

# **PERFORMANCE INSPECTION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

Report on East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Partnership  
Criminal Justice Social Work Services

2005

Social Work Inspection Agency

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## SUMMARY

### Background to the report

This inspection of criminal justice social work services in the East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Partnership is the fifth in a national programme of inspections.

Inspectors examined the quality of assessments prepared for courts and the Parole Board and assessed the standard of supervision of offenders on probation, community service and parole and non-parole licence. They evaluated 150 court reports, 20 home background reports and 95 case files and observed 44 separate examples of supervision. They interviewed managers, practitioners and offenders from across the different services and contacted Sheriffs and the beneficiaries of the community service scheme to gather their views about the quality of the service. For the file-reading exercise, inspectors assessed the quality of reports and supervision on a four point scale: 'very good', 'good', 'adequate' and 'poor'<sup>1</sup>.

There were some encouraging findings. The supervision of most offenders focused consistently on their offending behaviour and offending-related needs and involved a substantial amount of group work. The three authorities had established strong partnerships with other service providers, particularly addictions services. Sound procedures and skilled practitioners were facilitating work with sex offenders. Plans for improved monitoring and evaluation were on the point of implementation. Community service beneficiaries, Sheriffs and offenders themselves spoke highly of the service. The Partnership had pooled resources to deploy peripatetic staff across the three authorities to ensure court reports were delivered on time.

Some practice can be improved. The majority of reports submitted to the courts and Parole Board reached no more than a minimum standard, showing substantial room for improvement. Staff were not as clear as they should have been about risk assessment practice. Supervisors were not always maintaining required levels of contact with offenders. The Partnership was not yet sharing resources as widely as might have been expected. Arrangements for throughcare services needed rethinking.

### Key findings

- Six out of ten social enquiry reports were judged to be 'adequate'. Report writers assessed offending related needs relatively well but were less strong at analysing offending behaviour and the risk of re-offending;
- The Partnership had been using the LSI-R risk assessment framework for some time but staff were not all clear about its value and purpose. New risk procedures incorporating an assessment of risk of harm had recently been introduced. Practitioners were still uncertain about how and when to use these. Inspectors considered that the framework needed revision and that staff required some additional training;
- Around half of the home background reports sampled were 'good' or 'very good'. Just under a third were 'adequate' and a quarter 'poor'. Report writers were strongest at describing the family and community supports available to the offender on release and weakest at addressing the risks the offender posed to the community and at describing post-release packages of supervision. More than four out of ten reports had no provisional release plan;

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<sup>1</sup> 'Very good' indicates a very high standard which exceeds an acceptable level of competence; 'good' means that work is carried out to an entirely acceptable level of competence; 'adequate' indicates basic competence but with substantial room for improvement; and 'poor' means that work is below an acceptable standard.

- Most cases had a supervision plan. In almost nine out of ten cases this plan focused on offending behaviour and offending related needs;
- Authorities arranged the minimum number of required office appointments with offenders in most cases but did not carry out the required number of home visits in two thirds of the overall sample. Three of the eight sex offender cases and 14 of the 21 serious violent offender cases did not receive the required number of home visits;
- Practitioners worked in partnership with other agencies in three out of four cases;
- Supervision focused consistently on offending-related needs in four out of five cases and on offending behaviour in two out of three cases. The group work resource in Renfrewshire, available to offenders from East Renfrewshire, was not used by the latter authority to the extent that it might have been;
- Supervision focused consistently on offending behaviour in all sex offender cases. The Partnership is piloting an accredited group work programme;
- The content of supervision with serious violent offenders was not as good as the content of work with sex offenders. It was assessed as 'good' or 'very good' in under a quarter of cases;
- The Partnership had created a small throughcare team but had not yet developed a throughcare service with the capacity to tackle the complex risks and needs of offenders released from prison;
- Offenders on community service orders were carrying out well supervised work that was of benefit to the community. The variation in the resources available to each authority was striking. There was not yet any sharing of these resources across the Partnership. The Partnership is currently undertaking a Best Value review of this area of work.

### Key areas for improvement

- The Partnership should ensure that practitioners know what the LSI-R is for and that they are clear about how and when to use it. It should revise the recently introduced procedures for assessing risk of harm and provide staff with further training on the procedures;
- Home background reports should describe the nature and level of supervision that authorities will offer the offender on release and contain a provisional release plan;
- The Partnership must ensure that staff meet National Standards in their work with offenders. In particular, staff must check the living arrangements of high-risk offenders regularly;
- The Partnership should ensure it is making best use of its group work and community service resources;
- The Partnership should review whether current throughcare arrangements are the best for delivering an effective throughcare service;
- The Partnership was introducing a framework for monitoring and evaluating the service. It must ensure that this complements other initiatives to manage and improve the quality of the service.

# 1. CONTEXT AND ARRANGEMENTS

## Introduction

- 1.1 This report on services in East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, and Renfrewshire is the fifth in a series of inspections examining the practice of all groupings of local authorities and unitary authorities providing criminal justice social work services across Scotland. The programme focuses on key elements of service provision. These include reports for the courts, background reports for the Parole Board, social enquiry reports, and the community supervision of those on probation and statutory licence.
- 1.2 The inspection fieldwork took place during March 2005. We read 150 social enquiry reports, 20 home background reports and 95 case files and interviewed staff providing services and offenders receiving them. We visited community service sites, observed staff carrying out supervision, and sought the views of Sheriffs and community service beneficiaries.

## Partnership structure

- 1.3 Following the launch of “Community Sentences – The Tough Option” and the agreement between CoSLA and the Scottish Executive on the formation of groupings, the councils of East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, and Renfrewshire formed a partnership for delivering criminal justice social work services. There is a Minute of Agreement that defines these arrangements. A senior management group (the three operational heads of service, criminal justice service managers/principal officer, and the Partnership’s joint co-ordinator) manages the Partnership. The group is accountable to a joint advisory group consisting of elected members, directors and heads of service. The two service managers from East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde and Renfrewshire’s principal officer constitute an operational management group that also includes the Partnership’s joint co-ordinator.
- 1.4 Renfrewshire Council is the host authority for the Partnership’s budget. A finance sub-group consisting of finance officers and service managers reports to the senior management group.

## Area Profiles

- 1.5 Inverclyde has a population of 83,000. The authority has experienced a sharp decline in shipbuilding and heavy engineering industries and the unemployment rate of 5.5% is significantly higher than the national average (3.8%). The authority has Scotland’s fourth highest rate of drug misuse (2.57% compared to the national average of 1.84%).
- 1.6 East Renfrewshire has a population of 89,311. The unemployment rate of 2.2% is well below the national average. The authority has a number of affluent areas though there are pockets of deprivation. The overall rate of drug misuse (1.40%) is lower than the national average though there are pockets where the rate is higher.
- 1.7 Renfrewshire is the largest authority with a population of 172,867. The unemployment rate of 4% is just above the national average. The rate of drug misuse (2.41%) though slightly lower than that of Inverclyde is above the national average.

*(Sources: Short Reviews of Social Work Services in Scottish Local Authorities Scottish Executive 2003 and Estimating the National and Local Prevalence of Problem Drug Misuse in Scotland, NHS, 2005.)*

## Crime Statistics

- 1.8 Crime rates vary from 454 per 10,000 population in East Renfrewshire to 849 in Renfrewshire and 911 in Inverclyde compared with a rate of 805 for Scotland as a whole. (Source: *Recorded Crime in Scotland, Statistical Bulletin, Criminal Justice Series, Scottish Executive 2004*).

## Sentencing statistics

- 1.9 The Partnership provides a service to the two Sheriff Courts of Paisley (Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire) and Greenock (Inverclyde). Both courts make probation and community service orders at around the average national rates of 10% and 6% respectively. Greenock Sheriff Court imposes custody at a rate significantly above the national average (26% compared with the Scottish average of 16%). Paisley Sheriff Court has a rate of 19%. (Source: *Costs, Sentencing Profiles and the Scottish Criminal Justice System 2002, Scottish Executive*).

## Service delivery

- 1.10 Criminal justice services in East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde operate from central locations and are managed by dedicated criminal justice service managers. In East Renfrewshire this manager is accountable to the head of operations who reports to the director of social work. The service manager in Inverclyde reports to the head of social work services. The authority has had no director of social work since October 2004 (see Chapter 6).
- 1.11 In Renfrewshire, staff responsible for preparing reports for Court and for supervising probation orders and statutory licences are based in the three area teams of Paisley, Renfrew and Johnstone. They are managed by dedicated criminal justice senior social workers who are accountable to the area manager in each team (also responsible for community care and children and families services). The area team manager in Paisley also manages the authority's criminal justice group work resource, the 'Community Alternatives Unit' (CAU). A principal officer (criminal justice) manages community service, court services and some Partnership resources and is responsible for local strategic developments. The principal officer and the area managers are accountable to the head of operations who reports to the director of social work. The area managers and the principal officer liaise regularly.
- 1.12 The Partnership shares a number of resources:
- a joint co-ordinator (managed by Renfrewshire)
  - throughcare services (managed by Inverclyde)
  - 'Pathways' (managed by Renfrewshire)
  - arrest referral (managed by East Renfrewshire)
  - DTTO (managed by East Renfrewshire)
  - forensic mental health (managed by East Renfrewshire)
  - peripatetic workers (managed by East Renfrewshire)
  - East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire bail and diversion services (managed by Renfrewshire)

- 1.13 A fire disrupted services in Inverclyde from September 2002 to January 2004. This destroyed the criminal justice office including manual records and materials. During this period members of staff were based in three separate locations.

### Methodology

- 1.14 We examined social enquiry reports and case records, observed work with offenders, interviewed staff and offenders and consulted key stake-holders to assess the quality of practice in the authorities. The detailed methodology is set out in appendix 1.

### Assessing the quality of reports and practice

- 1.15 The inspection team used a four point scale to assess the quality of reports and practice as evidenced in case records. The scale distinguishes between practice that is 'very good', 'good', 'adequate' and 'poor'. 'Very good' indicates a very high standard that exceeds an acceptable level of competence. The high standard set, which recognises excellent work in complex cases, means that this point in the scale is awarded comparatively rarely. 'Good' means that work attains an entirely acceptable level of competence. 'Adequate' confirms a general basic competence or minimum standard, but suggests substantial room for improvement. 'Poor' means that the standard of work is unacceptable.

### The Inspection Team

- 1.16 The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) team comprised Irene Scullion (Lead Inspector), John Waterhouse, Gerry Hart and Tim Warren (Inspectors) with the assistance of Paul Silk former principal officer (criminal justice), City of Glasgow. Local staff made an important contribution to the inspection by assisting inspectors with the examination of case records.

## 2. SOCIAL ENQUIRY AND HOME BACKGROUND REPORTS

- 2.1 Preparing social enquiry reports (SERs) is a key function of criminal justice social work services. These reports provide information and advice to the courts to assist sentencing. They are subject to National Objectives and Standards, last revised in 1999.
- 2.2 Social enquiry reports are important, not only for the information and advice they offer courts, but also because they constitute an initial assessment that can help underpin work with the offender in the community, on probation, community service, and release on licence. If the offender is sentenced to imprisonment, they will also contribute to sentence planning.
- 2.3 Table 1 below shows the demand for social enquiry reports across the Partnership since the year 2000.

**Table 1: Demand for Social Enquiry Reports**

	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
<b>Nationally</b>	31,398	34,780	38,123	39,492
<b>Inverclyde</b>	929	755	932	961
<b>East Renfrewshire</b>	248	235	244	255
<b>Renfrewshire</b>	1,017	1,229	1,549	1,376

Source: *Scottish Executive Criminal Justice Statistical Bulletin 2004*

- 2.4 Nationally, demand has increased significantly over this four year period. This trend is not reflected in Inverclyde and East Renfrewshire. In Renfrewshire demand rose significantly in the first three years but dropped slightly in the fourth year.
- 2.5 Statistics for the number of SERs submitted per 10,000 population for the period 2002-2003 show that Inverclyde submitted 164.8 per 10,000 and Renfrewshire 113 compared with a national average of 110.3. East Renfrewshire's rate of 41.6 is the lowest in Scotland.

