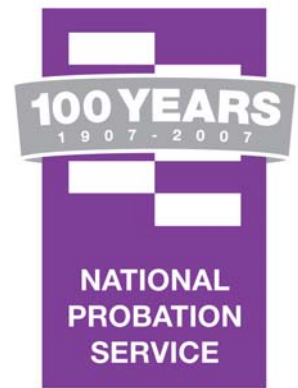


# Probation Circular



## PC13/2007 – INTRODUCTION OF A NEW SKILLS SCREENING TOOL: FIRST MOVE – INITIAL SKILLS CHECKER

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** 1 June 2007

**EXPIRY DATE:** 1 June 2010

**TO:** Chairs of Probation Boards, Chief Officers of Probation, Secretaries of Probation Boards  
**CC:** Board Treasurers, Regional Managers

**AUTHORISED BY:** Frances Flaxington, Head of Partnerships Unit

**ATTACHED:** Annex A – First Move – Initial Skills Checker

Annex B – Guidance Notes

Annex C – Equality Impact Assessment Form

**RELEVANT PREVIOUS PROBATION CIRCULARS**

PC58/2005, PC12/2006, PC27/2006

**CONTACT FOR ENQUIRIES**

[roger.stevens@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:roger.stevens@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk) or 020 7217 8283

### PURPOSE

First Move is the new initial skills screening tool which has been developed specifically for use by the probation service at the report stage. First Move will replace the use of Fast Track 20 Questions and enable NPS staff to quickly identify the possible literacy and numeracy needs of offenders. The new tool will introduce consistency to the skills screening process and provide a sound base for professional judgments to be made regarding an offender's current skills, employment/training history and needs.

### ACTION

Chief Officers are asked to ensure that the Area introduces the First Move tool into current business processes from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007.

### SUMMARY

The aim of this new tool is to replace Fast Track 20 Questions and to introduce some consistency (as many NPS areas are currently using a variety of skills screening tools) in our approach to skills screening at the report stage. The new tool will also contribute to the cross Government agenda to improve the skills and employment opportunities for offenders as described in the paper "Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps".

## UNCLASSIFIED

First Move should therefore replace all NPS administered initial skills screening tools and a copy of the completed tool should be retained ready for linking with the Skills for Life - Individual Referral Record (IRR). Both documents should then be forwarded on to local providers for information as part of the referral process.

First Move along with the information collected on the IRR, will provide valuable initial information to contracted or commissioned providers operating under the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) as it can be used as a first step into the assessment/diagnostic assessment process.

First Move will also assist in the completion of reports by providing a short set of structured interview questions and a scoring grid which will enable NPS staff to make professional judgments about an offender's current skills, employment/training history and needs. Apart from asking the interviewee to write down their name and address, the tool will continue to be completed by NPS staff based on responses from the interviewee and should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

The tool requires no formal training to use and should be used as part of any general interview process being undertaken. NPS staff will need to apply their professional judgement when scoring the responses and interpreting the total score. Please note that First Move will **not** identify specific skills needs or current skills levels; it provides a broad understanding of possible skills needs and the employment and training background of the offender only. OLASS providers will undertake further in depth work using an approved assessment tool to identify skills gaps if the offender is referred on to LSC led provision.

The score from First Move should be entered onto the IRR form as well as being used to inform the OASys assessment (if applicable) although assessors should also take into account all other relevant information available to them. The score from First Move should be entered into the text box in OASys 2, Section 4 "Education, Training and Employability" and be used when considering the scoring of OASys question 4.7.

Copies of First Move will not be distributed centrally. NPS areas will therefore need to source and store sufficient copies of First Move locally. To aid this, First Move can be downloaded from EPIC using the pathway:

[http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/index/service\\_delivery/interventions/noms\\_probation\\_interventions\\_and\\_substance\\_abuse\\_unit/community\\_reintegration\\_team.htm](http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/index/service_delivery/interventions/noms_probation_interventions_and_substance_abuse_unit/community_reintegration_team.htm)

### **Smart Move**

In addition to the First Move tool (which has been developed for probation use only) the *Skills for Life Strategy Unit* at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) have developed and published a more comprehensive **assessment** tool entitled "Smart Move" This tool has been designed to be used by a range of organisations (both public and private) and takes about 15 minutes to complete. It is made up of a small number of literacy and numeracy questions that increase in difficulty from Entry Level 1 to Level 2 of the Adult National Standards. Smart Move differs from the First move tool as it is completed by the user and then scored. Smart Move does not need to be administered by educational professionals and can be used as a quick, first step to help users to understand the skills they have, the approximate level they are working at and allow the user to begin planning the next steps of learning support. If NPS areas want to use this tool in addition to First Move they must ensure that the results are passed on to the learning providers as part of the referral process.

