

Derbyshire Probation Area

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 57584

Name of lead inspector: Sandra Summers HMI

Last day of inspection: 1 July 2010

Type of provider: Probation Area

Address: 18 Brunswood Road
Matlock Bath
Derbyshire
DE4 3PA

Telephone number: 01332 361200

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 area

Derbyshire Probation is, in terms of its budget, the twenty-third largest service in England. It acquired trust status in April 2010. The geographical area in which it operates is culturally, economically and demographically diverse. It includes eight district councils and the unitary authority of Derby. Over 12.5% of the population of Derby are from minority ethnic communities compared with 1.5% of the population of the rest of the county. Derbyshire Probation's caseload is 4,058 of which 90% are white and 88% men. About 46% have an identified education, training and employment need.

Derbyshire Probation has two local delivery units, one broadly based in the city and the other on the county. Education, training and employment are part of interventions and managed by one full-time and one part-time operational manager. A team of six dedicated work and learning officers deliver assessment and information advice and guidance, through a nextstep contract, to approximately 1000 offenders during the year. They also support offenders into education, training and employment activities and provide a link to employability services provided through European social funds. Derbyshire has developed two education, training and employment related specified activities to facilitate participation and improve employability. The standard requirement is 10 hours over five days and, for those offenders with enhanced arrangements, 40 hours over 20 days.

Derbyshire Probation works with a range of partners who deliver education, training and employment interventions, some on probation premises. The area has approved premises in Derby. Neither of the two prisons in the county, Sudbury and Foston Hall are local prisons.

Information about the offender learning and employability providers:

Lead providers and their subcontractors	Approximate number of learners on discrete provision during the week of the inspection	Types of provision
Derbyshire Probation – nextstep subcontractor	80	Information advice and guidance
Derbyshire Adult Education Service and Derby City Council Adult Learning Service	150	Literacy and numeracy from entry level 1 to level 2. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) – one class
Derbyshire Probation	26	Pre-placement work session

Lead providers and their subcontractors	Approximate number of learners on discrete provision during the week of the inspection	Types of provision
Other providers	40	Wide range of programmes including discrete college courses and Intensive Alternative to Custody programme

The following text is Ofsted's contribution to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's offender management inspection 2 report. A copy of the published inspection report can be found on

www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspect_reports/

Summary report

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade: satisfactory
------------------------------------	---------------------

Capacity to improve	Grade: satisfactory
---------------------	---------------------

	Grade descriptor
Quality of provision	good
Assessment and sentence planning	
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

Derbyshire Probation gave offenders effective and comprehensive initial advice and guidance. Pre-placement work sessions were well organised and comprehensive and offenders fully understood the requirements and opportunities for unpaid work. Staff placed a clear emphasis on education, training and employment in sentence planning.

Through good partnerships, Derbyshire Probation provided a wide range of opportunities for education, training and employment and unpaid work. Supervisors supported offenders well. The quality of teaching, training and learning varied widely as did planning to support individual learning. Providers gave offender managers insufficient information about learners' progress. There were too few education, training and employment activities in approved premises.

Offenders in unpaid work produced high standards of work, which clearly benefitted the local community. They enjoyed their work and were involved fully in their learning. However, achievements were low at 24%, although Derbyshire had met its target. The recording and accreditation of learning outcomes was insufficient.

Derbyshire Probation's strategy was clear, ensuring that education, training and employment had a high profile within the service. Education, training and employment staff were well supported. However, data were not used effectively to manage quality and improve the provision; clear targets were not set internally to ensure that all staff could prioritise their work. Links with employers were underdeveloped.

Derbyshire Probation had resolved many of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection and maintained strengths. However, quality improvement planning, including self-assessment needed further development. Equality, diversity and safeguarding arrangements were working well and were satisfactory.

What does Derbyshire Probation need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of management information to plan for quality improvements, effectively measure the performance of different groups of offenders and measure the performance of partners.
- Monitor, record and, where appropriate, accredit learners' development of employability, vocational and personal and social skills.
- Improve the collection of data from providers to communicate progress and achievement to offender managers for review purposes.

Offender perspective - learning and employability as confirmed by inspectors.

A total of 55 offenders were interviewed as part of the inspection process, individually or in groups. Those involved in unpaid work were generally very positive about the experience and could identify benefits both for themselves and for the local community. They valued challenging work and the opportunity to gain qualifications. Many thought these qualifications would help them get a job. Where accreditation was not available, learners expressed a wish to gain qualifications. Offenders appreciated the support they received from their offender managers, work and learning officers and tutors although a few felt their initial contact had involved too much form filling. However, they felt well informed and able to deal with barriers and problems. Some wanted more time with key members of staff. They improved

their levels of confidence and motivation. They liked the wide range of courses available and some returned to complete them after their court order had finished. Many appreciated the opportunities they had to work as volunteers and valued the training that supported them in this role. This had given some a real sense of self-worth and purpose. Offenders in approved premises were concerned about the reduction in their opportunities for education, training and access to more employment training and relevant qualifications.

