



**Safer Derby:**  
**Evaluation of Derby Prolific and other  
Priority Offender Scheme**  
**An Executive Summary**

Research Study Conducted by Ipsos MORI for  
Derby Community Safety Partnership

**Ipsos MORI**

Derby  
Community Safety Partnership

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# Contents

Background to the research	<b>1</b>
Aims of the evaluation	<b>3</b>
Methodolgy	<b>3</b>
Main findings	<b>4</b>
Successes and areas for improvement	<b>7</b>

This executive summary gives a brief overview of the background of the Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPO) Scheme and the evaluation carried out by Ipsos MORI in 2006. It also highlights the key findings from the research and concludes with a round up of successes and areas for improvement.

# Background to the research

Prolific and other Priority Offenders have been an important area of focus for the current government. This is primarily because research has indicated that a small number of offenders are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime. As a result, the government launched the PPO programme to reduce offending amongst this particular group of offenders.

## The schemes involve three strands;

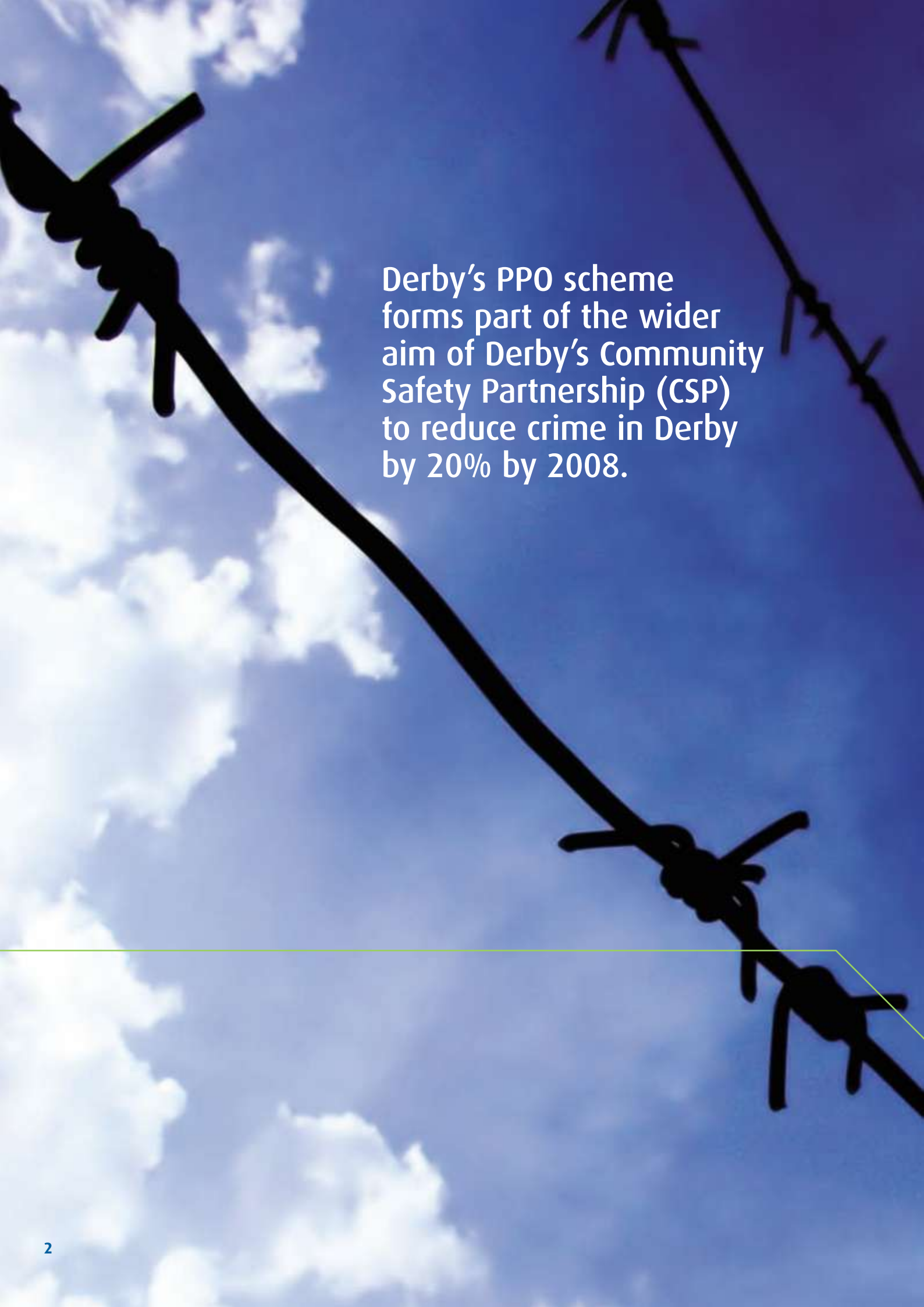
1. **Prevent and Deter** - Aiming to stop young people from engaging in offending behaviours and graduating to become the prolific offenders of the future.
2. **Catch and Convict** - Aiming to prevent PPOs from offending through apprehension and conviction, and through licence enforcement, by ensuring a swift return to the courts for those PPOs continuing to reoffend.
3. **Rehabilitate and Resettle** - Aiming to rehabilitate PPOs who are in custody or serving sentences in the community through closer working between all relevant agencies and continued post-sentence support.

