal contract with IAG partnership</p>	<p>Continuity in time of staff changes and organisational re-organisation</p> <p>More regular contact with prison service</p> <p>Targets which are not geared to offender needs</p>	<p>Fully integrated with IAG partnership including on local management board</p> <p>Joint training with IAG partners</p> <p>Structured programmes</p> <p>Regular communication with case workers (informal)</p> <p>Formal team and joint agency meetings</p>

Table 1: Summary of the case studies (Continued)

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
7	Staffordshire	<p>HM Prison Stafford, a category C prison which houses 640 male offenders in custody</p> <p>IAG links to HM Prison Drake (women's prison)</p>	<p>IAG services delivered in collaboration with local agencies including Jobcentre Plus, IAG partners</p> <p>Resettlement and rehabilitation work established over many years</p> <p>Prison involved in Prison Service Plus programme</p> <p>Funding secured to undertake through Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) Quality Development Fund</p> <p>Contract with Business Enterprise Support to provide pilot group sessions programme</p> <p>Drop-in facility for offenders in custody after release</p> <p>Community Fund project (Clinks) in partnership with voluntary or community sector locally</p> <p>Enhanced Services Pilot delivered at Drake Prison by IAG partnership seeing 12–15 individuals a month</p>	<p>Securing funding to continue the successful programmes in the county</p> <p>Meeting demand for IAG and educationally linked services</p>	<p>Close collaboration between IAG advisers and HM Prisons resettlement teams</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus offers extensive range of advice pre-release</p> <p>Group work and motivational courses offered through securing funding through national pilots (joint bids)</p> <p>Regular and transparent communication between agencies</p> <p>Senior management support at all agencies</p> <p>Delivery does not rely on small core team but a number of contributors with skills and knowledge to meet needs of offenders</p>

Table 1: Summary of the case studies (Continued)

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
8	Sussex	Local area county-wide NPS Delivering IAG services through external contract	County-wide IAG service delivered by voluntary sector agency to all offenders serving community sentences and those on release from prison who need support Very systematic team approach to learning and education services and recognised for quality and flexibility Delivers a contract for Jobcentre Plus (pilot) for a target number of jobs for offenders, sustained employment and achievement of qualifications	Accommodation to provide more facilities and resource centres for offenders Protocol development with Jobcentre Plus Introduction of National Offender Management Service (NOMS)	Effective agency working across Jobcentre Plus, voluntary sector and NPS and joint location with NPS gives regular access to case worker staff Transparent, systematic approach with robust monitoring of services Senior management support strong Co-located team is thought of as critical for success Qualified advisory staff, offered development opportunities regularly

Table 1: Summary of the case studies (Continued)

Case study number	Location	Context	Summary of service delivery	Key challenges	Good practice points
9	Hertfordshire	HM Prison The Mount, category C plus establishment	<p>Range of external IAG specialists assist prison staff in delivery of a package of activities which are offered from induction to pre-release</p> <p>Prison Service Plus is active within this prison. Also Career Workshops pilot – a programme of five weeks' group guidance work designed to enhance computer literacy</p> <p>A European Social Fund project</p>	<p>Securing or maintaining funding to sustain current activities</p> <p>Improving liaison with NPS</p> <p>Enabling larger numbers of offenders in custody to take part in successfully piloted programmes</p>	<p>Prison Governor actively and openly supports all activities to facilitate better IAG and education delivery</p> <p>IAG takes place at defined points of sentence</p> <p>IAG activities underpin sentence planning</p> <p>Informal discussions with peers (supervised) prior to formal job search and assessment pre-release</p> <p>Offenders in custody actively encouraged to research information themselves</p>

Source: HOST survey, 2004

Annex B: Glossary

Abbreviation or term	Meaning
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
C2E	Custody to Employment
C2W	Custody to Work
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CARAT	counselling, assessment, referral, advice and through care
CfBT	Centre for British Teachers
DfES	Department for Employment and Skills
Director	The governor of a private prison
EKP	Employment KeySkills Programme
EP	Employment Pathfinder
ESF	European Social Fund
ETE	employment, training and education
EYS	Education and Youth Services
FE	further education
FTC	Foundation Training Company
G2R	Gateway to Release
GAB	Guidance Accreditation Board
HE	higher education
HOST	HOST Policy Research
IA contractors	information and advice contractors
IAG	information, advice and guidance
ICCP	Intensive Change and Control Programme
ICT	information and communications technology
KPI	key performance indicator
KPT	key performance target
LAT	Lincolnshire Action Trust
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
MAPPPs	Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels
matrix Standard	the matrix quality assurance standard
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPS	National Probation Service
NPSTV	National Probation Service Thames Valley
NQSLW	National Quality Standards for Learning and Work
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OASyS	Offender Assessment System
OCA Offender	Observation Classification and Allocation In the context of this report, anyone who has been found guilty by a court (other than for a minor motoring-related offence), even if they have completed their sentence
OLSU	Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit
PC	personal computer
PS Plus	Prison Service Plus
RTRL	Real Times, Real Life
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
Ufi	University for Industry
Yot	Youth Offending Team

Annex C: Bibliography

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Notes

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