### Performance Indicators

- 2.6 During the period 2003-4 Inverclyde council submitted 100% of social enquiry reports to Court on time, East Renfrewshire submitted 99.2% and Renfrewshire submitted 94.7%. (Source: *Audit Scotland, Housing & Social Work Performance indicators 2003-2004*).

### Report writing arrangements

- 2.7 Most practitioners are involved in writing reports. Last year, the Partnership took the initiative of recruiting two additional staff members as peripatetic workers. They are employed by, and based in, East Renfrewshire and supervised by the senior social worker there but work across the Partnership. They provide back up and respond to unexpected surges in demand for reports. Currently the bulk of their work is in Paisley and to a lesser extent Greenock.

2.8 The senior social worker in East Renfrewshire assures the quality of their reports. The peripatetic workers discuss any action plans included in their reports with the senior social worker in the relevant authority. They said that initially they had had to adjust to differing practices across the Partnership although practice was now becoming more standard. They said they continued to face some administrative problems including accessing electronic data across three authorities and a lack of dedicated clerical support. Deploying staff in this way raises some complex issues of accountability and administration which we are encouraged that the Partnership is now addressing.

### Report writing analysis

2.9 We assessed 150 reports using criteria drawn from National Standards and effective practice principles. These comprised 81 reports submitted to the courts during a specific week in November 2004 and a further 69 reports read as part of the probation and community service file reading. Tables 2 and 3 below set out the results of the analysis of the sample of reports for the Partnership as a whole.

**Table 2: Social Enquiry Reports – Performance**

(Sample size: 150)	Yes	No	N/A
Has the author verified key information?	100	50	
Is there an outline supervision plan in the report?	91	25	34

**Table 3: Social Enquiry Reports – Performance**

	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very good
How well is offending behaviour analysed?	19	93	32	6
How well are offending related needs analysed?	6	79	60	5
How well is risk of re-offending analysed?	26	73	47	4
How well evidenced are the report’s conclusions about the feasibility of different sentences?	8	80	56	6
Overall how satisfactory is the report?	9	89	47	5

2.10 The findings show that report writers had:

- checked key information in two-thirds of reports;
- included an outline plan for supervision in nearly eight out of ten reports where this was to be expected;
- assessed offending related needs relatively well. In this field just over four out of ten reports were assessed as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ with a very small number of ‘poor’ assessments;

Reports were less strong in analysing offending behaviour and the risk of re-offending. In both these fields the proportion of ‘poor’ scores was significant and there was a predominance of ‘adequate’ practice.

The overall ratings reflect these variations. Whilst very few reports were judged to be ‘poor’, there was room for improvement in the substantial number of reports (around six out of ten) judged to be ‘adequate’.

### Differences between authorities

2.11 There were some differences in the performance of individual authorities. Renfrewshire had the highest proportion of 'good' and 'very good' reports and Inverclyde the highest proportion of 'adequate' and 'poor' reports. Weak performance in assessing offending behaviour and the risk of re-offending brought down Inverclyde's overall ratings.

### Women offenders

2.12 The sample included 20 reports on female offenders. The quality of these reports was not significantly different from that of the overall sample. Nine of the reports were 'good', ten 'adequate' and one 'poor'. Staff were stronger at analysing offending-related needs and weaker at analysing offending behaviour and risk of re-offending.

### Risk Assessment

2.13 Performance in assessing the risk of reconviction was disappointing because the staff across the Partnership had been using the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) risk assessment framework for some time (Renfrewshire had been using the framework since 1998). The inspection questionnaire asked file readers to record whether there was a structured risk assessment attached to the report or in the file. Readers found tools in 143 cases (LSI-R in 133 cases).

2.14 It was evident that practitioners had different views about the value of the LSI-R and some were confused about its purpose. Some practitioners said they found it helpful, others less so to the point of describing it as a 'paper exercise'. Some were unaware that the Partnership's policy was that report writers should deem those with LSI-R scores lower than ten to be low risk and not normally suitable for probation. A few said that they tended to override a low LSI-R score in their proposals to courts where they thought there was an offending-related need which the offender was not prepared to address voluntarily.

2.15 The Partnership introduced new risk assessment procedures on 1 February 2005 to address the assessment of risk of harm. They involve the use of parts three and four of the Scottish Executive's risk assessment guidance framework<sup>2</sup>) as well as the LSI-R. All offenders who are the subjects of an SER have an LSI-R prepared on them. However members of staff complete a risk of harm screening tool only when the offender has current or previous convictions for violent or sexual offences. After an offender becomes subject to supervision the supervising officer must complete an RA3 irrespective of whether the offender has previous violent or sexual convictions<sup>3</sup>. We thought that the Partnership had not fully thought through these procedures which do not tally with Scottish Executive guidance on risk of harm screening<sup>4</sup>. There is no apparent logic in the differential application of RA3 and RA4 pre- and post-sentence. In addition, the nature of the current and any previous offences (although important) is not the only factor that may indicate that an offender presents the potential to harm others. It follows that staff should screen for risk of harm in all instances.

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<sup>2</sup> This requires workers to use a quick check form 'RA3'. If this identifies an offender as presenting a high risk of harm or if the offender has been convicted of certain serious sexual or violent offences, the worker should then complete a comprehensive assessment of potential level of harm, the 'RA4'. After making a full assessment, workers should complete a summary sheet that uses a matrix to highlight the level of risk.

<sup>3</sup> unless already completed at the SER stage.

<sup>4</sup> Management and Assessment of Risk in Social Work Services, page 11, paragraph 11.3, SWSI 2000.

- 2.16 The Partnership had arranged training before implementing these procedures. Many practitioners said that this had not prepared them fully enough and that they were still uncertain about how and when to use RA3 and RA4. Some were unaware that RA3 screened offenders for risk of harm and were not clear why they had to complete this in addition to LSI-R. Some thought that the Partnership was phasing out Dunscore (risk of custody score) to introduce the risk of harm tools and were not clear that the tools served different purposes. Use of RA3 in East Renfrewshire was not mandatory but where practitioners did not use it, they were required to record a reason for this. Practitioners in Inverclyde were unsure whether they should be using the tools or whether they were 'out for consultation'.
- 2.17 Managers believed members of staff had been sufficiently well prepared to implement the procedures. They said that when staff had gained more experience of using the tools they would organise follow-up training.

### Analysis of offending

- 2.18 The file reading results indicate that report writers were also weak at analysing offending behaviour. Staff said that SCRO printouts did not always arrive in sufficient time to be useful in preparing a report. However this does not adequately explain why they failed sufficiently to probe the offender's account of and attitude towards his offending.
- 2.19 Report writers did not verify key information in one-third of reports. This included information that staff could have obtained from other agencies and from family members. National Standards emphasise that interviewing the offender's family and visiting the offender's home can add an extra dimension to assessment and help build up an overall picture. The Standards require report writers to make home visits as a general rule. Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire required their practitioners to do so. This was not the case in Inverclyde.

### Quality Assurance

- 2.20 Authorities are assessing the quality of reports in a number of ways. The Partnership intends to introduce a common monitoring and evaluation framework for the full range of services, including SERs, shortly. Managers said this framework would establish an annual cycle for monitoring different components of the service using standard tools adapted from those used by SWIA.
- 2.21 Senior social workers in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire said they read a sample of reports 'periodically'. In Inverclyde, senior social workers said they were not currently monitoring reports but were about to do so using the Partnership's new monitoring and evaluation procedures. The three area managers in Renfrewshire and the service manager in East Renfrewshire said they also sampled reports. The Paisley Sheriff Court team proof read reports and fed back any perceived quality problems to individual staff. Greenock Sheriff Court does not have a dedicated court team (court cover is provided by two staff from the criminal justice team who carry this responsibility along with other criminal justice duties).

### Sheriffs' views

- 2.22 We spoke to the three Sheriffs from Greenock Sheriff court and to one Sheriff at Paisley whom his colleagues had briefed to represent their views. All the Sheriffs trusted the reports they received and relied on them substantially. They considered proposals in reports to be realistic and often acted on them. Risk assessments were useful, particularly in those cases where risk of re-offending was assessed as medium or low even where the offence was quite serious. This allowed them to consider the possibility of a non-custodial sentence where they might not otherwise have done so.
- 2.23 Minor criticisms from Sheriffs at Greenock Court were the occasional inclusion of too much information on family background and a sometimes insufficiently objective account of the offender's attitude to the offence.
- 2.24 Sheriffs in Paisley raised some concerns about the period requested for completing and submitting reports. They had extended this to four weeks two years ago and, over the Christmas period, had granted a further extension to six weeks. They said this was still in operation at the time of the inspection. They also thought it might be helpful if court social workers could give offenders an SER appointment before they left the Court. They wondered whether more detailed action plans might help part-time Sheriffs. The Sheriffs had not yet raised these issues with the local authorities. They did not think they needed regular liaison meetings with social work managers (similar to those held in Inverclyde) because they were able to raise individual issues with the court social work team and received helpful presentations from social work staff about any new initiatives.

### Conclusions and areas for improvement

- 2.25 File readers judged comparatively few reports to be 'poor' but found more than half to be 'adequate' (a minimum standard with substantial room for improvement) suggesting considerable scope for improved performance. The weakest aspects of practice were the assessment of offending behaviour and the risk of re-offending, fields that previous inspections of other authorities have also identified as needing to be improved. These findings were somewhat surprising because all three authorities in this Partnership had been using the LSI-R for some time and should have been able to deliver better assessments.
- 2.26 The Partnership will need to address a number of issues to improve performance. These include:
- ensuring that all practitioners know what the LSI-R is for and are clear about how to use it;
  - revising the recently introduced procedures for assessing risk of harm to make sure staff complete an RA3 whenever they prepare an SER;
  - providing further training for staff now in order to clarify the purpose of each of the different assessment tools and offer specific guidance on how and when to complete RA3 and 4;
  - ensuring that it is normal practice across the grouping to undertake interviews with offenders in their homes when preparing an SER unless there are good reasons for not doing so;

- reducing the length of time taken to prepare reports for Paisley Sheriff Court if the six week period requested is still in operation;
- tackling any remaining issues identified in this inspection relating to the support requirements of peripatetic staff;
- ensuring the consistent implementation of new procedures for monitoring and evaluation and risk assessment.

### Home Background Reports

2.27 Home background reports (HBRs) provide the Parole Board with information about the home circumstances to which a prisoner would return on release from custody and describe the level of supervision and support on release to assist resettlement. Table 4 shows the national and local demand for these reports.

**Table 4: Demand for Home Background reports**

	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
<b>Nationally</b>	1,248	1,237	1,235
<b>Inverclyde</b>	40	38	39
<b>East Renfrewshire</b>	12	4	5
<b>Renfrewshire</b>	90	75	86

Source: Scottish Executive Criminal Justice Statistical Bulletin 2004

2.28 We read 20 home background reports written by the three authorities. Table 5 details our findings.

**Table 5: Home Background Reports – Performance**

Question (Sample size: 20)	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very good
How well does the report describe the likely family & community supports available after release?	0	10	9	1
How well does the report describe the post-release package of supervision, including access to any specialist resources?	9	4	6	1
How well does the report address any risks to the community arising if/when this offender is released?	6	8	6	0
Overall, how satisfactory is the report?	5	6	8	1

  

	Yes	No
Does the report contain a provisional release plan?	12	8

2.29 The analysis shows that:

- readers considered that just under half the reports were of a 'good' or 'very good' standard; under a third were 'adequate' and a quarter 'poor';
- the strongest aspects of reports were their descriptions of the likely family and community support;
- reports were weakest in describing the post-release package of supervision and in addressing the risks to the community. More than four in ten dealt with these aspects 'poorly'. A similar number had no provisional release plan.

2.30 The Partnership established a Throughcare team last year and intended that this team would complete all HBRs. This new team has had staffing problems (described in Chapter 3) and, until recently, practitioners in the existing teams in the authorities continued to write a substantial proportion of these reports.

