

Preventing Re-offending - progress report

Decisions

1. *Members are asked to agree actions proposed to take this work forward to its next stage as set out in paragraph 17 of this report.*

Actions Required

2. *As set out in this report*

Action by: *Preventing re-offending project team*

13 March 2006

Preventing Re-offending - progress report and proposals for further action

Summary

1. *This report informs members of action taken by the team responsible for the 'preventing re-offending' intervention to progress the objectives set out in the LGA report 'Going Straight' and seeks endorsement for proposed further action.*

Background

2. *On 12 September that Board agreed a set of ambitions for the coming year and key priority areas for action targeted at making these a reality. One of these was to reduce the rate of re-offending with the key interventions for this being identified as:*

- *Working with partners, including the IDeA, to refine and promote key recommendations in the LGA report 'Going Straight' at local level.*
- *Develop, with the National Offender Management Services (NOMS) a model for local authorities' and NOMS engagement and conduct a pilot in one region and*
- *Promote the message in 'Going Straight' to local government and partners*

'Going Straight'

3. *The LGA's 'Going Straight' report, published in 2005, was a major study into the ways in which local government could lead the work designed to reduce levels of offending and re-offending. Key recommendations within the report were:*

- *The criminal justice agencies alone were not able to provide or to guarantee, effective resettlement for prisoners*
- *The problem of lack of through care from prison to the community was significant. Key to successful transition is the need for an integrated multi-agency approach drawn from health, police, probation, prisons, the local authority, Jobcentre Plus, housing associations and other agencies.*
- *Local authorities should consider what opportunities they had to prevent offending and reduce re-offending by targeting their own services – notably housing (including benefits), education, social services, employment (including as employers in their own right), community development/regeneration, leisure and community safety.*
- *Local authorities should be given a properly funded leadership role to co-ordinate the work of local partners in providing support to offenders returning to their communities.*
- *strongly supported the policy of reducing re-offending through the provision of a comprehensive and coherent range of support services for offenders and ex-offenders, designed to ensure their successful re-integration into the community.*

The National Offender Management Service

4. *The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was set up in 2004 in response to an independent review of the correctional services by Patrick Carter which concluded that there should be a radical reform of the way in which offenders were managed. The central concepts of NOMS are:*

- *The assignment of a single offender manager to each offender from pre-sentencing to post-release.*
- *The creation of Regional Offender Managers who would be responsible for assessing the whole range of services required for offenders (prison, probation and other support services) and for commissioning these.*
- *The introduction of the concept of contestability for all offender management services.*
- *The creation of a planning framework consisting of the NOMS Five Year Strategy, the Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan, the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan and regional reducing re-offending action plans.*
- *The identification of seven key areas of support or 'pathways' that will assist offenders to reintegrate into the community. These are:*
 - *Accommodation*
 - *Education training and employment*
 - *Health, drugs and alcohol*
 - *Finance, benefit and debt*
 - *Children and families*
 - *Attitudes, thinking and behaviour*

5. *'Going Straight' had expressed concern about the regional focus of NOMS and the lack of recognition of the key role that local government could play in coordinating the commissioning of a range of support services.*

Action taken since September 2005

6. *The following action has been taken since the Board meeting agreed the key interventions for preventing re-offending.*

North West of England Seminar 11 November 2005

7. *A seminar was held in Bolton on 11 November 2005, at the launch of the NW Reducing Offending Action Plan, to promote the messages from 'Going Straight' to a local authority and NOMS audience. The regional action plans represent a central element in the NOMS planning process, operating within the framework of the NOMS Five Year Strategy, the Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan and the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan.*

Launch of the Civic Society Alliance – 22 November 2005

8. *The LGA was represented at the launch of the NOMS Civic Society, Corporate and Faith/voluntary and community sector alliances. These alliances are being created and developed to assist in achieving the aim of reducing re-offending.*

9. *Initially it was not completely clear how the government intended the Civic Alliance, which concentrated on work with local government, would work in practice. Concerns were raised that this would be a separate, parallel initiative that could confuse the development of the NOMS/local government relationship. In fact it has become increasingly clear that the 'civic*

alliance' is one and the same as this initiative and present discussions with the government are progressing on that basis.