**PC13/2007**

**Introduction of a New Skills  
Screening Tool: First Move –  
Initial Skills Checker**

**UNCLASSIFIED**

**ISSUE DATE – 18 May 2007**

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Smart Move is available in both a paper and a computer based format and can be downloaded (along with full guidance) from [www.toolslibrary.co.uk](http://www.toolslibrary.co.uk)

**Guidance** If you are using this tool for the first time, you may like to read the overall guidance on the available tools. There are two tools available - this 'First Move' tool has been specifically developed for the probation service to be used particularly where time or location requires a short, easy to administer tool. It is not a skills assessment tool - the DfES 'Smart Move' tool is available where a skills assessment needs to be undertaken.

First Move is administered and completed by the interviewer; it is not completed by the interviewee. If possible, try to use the tool where as much privacy as possible is available. Introduce the tool at a suitable point in the interview by explaining that it:

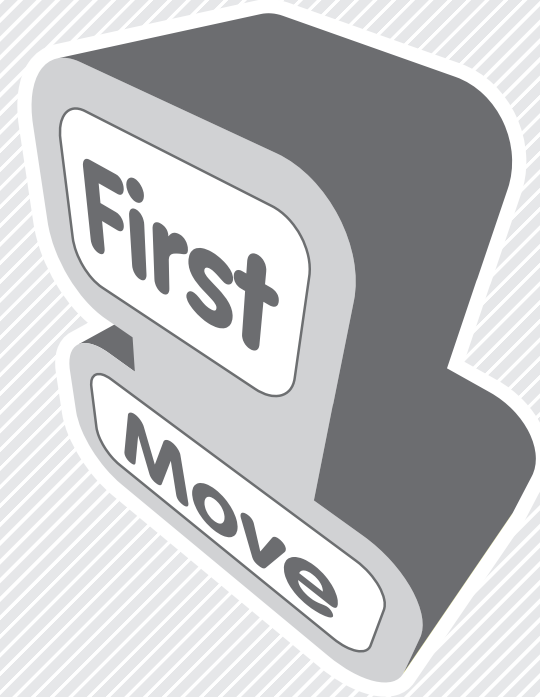
- will help you identify skills and employment needs at an early stage
- will help you give a more accurate impression in your report
- is used by everybody at this stage
- may stimulate useful discussion about employment aspirations.

The tool should take no more than 5 minutes to use.

In scoring each question, you need to remember that this is just a checklist and not a formal assessment tool and therefore you will also need to use your professional judgment to arrive at a score. The score from this screening tool should also be used when considering the scoring of question 4.7 in OASys 2 although assessors should also take into account any other relevant information available to them.

You will be asking the interviewee to write down their name, address and telephone number. You can use any suitable pretext for asking them to do this. If you are undertaking the interview at a distance you may need to consider how best to handle this activity - it is a valuable component within the tool. It should only be omitted if there are real signs of agitation or discomfort. Equally, be careful if reasons are offered for non-completion e.g. no glasses, no pen, etc. Assume there is a lack of confidence about having to write and score accordingly.

Finally, please ensure that the First Move skills check score is recorded in the text box in OASys 2, section 4, complete the information on the front of the tool and place a copy on file.



**Scoring** This skills check is not an assessment. The questions have been chosen to give a broad view of whether the offender is likely to have some skills development needs and should help you to complete the short court report in a consistent way. Inevitably, some of your judgements will be subjective.

<b>60 +*</b>	The offender is unlikely to have significant skills needs but may well have very specific skills needs e.g. they may have a particular problem with spelling.
<b>40 - 59*</b>	The offender will have skills development needs.
<b>Below 40*</b>	The offender will have significant skills development needs and may well be operating below Entry Level 2.