### Conclusions and areas for improvement

2.31 It is difficult to draw wholly reliable conclusions from such a small sample and the Partnership should consider taking a more in-depth look at this aspect of practice. Nevertheless, it is concerning that a quarter of reports were of a 'poor' standard. The new risk assessment procedures should lead to improved performance (subject to the recommendations already made). The standard may also improve when dedicated Throughcare workers are writing all HBRs (though in Chapter 3 we express concerns about how effectively this small team can operate). The Partnership must ensure that its home background reports:

- assess the possible risk to the community;
- clearly describe the nature and level of supervision that the authority would offer the offender in release;
- contain a provisional release plan; and
- are subject to quality assurance procedures that ensure that they meet the necessary standard.

### 3. SUPERVISION

- 3.1 The community supervision of offenders subject to probation or statutory licence is a core responsibility of criminal justice social work services. The aim of this supervision is to reduce (or stop altogether) the frequency and seriousness of further offending. Research indicates that, to achieve this, the offender should receive robust supervision coupled with interventions that can help change attitudes and behaviours that support offending. The service must also assist offenders to address any personal problems associated with their offending and lifestyle that may prevent them from re-integrating into the community. Social work staff supervising these orders and licences must pay close attention to public protection, working in partnership with other agencies, such as addictions services and the police, where required.
- 3.2 Table 6 below gives a breakdown of the numbers of new probation orders supervised by each authority since 2000. Table 7 sets out the numbers of existing and new statutory licences held by each authority in the given year. These include parole and non-parole licences, extended sentence licences and supervised release orders.

**Table 6: New Probation Orders**

	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
<b>Nationally</b>	5,928	7,071	7,417	7,742
<b>Inverclyde</b>	133	106	109	120
<b>East Renfrewshire</b>	48	47	40	46
<b>Renfrewshire</b>	206	187	277	231

Source: *Scottish Executive Criminal Justice Statistical Bulletin 2004*

- 3.3 2001-2004 saw a national rise of approximately 23% in the use of probation. Numbers increased by a more modest 10% in Renfrewshire although there was an unexpected surge in 2002-2003. They changed little in Inverclyde over this period and reduced slightly in East Renfrewshire.

**Table 7: Parole and Non-Parole Licences**

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
<b>Nationally</b>	1,332	1,115	2,348
<b>Inverclyde</b>	26	42	30
<b>East Renfrewshire</b>	9	7	2
<b>Renfrewshire</b>	100	48	48

Source: *Scottish Executive Criminal Justice Statistical Bulletin 2004*

- 3.4 Until 2003, local authorities used differing criteria for calculating the numbers of parole and non-parole licences. This may explain the apparent steep rise in the national figures and the significant decrease in the Renfrewshire figures. The Scottish Executive has since clarified with local authorities how to submit these statistical returns.

3.5 There are published statistics for the number of Probation Orders per 10,000 population relating to the period 2003-2004. These show that, at 7.5, East Renfrewshire Council had one of the lowest numbers of orders per head of population while Inverclyde and Renfrewshire recorded rates of 20.6 and 19.0 respectively, both close to the national average of 21.6.

### Profile of offenders on Probation

3.6 Statistics show that in 2002-03:

- 7% of those on probation in East Renfrewshire, 11% of those in Inverclyde and 5% of those in Renfrewshire were under 18;
- 20% of those in East Renfrewshire, 26% of those in Inverclyde and 20% of those in Renfrewshire were between 18 and 20;
- 30% of those in East Renfrewshire, 22% of those in Inverclyde and 26% of those in Renfrewshire were between 21 and 25;
- 15% of those on probation in East Renfrewshire, 18% of those in Inverclyde and 23% of those in Renfrewshire were female;
- 63% of those on probation in East Renfrewshire, 74% of those in Inverclyde and 78% of those in Renfrewshire were unemployed or not seeking employment.

(Source: Scottish Executive Criminal Justice Social Work Statistics 2003-04)

### Performance Indicators

3.7 The 2003-2004 Audit Scotland performance indicators show that 81.8% of offenders placed on probation in East Renfrewshire, 100% of those in Inverclyde, and 69.5% of those in Renfrewshire had an interview with their supervising social worker or representative within one week of the making of the order. Managers in Inverclyde acknowledged the figure of 100% was an error and said they had changed the way they recorded this information.

3.8 In 2003-2004 East Renfrewshire submitted an application for breach in respect of 14.1% of those on probation. The figures for Inverclyde and Renfrewshire were 18.9% and 21.3% respectively.

(Source: Audit Scotland, Housing and Social Work Performance Indicators 2003/2004)

### The Inspection

3.9 The inspection team reviewed 95 case files. The sample comprised the following:

**Table 8: Type of order or licence**

Type of Order	Overall	Men	Women
Community Service	18	16	2
Throughcare (Parole & Non Parole)	21	19	2
Probation (incl. additional conditions but not 229)	36	30	6
Section 229 Orders (Probation with CS)	20	14	6

- 3.10 Chapter 4 examines work with high-risk offenders in more detail. Chapter 5 presents data in respect of community service orders.
- 3.11 File readers (Inspectors and local staff) used a structured pro-forma to analyse the quality of assessment, case planning, and intervention to address offending and the extent of compliance with National Standards (the criteria are set out in full in appendix 1). They also looked for evidence that the authority evaluated its work as the order or licence progressed.
- 3.12 As well as examining a sample of case files, we observed interviews and group work sessions with offenders and spoke to offenders afterwards. We also sought the views of staff, managers, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the services.

### Case recording

- 3.13 File readers assessed the quality of case recordings. These results were very encouraging. Readers considered that almost two-thirds of files had either a 'good' or a 'very good' standard of case recording. The majority of the remaining files were 'adequate' with only eight case records considered 'poor'

### Planning

**Table 9: Planning Performance**

<b>(Sample size: 77)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Is there a written supervision plan for the first three months of the order or licence?	66	11
<b>(Sample size: 66)</b>		
Does the plan focus on addressing offending behaviour?	60	6
Does the plan focus on offending related needs?	58	8
Does the plan specify how supervision will be delivered?	52	14

- 3.14 The analysis shows that in almost nine in ten cases where there was a plan, it focused on offending and offending related needs. Almost eight out of ten plans spelt out how supervision would be delivered.
- 3.15 Our observations of interviews with offenders supported these findings. Most cases had an up-to-date plan for supervision though all plans were not of equal quality. Some set out specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited (S.M.A.R.T.) targets while others had aims and objectives that were very vague, for example statements like 'address violence' or 'maintain stability'. Inverclyde's performance was slightly weaker than the other authorities in this respect.
- 3.16 Risk and needs assessment is an important part of planning and reviewing supervision at every stage. Measuring risk and need periodically also enables the evaluation of change over time, an important indicator of service performance. The Partnership's new risk assessment procedures require supervisors to re-assess high-risk cases for each review. For other cases the procedures require supervisors to re-test (using the LSI-R) only every 12 months. This extended period limits the value of using the structured risk assessment tool to inform practice and does not address the need to revisit the initial risk of harm

assessment (See Chapter 2). It is also important that any changes in the intensity of supervision (for example moving an offender to ‘report in’ to a clinic) occurs only after a careful appraisal of risk and need.

3.17 In revising their procedures the Partnership may want to take account of emerging evidence about the importance of re-assessing offenders at the start of their orders. Offenders are often more honest with workers post sentence or on release from custody than they are at the SER or HBR stage. Workers need the most accurate assessments possible to be able to measure change as orders progress.

### Supervision

3.18 The findings from the file reading regarding the implementation of supervision plans are set out in tables 10a and 10b below. The ‘not applicable’ column includes those offenders who failed to present for supervision following the making of the order or licence together with a few data errors.

**Table 10a: Supervision Performance**

(Sample size: 77)	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
Overall, how well does the level of supervision reflect the assessed risk of re-offending and risk of harm?	8	20	44	5
Overall, how well does the content of supervision reflect the risk of re-offending and risk of harm?	7	20	47	3

**Table 10b: Supervision Performance**

(Sample size: 77)	Yes	No	N/A
Does supervision focus consistently on addressing offending behaviour?	47	23	7
Does supervision focus consistently on addressing offending related needs?	56	14	7
Does supervision address victim awareness?	27	43	7
Is the case manager working together with partners to deliver supervision?	53	13	11

3.19 The analysis shows that:

- supervision focused consistently on offending-related needs in four out of five cases;
- supervision focused consistently on offending behaviour in two out of three cases;
- practitioners worked in partnership with other agencies in three out of four cases;
- supervision did not address victim awareness in three out of five cases;
- overall, considerably more cases were rated ‘good’ or ‘very good’ in delivering supervision at the correct level and with the appropriate content than ‘adequate’ or ‘poor’. There were very few ‘poor’ overall ratings.

- 3.20 There were variations between authorities. Supervision that focused consistently on offending was most prevalent in Inverclyde and least prevalent in East Renfrewshire (over four out of five cases in Inverclyde, over three out of five in Renfrewshire and half of those in East Renfrewshire). Inverclyde performed more strongly than the others in its attention to victim issues.
- 3.21 Our observations of practice supported these findings. We describe these in more detail later in this chapter. We saw both individual and group work sessions where there was a clear structure for the session that fitted with the overall supervision plan. Some other sessions were less purposeful.

### Compliance

- 3.22 Table 11 sets out the extent to which file readers assessed that compliance was an issue during the period of supervision. These figures are not in themselves any indication of the quality of practice. There will always be a proportion of offenders who fail to comply with supervision.

**Table 11: Compliance – Incidence of non-compliance**

<b>(Sample size: 54, excluding CS)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Was compliance an issue at any stage of the order?	44	33

- 3.23 Table 12 presents an assessment of how the Partnership dealt with offenders who failed to comply with supervision. Performance was very creditable being much more weighted towards ‘good’ and ‘very good’ than towards ‘adequate’ and ‘poor’.

**Table 12: Performance in handling non-compliance**

<b>(Sample size: 77)</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
How well was the case managed in respect of contact compliance and enforcement?	5	18	51	3

- 3.24 Practitioners said that they considered it important to take an offender’s personal circumstances into account when they made decisions about enforcing compliance. Some East Renfrewshire practitioners were prepared to exercise a considerable amount of discretion to help offenders get through their orders. The file reading findings reflect this – the balance of practice in respect of handling non-compliance was towards ‘good’ performance in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde and towards more ‘adequate’ performance in East Renfrewshire.
- 3.25 File readers also looked at how well practitioners had adhered to National Objectives and Standards in respect of arranging contact with offenders. The analysis below distinguishes between those failures to meet the requirements of National Standards that were within the control of the service and those that were not.

Table 13: Compliance – Performance

<b>(Sample size: 54, excludes throughcare)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No – within service control</b>	<b>No – outside service control</b>
Did the service arrange an appointment within 5 working days of the making of the order?	44	10	2
<b>(Sample size: 21 throughcare cases)</b>			
Did the service arrange an interview within one working day of release from custody?	20	1	0
<b>(Sample size: 77, excludes CS)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No-within service control</b>	<b>No – outside service control</b>
Did the service arrange a review at 12 weeks?	41	33	3
Did the service arrange 2/3 home visits in the first 12 weeks?	25	46	6
Did the service arrange at least 4 appointments in the first 4 weeks?	52	22	3

3.26 The findings show that authorities:

- arranged to see almost eight in ten offenders within five working days of the making of a probation order;
- arranged at least four appointments in the first four weeks in just under seven out of ten cases;
- did not arrange reviews at 12 weeks in just under half of cases;
- did not carry out the required number of home visits in two-thirds of the sample. In most cases where they failed to do so the reasons lay within the control of the service.

3.27 Only East Renfrewshire met National Standards for home visits more often than they failed to do so. Renfrewshire was significantly better than the other authorities at arranging at least four appointments in the first four weeks.

### Women offenders

3.28 There were 14 women offenders (excluding those on community service) in our case file sample. 12 of the 14 cases had a plan. Each addressed offending behaviour and ten cases spelt out how the service would deliver the plan. Supervision focused on offending in 12 of the 14 cases. The main form of supervision was programmed group work (eight), with a further two receiving programmed individual work. File readers thought that the content of supervision was 'good' in eight cases and 'adequate' in six. In ten of the 14 cases the authorities arranged first appointments within National Standards. The required number of home visits only took place in four cases.

