

# Dorset Probation Trust

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 53977

**Name of lead inspector:** Maria Navarro HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 28 January 2011

**Type of provider:** Probation Trust

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The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) works in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prison and Probation and inspects the management and provision of learning and skills for offenders across the whole range of custodial establishments and probation areas. Inspections may include those serving whole or part of their sentence in the community.

Inspectors judge the quality of the provision against the *Common Inspection Framework* for further education and skills 2009 (*Common Inspection Framework* 2009) and contribute to the inspection frameworks of Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation.

## Information about the probation trust and its providers

The Dorset Probation Trust (DPT, the trust) has two local delivery units: Bournemouth and Poole, and the wider Dorset county, with a total population of just over one million inhabitants. It has two approved premises and serves four of Her Majesty's Prisons. The trust's current caseload is approximately 1,600 offenders. The percentage of male offenders is 91% and approximately 10% of the offenders are from an ethnic minority background. Approximately, 46% of offenders are unemployed. The unemployment rates in Dorset vary from 6% in Poole to 8.5% in Bournemouth against 7.9% in Great Britain. The percentage of minority ethnic population in Dorset is well below the national average at 4%.

The education, training and employment team report to the Head of Business Development and Offender Services. The team is managed by the performance and quality manager of offender services, the business development manager and the operations manager. The team comprises three officers and an additional officer supporting the Community Payback offer and the Learning Café supervisor. The team is further supported by two administrative officers. Staff support offenders to access community based education, training and employment opportunities as well as delivering training through a range of sub-contracts.

The Probation Area became a trust in April 2010.

### Information about the offender learning and employability providers:

<b>Lead providers and their subcontractors</b>	<b>Number of learners on discrete provision 2009-2010</b>	<b>Types of provision</b>
Dorset Probation Trust	139	Vocational, employability and life skills training
Weymouth College	82	Skills for Life (literacy & numeracy) & information technology
Weymouth College	15 - 20	Construction skills
Best Training	8	Skills for Life and vocational training
<b>Other providers</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Types of provision</b>
Dorset Probation Trust - Next step	500	Information, advice & guidance
Dorset Probation Trust	143	Health & safety (BSC Level 1)

<b>Other providers</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Types of provision</b>
Dorset Probation Trust – JCP New Deal	82	Criminal disclosure & vocational risk assessment) and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card
Dorset Probation Trust - A4e Way4Ward (NOMS ESF)	68	Employability & life skills
Dorset Probation Trust	44	Food safety qualifications
Dorset Probation Trust	40	Catering qualifications, work experience
Bridge Charitable Trust	18	Financial support for learners
Weymouth College	10	Range of vocational skills / qualifications
Dorset Probation Trust	9	Female course – Developing interpersonal skills
Bournemouth & Poole College	9	Range of vocational skills / qualifications
QTC Ltd.	8	Construction skills
Abilities Ltd.	3	Skills for Life and CSCS card training for rural learners / learning disability
Footprints	3	Mentoring support

The following text is Ofsted's contribution to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's offender management inspection.

## Summary report

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade: satisfactory</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade: satisfactory</b>
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	<b>Grade descriptor</b>
Quality of provision Assessment and sentence planning	satisfactory
Implementation of interventions	
Achieving and sustaining outcomes	satisfactory
Leadership and management	satisfactory
Equality and diversity including arrangements to support vulnerability	satisfactory

## Overall effectiveness, including capacity to improve

Offenders received good information, advice and guidance that took into consideration the contents of sentence plans and the results of their initial assessment. The trust had met or exceeded all its targets for the referral of offenders to education since 2007 and had also increased the number of information, advice and guidance interventions. The initial assessment of offenders' learning needs was not always effective. Some external providers did not carry out a diagnostic assessment of offenders' needs and often, the results of their initial assessment were not used appropriately by tutors.

The trust delivered a wide, and well managed, range of unpaid work placements which recognised the skills developed by offenders. The quality of teaching and learning was overall satisfactory but some accommodation and learning resources did not facilitate learning. Support for offenders attending unpaid work was particularly good and offenders in the approved premise visited received good personal support. The education, training and employment offer was limited in meeting the needs of the different offenders. Learning plans were not used well in many education and training interventions to manage individual learning progress.

The trust had met or exceeded the nationally set sustained employment targets and its achievement of safety qualifications was good. Offenders in unpaid work

developed a good range of vocational skills and female offenders attending the women's course raised their self-esteem. The achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications and the attendance to some education and training courses were low.

The good joint working with community partners and other regional trusts clearly benefitted offenders. Staff benefitted from a wide range of training and development opportunities. Some of the trust's quality assurance processes needed further development. Data were insufficiently analysed to focus on the quality outcomes of qualifications. The promotion of equality of opportunity and safeguarding to offenders was satisfactory.

The trust demonstrated that it had a satisfactory capacity to improve. It had met or exceeded all its nationally set targets since the previous inspection. A very clear strategy had focused the management team well on securing the education, training and employment provision during recent funding changes. A comprehensive business plan highlighted the main areas for development in the education, training and employment service and the trust had already taken effective action to improve operational aspects of the service they offered. However, their self-assessment and quality improvement processes were not yet fully developed to provide an overall view of the quality of provision.

### **What does the Dorset Probation Trust need to do to improve further?**

- Fully analyse and use data to ensure that literacy and numeracy outcomes for learners are increased and that improvement plans contain challenging targets.
- Further develop quality assurance procedures such as the observations of staff delivering training and learning and the use of offenders' feedback to improve the quality of the training and education provision.
- Expand the education, training and employment provision and the range of accredited courses available to meet all offenders' needs.
- Effectively use self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes to ensure that the trust evaluates the overall education, training and employment provision in a self-critical way, involving its stakeholders appropriately in reaching reliable judgments.

### **Offender perspective - learning and employability as confirmed by inspectors**

Inspectors interviewed a total of 38 offenders as part of the inspection progress, individually or in groups. All offenders highly valued the support and guidance they received from the education, training and employment team. They had a good recall of the information they received during their induction and the emphasis placed on health and safety, and rules and regulations. Those attending unpaid work had a

good understanding of the opportunity to take up education or training for 20% of the hours in their order. Many offenders were appreciative of the skills gained on unpaid work and valued to the opportunity to gain vocational qualifications. Female offenders increased their levels of self-esteem and confidence by attending the women's course and offenders completing the catering course developed good cooking skills of commercial standards. Many offenders enjoyed attending the education and training courses although some they would have preferred to have more varied activities during the learning sessions. Some offenders felt that there were not enough courses available at certain probation offices and some found that there were few interventions that would increase their vocational skills and improve their employability prospects.

## **Main inspection report**

### **The quality of provision**

**Grade:  
satisfactory**

#### **Assessment and sentence planning**

The trust provided a good information, advice and guidance service for its offenders. Staff planned their interventions well and made good use of sensitive questioning techniques to establish barriers to employment such as health problems. They adequately took into consideration the contents of sentence plans and the results of initial assessment when offering advice to the offenders. Target setting was precise and measurable and staff made appropriate reference to previous action plans to ensure progress had been made.

The trust had exceeded its targets in relation to the number of offenders referred to education since 2007/08; it had also increased the number of information, advice and guidance interventions meeting all their targets since then. Offender managers had an adequate understanding of the training and education interventions on offer by the trust.

There was some ineffective use of initial assessment of offenders' learning needs. The trust carried out a check of learners' literacy and numeracy abilities and used a dyslexia indicator checklist although there was a heavy reliance on self-declaration of additional learning needs by the offenders. Very low numbers had been referred to specialist support for dyslexia. Links with the Bournemouth and Poole College had recently been set up to offer support to offenders with dyslexia needs. The trust planned to train their staff to increase their awareness about additional learning needs.

On referral, external providers carried out a more detail initial assessment of literacy and numeracy needs. Only one of the two providers conducted a diagnostic assessment following the initial assessment. The outcomes of the initial assessment were not used effectively by tutors to promote and accelerate learning.

## Implementation of interventions

The trust delivered a good range of unpaid work in urban and rural localities. Offenders worked well in placements and these clearly benefited the community. DPT had successfully increased the numbers of single placements and 55 offenders benefitted from these. Placements included offenders preparing meals for pensioners attending lunch clubs in the community. Partnership with a local prison had enabled development of playing and seating areas for families visiting the prison and areas to grow vegetables for use in the prison kitchen. A small, commercially operated cafe in the Poole probation office gave offenders good opportunities to develop internally accredited catering skills and helped improve their employment opportunities in the trade. Most offenders on placements received recognition of improved team working, communication, attendance and ability to follow instructions through accreditation in an employability certificate.