\*These scores should be entered in the text box in OASys 2 Section 4: "Education, training and employability"

Copies of First Move can be downloaded from EPIC using the pathway:

[http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/index/service\\_delivery/interventions/noms\\_probation\\_interventions\\_and\\_substance\\_abuse\\_unit/community\\_reintegration\\_team.htm](http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/index/service_delivery/interventions/noms_probation_interventions_and_substance_abuse_unit/community_reintegration_team.htm)

Further advice and guidance on the use of this tool can be obtained from Roger Stevens, NOMS Commissioning and Partnerships Directorate. E-mail [roger.stevens@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:roger.stevens@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk). Tel 020 7217 8283.

# Initial Skills Checker

Date :

Name :

CRN :

Final Score:

Question	Profile Indicator	Score	Comments	Implications for recommendations
When did you leave school?	16 or older.	10	Leaving below 16 is likely to indicate that no courses were completed and may have had several periods of non-attendance leading to low skills levels.	
	14 - 15.	5		
	Below 14.	0		
Do you have any certificates from work? E.g. Food Hygiene, Fork Lift Truck driving, Health & Safety?	Yes.	7	If yes, some literacy skills may have been used to achieve.	
	No.	0		
Have you got any qualifications or certificates?	GCSE Maths/English C or above.	10	GCSE Maths/English above C or equivalents (e.g. Key Skills L2, National Lit/Num tests at L2). Other qualifications would indicate some literacy/numeracy skills to achieve.	
	Any other qualifications.	5		
	No qualifications.	0		
Have you done any work or training since leaving school or college?	F/T employment and/or completed training programme.	8	Clear indicator of some commitment but not necessarily of Num/Lit skills levels.  Some Lit/Num skills may have been gained but no guarantee.	
	Some employment since leaving school/college.	5		
	Unemployed since leaving school/college.	0		
Are you currently employed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
If no, when did you last work?	Date :			
Can you use a PC? If yes, what do you do?	Can use PC - e.g. for games, chat, looking at the web or using email/word processor.	10	Use of a PC for games, chat and looking at websites would indicate some literacy skills. Games would also suggest some numeracy skills.	
	Not often.	5		
	No.	0		
Do you feel confident handling money, understanding and paying bills?	Yes - very confident.	10	Confidence in paying bills indicates skills in both literacy - understanding the bill - and in numeracy - confidence in understanding how much to pay and how the bill was calculated.	
	Sometimes.	5		
	Not confident at all.	0		
Using a notepad, ask the person to write down their name, address and telephone number for you.	Written with ease i.e. no hesitation, result legible, follows normal conventions for layout e.g. capitals used correctly.	10	Asking for simple written material that should be known is a reasonable indicator of the ability to write, at least for everyday purposes such as form-filling.	
	Some letters/words badly formed, written all in capitals.	5		
	Unable to write name and address.	0		
Overall impression during interview.	Did the answers given and the discussion generally, use a reasonable range of vocabulary?		Reasonable indicator of some literacy skills.	
	Were complete sentences used or just one/two word responses?			
	Score between 1 and 10 based on your overall judgement.			

**Final Score:**

## Guidance Notes

### First Move – Initial Skills Checker

The First Move screening tool has been designed to help NPS staff identify and understand the possible literacy and numeracy needs of offenders at the report stage. The tool will also provide staff with initial information in order to begin the process of developing a *Skills for Life* and employability plan.

First Move has been developed specifically for use by the probation service. The aim of this tool is to help NPS staff complete reports by providing a short set of structured interview questions and a scoring grid which will enable professional judgments about an offender's current skills, employment/training history to be made. Apart from asking the interviewee to write down their name and address, First Move will continue to be administered and completed by NPS staff based on responses from the interviewee and should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

*How is the First Move tool used?*

The questions should be used as part of any general interview process being undertaken at the report stage. The responses are scored on the form. You will need to use your professional judgement to score the responses and interpret the total score. Remember, this tool is not identifying specific skills needs or current skills levels; it is providing you with a broad understanding of likely skills needs and the employment and training background of the offender only. A more detailed assessment of an offenders needs will be undertaken by the providers via a recognised diagnostic tool if the offender is referred on to LSC led provision under the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS).

*Can the First Move tool be used in a video based interview?*

The only activity that will be difficult to undertake will be asking the interviewee to write down their name, address and telephone number. Otherwise it is perfectly possible to undertake the interview remotely. The writing task does provide useful information so see if there may be other ways of collecting it from the interviewee.