### How the Partnership Engaged Offenders

3.29 In each case file readers identified the main method of service delivery. Table 14 sets out the findings.

**Table 14: Primary method of service delivery**

<b>(Sample size: 77 )</b>	
What was the primary method used to engage with this offender?	<b>Number</b>
Non-programmed individual work*	36
Non-programmed groupwork	0
Programmed groupwork	28
Programmed individual work	6
Offender never presented	7

*\*Figures for non-programmed individual work include those cases where the social worker used worksheets such as those within 'Targets for Effective change'*

- 3.30 The findings show that both Inverclyde and Renfrewshire delivered programmed work to just over half of offenders. In East Renfrewshire the service consisted primarily of non-programmed work, though some offenders attended a group work programme operated by the local substance misuse team. We observed some one-to-one sessions where social workers structured the session by using worksheets from the offence-focused pack 'Targets for Change'.
- 3.31 While there will always be a number of unsuitable candidates for group work, it was not immediately apparent why so few offenders in East Renfrewshire attended groups, particularly as the authority shares access to the Renfrewshire-based group work resource, the 'Community Alternatives Unit' (CAU). East Renfrewshire provides a social worker one day each week to help deliver groups at the unit. Many (but not all) offenders in East Renfrewshire live within easy travelling distance of the CAU premises. A possible option would be for the CAU and team-based workers to run some offence-focused groups in East Renfrewshire and include offenders from Renfrewshire in these.
- 3.32 The CAU runs a one-day induction group and a six-week offending behaviour module based on the 'Constructs' group work programme. The policy in Renfrewshire is that practitioners should refer all offenders to these groups (normally within the first three months of their orders) unless there are good reasons for not doing so. The file reading showed that a significant number of offenders had not undertaken the programmes. Whilst these offenders may have been assessed as unsuitable, we noted that the number was quite high in the context of an 'opt-out' policy. The authority should therefore satisfy itself that all those who are suitable do in fact attend.
- 3.33 Most of the sub-group of women offenders in the sample attended a group work programme. The CAU offers a women-only programme known as Paisley Area Women's Services (PAWS). It comprises two phases, PAWS 1, a module focused on offending behaviour and derived from 'Constructs' and PAWS 2 which provides learning in life-skills and self-management.
- 3.34 In the past, the CAU offered modules dealing with anger control, car crime and alcohol and drug issues. The anger control and car crime groups have run infrequently as there has been a low rate of referrals, while the alcohol and drug issue group is now run by a partner agency. The CAU generally runs groups only during office hours. Managers in Renfrewshire said that staff terms and conditions did not include routine payment for out-of-hours work.

- 3.35 The Partnership has volunteered to assist the Scottish Executive by piloting the revised version of 'Constructs' currently undergoing accreditation by the Scottish Community Justice Accreditation Panel. This 26-week offending behaviour programme is due to begin in Renfrewshire in mid-April. Renfrewshire expects supervising social workers to see offenders once only in the course of a six-week module – probably insufficient time for them to meet their case management responsibilities. As case managers they need to support and reinforce the work carried out in groups both during the group and afterwards. In piloting this longer programme the authority should revisit what it expects of supervising social workers.
- 3.36 Inverclyde has a well-established partnership with NCH Scotland to deliver a core group work programme. Together they offer one-day group work sessions (based on 'Constructs') covering induction and victim awareness and two-day sessions that address offending behaviour. They also run six-week group work modules that address anger control and drug and addictions issues. Women offenders attend women-only groups. These groups operate both during office hours and in the evenings.
- 3.37 Senior social workers in Inverclyde acknowledged that the basic core modules could do little more than 'scratch the surface' of addressing offending behaviour. We were surprised Inverclyde had not planned to join its partners in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire in piloting the revised version of the 'Constructs' offence-focused programme.
- 3.38 Inverclyde operates a reporting-in clinic for offenders who have completed all planned offence-focused work and who need only minimum monitoring. Two workers have responsibility for running this two-hour clinic every two weeks. In principle, a reporting-in model can allow a service to supervise low risk offenders more efficiently and to concentrate their resources on higher risk offenders. However, the authority has not yet developed any systematic way of assessing which offenders are suitable and of directing them towards the resource. Practitioners made little use of the clinic and were more likely to do so for offenders on probation than for those on statutory licences. Applying to the court for an early discharge might have been a more rational step for many such probationers.
- 3.39 The Partnership has used additional throughcare allocations from the Scottish Executive to establish a small throughcare team that works across the Partnership. The team (consisting of a co-ordinator and two social workers) is responsible for completing home background reports and for engaging with serving prisoners who will be subject to statutory supervision on release. Following release, a throughcare worker and the supervising social worker from the home area of the offender co-work the case for up to three months.
- 3.40 The throughcare team has been in place since May 2004. For almost half this time it has operated with only one social worker and has not been able to meet all its responsibilities – a significant amount of work remaining with local teams. As a result, practitioners across the Partnership are still uncertain about the role of the team. Although the team is now fully staffed it will shortly lose a worker during a period of planned absence again reducing its limited capacity. Difficulties like this are inevitable with such a small staff group.
- 3.41 The Partnership should reconsider its throughcare strategy. One option would be to pool all throughcare resources (the existing throughcare allocations and the new resources for

'enhanced' throughcare) to increase the overall capacity of the service. Offenders released from prison on statutory licence present criminal justice services with a wide range of problems. Many pose a continuing risk to others and face particularly acute social problems.<sup>5</sup> Some will have completed offence-focused programmes during their periods in custody and their learning from this needs to be consolidated when they return to the community. The staff time presently given over to co-working ex-prisoners for a short period after release could be re-directed to developing a specific throughcare capacity within the grouping (in partnership with SPS and other agencies). This should build on programmes already completed in prison, and address in a systemic way, risks to the community and the employment, housing, mental health, relationship and social skills needs that research indicates are particularly prevalent in the ex-prisoner population.<sup>6</sup>

### Working with partners

3.42 The authorities work in partnership with a number of agencies. These include:

- The CACTUS drug project, operated by Turning Point. The project works with offenders in Renfrewshire subject to supervision. CACTUS also operates the arrest referral pilot across the grouping;
- Renfrew Council on Alcohol (RCA Trust). Renfrewshire funds a post in this service which provides alcohol counselling to offenders. East Renfrewshire Council also contributes financially to the Trust;
- Inverclyde Alcohol Service (IAS). This is a social work service offering alcohol counselling to 16-25 year-olds. It operates an 'Alcohol Education Awareness' group consisting of around ten sessions for offenders on deferred sentence or probation (as a condition of the order). The group is co-worked by a worker from IAS and a worker from the criminal justice team;
- East Renfrewshire Substance Misuse Team. The team provides a range of services for drug users including methadone prescribing, counselling, drugs education, and a day activity programme.

3.43 Practitioners and staff in the agencies spoke highly of how well these partnerships worked. They communicated with each other regularly and collaborated well. The agencies routinely attended probation reviews (although the Substance Misuse team in East Renfrewshire was unclear why it was invited to some reviews and not to others).

3.44 After reviewing the material delivered to offenders, we had some concerns about the duplication of resources in Inverclyde. The content of the alcohol group run by IAS and the groups run by NCH and the criminal justice team were very similar (and in some parts identical).

3.45 We found the absence of strong links with employment services and the lack of a systematic approach to increasing the employability prospects of offenders disappointing.

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<sup>5</sup> The Social Exclusion Unit's report: Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners, illustrates the complex and pervasive range of social and welfare needs concentrated in the ex-prisoner population.

<sup>6</sup> The Social Exclusion Unit summarises the importance of linking work between the prison and community phases in 'Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners' but it is also iterated in a Scottish context in the Report of the Tripartite Group; 'Throughcare – Developing the Service'. The Scottish Executive planning guidance that accompanied circular 12/2002 also reiterates the importance joint work and partnership play in delivering effective throughcare.

### Observations of practice

3.46 We observed a considerable amount of practice across the Partnership. This included 40 individual interviews and four group work sessions. Individual interviews included probation and throughcare sessions and reviews. Wherever possible we looked at the most up-to-date action plan in the offender's case file and discussed the case with the worker beforehand. During the observations we were looking to see whether practitioners had set appropriate aims for the interview or group work session and whether the interview/group dealt with behaviours, problems and needs associated with offending. Afterwards we asked offenders about whether they thought that what had taken place during the interview, and during supervision so far, would help them stop offending:

### Group work

We observed:

<p><i>the first session of an offending behaviour group in Renfrewshire/ East Renfrewshire</i></p>	<p>Facilitators began by explaining the purpose of the group and establishing ground rules before introducing offenders to the type of exercise they would be carrying out in future weeks. This involved offenders looking at a number of offences and identifying what kind of impact these might have on others. The workers kept the group focused on the task and made sure that even the most reluctant offenders made some contribution. Offenders commented afterwards that workers had explained the material clearly and that they had understood (though did not necessarily agree with) the point of the final exercise. However, in some cases the supervising social workers did not appear to have prepared and motivated offenders adequately before referring them to the group. Some offenders were confused about why they were there and were resentful about having to attend.</p>
<p><i>the Inverclyde victim awareness group</i></p>	<p>The session began by considering the various excuses people use for committing offences before moving on to look at the effect some of these offences could have on victims, followed by a video of victims discussing their experiences. Facilitators then asked offenders to describe one of their offences (in 'cartoon' form) from their victim's perspective. The session covered a good deal in a very short time. Nevertheless participants seemed to understand the issues raised. Afterwards offenders commented that, 'It helps you think about some of the things you've never thought about before'. All said that it had come as something of a shock to find that they were required to attend groups, though having now done so, they found them interesting and helpful.</p>

<p><i>a session from the PAWS programme in Renfrewshire/East Renfrewshire)</i></p>	<p>The session focused on victims' issues. Offenders first looked at the effects of offending on victims in general. Each offender then identified a time she had been the victim of an offence (avoiding incidents that were too personal and traumatic) and the effect this had had on her. They then considered whether others might have suffered in similar ways as a result of their actions. The session worked well. Most participants acknowledged that they had started the session believing that their offences had had little or no effect on their victims but had ended it with an appreciation of the impact of their actions, commenting that, 'it gets more in-depth with things'. Most of the women said that, in addition to the group, they would like more regular contact with their supervising social workers.</p>
<p><i>a video of a session from the sex offenders' programme (Partnership)</i></p>	<p>Discussed in Chapter 4.</p>

### Individual interviews

**We observed a number of well focused interviews that were part of supervision plans aimed at helping offenders address their offending behaviour and tackle problems in their lives. These included:**

A session where a worker used a structured approach to revisit the action plan and make sure that it was still relevant. Using a worksheet from 'Targets for Change' he asked the offender to rate issues in his life on a scale ('not a problem', 'a bit of a problem', etc.). This allowed the worker and offender to identify areas that had become less of a problem, discuss why this was so and to prioritise areas they would work on in the future. The offender commented that he had found this type of approach helpful and that it had helped him 'learn from his mistakes'.

A review of an order on a long term heroin user whose life was now a good deal more stable. During the earlier part of the order he had attended a number of groups. He had been motivated to change since becoming a father for the first time and thought that the groups had helped him capitalise on this desire to change.

A complex case where practitioners worked closely with partners to deliver a service to an offender with mental health difficulties. The service had recently held a review of the offender's licence attended by all the relevant agencies. The supervising social worker and throughcare worker were concerned that the offender had been too agitated to understand the discussion. In the session we observed, they carefully went through each of the action points from the review and made sure the offender understood which person or agency would be responsible for helping him with what needed to be done.

An interview between a supervising social worker and an offender who was attending group work. The supervising social worker discussed feedback from group work sessions. Facilitators had identified an issue that they felt the offender had not fully grasped in the group and the social worker spent time looking at this in the interview.

### Examples where practice could improve

**We thought that supervision in some sessions needed to be more focused and that there was room for improvement. Some examples were:**

The supervision of an offender on licence. There had been no pre-release meeting and the supervising social worker had not drawn up a plan for supervision following the offender's release. There was no evidence of any structured work in the six months since the offender's release including any attention to the offender's substance misuse problem which had played a part in his previous offending. The worker required the offender only to report in for appointments.