Response to the consultation paper on reform of Probation Boards

10. *In November 2005 the government published proposals for the reform of Probation Boards that would see the Boards replaced by Trusts whose primary purpose would be to prepare to compete for the provision of probation services against other providers. Were the bid to be unsuccessful the Trust would be wound up. The LGA expressed concern about the proposals, the principal points made in our response being :*

- *loss of meaningful local accountability for offender management services*
- *the proposed commissioning model runs counter to current moves to strengthen horizontal accountabilities and multi-agency partnership working, via Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).*
- *the contractualised model of service delivery may introduce inflexibilities, and hamper responsive partnership working, innovation, and sharing of sensitive data, at a time when councils, police, health services, employment services, and other local agencies are working more closely than ever before.*

11. *Our response proposed the following way forward:*

- *localities should be encouraged to build offender management targets into the 'safer and stronger' block of LAAs, working with Government Offices and ROMS on the basis of a regional needs analysis or strategy.*
- *as with the 'economic development and enterprise' block of LAAs, LSPs would normally need to work across boundaries and to look upwards, to the sub-regional and regional level, to develop coherent approaches to offender management. This would not prevent LAAs providing the vehicle for injecting local ideas and local context, particularly in terms of joint working on 'upstream' or preventative measures involving education and youth services, employment services, police and health services.*
- *existing probation boards should be reconfigured, alongside YOTS and CDRPs, as part of the sub-structure of over-arching LSPs.*
- *a 'duty to co-operate' would apply in the same way to probation boards and the probation service, as to other local statutory partner agencies involved in LSPs and LAAs. This would reinforce collective horizontal accountability and joint working.*
- *that competition and 'contestability' be designed to widen service provision, such as profiled multi-year targets set for probation boards, determining the percentage of services to be provided through third sector or commercial providers (i.e. a model similar to that applied for social services commissioning). Such targets could be varied regionally, and over time, reflect the maturity of a currently undeveloped market.*

12. *The proposals attracted widespread opposition, and although the government has said that it intends to go ahead with the changes, they were not, as expected, included in the provisions of the Police and Justice Bill, published on 25 January.*

Building alliances with key partners

13. *An initial meeting with key organisations (Concern, Probation Boards Association, International Centre for Prison Studies, Clinks and the Prison Reform Trust) has been held to*

explore the possibility of creating a coalition of partners that would lobby government in support of the implementation of recommendations made in 'Going Straight' in particular by

- *Producing a short publication that will highlight these messages*
- *Creating innovative solutions as an alternative to prison*
- *Developing local models for the planning and delivery of support for ex-offenders, with the local authority taking with lead within the framework of local strategic partnerships, local area agreements and crime and disorder reduction partnerships*

14. *The next meeting designed to explore further action will be held on 7 March, and an oral report of the proceedings will be given to members. Members are requested to approve action to take this proposal forward.*

Government/LGA seminar – 1 March 2006

15. *This seminar was a major event, requested by the Home Secretary and designed to raise awareness of the messages in 'Going Straight' at senior ministerial level and to gain commitment to joint working between NOMS the LGA and local government. The seminar was attended by the Home Secretary, Baroness Scotland, Minister of State for the Criminal Justice and Offender Management, Fiona Mactaggart, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and from the LGA Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, Cllrs Bryony Rudkin, Graham Brown, and James Kempton, with senior NOMS, Home Office and LGA officials.*

16. *The LGA was successful in gaining agreement or acknowledgement from ministers on the following issues:*

- *good relationships between NOMS and councils (particularly employment, housing, education) were important to delivery the NOMS five year strategy;*
- *the central role that should be played by LAAs in planning, delivering and resourcing services at local level*
- *that the way forward was not to set up new partnerships but build on existing structures and the need to align targets (including between crime reduction and reducing re-offending targets);*
- *the importance of raising the profile of the work with local authorities;*
- *agreed to support a (Home Office, LGA, SOLACE) East Midlands demonstration project, which is expected to produce a local toolkit to help developing alliances with examples of good practice from around the region (and nationally) and suggestions of mechanisms such as using Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and LAAs*
- *that the possibility should be examined of setting up further demonstration projects in other regions.*

Future action

17. *It is proposed that work now continues on the following key areas*

- *Developing a strong alliance with partner organisations to promote the role of local authorities in preventing re-offending*
- *Working with NOMS to support the outcomes of the East Midlands demonstration project, and identifying other areas where further demonstration projects can be mounted*

- *Developing a robust but flexible model through which support for ex-offenders can be planned and delivered at local level, with local authorities taking the lead within the framework of Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.*
- *Ensuring adequate funding for these activities*
- *Taking action to raise the profile of local authorities work to reduce re-offending*

Implications for Wales

The NOMS delivery Plan reflects the work of NOMS and partners in England. The same principles and broad approach are being applied in Wales. NOMS is working in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government to reduce the risk of reoffending in Wales.

Financial/Resource Implications

No additional resource requirements have been identified at present.

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