*What do I do with the information?*

Information from the First Move tool can be used to help complete a report and contribute to the OASys assessment (if applicable). The score from First Move (60+, 40-59, Below 40) should be entered into the Skills for Life Individual Referral Record (IRR) as well as into the Basic Skills score box, directly above the evidence box in OASys Section 4 "Education, Training and Employability". It should also be used when considering the scoring of question 4.7. This question should still be answered using the OASys scoring system (0, 1, 2), not the First Move scores. Assessors should however take into account all other relevant information available to them when scoring this section.

Once completed First Move should then be linked with the IRR and passed on to the education provider(s) should the offender be referred on to LSC led provision.

*What feedback should be given to the offender?*

It should be emphasised to the offender that First Move will not give detailed skills information. Broad inferences can be discussed with the offender if time and location

permit but they should always be aware that other, more detailed skills checks and diagnostic tools will be available should they be referred on to LSC led provision under the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service.

*What training is required to use the First Move tool?*

The First Move tool requires no formal training to use. However, you should familiarise yourself fully with the tool before first using it and it may be helpful to share with colleagues how you intend to interpret the scores.

*Why do I need to pass First Move on to the provider?*

The information collected on the Skills for Life Individual Referral Record (IRR) coupled with the completed First Move tool will provide valuable initial information regarding an offenders likely skills needs to a provider. This information can then be quickly used by the provider as a first step into the assessment/diagnostic assessment process.

*Where can the tool be obtained?*

Copies of First Move will not be distributed centrally. NPS areas can download First Move from EPIC by following the pathway [http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/index/service\\_delivery/interventions/noms\\_probation\\_interventions\\_and\\_substance\\_abuse\\_unit/community\\_reintegration\\_team.htm](http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/index/service_delivery/interventions/noms_probation_interventions_and_substance_abuse_unit/community_reintegration_team.htm)

*Where can I get further information or support?*

Further information and support can be obtained from Roger Stevens, Interventions and Substance Abuse Unit, NOMS, e-mail: [roger.stevens@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:roger.stevens@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk). Telephone: 020 7 217 8283.

## Smart Move

In addition to the First Move tool (which has been developed for probation use only) the *Skills for Life Strategy Unit* at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) have developed and published a more comprehensive **assessment** tool entitled "Smart Move" This tool has been designed to be used by a range of organisations (both public and private) and takes about 15 minutes to complete. It is made up of a small number of literacy and numeracy questions that increase in difficulty from Entry Level 1 to Level 2 of the Adult National Standards. Smart Move differs from the First Move tool as it is completed by the user and then scored. Smart Move does not need to be administered by educational professionals and can be used as a quick, first step to help users to understand the skills they have, the approximate level they are working at and allow them to begin planning the next steps of learning support. If NPS areas want to use this tool in **addition** to First Move they must ensure that the results are passed on to the learning providers as part of the referral process.

*How is the Smart Move tool used?*

When you order the Smart Move tool or download it from the website, you are provided with a comprehensive guide to using the tool. The four key points are that: a) the tool needs to be used in a quiet environment, b) it is completed by the user and then scored, c) the outcome is a skills level for Literacy and for Numeracy and d) the total process will take about 15 minutes to complete.

*What training is required to use the Smart Move tool?*

The Smart Move tool is an **assessment** tool and, to provide feedback, the results need to be interpreted by a person familiar with *Skills for Life*. However, the tool has been designed to be used by a variety of people in various agencies all of whom will

not necessarily have a *Skills for Life* background. This is not a problem, provided the offender is made aware in advance that detailed feedback will not be available and what the arrangements are for referral on to an LSC provider who can provide detailed interpretation.

*Which tool should I use?*

NPS staff will use the First Move – Initial Skills Checker tool where they need to complete a fast delivery report or they are interviewing the offender in a location or environment not suited to undertaking any more detailed work. The Smart Move tool may be considered where there is more time available, where there is a suitable environment to administer the tool and where it seems clear that any necessary onward referral is likely to be successful.

*Where can Smart Move be obtained?*

Smart Move can be downloaded from: [www.toolslibrary.co.uk](http://www.toolslibrary.co.uk).

## A. INITIAL SCREENING

### 1. Title of function, policy or practice (including common practice)

*Is this a new policy under development or an existing one?*

This is not a new initiative as NPS areas have been using Fast Track 20 Questions (and locally agreed tools) in order to conduct a high level initial skills screening at the report stage for a number of years. First Move builds upon current practice and will replace the use of the current outdated screening tool (Fast Track 20 Questions) and all current local screening tools.