An interview in which the supervising social worker identified a number of problems in the offender's life that he needed to deal with. There was no attempt to establish how the offender might resolve these or to set timescales for doing so and it was not clear how many of these problems related to the offender's behaviour.

An interview with an offender on a Section 229 order. The offender had a conviction for a serious violent offence and the initial action plan had identified the need to address this behaviour and associated alcohol misuse, and to consider victims issues. Subsequent supervision had not followed through on this plan and had required the offender only to report in until he completed the community service part of the order. The order was more than half complete and the supervising social worker was just beginning to look at these issues.

### The views of Sheriffs

- 3.47 A Sheriff at Paisley Sheriff Court (briefed by his colleagues) was satisfied that supervision of offenders on probation would follow the action plan set out in court reports. He considered that the structure of probation had improved in recent times, especially since group work became a regular part of offender supervision. He was very positive about how useful the PAWS group was for women offenders. He had some concern that social workers could sometimes delay submitting breaches of probation, but thought they did so to give offenders an opportunity to get back on track.
- 3.48 Sheriffs in Greenock Sheriff Court were reasonably confident about the way social workers enforced probation orders. They too had some concerns about delays in reporting breaches of probation but said that this had improved more recently. They were satisfied with the quality of completion reports which they said were always realistic about the progress the offender made while on probation.

## Evaluation

3.49 The authorities assure the quality of supervision in different ways, though as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Partnership is introducing a common monitoring and evaluation framework. Currently some managers rely on staff supervision and reviews to check on the quality of casework while others also regularly sample case files. Most practitioners were not aware of any systematic sampling of files.

## Conclusions and areas for improvement

3.50 The inspection found some encouraging examples of good practice. We were impressed by the strong partnerships authorities had built up with other service providers to deal with offending-related problems in offenders' lives (although they had not yet extended these to employability services). We were also encouraged by efforts to deliver structured interventions to deal with offending behaviour. Some other aspects of the Partnership's performance were less strong and can be improved:

- National Standards set out minimum requirements for contact with an offender. These Standards should be met and practitioners should arrange the required number of contacts with an offender, carry out home visits and arrange reviews of supervision at the appropriate intervals;
- practitioner comments evidenced differing views and approaches to compliance and enforcement. It is important that there is rigorous and consistent enforcement of offender compliance with statutory supervision;
- Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire will soon pilot the revised version of the Constructs programme. The Partnership should consider extending the pilot to Inverclyde where it could help to improve existing service provision;
- the pilot has brought into sharper relief the need for the Partnership to give closer attention to case management. Supervising social workers play a vital part in building an offender's motivation to participate in programmed work. They should reinforce learning gained during the programme and help resolve any personal problems that might affect attendance and participation. Effective case management of this kind is a pre-requisite of effective practice at all stages;
- a key expectation of groupings is that they will bring about economies of scale. Making the CAU resource available to East Renfrewshire is such an opportunity. It has not been sufficiently well used and the Partnership should review the reasons for this;
- the Partnership has not yet developed a throughcare service with the capacity to contribute to and build on work in prison before release and to tackle the complex range of risks and needs typically concentrated in the ex-prisoner population. A service of this kind is critical to risk management and to the resettlement prospects of offenders released from prison. The Partnership should review whether its current arrangements are the best for delivering an effective throughcare service;
- risk assessment should be ongoing and continually inform practice. The Partnership should make sure that supervisors revisit their assessments of risk of re-conviction and risk of harm at each review;
- Inverclyde has invested in resources that are under-used or duplicated. The authority should review both its 'reporting-in' clinic and the groups operating at IAS and NCH to make sure they are utilising resources as efficiently and effectively as possible.

## 4. HIGH-RISK OFFENDERS

### Liaison arrangements

- 4.1 The three authorities each have in place, or in draft a joint protocol with the relevant police divisions of Strathclyde Police.
- 4.2 The protocols state that the police<sup>7</sup> must convene a community protection case conference (CPCC) on registered sex offenders whom the two agencies assess as presenting a medium or high risk of harm (and unregistered offenders about whom they also have concerns). Police and a practitioner from the 'Pathways' project agree this assessment by sharing the levels of the risk predicted by the framework used by each organisation ('Tayprep' and 'RM2000' respectively).<sup>8</sup>
- 4.3 Police, managers from the relevant criminal justice and children and families teams, and a staff member from 'Pathways' attend CPCCs, along with representatives from agencies such as housing and health where appropriate. These representatives can provide information that alters the preliminary assessment of the level of risk the offender presents. The meeting may decide to hold further CPCCs on an offender at three or six monthly intervals' depending on its assessment of the level of risk. It must convene a conference on all registered sex offenders at a point before any probation order or statutory licence terminates.
- 4.4 As well as having a CPCC, Inverclyde operates a system of quarterly social work/police liaison meetings at which agencies share information on sex offenders currently, or previously, subject to social work supervision or who may become subject to supervision. The two agencies see these meetings as a safety net to make sure that CPCCs are in place for all appropriate cases. The service manager chairs the meeting which includes the police, the criminal justice senior social worker and the service manager. The police officers who attended said they found the meetings invaluable as they enabled the two agencies to sift a large number of cases and to make sure they did not miss any offender who might pose a risk.
- 4.5 Renfrewshire introduced a similar system of quarterly liaison meetings last year. Area team managers also attend and contribute an important child protection perspective. Inverclyde should consider following this example and include child care colleagues. Neither authority invites external agencies (except the police) to liaison meetings. These meetings review a wide range of offenders. At one meeting we thought housing services could have made an important contribution in around a quarter of the cases reviewed. At this meeting, and at one of the CPCCs we attended, some of those present commented that housing services did not seem sufficiently clear about what procedures to follow when they allocated tenancies to sex offenders.

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<sup>7</sup> Agencies have amended the police/social work protocol in East Renfrewshire to transfer the administrative responsibility for convening a CPCC from police to social work (a change instituted at the request of the local police division which has to deal with a number of other criminal justice teams in the City of Glasgow).

<sup>8</sup> Tayprep has been widely used in Scotland both by local authorities and police. As a result of developments in this field, plans are in progress to introduce a new framework for risk assessment across Scotland.

- 4.6 East Renfrewshire deals with a small number of sex offenders. The authority had not held quarterly liaison meetings for some time though had plans to do so.
- 4.7 The three authorities (and the Police) said that the liaison meeting and CPCC processes would eventually encompass violent offenders, though there were no immediate plans for them to do so.

### Risk assessment

- 4.8 We describe workers' confusion over aspects of the newly introduced risk of harm assessment procedures and how and when to use the chosen risk assessment framework in Chapter 2.

### File reading

- 4.9 We sought to read a number of reports and cases involving offenders categorised as presenting a high risk of harm to the public. Identifying these offenders based solely on information in the report or on file was not possible because of varying risk assessment practice across the Partnership and different definitions of high-risk offenders. To achieve a consistent approach, we defined high-risk offenders as those with convictions for crimes of indecency or serious violence. This provided eight reports and eight cases involving sex offenders and 24 reports and 21 cases involving serious violent offenders from our case file sample of 95.

### Sex offenders

- 4.10 File readers considered that half the reports on sex offenders were of a 'good' or 'very good' standard and the remainder 'adequate'. There were no 'poor' reports. Report writers were strongest in their analysis of offending and offending related needs and weakest in their analysis of risk of harm. The 'Pathways' project improved the overall quality of the service by providing comprehensive assessments to accompany these reports.
- 4.11 Readers were impressed by the content of supervision in sex offender cases and by the way in which workers managed compliance and enforcement. Case plans (bar one) focused on offending and offending related needs and were specific about how staff intended to deliver the plan. In all cases, supervision focused consistently on addressing offending and used a structured offence-focused programme.
- 4.12 In around half the cases, however, supervisors had not maintained contact with these offenders at the level and frequency required by National Standards. In four cases, they had not arranged four appointments in the first four weeks and in three cases, they had not arranged two home visits in the first twelve weeks. The files did not record reasons for this.
- 4.13 There were no significant differences between the performances of the three authorities.

### Serious violent offenders

- 4.14 Reports on serious violent offenders were generally of a lower quality than those on sex offenders. A third were 'good' or 'very good'. Most of the remainder were 'adequate'. Two were 'poor'. In around a quarter, the report writers had failed to analyse offending and in almost two-thirds they had not analysed the risk of harm.

- 4.15 The content of supervision of violent offenders was also weaker than that of sex offenders. Readers judged that this was 'good' or 'very good' in under a quarter of cases. A third of case plans did not focus on offending and in almost one in six cases, supervision did not focus consistently on offending. Between one-quarter and one-third of violent offenders were engaged in programmed work. Inverclyde was more likely than the other two authorities to focus on offending and to address victim awareness.
- 4.16 Supervisors managed the compliance of offenders well in two-thirds of cases but did not themselves adhere to National Standards in a significant number of cases. They failed to arrange four appointments in the first four weeks in six of the 21 cases sampled and to arrange two home visits in the first 12 weeks in 14 of these cases (in most of these cases the reasons lay within the control of the service). Though the sample size was small, there were some discernable differences between authorities in this respect with workers in East Renfrewshire most likely to undertake home visits.

### Service delivery

- 4.17 The 'Pathways' project has provided a resource for the three authorities since 2000 (prior to the establishment of the Partnership). Staff work jointly with SER and HBR authors to prepare reports, deliver the Community sex offender group work programme (C-SOGP)<sup>9</sup> to adult offenders, carry out risk assessments and offer consultations to those working with adult offenders and those working with young people who behave in a sexually problematic way. The project is line managed by the principal officer (criminal justice).
- 4.18 The project receives one-fifth of its funding from the childcare services in the three authorities and the remainder from the criminal justice services. Staff commented on the difficulties of coping with the responsibilities of both adult and young offenders. The amount of work with young people had increased but the proportion of funding had not. Workers also said they were struggling to deal with two significantly different groups and to develop the specialist skills and knowledge needed to work with children and young people.
- 4.19 The Partnership is one of five criminal justice groupings and unitary authorities that have volunteered to pilot C-SOGP. The programme consists of three modules – induction (50 hours), core (190 hours), and relapse prevention (50 hours). After the induction module workers administer a psychometric test to offenders. Those they assess as presenting a medium or high risk progress to the core module. 'Pathways' has never had sufficient medium- or high-risk offenders to form a group for the core module and practitioners have had to deliver this to offenders on an individual basis. This is unsatisfactory as the programme is designed to be delivered with groups. The Partnership would therefore like to deliver the core module together with other authorities piloting the programme.
- 4.20 The project has also struggled to deliver the induction group due to staffing vacancies and offenders have waited some months for a new group to commence. This should be (temporarily) resolved in the near future when the project fills two of its current vacancies. However, the project is due to lose a further two staff and there is a danger that the current hiatus will recur. The Partnership will need to consider what steps it can take to deal with future staffing issues in this small project. This may include training some team-based social workers as additional C-SOGP facilitators.

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<sup>9</sup> C-SOGP, has been accredited by the Joint Programme Accreditation Panel for England and Wales and has been provisionally accredited by the Scottish Community Justice Accreditation Panel.

