

Surrey Probation Area

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Stephen Miller HMI

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Address: Bridge House
Flambard Way
Godalming
GU7 1JB

Telephone number: 01483 860191

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 area

Surrey Probation Area (Surrey Probation) is one of the smallest probation areas with a population of 1,085,200. Surrey Probation employs approximately 300 staff at five centres across Surrey in: Staines; Woking; Guildford; Godalming; and Redhill. Probation staff also work within in the five local prisons: HMPs Bronzefield; Send; Coldingley; Downview; High Down, and at an approved premises located in Guilford. In addition, staff are seconded to work with the Social Services Youth Offending Team in Woking and Leatherhead.

The strategic management of learning and skills in Surrey Probation is the responsibility of the Area Manager of Interventions who is directly responsible to the senior management team. A programmes manager is responsible for the coordination of the internal provision, contract management and liaison with regional and Surrey based partners. At any one time, around 2,200 offenders are served by Surrey Probation; their research shows that 50% of sentenced offenders are either employed or self employed when starting their order. Overall employment in Surrey is high. The proportion of minority ethnic residents within Surrey represent 5% of the population. The main Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) provider is Creating Futures who also contract with other providers across the area to provide opportunities for education and training. Creating Futures provides initial advice and guidance at each probation office. A range of unpaid work projects are available across the county with approximately 112,000 hours of unpaid work being completed annually.

From April 2010, Surrey Probation will merge with Sussex Probation to become part of a new Surrey and Sussex Probation Trust.

Information about the offender learning and employability providers:

Lead OLASS providers and their subcontractors	Number of learners on discrete provision	Types of provision
Creating Futures	Variable	Information, advice and guidance
Brooklands	11	Skills for Life
Guilford	variable	Skills for Life
East Surrey	7	Skills for Life
Nescott	Variable	Skills for Life
Other providers	Number of learners	Type of provision
Citizen's Advice Bureau	Variable	Information , advice and guidance
Jobcentre Plus	Variable	Information , advice and guidance
HMP Highdown	Variable	Horticulture
Surrey Care Trust (Swing bridge)	16	Conservation
Prince's Trust	Variable	

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

Summary report

Overall effectiveness of provision	inadequate
Capacity to improve	inadequate
Quality of provision	satisfactory
Assessment and sentence planning	
Implementation of interventions	
Achieving and sustaining outcomes	inadequate
Leadership and management	inadequate
Equality and diversity	satisfactory
Safeguarding	satisfactory

Overall effectiveness, including capacity to improve

Offenders had good access to information advice and guidance, provided by skilled staff. Good links were in place between education, training and employment workers and offender managers. The process for initial assessment of offenders' wider needs was not sufficiently thorough.

The range of unpaid work provided opportunities for offenders to access a variety of activities. However, the education, training and employment provision had insufficient capacity to ensure that offenders had good access to courses and waiting lists were in place for most courses. The learning and skills provision was insufficiently flexible to provide course for offenders who were unable to attend main college provision. Some opportunities enabled offenders to gain accreditation of work skills development in their community payback schemes, but most opportunities were not accredited and offenders' skills development was not sufficiently recognised.

Offenders' achievement on courses was poor. However, they developed good work skills on most unpaid work projects. Referrals to education, training and employment activities were high, but few offenders successfully started or completed courses. Surrey Probation had developed some specialist courses to tackle the wider requirements of particularly needy groups of offenders. The strategic development of the provision within the merged probation areas was at an early stage and staff were insufficiently clear about their roles and responsibilities. The provision had made little progress in resolving the areas for improvement found at the previous inspection in 2008 and quality assurance systems remained underdeveloped. The overall self-

assessment process was insufficient to be an effective tool for continuous improvement.

What does Surrey Probation Area need to do to improve further?

- Raise expectations, for the quality of the learning experience, by increasing the number of offenders that progress to, start on, complete and are successful on learning and skills courses and by improving the availability and the flexibility of learning and skills courses within the area.
- Develop and implement rigorous quality assurance processes for learning and skills including an effective overall self-assessment process to promote continuous improvement.
- Develop a system to recognise and record skills development through unpaid work.