Main inspection report

The quality of provision

Grade: good

Assessment and sentence planning

Staff at all levels strongly promoted education, training and employment opportunities as part of the service's strategy to reduce reoffending. Offender managers ensured that all offenders were screened for their Skills for Life needs. Education, training and employment activities were clearly identified in many sentence plans and referrals to programmes exceeded target.

Work and learning officers provided comprehensive initial advice and guidance for offenders. By using a range of motivational interviewing techniques effectively, they supported offenders well to identify and tackle barriers to employment and achieve their potential. They kept detailed records of offenders' progress and set them clear targets. Offenders and offender managers valued the officers, but in some offices, they could not provide sufficient appointments to meet all requests and needs.

Pre-placement work sessions were informative, supportive and inclusive. Staff, working closely with partner organisations, promoted education, training and employment activities well as part of unpaid work. Sessions were well structured and of a sufficient length and depth to ensure that all offenders understood and retained information to help them benefit fully from unpaid work. Health and safety were promoted well. Staff worked effectively with individuals to motivate them and assess their needs.

Staff with specialist training in dyslexia supported the provision in both the city and the county. Learners were referred to them for diagnostic assessment and support and they provided help and training for other staff.

Derbyshire Probation did not regularly receive information about offenders' prior education, training and employment activities or achievements from previous training organisations and prisons. Those offenders, who were not able to evidence their achievements, sometimes found it difficult to progress and had to retake assessments, which many found demotivating.

Implementation of interventions

Derbyshire Probation worked very effectively with its partners to provide a wide range of opportunities for education, training and employment and unpaid work.

These included a range of discrete college programmes, work with voluntary bodies, on site Skills for Life support and an intensive alternative to custody programme. Offenders had opportunities to develop skills in a range of vocational areas including: horticulture; woodworking; painting and decorating; recycling, including an optional information and communication technology qualification; and retail work including charity shops. Many programmes provided opportunities for nationally recognised qualifications and the development of useful work related skills. Derbyshire Probation had gained awards for successful projects such as Britain in Bloom for work in gardens and council awards for work in cemeteries. Staff, including work and learning officers, and partner providers strongly promoted volunteering activities to offenders. Some offenders became successfully involved in these activities and continued them after the end of their order. Staff made good use of internally arranged contracts such as nextstep and the European social fund mentoring programme 'REACH' to support learners.

Unpaid work supervisors supported offenders well. College staff appreciated the help they gave to learners and staff on college programmes. Many were skilled and qualified in the relevant subject area and worked closely with offenders, providing valuable support and improving their motivation and attendance.

Probation and providers' staff were appropriately skilled and qualified and understood well the barriers faced by offenders. Many probation staff had experience of unemployment and job seeking and used this effectively to improve offenders' motivation and gain their trust. They were enthusiastic about their work and provided good role models.

Although most teaching and learning was good or better, some was inadequate. Tutors' support for some individual and small groups of learners, with entry level literacy needs, was outstanding. In these classes, tutors used a wide variety of multi-sensory activities to successfully engage and motivate reluctant learners. However, in the poorer sessions, tutors did not sufficiently plan to meet individual learning needs. The work was too difficult for many learners and tutors did not adequately support those who were struggling. Only one class was available for ESOL learners.

The quality and use of individual learning plans was variable. Targets in individual learning plans on Skills for Life programmes were insufficiently challenging. Learners on some college programmes had no individual learning plan. Many tutors used individual learning plans largely for recording rather than setting targets and planning future learning. However, work and learning officers set clear and achievable targets on skills action plans developed through nextstep interviews.

Generally, offender managers worked well with work and learning officers to support offenders. Communications were less satisfactory when staff were not based in the same office and did not meet regularly. A few offender managers did not effectively promote the 20% allowance for education, training and employment activities in unpaid work hours.

Although offender managers received prompt reports on learners' attendance, many received insufficient information from providers. Offender managers often relied on offenders to tell them about their progress and they did not have a clear understanding of the standard of offenders' learning, personal effectiveness or

behaviour. It was difficult for offender managers to judge the effectiveness of referrals or to resolve problems quickly enough.

Derbyshire Probation provided insufficient activities and education, training and employment opportunities in approved premises. Changes in funding had recently led to the provider withdrawing the programme. Staff offered a limited programme of activities but there was insufficient provision to meet the Skills for Life needs of the residents.

Achieving and sustaining outcomes

Grade:
satisfactory

Offenders achieved high standards of work in unpaid work projects. They developed good and useful skills and their work clearly benefited the local community. For example, they made benches, notice boards and equipment for children's play areas and renovated amenities and cleared derelict sites. They took pride in their work and gained high levels of job satisfaction and a strong work ethic. Some offenders involved in the intensive alternative to custody programme developed high levels of confidence, self-worth, and good mentoring skills, which they used effectively through voluntary work.

Learners enjoyed their training. They became very engaged in learning sessions and expressed real enjoyment in the purposeful work they were doing. They recognised and appreciated the skills of their tutors and supervisors and the support they gave to develop offenders' readiness and stamina for employment.

Derbyshire Probation had reached their target for the number of achieved qualifications. However, although it was in line with the regional average, the proportion of offenders' achieving qualifications was low at 24%. Some offenders who were referred to Skills for Life provision did not have sufficient time on their order to complete a qualification.

Although many offenders developed good employability and personal and social skills staff did not record or accredit these and offenders did not have a record of their progress to support their CV development and job seeking. Providers did not offer accreditation for the good vocational skills developed in some areas, for example the woodworking programme.

Leadership and management

Grade:
satisfactory

Derbyshire Probation had a clear strategy for the delivery and development of education, training and employment provision. Staff at all levels within the service understood and articulated the importance of such interventions in reducing reoffending. The strategy was supported by a detailed operational plan, which identified key action points and included an analysis of risk including uncertainties in the continuation of funding.

Partnership arrangements were strong. Derbyshire Probation had developed a wide range of partnerships working with them effectively to meet a range of offenders' needs. A particularly productive relationship with the adult education services in the city and the county delivered Skills for Life programmes on probation sites. Good and developing links with Jobcentre Plus were in place.

Work and learning officers were enthusiastic about their work and gave very good wide-ranging support to offenders. They had good and relevant experience, access to useful training and were well qualified. Some had useful experience as offender managers. Unpaid work supervisors were also well supported and had access to comprehensive training. Staff met regularly and were generally well informed and supported.

Unpaid work projects were well planned and managed. They were carefully researched and risk assessed for their suitability and purposefulness. Materials, resources and costings were carefully planned and agreed. Projects made a significant use of recycled materials and strongly promoted sustainability. The quality of the work offenders produced was carefully checked.

Arrangements for equality and diversity and safeguarding arrangements to support offenders as vulnerable adults were satisfactory. Derbyshire Probation had a comprehensive single equalities scheme and action plan and a range of suitable equality impact assessments for education, training and employment activities. All staff had completed relevant training in equality, diversity and safeguarding and received regular updating. Staff promoted equality and diversity well in teaching sessions, including the pre-placement work session and in unpaid work. Offenders said they felt safe. Relationships within teaching and work groups, and within the probation office, were respectful. All learners signed a learning contract, which underlined their duty to respect individual differences and the needs of others. Equality and diversity and safeguarding were promoted well in probation offices with leaflets and posters, displaying information. However, Derbyshire Probation did not have sufficient data on learners' achievements to be able to identify, analyse or plan to reduce inequalities in the performance of different groups.

The use of data to manage quality and improve the provision was ineffective. Derbyshire Probation collected data to ensure that it achieved its external targets. However, the information was not sufficiently accurate or comprehensive to help staff to understand and manage the range of provision and the performance of different providers. Derbyshire Probation's use of self-assessment was underdeveloped. The service collected and collated learner feedback but did not analyse it sufficiently to identify and plan actions for improvement. Derbyshire Probation was over dependent on the quality assurance systems of providers and was, for example, not aware of the wide range of quality in teaching and learning.

Many of the staff at operational levels did not have clear targets. They worked largely to externally generated targets, many of which related to an increasing and changing range of different funding streams and contracts. Many staff spent a significant amount of time on the bureaucratic demands of projects and found it difficult to determine their priorities and use their time effectively.

Although Derbyshire Probation had a wide range of unpaid work opportunities, the service had too few active links with employers. A European social funded project was designed to improve this but had so far had limited impact. The development of good links with Jobcentre Plus did not provide offenders with opportunities for work trials and work placements.

Information about the inspection

1. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by Derbyshire Probation's Interventions Manager as co-ordinator, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of provider most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, 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. They also visited learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from a number of partners and a range of programmes used by offenders.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

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