It is proposed to issue the new screening tool along with some brief guidance to NPS areas under cover of a Probation Circular entitled: "Introduction of a new skills screening tool: First Move – Initial Skills Checker". The effective date for implementation of the new screening tool will be 1 May 2007.

### 2. Aims, purpose and outcomes of function, policy or practice

*What is the function, policy or practice addressing? What operational work or employment/HR activities are covered? What outcomes are expected?*

First Move has been designed specifically for use by the Probation Service. The tool has been developed in close consultation with practitioners and has been trialled in a small number of NPS areas. Feedback from the trial was positive and allowed for the tool to be further refined in order to meet areas business needs. The final version of the tool has been reviewed by the NOMS ETE reference Group and circulated again to NPS areas for comment.

First Move will replace the use of Fast Track 20 Questions and all other local screening tools. It will introduce a consistent approach to screening at the report stage and enable practitioners to make high level professional judgements about an offenders' current skills employment/training history and needs via the structured interview questions and scoring grid. Once completed NPS staff will then be able to make a judgement as to whether the individual concerned is suitable to be referred on to LSC led provision under the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS).

First Move is a high level initial skills checker and is not designed to identify specific skills needs or current skills levels. It simply provides a broad understanding of likely

skills needs and the employment and/or training background of an offender which can be used at the report stage. A more detailed understanding of an offenders' needs will be undertaken by educational professionals via a recognised assessment tool if the offender is referred on to LSC led provision under OLASS.

The score from First Move will also help inform the scoring of an OASys assessment (where applicable) by contributing to the available information when NPS staff are scoring section 4, Education, training and Employability.

### 3. Target groups

*Who is the policy aimed at? Which specific groups are likely to be affected by its implementation? This could be staff, service users, partners, contractors.*

*For each equality target group, think about possible positive or negative impact, benefits or disadvantages, and if negative impact is this at a high medium or low level. Give reasons for your assessment. This could be existing knowledge or monitoring, national research, through talking to the groups concerned, etc. If there is possible negative impact a full impact assessment is needed. The high, medium or low impact will indicate level of priority to give the full assessment. Please use the table below to do this.*

Equality target group	Positive impact - could benefit	Negative impact - could disadvantage	Reason for assessment and explanation of possible impact
Women	X		
Men	X		
Asian/Asian British people	X		
Black/Black British people	X		
Chinese people or other groups	X		
People of	X		

mixed race			
White people (including Irish people)	X		
Travellers or Gypsies	X		
Disabled people	X		
Lesbians, gay men and bisexual people	X		
Transgender people	X		
Older people over 60	X		
Young people (17-25) and children	X		
Faith groups	X		

4. Further research/questions to answer

As a result of the above, indicate what questions might need to be answered in the full impact assessment and what additional research or evidence might be needed to do this.

It will be important to ensure that First Move meets the current business need and enables NPS staff to make effective initial judgements regarding the referral of offenders on to LSC led provision.

A review of First Move is expected to be commissioned six months after its introduction in order to ensure that the tool is effective and helps inform the reports written by NPS practitioners.

Initial screening done by: Jill Shaw, Head of Community Re-integration; Roger Stevens, Project Implementation Manager, Commissioning and Partnerships Directorate, NOMS

Name/position

Date 28 March 2007

## B. PLANNING A FULL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 1. Title of function, policy or practice (including common practice)

*Is this a new policy under development or an existing one?*

### 2. Aims, purpose and outcomes of function, policy or practice

*What is the function, policy or practice addressing? What operational work or employment/HR activities are covered? What outcomes are expected?*

### 3. Target groups

*Who is the policy aimed at? Which specific groups are likely to be affected by its implementation? Use the initial screening to summarise potential adverse impact on each group as identified above and the reasons given. What knowledge and information do you already have, what further research or evidence should be collected in the full impact assessment?*

- Gender
- Race
- Disability
- Sexual orientation/transgender
- Age
- Faith

#### **4. Impact assessment process**

*Which staff will conduct the IA? (eg Board members, senior managers, policy leads, or a team of staff.)*

*Will you include external advice from community groups or individuals? (cross reference to question 5 below)*