- 4.21 As we were unable to observe a group during the period of the inspection, we watched a recorded session of the last induction module and read the offenders' evaluations of the group and the observer's notes.<sup>10</sup> The group was beginning to examine each participant's cycle of offending. C-SOGP demands a very structured style of questioning that can appear quite stilted and formal. However it worked with this group and comments from offenders' written evaluations of the session included: 'I'm learning a lot about myself' and 'it was very tough and thought provoking'. The observer's notes showed that she had identified both the strengths and weaknesses of the way the facilitators delivered the group and fed this back to them.
- 4.22 We also observed an individual session with an offender and spoke to him afterwards. The session (co-delivered by a 'Pathways' worker and the supervising social worker) examined how an individual's previous experiences could affect his behaviour. The offender was about half way through the programme and was very positive about it. He commented that 'suddenly in one session it really clicked', and 'it helps you learn to stop'.
- 4.23 The premises and resources used for this work are not ideal. The project is located in the attic space of the social work office and staff have to lead offenders through several flights of stairs to reach it. We also found the video equipment that allows the observer and line manager to monitor the standard of work to be of very poor quality.
- 4.24 The Partnership has developed robust procedures for ensuring that the 'Pathways' project provides some specialist input for all sex offenders on orders or on whom staff prepare reports. Court social workers in Greenock and Paisley Sheriff courts routinely forward copies of all SER requests on those convicted of sex offenders to 'Pathways' whether or not the Sheriff has specifically requested a 'Pathways' assessment. Sheriffs in these courts told us that they welcomed the thoroughness of these assessments as they needed as much information and advice as possible in reaching decisions about sex offenders. Senior social workers in the teams also notified the project of any new order or licence.
- 4.25 'Pathways' staff met with supervising social workers every three months to complete an assessment of the risks presented by all sex offenders subject to statutory supervision (whether or not the project was actively working with the offender in group or individual sessions at that point). It is encouraging that the Partnership attempts to make sure that the project contributes to the work with all sex offenders subject to supervision but it will need to consider how this practice fits with its current Throughcare procedures. There is a possibility that the supervising social worker, Throughcare worker and 'Pathways' worker might all be working with sex offenders about to be released or newly released from custody.
- 4.26 The Partnership has ensured that all staff supervising sex offenders have completed the C-SOGP case manager training. They are expected to work through a C-SOGP case manager work pack that consists of a number of exercises designed to motivate and prepare offenders for the group. The exercises begin to explore factors in offenders' lives that may be associated with their offending behaviour but do not explore the behaviour itself.

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<sup>10</sup> The use of an observer is a requirement of C-SOGP.

- 4.27 It is vital that offenders are prepared in this way before beginning the phase of the programme designed to help them change their behaviour. Supervising social workers must also support offenders through this phase and help them tackle any other factors related to their offending. We were concerned that staff working through the pack with offenders for some months were not certain if or when the offenders would join the group programme and begin work on their offending. This created uncertainty about the purpose of the work and raised anxiety levels. The Partnership must consider the consequences of this for its strategy.
- 4.28 The case manager pack includes a format for assessing the risky domains in an offender's life. It was helpful that 'Pathways' staff met with supervising social workers every three months to review these risks. It is important however that staff remain constantly alert to possible areas of risk in their day-to-day work with offenders.
- 4.29 NCH (in Inverclyde) and CAU (in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire) both offer programmes for violent offenders. As highlighted in Chapter 3, CAU concentrated its resources on the induction, core offending groups and on the women's programmes and ran the anger management programme only once last year.
- 4.30 Area team managers in Renfrewshire had recently completed an audit of all cases that criminal justice workers had assessed as involving serious violent offenders. As a result of this exercise, they had identified their own need for training in risk assessment.
- 4.31 Argyll and Clyde Health Board, in conjunction with the Partnership, has established a joint community forensic mental health team (psychiatrist, psychologist, nurses, and criminal justice social workers) with an administrative base in Renfrew. The Partnership experienced initial difficulties in recruiting social workers but appointed two and a half posts last September. The service is managed by the East Renfrewshire manager. Staff we spoke to in the other teams were not yet wholly clear about the precise role and remit of this relatively new service.

### Child protection awareness

- 4.32 All criminal justice workers across the partnership are required to complete a one-day basic child protection awareness training and all those we interviewed (other than very new staff) had done so. A considerable number had previous training and experience of child protection work. Managers of children and families services, who see all child protection case conference minutes, confirmed that criminal justice social workers (including those from 'Pathways') attended all relevant case conferences though did not always attend core group meetings. The authorities are developing guidance for agencies dealing with drug misusing parents in response to the Scottish Executive's publication 'Getting Our Priorities Right'. Currently few criminal justice practitioners we spoke to were familiar with their responsibilities as outlined in this document.

### Conclusions and areas for improvement

- 4.33 The Partnership has made real progress in delivering an effective service to those who may pose serious harm to others. It is piloting C-SOGP and has set in place procedures to ensure that staff make use of the 'Pathways' project in their work with all sex offenders. Two of the three authorities have established quarterly liaison meetings with the police (in addition to individual CPCCs) to make sure that they take appropriate action with all sex offenders

with whom they come into contact and the third has plans to do so. The Partnership is also introducing new risk assessment procedures that should (when revised) help staff assess the potential risk posed by both sex offenders and those convicted of other serious violent offences. These are encouraging moves. To improve the service further the Partnership must consolidate these achievements and address those gaps and areas of weakness we have identified. This should include the following steps:

- as a matter of urgency, the Partnership must make sure that staff meet minimum National Standards of contact with high-risk offenders. To protect the public it is particularly important that staff check on the living arrangements of these offenders;
- managers should review all those high-risk cases their staff supervise and make sure that standards are met now and in the future;
- the Partnership's new risk assessment procedures (when revised and implemented) should improve practitioners' assessment and management of the potential risk of harm offenders may present. This agenda must be moved forward swiftly;
- the Partnership has invested heavily in C-SOGP. However, it has not been able to deliver the group work programme for some time and should seek to ensure this does not happen again. This may include training some case managers as additional facilitators. If the programme cannot be delivered in the future the Partnership should consider whether supervising social workers should continue to use the related case manager pack with offenders;
- the Partnership should ensure that the procedures in place for shared working between the 'Pathways' project and the new throughcare service do not result in duplication;
- the Partnership should review the suitability of 'Pathways' premises;
- authorities should consider the benefits of including other agencies, in particular, housing services, in their quarterly liaison meetings. Inverclyde council should include child care colleagues;
- work with violent offenders was not of the same standard as work with sex offenders. The new procedures for assessing risk (revised and consistently implemented) should improve the quality of assessments. Delivering more programmes that focus specifically on violent offending and its triggers would improve the effectiveness of supervision for this category of offender across the Partnership.

## 5. COMMUNITY SERVICE

- 5.1 Community service provides courts with a community-based alternative to custody requiring offenders to carry out unpaid work in the community. National Standards call for work to be of value to the community, the direct beneficiary and the offender. Schemes should set challenging standards of behaviour and work, rapidly follow up any instances of absenteeism or poor behaviour, and consistently apply sanctions for non-compliance.
- 5.2 Demand for community service orders nationally has risen incrementally over the past four years. In contrast, demand across the partnership over this period has fluctuated. By 2004, numbers in Inverclyde and East Renfrewshire had returned to the level they had been at in 2001 and Renfrewshire had seen an overall decline in numbers.

**Table 15: Demand for community service**

	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
<b>Nationally</b>	6,131	6,509	7,359	7,428
<b>Inverclyde</b>	138	133	122	137
<b>East Renfrewshire</b>	56	67	58	58
<b>Renfrewshire</b>	232	248	214	221

Source: *Scottish Executive, Criminal Justice Statistical Bulletin, 2003-2004*

### Partnership profile data

- 5.3 In 2003-04:
- Inverclyde recorded 23.5 community service orders per 10,000 population; East Renfrewshire recorded 9.5 and Renfrewshire 18.1. These figures compare with a national average of 20.7;
  - 11% of offenders in Inverclyde, 5% of those in East Renfrewshire and 2% of those in Renfrewshire on community service were under 18 years old;
  - 22% in Inverclyde, 30% in East Renfrewshire and 19% in Renfrewshire were between 18 and 20 years;
  - 22% in Inverclyde, 24% in East Renfrewshire and 29% in Renfrewshire were aged between 21 and 25 years with the remainder over 25 years old;
  - 9% of offenders on community service in Inverclyde, 10% of those in East Renfrewshire and 10% of those in Renfrewshire were women;
  - The unemployment rate of offenders on community service was 50% in Inverclyde, 52% in East Renfrewshire and 73% in Renfrewshire.

Source: *Scottish Executive Criminal Justice Social Work Statistics 2003-04*

- 5.4 We read a number of community service files, observed individual, squad and workshop placements, interviewed community service staff and offenders, and sought the views of sentencers and beneficiaries through interviews and questionnaires.

### Organisation of service delivery

- 5.5 Community service is organised in different ways across the Partnership and the three authorities have access to significantly different resources. The Partnership has instituted a Best Value review of the service (currently ongoing). Senior managers told us that they anticipated that this would result in more joined up management arrangements and improved efficiency.
- 5.6 Inverclyde has a large and well-equipped workshop that enables the community service scheme to offer a range of activities and to cater for offenders with particular needs. This is in sharp contrast to the workshop facility in Renfrewshire which is poorly equipped and lacks useable space (we were informed that the authority is tied into a long-term lease for these unsuitable premises). The scheme in East Renfrewshire is small and has no workshop provision.
- 5.7 Inverclyde and Renfrewshire have discrete community service teams each operating from one base, managed by a dedicated first line manager. The manager in Inverclyde also carries responsibility for the supervised attendance scheme and for the pilot 'Community Reparation Order Scheme'. Staff providing these services work from the same base as community service staff and have shared some responsibilities with them as a way of coping with staff shortages and added responsibilities. This situation is currently under review.
- 5.8 The Renfrewshire scheme has experienced some difficulties. There have been frequent changes of manager and periods with no first line manager. The team has a relatively new first line manager. He is seeking to overcome the effects of this unsettled period and to introduce more consistent, systematic practices. It was too early to assess the effectiveness of these changes.
- 5.9 The teams in Inverclyde and Renfrewshire comprise community service officers, who carry out assessments and supervise orders, a community service assistant in each team who assesses work projects and oversees their satisfactory completion, and work supervisors. One officer in each team is a qualified social worker (as is the first line manager in each team). The general responsibilities of these officers are the same as those of the unqualified officers in the teams.
- 5.10 East Renfrewshire employs two full-time dedicated community service staff – a criminal justice support worker and a work supervisor<sup>11</sup>. The authority's criminal justice social workers hold responsibility for community service orders as well as supervising probation orders and throughcare licences and preparing social enquiry reports. The support worker carries out day-to-day supervision of the orders.
- 5.11 Across the Partnership, different grades of staff hold the same level of responsibility for assessing suitability for community service and for supervising orders. The reasons for this are historical. There appeared to be no clear rationale for, or benefit from, using qualified social workers in this way. National Standards require community service schemes only to deploy a "core" of staff with a social work or related qualification (qualified first line managers in each authority meet this requirement).

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<sup>11</sup> The authority employs a further two sessional work supervisors who cover weekend squads.

## Types of placement

- 5.12 Squad activities in each authority include painting and decorating, gardening, landscaping and ground maintenance. Renfrewshire and Inverclyde have been able to carry out some larger projects, including upgrading a community cycle path and creating a new garden for a day centre for people with disabilities. The scheme in East Renfrewshire operates on a small scale and has one squad that mainly carries out litter pickups and maintenance work at residential and day care units.
- 5.13 Renfrewshire has limited workshop facilities for the less physically able and does not operate a lighter duties squad. The scheme accommodates these offenders in personal placements (where available) or allocates them lighter duties in mainstream squads. The authority does not operate a late start facility to accommodate those offenders who have inescapable domestic commitments or who have to collect medication, although these offenders may be accommodated in personal placements. There is no specific provision for female offenders. Many women are allocated to personal placements. When this is not possible they are included in squads with men, with staff doing their best to ensure they are not the only woman. National Standards require community service schemes to make provision for offenders with particular needs and circumstances. Notwithstanding its limited workshop facilities, the Renfrewshire scheme could do more to achieve this.
- 5.14 The excellent workshop in Inverclyde makes it possible for offenders to perform a wide range of tasks and to offer the option of lighter duties (such as painting, sanding and assembly of joinery work) to the less able-bodied. Offenders with addictions problems who have to collect prescribed medication may report up to one hour later than other offenders and will normally work in the workshop. A women-only group is also based in the workshop (though the squad might prefer to work outwith the workshop).
- 5.15 The workshop is close to the authority's boundary with Renfrewshire. It is a costly resource and, though well used by Inverclyde, could be put to even better use. One option would be to use it to help meet the shortfall in workshop provision elsewhere in the Partnership. This possibility would have staffing and transport implications for the other authorities but is certainly worthy of consideration. It is encouraging that the current Best Value review of the service is exploring this option.
- 5.16 It is standard practice throughout the Partnership to allocate no more than five offenders to each squad (though Renfrewshire allocates a higher number to weekend squads)<sup>12</sup>. The file reading showed that non-compliance was an issue in six out of ten community service cases, notwithstanding the efforts of staff to secure compliance. This and evidence from the on site inspection, suggest that squads may be frequently operating below capacity. Imposing a limit of five offenders to a squad when, for a variety of reasons offenders do not attend, can waste resources and lead to delays in assigning offenders to squads that are ostensibly 'full'. It also reduces the capacity of schemes to enable those offenders who want to work more than one day per week the chance to do so. Authorities are properly committed to achieving stable squads that do not experience frequent changes of membership, but high levels of non-attendance can undermine these efforts. The Partnership should therefore continue with their rigorous efforts to enforce compliance (described later in the chapter) and also consider routinely 'overbooking' squads to make best use of resources. This would mean finding ways to cope with the eventuality that all offenders reported in for work.

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<sup>12</sup> National Standards recommend that squads should include four or five offenders. Although Renfrewshire over-allocates it does not exceed a squad size of 5. It is rare for more than the allocated number to report in for work.

- 5.17 There were examples of interesting personal placements across the Partnership, including a city farm, a community café and a hospice. The number of personal placements was limited and probably insufficient in Renfrewshire which also lacks squad and workshop provision for those with particular needs. The authority recognises the need to review current placements on a more systematic basis and is committed to beginning this work soon.
- 5.18 Inverclyde organise a daylong review of personal placements every two years, with all placement providers invited to attend to discuss their experiences and to plan future use. Sheriffs were included and told us that they welcomed this review as a way of keeping their knowledge of community service up to date. This appears to be a useful way of supporting personal placements and informing Sheriffs. The other two authorities should consider introducing a similar (or a shared) event.
- 5.19 East Renfrewshire offers four personal placements. This is sufficient to meet its current requirements though the authority would stand to benefit if the Partnership as a whole invested more time in developing a larger and wider range of personal placements.

### Assessment

- 5.20 SER authors submit a single combined report to court. Community service members of staff were confident that report writers had a good understanding of community service and that they always discussed offenders' suitability with community service staff before submitting their reports.

### The file reading

- 5.21 There were 18 community service cases in the sample and a further 20 S229 orders:

**Table 16: Community Service – Performance (1)**

Sample size: 38 cases (CS only and S229)	Yes	No	No data
Does the file contain clear work instructions?	36	1	1
Does the file contain an assessment of the risk an offender might pose in his/her placement?	4	33	1

**Table 17: Community Service – Performance (2)**

Sample size: 18 cases (CS only)	Yes	No
Was compliance an issue at any stage of the order?	11	7

**Table 18: Community Service – Performance (3)**

Sample size: 18 cases (CS only)	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
How well did the service manage compliance and enforcement in this case?	0	7	9	2

5.22 The analysis shows that:

- almost all files contained clear work instructions;
- readers judged that the service managed compliance and enforcement well or very well in three out of five cases, and adequately in two out of five. There were no examples of poor performance;
- only one in ten files contained an assessment of the risk an offender might pose in a placement.

5.23 There were no variations between authorities.

### Risk assessment

5.24 The partnership has introduced a pro-forma that community service staff must complete at the induction interview. This includes a heading 'identified risk factors' but there are not yet any guidelines to help staff identify these factors and to assess the level of risk the offender may pose to whom and in what circumstances.

### Compliance

5.25 Community service officers/the criminal justice support worker in East Renfrewshire carry out a standard induction interview outlining the purposes of community service and requirements in respect of compliance and performance.

5.26 Community service staff across the Partnership follow up non-attendances with a home visit, normally on the same day, and report the outcome of these visits to the staff member responsible for supervising the order. The file reading indicated that these workers then took appropriate action to deal with unacceptable absences.

5.27 Renfrewshire and Inverclyde community service staff send a copy of any warnings to supervising social workers where unpaid work is a condition of a probation order. They reported that they rarely received a copy of any warnings relating to the probation element of the order and might not know about these until they attended the first review. In Inverclyde, community service workers and supervising social workers carried out joint interviews at the beginning of S229 orders. In Renfrewshire, they no longer did so and did not normally meet jointly with the offender until the first review. Though staff stated that they maintained regular telephone contact with each other, this communication should have been more systematic.

5.28 In each authority offenders can access information at mustering about the number of hours they have completed and the status of any warnings they have received.

### Health and Safety

5.29 Work supervisors provide specific health and safety advice on the duties carried out on site once the placement has started. Supervisors base the advice primarily on their previous work experience and it does not necessarily follow a standard format. Staff in Renfrewshire commented that they would have liked to have had a more standardised health and safety induction and an opportunity to assess offenders' capabilities in workshop conditions before they were placed. They said the current workshop facility did not lend itself to this purpose.

- 5.30 Each offender in Inverclyde has an individual health and safety checklist. Once a supervisor has covered a relevant section with an offender before starting an activity both the supervisor and offender countersign the section. The checklist was particularly detailed in respect of workshop activities. It offered a systematic approach to health and safety practice that could usefully be adopted by the other Partnership authorities.
- 5.31 The Renfrewshire community service team works from offices situated above the workshop. The building has poor access for the less physically able. Staff reported that the use of paints and timber treatments in the workshop created odours that rose to the office level. Supervisors therefore undertook this type of work infrequently. The workshop limitations meant that squads had no foul weather alternative to outdoor work.
- 5.32 In Renfrewshire the scheme's community service assistant carried out risk assessments of projects. He had undertaken training in risk assessment and control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) and completed a standard assessment format he had designed himself. These training and risk assessment arrangements are basic and would benefit from more 'site-specific' content. It would also be beneficial to extend training in routine risk assessment to work supervisors. This would avoid the kind of bottlenecks that staff and beneficiaries reported happening when all this work fell to one individual.
- 5.33 Similar training needs exist in East Renfrewshire where the scheme's only full-time work supervisor completed written site-specific risk assessments based only on his prior work experience and knowledge.
- 5.34 The service in Inverclyde was not carrying out site-specific risk assessments at the time of the inspection though it was working alongside Inverclyde Council's Health and Safety staff to develop a methodology for this. There was no timescale for completing this work. The service should have set a date for implementation.
- 5.35 Inverclyde and East Renfrewshire followed and recorded an annual schedule of machinery maintenance. Renfrewshire expects work supervisors to carry out monthly inspections of equipment for faults though this was not recorded and was based on the experience of the supervisor. Supervisors commented on the low cost and poor quality of some of the tools and equipment provided.
- 5.36 Personal protective equipment, where appropriate, was in use in all the sites we inspected. Renfrewshire issued used safety Wellingtons (disinfected after use) to offenders on work squads. East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde issued new safety boots that offenders could retain.
- 5.37 In two of the Renfrewshire sites we had some concern that first-aid equipment was not available immediately on site. On one site, the equipment was in the community service van that had moved on to another location. On another site, the squad was working some distance from where the supervisor had had to park the van. First-aid equipment should always go with the squad.
- 5.38 We observed a number of squads across the Partnership and found that work supervisors offered appropriate and effective supervision, taking time to communicate their knowledge and experience to offenders.

- 5.39 Staff in Renfrewshire routinely made home visits in pairs. This was how it had always been done and did not take account of the social work department's policy on lone working. This instructs staff to make a case-by-case assessment of risk before visiting a home. We thought the practice of community service staff wasted resources.
- 5.40 Supervisors in Renfrewshire commented on the difficulties their limited transport provision presented. The scheme had two vans and four squads. This had led to inordinate time being spent transporting squads not only at the beginning and end of each day but also at mid-day for lunch breaks. Supervisors sometimes needed transport to take the squad back to the workshop when there were incidents of serious indiscipline.
- 5.41 Community service officers/the criminal justice support worker were paid to provide weekend emergency support for work supervisors. Those in Inverclyde and Renfrewshire shared this task on a rota basis. In East Renfrewshire the support worker and social workers also shared this on a rota basis.
- 5.42 Community service officers/the criminal justice support worker pass on relevant information about offenders to the work supervisors by word of mouth. Though supervisors said they received sufficient information and could have access to case files if they requested this, the process was ad hoc and would benefit from being better structured and more systematic.

### Staff supervision and training

- 5.43 Staff in Renfrewshire commented that they had had four managers in as many years and that this had had an unsettling effect. The current manager had now introduced monthly supervision for all staff, including work supervisors, and six-weekly team meetings. He also intended to introduce a training audit and related plan for each staff member. To date training has been ad hoc and reactive, particularly in relation to work supervisors. The authority had offered them issue-based training, including drugs awareness and pro-social modelling, but little specific health and safety training. Many of the expectations regarding their performance were based on their previous work experience. There had been no systematic audit of this experience to establish its extent and to assess how the service could best use it.
- 5.44 The criminal justice senior social worker in East Renfrewshire provided the criminal justice support worker with regular and structured supervision, including a training audit. The support worker acted as the de facto manager of the work supervisors and offered informal supervision. This did not include systematic consideration of their training needs.
- 5.45 The community service organiser in Inverclyde offered monthly supervision to the community service officers and assistant. The organiser and officers also met monthly as a team. Officers and the assistant had undertaken a range of training but said there had been no specific audit of their training needs. Work supervisors did not have structured supervision sessions but attended three monthly meetings where they received updated information on policies and procedures. The authority does not routinely review and update their knowledge of health and safety matters and they said they had received little training in 'offender-related' aspects of their work such as working with those with addictions or mental health problems.

### The views of beneficiaries

5.46 We wrote to 27 community service placement providers and beneficiaries seeking their views on:

- the standard and reliability of work;
- the information they received about the offending background of those on placement or in squads;
- the extent to which they thought that community service staff considered risks of re-offending or causing harm in allocating offenders to placements;
- the extent to which the service matched offenders' skills to the placement provider's requirements;
- and the speed of follow up in the event of problems arising relating to attendance, behaviour, or work performance.

5.47 Fifteen placement providers responded. Most were happy with the standard of work. They were satisfied that the service had matched the offenders' skills with their requirements though most said that all they needed was a 'willing pair of hands'. All were satisfied that community service staff had given them sufficient information and had considered any risk the offender might present in the placement. They described the speed of follow up in the event of any problems as excellent.

5.48 We also spoke directly to a number of beneficiaries and placement providers as we observed offenders at work in squads or personal placements. All were enthusiastic about the work of the offenders and content with the level of supervision and support from community service staff. Individual beneficiaries included elderly or disabled people who told us that they would not have been in a position to have work done (normally decorating or gardening) without the help of community service. Charities – many of which had been taking community service placements for many years – also spoke highly of the work of offenders. One commented that those on community service were more dependable than their volunteers. Another was clear that without the contribution of community service her charity shop would have difficulty functioning and that her experience had been '90% positive'. In some personal placements, offenders had remained as volunteers following completion of their orders.

### The views of those on community serving orders

5.49 We spoke to a number of offenders on squad or personal placements, most of whom spoke positively of their experience of community service. Most thought the work they had carried out was of clear benefit either to an individual or to the wider community. Many said they had had the opportunity to learn new skills such as painting and decorating, woodwork and landscaping. Some who were unemployed said that it had helped them gain or regain the discipline of well-supervised useful work.

### The views of Sheriffs

5.50 We spoke to Sheriffs in Paisley and Greenock Courts and sought their views on the quality of community service. All were content with the rigour with which practitioners enforced orders and with the type of work offenders carried out. All said that completion reports gave them sufficient information on the progress of orders.

## Evaluation

- 5.51 In Renfrewshire community service officers arrange a completion interview on the final day of an offender's placement and have recently begun to send offenders a feedback form. Inverclyde had sent out these forms for some time and reported that the majority of offenders returned them.
- 5.52 Authorities acted on any individual issues noted in feedback forms and Inverclyde presented an analysis of forms at the bi-annual placement review day. The forms are not, however, routinely built into procedures for quality monitoring.

## Conclusions and areas for improvement

- 5.53 This inspection has identified examples of good practice in all three authorities and also areas for improvement. Across the Partnership beneficiaries, Sheriffs and offenders alike spoke highly of the way community service operated and we found that offenders were carrying out well supervised work of benefit to the community.
- 5.54 Each scheme has, in different ways, experienced operational difficulties. The Partnership has been slow to take a grouping approach to tackling these though has now instituted a Best Value review of the service. The review is likely to identify some of the issues highlighted in this inspection and managers anticipate that it will result in structural changes and more efficient use of resources. We recommend that any changes include the following:
- the Partnership must, as a priority, act on all the health and safety concerns raised in this report. This should include introducing a more systematic approach to auditing the knowledge and skills of all staff and ensuring that they have received the relevant training to meet their responsibilities effectively;
  - the variation in the range of resources available to each authority is striking. The Partnership must address this disparity in seeking to raise overall standards of provision;
  - the scheme in Renfrewshire should make every effort to make suitable provision for women offenders and offenders with health or addictions problems;
  - examples of excellent practice existed in isolation. The Partnership should ensure that community service staff have more opportunities to share and develop good practice;
  - authorities are deploying different grades of staff in the same functions. The Partnership should therefore review the skills and qualifications required for specific tasks. In particular, they should consider whether they need to deploy qualified social workers to supervise community service orders;
  - the procedures intended to identify any risk factors related to offenders placed on community service must be clearer to staff. The Partnership must develop ways of routinely sharing this and other relevant information with work supervisors;
  - limiting work squads to five offenders when non-attendance is a continuing problem is wasting resources. The Partnership should adopt a more flexible approach to squad size;
  - feedback from beneficiaries, offenders and Sheriffs is important for evaluating the quality of the service. This feedback should routinely form part of the monitoring of service quality.

## 6. ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

### Partnership arrangements

- 6.1 Chapter 1 outlines the arrangements for senior management and elected member oversight of the Partnership. The 'operational management group' is responsible for implementing the strategic plan and any other management initiatives. Currently this group comprises the criminal justice service managers/principal officer and the Partnership co-ordinator but does not include the three area team managers in Renfrewshire. Although these staff do meet separately with the Principal Officer this appears to be a significant omission. They are responsible for many of the criminal justice workers delivering core services. We found they were not wholly familiar with the strategic objectives of the criminal justice services they managed.
- 6.2 The Partnership's joint coordinator is responsible for servicing the main Partnership groups, assisting with planning and 'bringing together' monitoring and evaluation activity.
- 6.3 The Partnership has recently introduced quarterly meetings of first line managers across the grouping. There is no equivalent forum for practitioners (though some have met each other at joint training events) and practitioners said they had little sense they belonged to a Partnership. A senior manager commented that the sheer speed of change had made it difficult for the Partnership to communicate sufficiently well with staff about every new initiative and development.
- 6.4 Managers commented that the creation of the Partnership had made it easier to introduce new services. Sharing resources has clear benefits though, as the description of the arrangements for peripatetic staff in Chapter 2 illustrates, these arrangements can be complex.
- 6.5 Managers acknowledged that they had been slower to improve existing service quality. Recent developments, like the introduction of the risk assessment and the monitoring and evaluation frameworks, are welcome but the Partnership will need to ensure they are effectively implemented.

### Local authority arrangements

- 6.6 Both East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde have criminal justice teams based in one location in their respective authorities and managed by criminal justice managers.
- 6.7 The criminal justice team in East Renfrewshire is small and not in a position to deliver the same range of services as the other two authorities. The review of Community Service, now nearing completion, may partly address this problem by proposing greater sharing of community service resources across the Partnership. East Renfrewshire currently has access to Renfrewshire's CAU resource to deliver a service to those on probation but does not use this as well as we thought they might.
- 6.8 There has been no director of social work in Inverclyde since October 2004 with an interim arrangement in place while the chief executive conducts a structural review. The current social work management team comprises a head of service (children and families and criminal justice services), who is also the authority's chief social work officer, and a head of service (community care and strategic planning). During this transitional period the

authority has introduced four lead officers, responsible for different service areas. The criminal justice service manager continues to report to the chief social work officer and did not seem directly affected by the structural changes. Nevertheless it appeared to us that senior managers were operating under a considerable strain.

- 6.9 Practitioners in the three Renfrewshire teams (Paisley, Renfrew and Johnstone) each have a percentage of their time allocated to criminal justice and for the remainder of the time may be involved in a range of other duties including office duty, child protection, and mental health officer (MHO) responsibilities. These percentages vary<sup>13</sup>. Each team apportioned staff time according to its particular resource needs and there was no single, consistent approach across the three teams. It was not clear how teams managed staff workloads to keep to the stipulated percentages.
- 6.10 Managers said these arrangements helped protect the delivery of locally based services. They also maximised the knowledge and skills of experienced staff, particularly those with a Mental Health Officer qualification. More generally they said they encouraged delivery of more joined up local services and helped avoid duplication. They commented that the practice gave more staff the chance to undertake criminal justice duties if they wanted to. They also helped retain staff who might have moved on had they not been able to undertake some criminal justice work.
- 6.11 Practitioners said the different percentages could be confusing and the percentage boundaries difficult to maintain, particularly when there were staff shortages in other important areas of work, for example child protection. A senior manager in another authority said he thought the lack of a single consistent approach made negotiations between authorities about allocating resources more difficult.

### Strategic planning, performance review and quality assurance

- 6.12 The Partnership has produced a number of planning and review documents. These include the strategic plan for the period 2002-5 and annual progress reports for 2003 and 2004. There has also been a service review (completed in 2003) with a follow on service improvement plan. We also saw a draft strategic plan for 2005/6.
- 6.13 The draft plan includes some information on service performance. This is almost exclusively data gathered for and submitted to Audit Scotland. The plan acknowledges that the Partnership has not consistently gathered other quality assurance data.
- 6.14 The service improvement plan identifies key tasks to be started or achieved by given dates. Some tasks are described as 'ongoing'. Key tasks include:
- using aggregated LSI-R assessments to provide a better profile of offenders' crime-related needs to assist service planning and targeting;
  - developing group work across the Partnership;
  - developing the existing enhanced throughcare service and establishing phase two;
  - agreeing a quality assurance framework;

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<sup>13</sup> In Paisley, for example, 4 staff are allocated 90%, 4 80% and 1 70%. Senior social workers are wholly dedicated to criminal justice duties with the exception of the senior in Renfrew and Johnstone who allocates 60% of her time to criminal justice.

- establishing a performance management framework with common data collection criteria;
  - establishing and monitoring peripatetic posts.
- 6.15 There have been some notable achievements. The peripatetic posts have been established and their performance is being monitored. Staff from East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire are now working together to deliver group work in Paisley although it is proving difficult to draw in offenders from East Renfrewshire. A performance management framework had been signed off and is about to be implemented. However deadlines on some tasks have slipped and some other timelines have not been defined sufficiently tightly to be able to measure achievement. Whilst all three authorities now use the LSI-R, the analysis of the aggregate data has yet to be completed. The throughcare service is still at a fairly embryonic stage although staff have now been appointed to take phase two forward. The Partnership's joint co-ordinator has developed an outline proposal for a common criminal justice quality assurance system but senior managers have yet to approve this and there is no timescale for implementation.
- 6.16 The Partnership still had a way to go to put some of its plans into effect. It is also the case (and this is true of other authorities we have inspected) that there is little analysis of service outcomes. Nowhere in the documents is there any reference to how many offenders have successfully completed orders, any analysis of the reasons for the breakdown of orders; any analysis or profile of the offenders placed on supervision.
- 6.17 The framework for monitoring and evaluating services referred to above envisages the regular sampling of reports and cases using templates that draw on the methods of this inspection. The Partnership intends that managers and practitioners will work across authority boundaries to analyse a sample of reports, probation, community service and throughcare cases at six-monthly intervals and report the results back to staff (mirroring the file reading exercise where authorities worked on the sample collaboratively). The framework is an encouraging development but will only serve a meaningful purpose if it fits into a more comprehensive quality assurance system.
- 6.18 None of the three authorities in the Partnership uses any structured approach (eg EFQM) to assure the quality of all its services (not just criminal justice).

### Service agreements

- 6.19 Renfrewshire has a service level agreement (SLA) in place with the Renfrew Council on Alcohol Trust to provide services for 80 offenders per year in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire. It is currently meeting this target.
- 6.20 There is an old SLA in place between Renfrewshire and Turning Point relating to Renfrewshire Drug Project (CACTUS). This agreement is for a service (individual and group work) for offenders on orders/licences. Staff in the project commented that the workload had proved heavier than originally anticipated. The agencies are updating the agreement to reflect the provision of an arrest referral scheme across the partnership.
- 6.21 Inverclyde has a (draft) SLA in place with NCH Action for Children for 'integrated criminal justice social work services'. The agreement sets NCH the target of providing group work for 150 offenders per year.

## Finance

6.22 A funding formula based on historical workload patterns and a range of needs factors determines the allocation of funds to groupings/unitary authorities for delivering core services (appendix 1 describes this formula in more detail). The table below sets out the funding allocations for the last three years.

### Allocations

	Core	Non-core	Total
2002-2003	2,520,908	764,589	3,022,380
2003-2004	2,896,396	1,250,277	4,146,673
2004-2005	3,063,268	1,424,962	4,488,230

6.23 Renfrewshire is the host authority for the budget. The Partnership has established a finance sub-group consisting of finance officers and service managers. This meets on a six-weekly cycle and reports to the senior management group within similar timescales.

6.24 In its initial stages the Partnership allocated funding to each authority on the same basis as the Scottish Executive would have done prior to the creation of criminal justice groupings. More recently it has pooled resources to deploy peripatetic workers across all three authorities.

### Staff supervision and development

6.25 Practitioners in the three authorities reported that supervision took place monthly (fortnightly for new workers) though this could occasionally slip to six weekly. The content of supervision appeared to vary significantly. Some first line managers used workload management systems they had developed themselves, others focused primarily on caseload issues. In East Renfrewshire, supervision included a focus on personal development. Each worker in East Renfrewshire had access to an allowance of £500 that they could use for training, in discussion with their manager. Some practitioners in the other authorities said that training issues were always on the agenda, others said they were not. First line managers reported that their own experience of supervision varied significantly in frequency, amount and content.

6.26 The Partnership has recently established a training group that is completing a training needs analysis for all staff. The Partnership has already delivered some joint training events including training in risk assessment, working with sex offenders, mental health awareness, and the 'Change' programme.

6.27 To improve staff safety, Inverclyde Council has introduced the 'Communicare' lone working telephone system. It is in the process of rolling this out to all criminal justice staff. East Renfrewshire staff have been issued with mobile telephones and work within the authority's lone working policy, which includes reporting to the team manager when they complete out-of-office appointments in the evenings.

6.28 Some practitioners told us they resented the fact that different pay and conditions obtained for carrying out similar responsibilities across the Partnership – a problem all criminal justice groupings routinely face. Restrictions on overtime meant that staff in Renfrewshire/ East Renfrewshire did not provide an evening group work service for offenders. This was possible in Inverclyde because of more flexible working arrangements.

## IT

6.29 The three criminal justice services link to the IT systems of their respective departments. East Renfrewshire link to OLM and began using the criminal justice 'Carejust' module last summer. Inverclyde and Renfrewshire link to the Sheridan 'SWIFT' system. Inverclyde are now using the system's criminal justice module and there are plans for Renfrewshire to do so in the near future. The systems are still producing largely quantitative rather than qualitative information.

6.30 The Partnership faces a challenge to ensure that these systems can meet its information requirements. It must first determine what range of information it needs and then find ways to produce and use it.

## Conclusions and areas for improvement

6.31 The Partnership has done well to establish a number of new initiatives crossing authority boundaries. It has been markedly slower to introduce improvements to existing services. Some are now in hand and the Partnership will need to maintain this momentum. Several issues need particular attention.

- Renfrewshire area team managers must be fully conversant with the strategic objectives of the criminal justice services which they are responsible for delivering;
- the recently approved framework for monitoring and evaluating services must complement other initiatives to manage and improve the quality of service;
- all staff across the Partnership should receive consistent good quality supervision;
- East Renfrewshire should draw more on the resources in partner authorities to improve the overall range and scope of its services;
- managers in Renfrewshire should be able routinely to provide evidence that the percentage arrangements for deploying criminal justice staff across the three area teams are being adhered to;
- Inverclyde should move quickly to resolve the current hiatus at senior management level in its social work service.

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