*(Home Office, 2004)*

Derby's PPO scheme forms part of the wider aim of Derby's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to reduce crime in Derby by 20% by 2008. It was therefore deemed paramount that Derby take stock of the scheme's progress and confront barriers to further success. The CSP commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct an evaluation of the scheme, founded on the national evaluation conducted by the Home Office.

This document summarises the results of an evaluation by Ipsos MORI of the Derby PPO. The Scheme was launched nationally in 2004 to identify offenders that pose the most harm to communities and provide a consistent framework for effective local partnership working to reduce PPOs' offending. Eighty prolific offenders were originally identified as committing the highest proportion of crime and at the time of the evaluation 136 PPOs had participated in the Scheme.





Derby's PPO scheme forms part of the wider aim of Derby's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to reduce crime in Derby by 20% by 2008.

# Aims of the evaluation

## The key aims of the research were to:

- 1) explore the local crime levels in Derby in relation to the scheme, although direct impact cannot be established
- 2) assess the impact the scheme has had on offending behaviour, drug misuse and related problems of those targeted
- 3) examine the extent to which the scheme has met its aims
- 4) identify successes of the scheme and areas for improvement
- 5) determine the scheme's added value in terms of partnership working and information exchange
- 6) assess the scheme's future potential.



## Methodology

There have been numerous evaluations of these types of schemes but few have managed to robustly establish any impact on reoffending or criminogenic needs. The methodology used in the current evaluation is not as robust as a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) design, or Propensity Score Matching, but it is more advanced than many of these evaluations as a matched comparison group is used alongside survival analysis. The PPOs and “non-PPOs” were matched on characteristics including age at selection for the PPO scheme, age at first offence and number of previous offences.

### The following methods were applied to provide a holistic view of the Scheme:

- **Literature Review** - summarising findings of the key research studies to develop understanding of “what works” with this particular group of offenders.
- **Analysis of Secondary Data** - looking at police recorded crime statistics to ascertain any effect on patterns of offending.

- **Analysis of project management statistics** - looking at case record data for descriptive statistics on the type of offender on the scheme, types of offence, conviction count and convictions in different offence types.
- **Semi-Structured interviews with PPOs on the scheme** - we conducted ten interviews with PPOs (a mix of those in custody and in the community) on their experiences of the scheme.
- **Semi-Structured interviews with service providers and Criminal Justice System (CJS) representatives** - We conducted ten interviews with a range of staff with agencies involved in the scheme.

The qualitative elements (interviews with staff and offenders) provide anecdotal evidence of the Scheme's success on the ground and suggestions for improvements from those closest to the Scheme. The quantitative elements provide descriptive detail about the Scheme, and compliment qualitative evidence of its impact by providing a robust measure of the Scheme's affect on offending patterns.

# community:safety

# Main findings

## Profile of PPOs on the scheme

The profile of the Derby PPOs is similar to that of the profile from the national evaluation (Home Office, 2004) regarding the age at first offence.

The age of referral to the scheme (average age of 28 years old) is higher than the national average of 25 years - showing that the Derby scheme is targeting PPOs later than the national average. It is therefore possible that PPOs that are on the scheme may have already passed their period of "peak" offending<sup>1</sup>.

Derby PPOs with recorded arrests have a higher average number of arrests in their criminal careers than PPOs nationally. This signifies that the targeting criteria used on the scheme is selecting appropriate PPOs.

Derby PPOs are predominantly arrested for burglary or theft from or of a vehicle. There is strong evidence to support that the scheme is targeting the correct PPOs to meet Derby CSP's objective in reducing acquisitive crime.

Derby PPOs are less "versatile" than PPOs nationally, having on average committed offences in five out of the 12 main crime types in their criminal careers, compared to seven nationally.

## Impact of the scheme

Statistical analysis of project management statistics indicates that the scheme is successfully reducing offending behaviour amongst the PPOs that are targeted.

Derby PPOs are significantly less likely to re-offend than a matched group of non-PPOs, hand-picked for the analysis on the basis of their similar offending characteristics. The percentage of re-offenders was significantly higher for non-PPO offenders (78%) than PPO offenders (50%), and the (estimate) mean re-offending time for PPO offenders is also more than double that of non-PPO offenders (315 days vs. 128 days).<sup>2</sup>

Evidence shows that the Catch and Convict strand is working effectively, as arrest rates for Derby PPOs peak just prior to their referral. The data suggests strong partnership working between the scheme and police.

Crime in Derby has decreased substantially over the period before and after the scheme, although this trend follows similar trends nationwide. Offences specifically targeted by the scheme (burglary, robbery, vehicle crime) have fallen faster than crime overall, however, it is not possible to directly attribute any decrease directly to the scheme due to methodological challenges.

70% of all Derby PPOs have been placed on drugs intervention programmes and 43% into suitable accommodation, since the start of the scheme.

## Views of offenders and staff

Ipsos MORI conducted 20 depth interviews in total: ten interviews with staff and ten with offenders. Views represented here can therefore be said to be indicative rather than representative of all staff and offenders.

## Targeting and selection

**For targeting and selection to work successfully, the following criteria must be met:**

- a robust matrix with selection criteria must be designed and adhered to, reflecting Derby's offence priorities
- a partnership approach to identifying and selecting offenders
- offenders must be aware of their inclusion in the Scheme, and what it entails.

A robust selection matrix has been designed featuring criteria such as local crime concerns, number of convictions and severity of offence. It is mainly Derby CSP and the police that lead on the selection of offenders, and Scheme staff and most of the PPOs feel that the Scheme is targeting the most suitable people in the city.

All of the PPOs interviewed are aware they are on the PPO Scheme. They received a letter explaining the Scheme when they were first selected, which most found helpful. Most of the offenders understand why they were selected for the Scheme. However, those graded green and amber on the traffic lights system are more amenable to selection than those graded red.



<sup>1</sup> However, it is possible that this higher than average referral age is due to the fact that this evaluation, and indeed the Derby scheme, do not classify offenders on the Prevent and Deter strand, or those on ASBOs, as PPOs. These offenders are generally younger which would reduce the average referral age.

<sup>2</sup> However, a number of caveats including the small number of matched pairs, the effect of crime levels, and the matching process are highlighted in the full report. There is also a variation in the arrest data trends between the Derby scheme and the national evaluation. This may be due to the time when the adjusted selection criteria used for the scheme was amended and implemented. It may also be due to the high number of PPOs on the scheme in custody.

## Premium service in the community

### A Premium service in the community requires:

- enhanced and bespoke intervention
- strong links between the Scheme and service providers
- fast tracking for PPOs in the criminal justice system
- successful intervention programmes – in particular:
  - drug treatment
  - accommodation
  - employment and training
  - financial support.

All staff feel that the fast tracking within the Criminal Justice System: custody and interventions, is the most important component of the scheme. All agencies and service providers offer a premium service to PPOs - usually by increasing the intensity of appointments, however, the more chaotic PPOs find this number of appointments “too much” or “difficult.”

Staff believe there are strong links between the scheme and service providers. They recognise the challenges in making these appointments for the more chaotic PPOs. In response they try to coordinate these appointments to limit time and establish a routine.

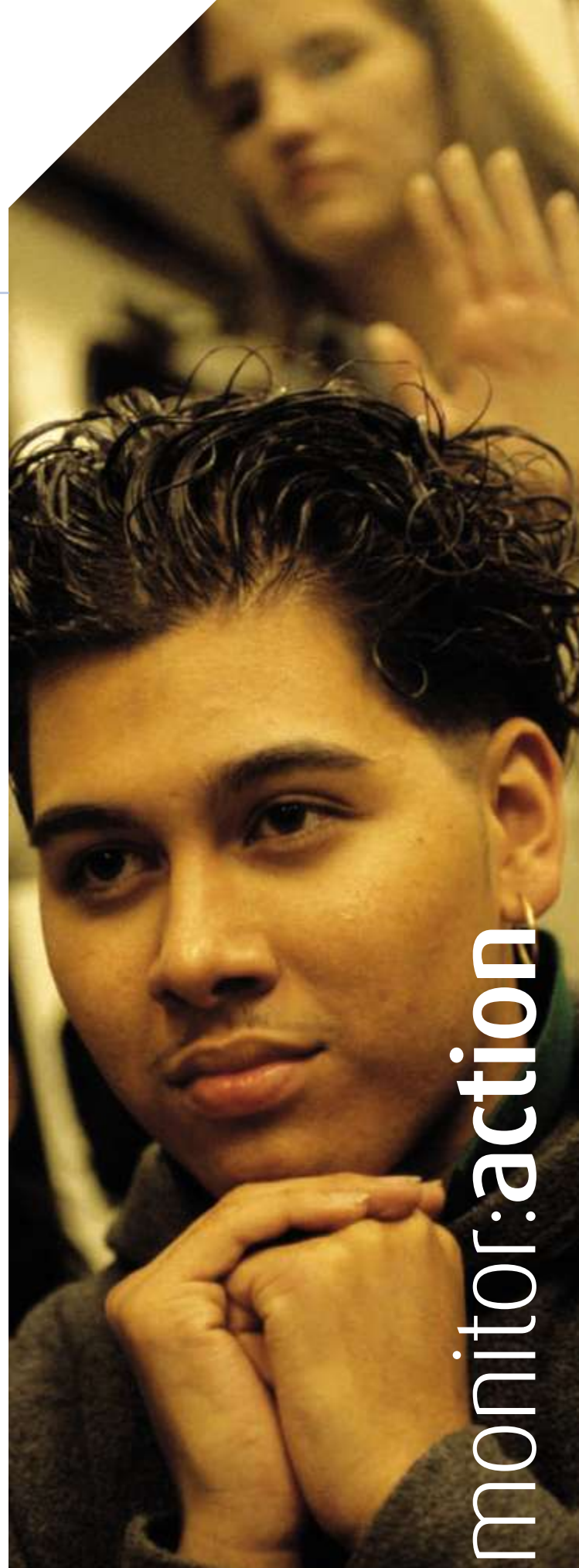
Staff recognise the importance of fast tracking PPOs into court - when they reoffend or breach the scheme. However, this is an element some staff feel could be improved - as they sometimes do not notice the difference between this “premium” service and normal service.

All staff and PPOs recognise the link between drug abuse and offending - and therefore the importance of drug treatment. All staff and PPOs stressed the high standard of the drug treatment received and the importance of this for the PPOs.

