

National Community Sentence Pilot completes second successful year

National Statistics show that offenders given a custodial sentence of under 12 months have a reduction in re-offending rate of - 4.8% after two years. For offenders given community sentences that rate is **-23.4%**.

Source: National statistics - offenders completing their sentence (2000 – 2006)

Derbyshire Probation Trust has had a successful second year with its Government pilot study into the benefits of an Intensive alternative to Custody (IAC).

In order to assess sentencing alternatives for offenders who would otherwise be given a short prison sentence, the Government created a small number of pilot schemes. Derbyshire was the first area to pilot an Intensive Alternative to Custody (IAC) option for local courts.

For appropriate offenders facing a prison sentence, Derbyshire Probation can offer magistrates an option to retain those offenders in the community and give them both a far stricter punishment regime than an ordinary Community Sentence, and a significant level of support, both to keep them from re-offending and raise their likelihood of successfully completing the sentence.

Since April 2008, 194 IAC orders have been imposed by the Courts in Derbyshire. Two years into the pilot project, we have many examples of the success of this last chance option for offenders who would otherwise have received prison sentences. Key offence types targeted for this kind sentence have been theft or handling, violence and burglary.

IAC consists of an initial core of a 4-month curfew, twice- weekly supervision, intensive delivery of 100 unpaid work, and weekly mentoring (provided by Action Housing and Support). Other requirements can then be added as identified by the individual assessment process. The average number of requirements set in Derbyshire is 5.5

Much of the success of the pilot stems from the greater degree of contact and support available to the target group of offenders. In particular, the mentors have enabled us to provide much more monitoring of the risk issues in key, everyday areas of offenders' lives. As a result, 80% of those who have completed the IAC order have not re-offended.

Started with Derby courts, the project was quickly expanded to cover the whole of Derbyshire.

The Ministry of Justice project oversight group noted that:

“Derbyshire has paved the way for the programme and led the way in identifying and overcoming issues and problems, sharing the learning with other areas along the way. ...The liaison with sentencers has been impressive.”

National statistics show that as well as being successful at cutting the re-offending cycle, the IAC project is cost effective. 81% of offenders sentenced to under 12 months in prison serve 3 months at a cost of £7000 each. The average cost of an IAC order is only £5333 - and that is for 14 months of supervision.