The quality of teaching and learning was overall satisfactory. In the better sessions, offenders participated particularly well. They freely asked questions to further their understanding beyond the session's aims and they clearly enjoyed learning. Dedicated training rooms provided a good learning environment with resources including data projection, flip charts and whiteboards. However, not all tutors made good use of these resources. Accommodation on some unpaid work placements was not wholly suitable as a learning environment. At one site, theory training was carried out in a windowless changing room without tables or heating. Offenders on decorating placements did not have enough decorating tools.

Support for offenders attending unpaid work was particularly good and it showed flexibility at meeting their individual needs. Placements were carefully planned according to each individual offender's restrictions and specific requirements. Good personal support was provided to offenders residing in the approved premise visited by inspectors. Offenders were provided with a wide range of help including specific referral to specialist agencies to help overcome problems and issues related to their offending behaviour.

The education, training and employment offer was limited in meeting the needs of the different offenders. Literacy and numeracy courses at entry level and courses for English speakers of other languages (ESOL) were not available. Certain rural geographical areas did not offer many of the courses delivered. The accredited vocational offer was very limited. However, a horticulture course had been introduced during the inspection week and plans were well advanced to introduce a retail qualification.

Learning plans were used ineffectively in many education and training interventions to manage individual learning progress. They were used effectively with offenders on unpaid work placements following employability courses, but did not reflect their learning styles and they did not receive a copy. Most offenders had a poor understanding of their use. The learning plans failed to use appropriate target setting to measure the progress offenders were making. Offenders' progress reviews lacked

sufficient detail to highlight what learning had taken place. Individual learning plans did not reflect whether any additional support had been offered to those offenders with reading and writing difficulties.

## **Achieving and sustaining outcomes**

**Grade:  
satisfactory**

The trust had met and exceeded the sustained employment targets set by the Ministry of Justice over the last three years. The catering unpaid work placements had been particularly successful. In the last 12 months, 50% of the offenders taking part in the Café 63 courses had gained employment in the catering trade.

The achievement of safety qualifications was good. Since 2008, over 200 offenders who started the health and safety qualification as part of their unpaid work placement achieved their award. Also, since the previous inspection, a total of 127 offenders had started and achieved their food safety qualification. CSCS card achievements had increased from 53% in 2008 to 72% in 2009 although the number of offenders starting the course had almost halved.

Offenders in unpaid work developed a good range of vocational skills. Those attending the lunch clubs projects improved the effectiveness of their communication and interpersonal skills with older people as well as learning valuable catering skills. They gained good skills in health and safety and many achieved an accreditation at level 1. In Café 63, offenders developed good commercial kitchen skills and a sound knowledge of food hygiene. Women attending the improving confidence course, saw their self-esteem raise and became particularly aware of their own strengths and how to apply them to enhance their employment prospects.

The achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications was low. It was not possible to make a fully accurate judgement on the achievement rate for the years 2008/09 using the data available. However, the achievement rate was low at 30% in 2009/10. In the last three years, the average number of qualifications achieved every year had declined.

Attendance to some education and training courses was poor. Attendance to literacy and CSCS card sessions was low at approximately 50%. Attendance to unpaid work placements was better at 70%. During the inspection week, one session was cancelled due to no offenders attending and poor attendance was observed in another. The trust had recognised the need to improve this and had recently put in place an action plan. However, it was too early to judge its effectiveness.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade:  
satisfactory**



The strong direction towards securing the education, training and employment service delivery, as a way of contributing to reducing re-offending, was clearly reflected in the service's strategy. The local and national priorities set by the Ministry of Justice had appropriately been included in the strategy. Managers had successfully handled recent funding changes and they had well advanced plans to support the developments needed to build effective relationships with the new contractual bodies.

Some good joint working with community partners demonstrated the trust's flexibility in their approach to meet the needs of individual offenders and to accredit some vocational aspects of unpaid work placements. The trust had effective relationships with Portland Young Offenders' Institute, which provided an unpaid work placement, and with other probation trusts in the region. The trust communicated well with its partners. However, it did not provide sufficient opportunities for all of them to meet to network, share best practice and be informed and consulted on the evaluation of the provision.

The trust had a comprehensive business and development plan for the education, training and employment provision. The trust made good use of a variety of meetings to monitor the provision and identify areas for improvement. It had taken effective action and successfully reduced the stand downs in unpaid work. The need to improve attendance to learning sessions, the avoidance of duplication during initial assessment and the review of the induction process to unpaid work were examples of the recent improvements brought about by timely reviews and good team work.

Staff accessed a wide range of training opportunities that further expanded their understanding of offender behaviour. They were also able to complete training on generic managerial skills that contributed to their development. The trust had demonstrated its commitment to education, training and employment by seconding and training the majority of unpaid work supervisors to integrate vocational skills into offenders' work placements.

Data had been used insufficiently to analyse quality outcomes and progress, particularly during the years 2007 to 2009. This had begun to improve but it was not fully developed yet. The trust had not measured the achievement of qualifications in a qualitative way by comparing the number of offenders who started a qualification with those who successfully achieved it. Data were not being systematically analysed to make meaningful comparisons of progress and achievement amongst the different groups of offenders. Data were not used well in many of the improvement plans to set up targets or illustrate progress.

Some of the quality improvement processes required further development. Few observations of teaching and learning had been carried out amongst the trust's own tutors; DPT did not carry out observations of teaching of their external training providers. The trust had little evaluative information on the quality of the teaching offenders received.

The trust had improved the learners' feedback system in the last year to increase the volume of comments and suggestions from offenders. However, some of the feedback had not yet been analysed and summarised into useful ideas for improvement. The trust had mostly agreed some operational improvements as a consequence of the comments received but feedback given on the quality of teaching had not always been followed up by actions for improvement.

The promotion of equality of opportunity by the trust was satisfactory. The trust had a comprehensive equality of opportunity policy and staff had increased their diversity awareness through training. In some unpaid work placements, there had been good attention paid to learners who spoke English as a second language by using interpreters and matching peer offenders who spoke the same languages. The trust emphasised diversity and safeguarding topics during the sessions observed. Offenders received appropriate information about equality and diversity during induction. Several marketing materials promoted the offenders' rights and responsibilities in relation to equality but they did not fully explore the concept of diversity and the offenders' diverse needs. The trust displayed a good understanding of diversity at strategic level by creating a women's course that responded to the specific needs of offenders in this group.

Staff had been adequately checked by the Criminal Record Bureau and had received adequate training on safeguarding vulnerable adults. The trust was meeting the government's current requirements towards safeguarding. Tutors clearly highlighted the right for all offenders to feel safe in the learning environment and reinforced the complaint procedures.

The self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes required further development. Although some staff were consulted during the process, stakeholders and partners had not been adequately involved. The trust's self-assessment report was made up of the individual self-assessment reports of its lead providers but it did not provide an overall view of the provision. The report contained mostly description and was insufficiently critical in assessing the quality of the provision. The quality improvement plan was comprehensive but insufficiently specific. It failed to highlight the agreed actions to improve the provision and its timelines remained vague.

### **Information about the inspection**

1. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and an additional inspector, assisted by the Head of Business Development and Offender Services at Dorset Probation Trust as co-ordinator, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of provider's most recent development plans, comments from the local Skills Funding Agency or other funding bodies, previous inspection reports, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors used a range of methods to gather the views of learners including group and individual interviews. They looked at questionnaires learners had completed on behalf of the trust. They also visited learning and information, advice and guidance sessions. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the trust offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)			
<b>Provider Name:</b>	Dorset Probation Trust	<b>Inspection No</b>	363118
<b>Learning types: 14 – 16:</b> Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; <b>16-18 Learner responsive:</b> FE full-time and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including E2E); <b>19+ responsive:</b> FE full- and part-time courses; <b>Employer responsive:</b> Train to Gain, apprenticeships <b>Blank Column:</b> insert Judicial Services or Nextstep as appropriate			

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>					
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>						
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>					
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	3					
<b>A. Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>3</b>					
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3					
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3					
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	3					
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2					
A3. How safe do learners feel?	3					
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	-					
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2					
<b>B. Quality of provision</b>	<b>3</b>					
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3					
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	4					
B3. How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2					
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3					
<b>C. Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>					
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2					
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>						
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3					
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3					
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3					
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4					
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3					

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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