Staff and PPOs also recognise the importance of suitable accommodation and highlighted “Smartsteps” and the work they do to support the PPOs. Concerns were cited regarding the shortage of drug-free accommodation by staff and PPOs. PPOs feel living in drug free accommodation can make relapse more likely and increase police attention.

Employment and training support is provided to some of the PPOs, however most feel this could be improved and that there is not enough support in this area. This is similar to the lack of financial support received when PPOs leave prison. Staff recognise this latter finding, and believe there should be more support from DWP and the Job Centre.

PPOs are generally happy with the interventions they receive whilst on the project, but most believe the support offered by the staff on the scheme and the regime is the most important aspect.



# Main findings (cont.)

## Premium service in custody

### Success criteria for a premium service in the custody:

- effective sentence planning
- adequate contact between the prison office and PPO
- consistency of service following transferrals to or from other schemes.

Staff and PPOs find the inclusion of a member of prison staff on the scheme very important. This has primarily helped PPOs introduction to the scheme and effective sentence planning.

However, it is more difficult when PPOs are transferred to other prisons and sometimes this means they are not receiving this premium service. This may be because it is too far for the prison officer to travel.

## Multi-agency working

### Success criteria:

- effective inter-agency communications
- data-sharing (on PPOs) and adherence to data protection
- clarity of responsibilities
- regular meetings and feedback from Steering Group
- co-location of staff where necessary.

Most staff feel that the scheme has a good multi-agency working ethos. All staff and most PPOs were very positive towards the inter-agency working between police and probation. The evaluation did find however, that the rehabilitative strand of the scheme could benefit from the involvement of some of the other local agencies.

- both staff and PPOs feel it is necessary to have involvement from Job Centre, DWP (benefits) and Social Services.
- it is also felt by some staff that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) could have a greater input.
- smart Steps are involved - an agency dedicated to finding accommodation for drug users, they also house PPOs, very successfully.

Many staff on the PPO Scheme were inherited from its original Persistent Offender Project status and so brought the Scheme valuable historical knowledge. However, they do feel that the Scheme would benefit from increased staff capacity.

Data sharing is reported as being effective by staff - as several data sharing protocols are in place. There is also data sharing with service providers which is very positive. Although, data sharing with service providers can sometimes be difficult surrounding client confidentiality.

However, many staff feel a data sharing protocol should be drawn up between DWP to complete the holistic approach. Staff on the scheme have been trying to organise this with DWP for a long time and many find this frustrating.

Generally, the communication channels for information sharing seem to be working very well. However, some staff reported that a more formal channel was needed when communicating license conditions to service providers as this is sometimes missed. A couple of members of staff feel that regular operational meetings would help to resolve these issues as they arise.

## De-selection

### Success criteria focus around clear guidelines on:

- criteria for de-selection
- who is and is not de-selected
- whether to inform PPOs when they are de-selected.

At the time of the evaluation, very few PPOs have been de-selected so there was less clarity about this stage amongst staff and PPOs. Most PPOs are aware they can be deselected off the scheme but are not sure how this happens.

There is also confusion amongst the staff regarding the procedure for de-selection. Some think that PPOs are informed when they are deselected. Others know that PPOs are not to be informed.

## Resources

Most of the staff feel that the number of PPOs on the Scheme at the moment is just about acceptable with current resources. The Scheme implements a traffic light system to prioritise those offenders who need the most support or are most at risk of reoffending. This enables agencies to focus on the more chaotic PPOs, the red PPOs.

While launching the national PPO framework, the Government announced it would not contribute any additional funding. However, some staff feel the government should give extra funding to run the Scheme as they feel the amount of work involved in setting up and running the intensive, Premium Service is not recognised.





## Successes and areas for improvement

This section uses the best practice informed by previous evaluations, and findings from this evaluation to identify perceived successes of the scheme and areas for improvement.