*How will the IA be approved and integrated into senior management processes?*

*What is the role of the diversity manager?*

#### **5. Consultation**

*Give details of any planned internal staff and external community consultation and engagement.*

*Who will be consulted, how will it be done, when, what are the aims of the consultation, what will be done with the results?*

*Are a diverse range of staff, service users and stakeholders consulted?*

*How will the impact assessment process be publicised to give as many people as possible an opportunity to take part?*

## C. CONDUCTING THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 6. Q & A: Effect of function, policy or practice

*(use the questions as prompts, not as a list which must be answered in every case)*

*What questions were identified in the initial screening above?*

*What other aspects of the way this policy is, or might be, implemented, should be explored?*

*Are there any points within the policy as it stands where the potential exists for negative impact on staff or service users or stakeholders across all groups?*

*Is there any existing evidence to show that adverse impact on any disadvantaged group has occurred previously in this area, if so what?*

*If not what evidence will you need to collect to assess the impact? (This might be monitoring, evidence from staff networks, evidence from service users, surveys, interviews, focus groups, wider consultation, research at national or area level on impact of similar policies or functions, etc.)*

*How can you be sure you have fully understood potential for adverse impact? Have relevant community members been engaged at all stages in identifying questions to ask, areas of concern?*

*What level of community consultation and engagement has taken place during the impact assessment? What were the results?*

*Overall, how does the policy promote equality, eliminate discrimination and promote good relations?*

**7. Assessment of evidence and action on results**

*What conclusions can be drawn from the consultation and the evidence collection?*

*Support the conclusions by reference to the outcomes of consultation and evidence collection.*

*Is there is a need to change, amend or withdraw the policy or practice?*

*In what ways will the policy promote good relations, promote equality and eliminate discrimination? Does it need amending to reflect this?*

*If so, what action is needed, by when and who is responsible?*

## D. FOLLOW UP TO IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 8. Monitoring and management

*How will the policy be monitored to measure the impact of it on the target groups?*

*Are monitoring arrangements adequate to measure the impact of the policy in relation to on all groups?*

*Race*

*Gender*

*Disability*

*Sexual orientation/transgender*

*Faith*

*Age*

*What management structures are in place to ensure effective implementation of the equality aspects of this function, policy or practice?*

### 9. Publishing the results

*How will you publish the results of the IA and any subsequent monitoring to measure progress?*

*In what formats, aimed at which audiences? If the information accessible to those who need it?*

*How will feedback be given to those involved in consultation?*

**10. Approval and review**

*Who will give final approval of the impact assessment of the policy or function?*

*How often will it be reviewed in future – by when and by whom?*

Final approval by \_\_\_\_\_ (name)

Date of completed IA and approval \_\_\_\_\_

## RACE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### Ten key points to ensure a good impact assessment

The ten steps below are practical suggestions about how to approach the impact assessment process in general to ensure that it is thorough and fully evidenced.

These notes supplement the more detailed guidance in the Home Office Impact Assessment template, to which probation areas should refer for more information if required, as well as the CRE guidance on impact assessment.

#### 1. Establish the local baseline in your area – this will help with all impact assessments

Who are your service users? Who are your staff? Who are your partner organisations and those to whom you contract services? What do you know about these groups in relation to racial and cultural background, age, faith, gender, etc? Do you have enough knowledge and information about these diverse groups to be able to assess the impact of your policies and practices on each of them? What sort of information might you need to show that you can give detailed consideration to the possible impact?

If you don't have it, how can you get it? What do you know about your local community and sources of advice and expertise that you could tap into? How can you find out? What could be available in your area or at national level, to strengthen local community sources and their capacity to help with the impact assessment process?

Are there any race equality issues in your area which should be taken into account? For example have there been any employment tribunal cases alleging racial discrimination, or complaints from service users or community groups? What well known community concerns are there beyond the probation service – for example any known concerns about policing, or poor community relations – these external factors can affect how the Probation Service delivers its services.

#### 2. Clarify who is responsible for conducting impact assessments

Will all impact assessments be done by one person, for example, the diversity manager? Or will relevant policy and operational managers carry them out

with advice from the diversity manager? How will the assessment be communicated and actioned by senior management? How will the outcome form part of regular performance and management review processes? Are responsibility and deadlines clearly assigned and are there enough resources available for those responsible to do them properly?

Will impact assessment training be provided for all those responsible for impact assessments?