Offender perspective - learning and employability as confirmed by inspectors.

A total of 25 offenders were interviewed as part of the inspection process, individually or in groups. Offenders appreciated being able to receive prompt information and guidance. They felt that they were treated with respect and valued the support they received from staff. Offenders living in approved premises valued the opportunity to develop independent living skills and could see how this would help them to resettle into the community. Most offenders were not sufficiently clear about opportunities available to improve their literacy and numeracy and wanted more help in finding employment. Offenders could recall their induction and found the information they received valuable but most were not aware that they could use 20% of their unpaid work for learning. Offenders on unpaid work found tasks well planned and structured, took pride in their work and could recognise the benefit to the community, particularly where projects benefited children or older people.

Main inspection report

The quality of provision

Grade: Satisfactory

Assessment and sentence planning

Offenders had good access to information, advice and guidance services at the start of their sentence. The proportion of offenders referred to this service was high. Information, advice and guidance advisers provided offenders with good opportunities to consider their training needs in individual interviews. Those offenders who volunteered could access further effective support to identify and apply for training opportunities and prepare for health and safety related qualifications such as the construction site certification scheme's operatives card. Information, advice and guidance advisers were located in local probation offices and

had good informal links with offender managers and access to relevant records, which they kept up to date.

Assessments of offenders' learning needs were insufficiently thorough. Advice and guidance was based on the results of the literacy and numeracy screening and other information supplied by offender managers. Few offenders completed a full assessment of their learning needs or other barriers to learning and employment. Offenders were often insufficiently clear about how to prioritise the range of learning, employability, and/or job-seeking skills they needed to tackle. Surrey Probation made very little use of specified court or supervision orders for education, training and employment. Offenders' involvement in learning and employability skills activities was based on voluntary agreements between the offender and their offender manager.

Implementation of interventions

Surrey Probation provided some good unpaid work projects to meet the needs of offenders. Group projects, particularly those based on environmental work, provided good opportunities for vocational training and the development of a good range of generic employability skills, such as team working and problem solving. All offenders on one project, managed by a local charity, completed one or more units towards a level 1 qualification in environmental studies. Similar opportunities were available to offenders on a project run by Surrey Probation, but uptake of the qualification was low. Increased use of a variety of single placements provided offenders with more opportunities for training and progress into work.

Employed offenders had equal access to information, advice and guidance, which was available in the evening and weekends. Around half of unpaid work projects were planned to take place at weekends to ensure that employed offenders could complete their order quickly. Surrey Probation had developed a significant number of external agency placements since the previous inspection. This had increased from 20% of the provision to 45%, providing greater flexibility in where and when offenders could be placed. Selection and risk assessment for this type of placement were effective and attendance rates good at 83%. Community payback managers had collaborated with a local college to develop qualifications for offenders using Train to Gain programmes; this development had been piloted but was yet to be introduced.

Offenders at the approved premises had individualised weekly timetables of activity. These activities included a limited number of learning and skills activities including courses in problem solving and cookery. Other provision, focused on preparing offenders for work, for example the return to work course, was no longer available. Systems to actively support offenders in their progress to employment were underdeveloped. The promotion of healthy living was satisfactory. Offenders' access to computers was limited.

Offenders requiring help with their literacy receive good support from accredited programme facilitators. Good links were in place between offender managers, information, advice and guidance workers and treatment managers who helped offenders with support for literacy before and during offending behaviour

programmes. Materials were adapted to be more sensitive to offenders who may have difficulty reading and some materials were produced specifically for dyslexic offenders. Facilitators were sensitive to identifying offenders' learning styles and programmes were developed to meet these needs. Facilitators were well prepared for the programmes they delivered, supported by offender profiles that included an assessment of need. These were reviewed with treatment managers before each programme to ensure that learning needs were met sensitively. However, identified learning styles were not shared with external providers. Treatment managers had some success in helping offenders directly access course at main colleges. Teaching, learning and coaching overall were satisfactory, with a range of strategies in place to motivate offenders. Individual learning plans were used satisfactorily.