### Targeting criteria and selection matrix

The Derby scheme use a matrix system to select their PPOs. This is targeting the right offenders. However, the matrix and selection criteria should be reviewed regularly to ensure that local priorities are targeted and the views of staff are regularly explored.

The procedures in place to inform offenders they are on the project are working well. It is important to ensure that all PPOs continue to receive written notification so they have information to refer to, especially for those PPOs in custody.

### Breaking down barriers

Ensuring that work is done with the PPOs to make them feel comfortable has been shown to be important in previous evaluations. The Derby scheme is flexible with regards to the work that is done with the PPOs. Staff visit PPOs houses, and work in the community. This is important to build a relationship between the scheme staff and the PPOs.

It is also important to get a good balance between work done in the community and custody. Previously, similar schemes have focussed primarily on the premium service in the community, but the Derby schemes premium service offered to PPOs in prison is an important part of the scheme.

### Interagency working and information sharing

Most staff feel that the scheme has a good multi-agency working ethos. All staff and most PPOs were very positive towards the inter-agency working between police and probation. Staff and PPOs especially felt the partnership working between probation and the police to be of vital importance.

Regular meetings have been proven to enhance interagency working. The scheme regularly holds meetings to share information and this has enhanced interagency working and information sharing.

### Data sharing is reported as being effective by staff. However there are several ways staff believe this should be improved:

- more formal channels of communication or a protocol could be issued to assure everyone that the client confidentiality/data sharing issues has been addressed
- the scheme should persist in trying to draw up a datasharing protocol with DWP to complete the holistic approach
- there should be more formal channels to share license condition information between the PPO team and service providers
- more formal channels to communicate issues or decisions made in the strategic meetings
- attendance of steering groups meeting by the CPS and the Job Centre.

It has been previously suggested that co-locating staff in the same offices would improve information sharing. This is a view that some of the staff on the scheme also hold. However, all staff recognise that would be a costly option.



### Prisons - Premium Service and relations

Staff and PPOs find the inclusion of a member of prison staff on the scheme very important. This has primarily helped PPOs introduction to the scheme and effective sentence planning. Staff feel that the Prison Officer helps to ensure a premium service is offered to PPOs in custody. However, it will be important to ensure PPOs that are transferred receive the same standard of service. This is also important for information sharing, to enable easy access to the prison databases.

### Premium Service - Community

All staff feel that the fast tracking within the CJS, to custody and for interventions, is one of the most important components of the scheme. Staff believe there are currently strong links between the scheme and service providers.

Staff also recognise the importance of fast tracking PPOs into court - when they reoffend or breach the scheme. However, this is an element some staff feel could be improved- as they sometimes do not notice the difference between this premium service and a normal service.

### Both staff and PPOs felt the premium service offered by the scheme was good. However, there were some possible improvements surrounding:

- the shortage of drug-free accommodation- living in drug free accommodation can make relapse more likely and increase police attention
- an increase in employment, education and training support
- the lack of financial support received when PPOs leave prison
- the lack of support from DWP and the Job Centre
- the lack of resources available to some of their service providers.

### Aftercare and deselection

Most PPOs were aware they could be deselected off the scheme but were not sure how this happened. There was confusion amongst the PPOs interviewed between the relationship between the scheme, their license and deselection.

There was also confusion amongst the staff regarding the procedure for de-selection. Some thought PPOs were informed when they were deselected and others knew that PPOs were not to be informed but to be told they were to be “dropping down a level.”

There should therefore be clearer information surrounding the de-selection process for PPOs and for staff.

### In conclusion, while there are several main areas which were highlighted that could be improved:

- data sharing protocols with DWP and the Job Centre
- more formal channels of communication with service providers surrounding licenses and regarding feeding back of strategic developments to staff on the scheme
- the premium service was heavily praised, however a shortage of drug free accommodation and lack of resources for service providers were highlighted as issues
- the clarity of the deselection criteria and processes for staff and PPOs.

There is strong quantitative and qualitative evidence highlighting the possible impact the scheme has had on reoffending and the Derby PPOs.

scheme:**progress**

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