3. Set up a process for internal consultation – and use it before you start

Given the composition of your staff, who needs to be consulted internally about the impact of policy and practice? Is there already a system in place for consultation? If so how effective is it? And if not can something be put in place *before* the impact assessment process begins? Can staff associations and support groups help?

Use the internal consultation process to help identify potential problems, adverse impact or areas which the impact assessment might need to probe. This framework can be used for all policies and functions.

4. Set up a process for external consultation – and use it before you start

What is the best way for you to involve local communities, faith groups etc? What sort of support from you might they need in order to take this on effectively (resources, access, methods of communicating, frequency of consultation and so on)? Are any existing consultation methods working well and do they include the right people? If not, set up a strong and effective system of regular consultation with local communities.

Some organisations have set up an independent advisory group specifically to assist with impact assessment, by reviewing priorities for assessment, conduct of the assessment, conclusions, and bringing a challenging and fresh perspective which can be very helpful.

Once a good process is in place, consult before you begin the impact assessment to help to identify potential problems, adverse impact or areas which you need to explore.

5. **Decide what questions need to be asked about the policy, function or practice.**

Remember that policies can be unwritten – custom and practice – as well as formal written policies.

What and who does the policy or function affect? How much do you already know about the way it works: has there been any ethnic monitoring in the past, any staff or service users surveys, audit reports or other information? Are there any identified concerns?

Use this and the consultation process above to think through any potential adverse impact of each area: what are the danger points where unfair treatment might occur? How much discretion is involved, and how is this discretion supervised and by whom? How is use of discretion recorded? What management oversight and supervision is in place for the policy or function?

What are the gaps in your knowledge of the impact of this policy or practice and how can you fill them?

6. **Collect the evidence**

Evidence can be from a variety of sources: ethnic monitoring where it is in place, of staff and service users, is one source. You can also carry out surveys or interviews and focus groups specifically to gather evidence for the impact assessment, and collect further evidence from the consultation methods set up earlier in the process. There might have been inspectorate reports, or pieces of local research on a topic. Staff associations and networks may have evidence as may partners and service users.

In the impact assessment you need to describe what the various sources of evidence were; how it was obtained, from whom and what were the key issues (concerns or successes) which the evidence suggests. It is not enough to state that no adverse impact has been identified: the assessment must make clear the basis for that statement: the how, who, what and when of arriving at that assessment.

7. **Act on the results**

According to what the impact assessment concludes, ensure action is taken to amend the policy or function or even produce a new policy or procedure, and that responsibility and a timetable for action is clearly assigned and implementation is monitored.

**8. Set up and use an effective ethnic monitoring system.**

If the policy or function concerned has not been subject to ethnic monitoring in the past, and has a potential for adverse impact, you need to ensure ethnic monitoring systems are in place. All new policies and functions will also require an ethnic monitoring process to demonstrate year on year that there is no discrimination and that the policy promotes good race relations.

Make sure your local ethnic monitoring system can provide the answers to your own local questions (not just provide data for NPD statistics!) and reflects what you know about your service users and your staff. Make sure that everyone involved knows why they are monitoring and how to do it.

As well as outcomes in terms of statistics ensure you cover the use of discretion at key decision making points: how is it used, who by, who oversees the outcomes. Can you be sure discretion is always been exercised fairly and can you prove that? Provide training for the staff that will collect and analyse the ethnic monitoring information.

**9. Publish the results**

All race equality impact assessments should be made available to service users and staff, perhaps using the Area web site. Feedback and results should also be given to everyone, internally and externally, who was consulted. Publication promotes openness and accountability and encourages further dialogue and debate. Make sure the published results are in a range of accessible formats to meet the diverse range of access requirements.

**10. Keep asking the questions!**

If the ethnic monitoring and consultation is effective, the review process should become part of the routine performance and management processes

so that the impact of policy and practice can be continuously reviewed.

Think about additional ways to check for impact and gather evidence as time goes by: annual service users and staff surveys, for example. Use local independent external contacts (for example local universities) to conduct small scale research projects to validate the ethnic monitoring results.

Impact assessment is an evolving and continuous process. Policy and practice changes and so do people and knowledge and understanding of race and diversity. Setting up a strong system as suggested above will mean the impact assessment process becomes mainstreamed, and can be used as a basis for impact assessment of other diversity strands such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, faith and belief, and age.