Insufficient capacity was available to ensure access to appropriate education, training and employment interventions provision for offenders throughout the county. Many offenders, who needed learning and employability skills support, were referred to mainstream provision. Access was often inadequate. Offenders encountered many problems including courses that were: already full; not available at a relevant time or during holiday periods; with completion dates that extended well beyond the end of their order. Many offenders lacked the confidence and motivation needed to attend this type of provision; access for high risk and sex offenders' was very limited. The proportion of offenders who received effective support with their learning and employability skills and job-seeking skills was low.

Surrey Probation was not using unpaid work effectively to support training and employment. Offenders made little use of their unpaid work hours to carry out education, training or employment related activities. Probation staff were unclear of how or when they could apply this to motivate offenders to participate in learning. The promotion of the 20% rule, to use some unpaid work hours for education or training, was ineffective. Where offenders had improved their personal and generic employability skills, this was not recorded and they had insufficient evidence to support job applications.

Achieving and sustaining outcomes

Grade: Inadequate

Offenders on unpaid work projects had a high level of respect for their supervisors. Supervisors treated offenders respectfully and were skilled at working with this group. Supervisors worked well with offenders, helping them develop their personal skills. Offenders quickly gained confidence in the work they carried out and helped plan projects in an appropriate manner. Those who had not been employed learned work skills such as taking instructions, team work and problem solving. Offenders recognised their improved self confidence and self esteem. However, the skills developed by offenders and the progress they made was not sufficiently well communicated to offender managers.

Although Surrey Probation met its targets for referrals, most failed to result in offenders completing the courses to which they had been referred. The most recent data indicated that of 795 offenders referred to literacy and numeracy, only 29

achieved a qualification. A high number of referrals failed to start or complete their chosen courses.

Leadership and management

Grade: inadequate

'Equality and diversity, and arrangements to support offenders as vulnerable adults were satisfactory. Surrey Probation provided specific groups of offenders with good access to specialist learning and employability skills provision. Offenders recovering from drug abuse accessed programmes to support them progress into work. Specialist providers supported offenders with health related needs that restricted their employment prospects. Prolific and high risk offenders accessed a Surrey job match service and enhanced information, advice and guidance. Surrey Probation's mentoring scheme provided effective additional support where needed. A project for women offenders provided relevant information, advice and guidance and other services. However, a number of these projects had stopped taking new referrals and were scheduled to finish in the near future leaving uncertainty, at the time of the inspection, about what would replace them. Offenders felt safe and appropriate attention was paid to health and safety on unpaid work schemes visited by inspectors. Risk assessments were effectively shared with providers and partners. Providers and partners working with offenders completed Criminal Record Bureau checks and their staff had received training on working with vulnerable adults. Offenders with additional learning needs received sufficient support to achieve their chosen qualification.

Procedures to ensure the quality of the overall learning and skills provision were underdeveloped. The method of delivery of learning and skills in Surrey Probation had been changed in April 2009 with the appointment of a new provider. Systems to ensure the overall quality of learning and skills were not yet in place and relied mainly on the quality assurance of each of the respective partners, with no coordination or analysis of their findings to give a complete picture. Data were not being used as a tool to judge the overall quality of provision. Collected data were based on meeting targets and contract compliance and gave no clear indication of the quality of an offender's learning experience. The self-assessment process was not sufficiently formalised to be effective as a tool to drive continuous improvement. Many of the areas for improvement found at the last inspection had not been fully remedied.

The merger of Surrey and Sussex probation areas was imminent and work had been carried out to plan the education, training and employment provision over the two counties. Plans were in place to develop the provision and a management structure was in place. Plans had taken into account the imminent changes to the way offender learning will be funded. However, implementing these plans had yet to take place and, at an operational level, the roles and responsibilities of staff were insufficiently clear in identifying how the learning and skills provision will be developed.

Offender managers were clear about the referral process but had insufficient information about where offenders were referred to after initial information, advice

and guidance. They received information of differing quality from external providers on offenders' progress. Formal protocols were not in place to determine the type of information that should be provided to external providers.

Information about the inspection

1. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors assisted by the Surrey Probation's Head of Interventions as co-ordinator, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of provider most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, previous inspection reports, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors use a range of methods to gather the views of learners including group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the Surrey Probation. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk