



REPORT ON A SURVEY OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF PPO
PUBLICITY MATERIALS IN PRISONS AND NATIONAL
PROBATION SERVICE AREAS

Ashley House, 2 Monck Street, London SW1P 2BQ Tel: 0202 7035 2876 Fax: 020 7035 2860
E-mail: mail@ppo.gsi.gov.uk www.ppo.gov.uk

PPO PUBLICITY MATERIALS IN PRISONS

In addition to ascertaining the extent to which PPOs publicity materials are readily available to offenders in prison, there was a public relations element to the survey. It gave us an opportunity to talk to staff and to tell them something about who we are and what we do.

Approach

The survey was carried out in two stages. The first stage was to obtain information already gathered in prisons about the availability of PPO publicity materials. The second stage was to telephone a sample of Heads of Residence, or appropriate alternatives, to ask follow up questions about what PPO publicity materials are available and where.

Stage 1 - internal audit reports

Regular internal audits are carried out in prisons to assess compliance with Prison Service Orders (PSOs). They are conducted on a rolling programme, so that compliance with each PSO is audited about every two years. PSO 2510, Requests and Complaints Procedures, is one of the regular audits carried out. The audit includes a key audit baseline requiring information about the PPO to be on display.

The requirement of the key audit baseline states:

"Printed material is made available on other avenues of complaint (e.g. Prisons Ombudsman, Criminal Cases Review Commission) advising them what to do after internal procedures have been exhausted."

A pilot exercise was carried out in which a copy of the most recent internal audit on PSO 2510 was requested from a sample of 17 prisons. A variety of prisons of different categories, including YOIs, were chosen. The aim was to establish the type of information contained in the audit and whether it would be helpful to the survey.

Ten prisons responded to the request and nine sent a copy of the most recent audit report on PSO 2510. It was decided that the reports did contain information relevant to the survey.

The remaining prisons and YOIs were written to, requesting copies of their internal audits on PSO 2510. Altogether 136 prisons were approached. (Unfortunately three prisons were missed from the mailing list and were not asked to provide their internal report. It was decided that sufficient information could be gathered from the prisons that were contacted.)

Stage 2 - telephone follow-up

Although the response rate from the internal audit request was encouragingly high, the information contained in many of the audits was incomplete or unclear. It was decided that clarification and verification could be sought by speaking to

the Heads of Residence at a sample of the prisons that had responded. This included some that had not sent an audit report.

Eleven Heads of Residence were contacted. Where the Head of Residence was not available, another governor or member of staff was interviewed. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix A.

Results

Stage 1 - internal audit reports

• Audits requested	136
• Responses from prisons	102
• Audits received	86
• Complying with key audit baseline	83

A total of 102 replies (75%) were received. Of these, 86 prisons (63%) were able to send copies of their most recent audit. Those not able to send copies had usually not carried out an audit in the last two years. In many cases those prisons sent other information or discussed the issues over the telephone.

Some audits had been carried out since the introduction of the new complaints procedure in July 2002. These audits had slightly different key audit baselines relating to PPO.

Seven audits had the wording:

"Terms of reference of the Prisons Ombudsman are
? placed in the library,
? displayed on notice boards."

A total of 83 audits showed that prisons were complying with the requirement to have information on PPO "freely available." This represented 61% of the prisons contacted.

There were a number of audits that listed all the places where the material was or was not on display. For example, HMP Deerbolt stated that every wing displayed information regarding the Ombudsman and information was also issued to every prisoner on induction. HMP & YOI Reading stated that the information was displayed in the library, including in foreign languages, and was also on notice boards on all residential areas and in reception.

However, in some of the audits it was not clear what exactly this "information" was. Three audits specified that the information available was the prison's own notices. Another three said that notices were available but it was not clear

whether these were the prison's own or referred to PPO posters. Six prisons said that the information was available in prisoner information books. Six prisons stated that the terms of reference for the Ombudsman's office were on display, but again it was not clear whether this referred to printed terms of reference or PPO material.

Good Practice

- **HMYOI Deerbolt**

"Every wing displays information regarding the Ombudsman. Again, on induction, this information is issued to every prisoner."

- **HMP Frankland**

"The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman leaflet is available to prisoners on all residential units. Also on display were posters reference Prisons Ombudsman."

- **HMP Full Sutton**

Audit: "Information is displayed in all areas, however, not all areas displayed all relevant information."

Re-audit: "All areas now have up to date versions of the information."

- **HMP Ranby**

"All wings display information on the Ombudsman. New posters and information have been ordered to replace existing ones."

- **HMP & YOI Reading**

"Terms of reference of the Prisons Ombudsman are placed in the library (also in foreign languages) and displayed on notice boards on all residential units and in reception. There was a mixture of answers when we interviewed prisoners about their knowledge of the Prisons Ombudsman."

- **HMYOI Rochester**

"Observed notice boards in all residential units. All fully compliant."

- **HMP Send**

"Printed material is available to prisoners on other avenues of complaint (for example Prisons Ombudsman) in reception and on the wings. On some wings this information is printed in several different languages."

- **HMP Swansea**

"Notice boards examined on all residential areas and other prisoner locations. A wing - compliant, D wing - compliant, F wing - compliant, hospital - compliant, Seg Unit - compliant, Education - compliant."

Many of the audit reports said that information was on display but did not state where. Others said that it was "available" but it was not clear if this meant that it was on display or had to be requested.

Comments

"Despite new notices being distributed last year the old notice is still on display..."

"Information book issued to all new receptions covers all above areas."

"There is information available on how to complain to the Prisons Ombudsman...."

"Posted around complaints boxes."

"Published on all unit notice boards. Information delivered in induction pack."

"The above mentioned material is available to prisoners in the resource centre, which is located in the induction office and also in the prison library. Viewed the documents in both locations."

"Literature is displayed on wing notice boards."

Stage 2 - telephone follow-up

The results of the telephone survey were:

	Yes	No	D/Know
Is PPO publicity material displayed in the prison?	11		
Posters? ¹	11		
Leaflets? ²	9		2
Where is it located?			
Wing Notice Boards?	11		
Association areas?	1	3	7
Visits area?	3	1	7
Gate?		4	7
Hospital / Healthcare centre?	1	3	7
Gym?	2	2	7
Segregation unit?	4	1	5

¹ One prison had old versions of the PPO posters and leaflets.

² One prison said leaflets were "made available" to prisoners when they wanted them but were not "freely available".

BoV?		1	10
Library?	8	1	2
Other? ³	3		
Do you show the PPO video?	7	3	1
When?			
At induction?	7	3	1
Other?			
What impression does the PPO publicity material create?⁴			2
Positive?	6		3
Clear?	7	1	1
Informative?	9		
Easy to understand?	8		1
Attractive?	6		3
Negative?	1	8	
Other?			
What do you think about it in general?	See comments below		
What would you add/amend/improve?			
<u>Comments</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The material is a "sound improvement". • The material is "straightforward". • Would make no changes. • It is "easy to explain" the posters to juveniles. The video is "good at getting the message across." • The poster does not make it clear what PPO does. Prisoners don't necessarily know what the name Ombudsman means. The material needs to aim at the "lower level", as there are lots of prisoners with educational difficulties. • It "gets the message over" and is helpful to prisoners. 			

The information gathered from the telephone survey painted a different picture to that of the audit reports. Every prison spoken to said that PPO posters and leaflets were on display (although one had old material). All prisons had them

³ Other included the Admin wing, reception and wing libraries.

⁴ Two prisons were unable to comment on the impression the PPO material created because one had the old material and the interviewee in the other had not worked in the prison long enough to recall having seen the posters.

on display on all residential notice boards. Eight had them displayed in the library, and many had them elsewhere.

Seven prisons said that the PPO video was shown to prisoners at induction. None said that it was shown at any other time. It was praised for being a useful visual medium, but its use is limited by being shown to prisoners only once, and at a time when they are receiving considerable other information.

Though not large, the sample of prisons followed up represented a cross section of establishments and can be reasonably regarded as portraying a fair picture of the current situation across the prison estate.

Every prison contacted said the PPO publicity material was positive, clear and easy to understand. None said anything negative about the publicity itself, although there were comments about the name "Ombudsman" and whether it was clear from the publicity what this means.

One Head of Residence said it did not matter how much publicity is available, it was still often necessary to explain things to prisoners, as there can be so much other information for them to take in. He said that juveniles often took little notice of posters and leaflets, especially as there are so many different types on display.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from the survey were encouraging and showed that PPO publicity material is generally available to prisoners in most prisons. However, there is still room for improvement for both prisons and PPO.

We make the following recommendations:

- The Prison Service should make the key audit baselines relating to PPO in the internal audit of PSO 2510 more specific. In particular, by listing the areas where posters and leaflets should be on display, and asking whether the PPO video is shown.
- All prisons should send a copy of their internal audits on PSO 2510 to PPO as a matter of routine, so that the distribution of its publicity material can be monitored.
- All prisons should ensure that the PPO video is shown.
- To ensure consistency, each prison should only display PPO's publicity material and not its own materials about PPO.
- PPO should review its system for distribution of publicity materials. Clear instructions and guidelines, e.g. for ordering, should be communicated to each prison. A single point of contact should also be established in each prison.

- PPO should review its publicity materials to ensure they are effective.

DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLICITY MATERIALS IN NPS AREAS

Measures to publicise the Ombudsman's increased role included a launch event in London and a programme of presentations to all Area Boards. Publicity posters, leaflets, application forms, audio tapes and video tapes about the Ombudsman were distributed to all areas with requests for them to be circulated to all local offices.

No data was available to predict the number of complaints that the Ombudsman might expect to receive in the first year. But in practice it proved to be very low. Just 157 complaints were received, of which only 20 met the Ombudsman's eligibility criteria for investigation.

How is this to be explained? The potential number of complainants is huge. Are all but a tiny proportion of offenders under NPS supervision so satisfied with their treatment that they have no complaints? Are the internal complaints procedures so effective that complainants do not need to proceed to independent review?

These are possible explanations. But contact with NPS staff led us to believe that at least a part of the explanation is the absence of a strong foundation, namely, the lack of knowledge among probation staff and offenders that the Ombudsman's service exists.

It is evident that if probation staff do not know of PPO they cannot inform offenders of their right of access, and if offenders are unaware they obviously cannot complain.

Approach

The survey was conducted at two levels.

First:

- Telephone surveys of managers in ten local offices selected from an area in each of the NPS regions. Where possible larger offices that covered a range of functions were chosen.
- 'On the spot' surveys made by colleagues in the Probation Inspectorate in the course of their area inspections.
- Visits to offices by prior arrangement. As well as the survey we took the opportunity to inform staff in those offices about the work of PPO.

Second:

- A follow-up telephone call to the HQ of the local offices surveyed to discover whether the findings were representative of that area.

Visits were also made to offices in one large urban area including one to a probation hostel and one to a community punishment workshop.

A standard script was used throughout and an undertaking was given not to name the offices or areas surveyed. A copy is at Appendix B.

Responses to the surveys.

	Telephone			Inspection			
	Yes	No	Total	YES	No	Total	Not Kno
<i>Have you heard of PPO</i>	9	1	10				
<i>Have you seen PPO posters?</i>	4	6	10	6	6	12	
<i>Have you seen PPO leaflets?</i>	4	6	10	6	6	12	
<i>Have you seen the PPO video?</i>	0	10	10		10	12	2
<i>Do you make use of PPO publicity materials?</i>	2	8	10		10	12	2
<i>Are PPO materials displayed in -reception?</i>	2	8	10				
<i>- offices?</i>	4	6	10				
<i>- hostels?</i>	0	2	2				
<i>- group areas?</i>	1	0	1				
<i>- workshops?</i>	0	2	2				
<i>Are the materials informative ?</i>	7	3	10				
<i>Do you know about NPS internal complaints procedure?</i>	9	1	10				

Comments from the telephone surveys

- The leaflets and posters were described as ""well put together", "very helpful and easy to understand", "easy to read, informative, professional and colourful".
- One respondent was confused about the leaflets and the Ombudsman's quarterly publication 'On the Case'.
- Two respondents said they had used the leaflets during initial induction with offenders.

Comments from the Inspectorate surveys

- Two offices did not know whether they had a copy of the video on the premises.
- One knew that there was a copy of the video in the administrative office and said it would be used if someone wanted to complain.
- Five offices knew that the video was at HQ and available but it had not been requested or used.
- In one instance the Inspector knew that the leaflet was displayed when it was known that the visit would take place, after the Inspector had made enquiries at other offices.
- In one office, the manager thought the leaflets might be at HQ.

Comments from PPO's visits

- Neither posters nor leaflets were visibly on display in waiting areas.
- Only three members of field staff knew about PPO's role.
- All staff engaged in discussions showed interest in PPO but thought it more important for them to be made more aware of their internal complaints policy and procedures.

Analysis of results

The results of the telephone survey showed:

- 90% of managers said they are aware of the NPS complaints procedure.
- 90% of managers have heard of PPO but only 80% know what PPO does.

but:

- Only 40% have seen PPO publicity materials and only 20% make any use of it.
- Of those who have seen the material, 70% found it informative.
- Only 20% of managers said they display PPO publicity materials in public reception areas (and there seems to be negligible use elsewhere).
- 20% of managers said they use PPO publicity materials in offender induction.

- None of the managers surveyed had seen the video and /or shown it to offenders.

These responses are very disappointing. Although a high proportion of staff surveyed have heard of PPO and know what it does, this has not resulted in ensuring that offenders are informed by display of posters and leaflets or by showing them, or staff, the video that was sent to all areas.

Follow-up telephone surveys.

The purpose of the follow-up surveys was to discover whether the responses obtained from the local offices were typical of the area in which they are located.

Questions were directed to the senior manager with responsibility for complaints in the area. In most areas this was the Chief Officer (CO).

The follow-ups showed:

- All but two respondents said they distributed PPO leaflets, posters and videos to local offices shortly after the scheme was launched.
- The same number said that, following the letter from the Ombudsman's office about this survey, local office managers were instructed that leaflets and posters must be visibly displayed. In some areas, this instruction was reinforced at management meetings.
- No areas carried out checks to ensure this instruction was followed.
- No areas issued instructions about use of the video.
- Some respondents said they did not receive sufficient quantities of PPO's publicity materials to send to all offices.
- Two respondents said their areas have adopted a policy of not displaying PPO publicity material. Their reason was that they believe there are too many posters and leaflets about complaints (NPS, Local and PPO) and these have caused confusion.
- Two areas have replaced all national complaint materials including PPO's, with one local leaflet and poster. These incorporate information about PPO and NPS.
- The majority of respondents said members of staff need to be made more aware of the internal complaint procedures and PPO.

Three themes emerge from the follow-ups.

- Most areas say they are distributing PPO publicity materials and issuing instructions about display to local offices, but they have not provided much supporting information. None have used the video. Nor have they made compliance checks.
- Areas are not consistent in their use of publicity materials. Some have chosen to produce their own rather than use what PPO supplies.
- Two areas have unilaterally decided, as a matter of local policy, not to display PPO materials.

It appears that few area HQs have attached much weight to informing staff about PPO or introduced procedures to ensure compliance with instructions to display materials. It is therefore not surprising that local offices have given PPO little priority. The replacement of PPO materials with locally produced alternatives is difficult to reconcile with a consistent national approach. The decision by two areas not to arrange distribution of PPO materials contravenes paragraphs 23 and 24 of the Secretary of State's guidelines to Probation Boards on the complaints procedure and the role of the Ombudsman's office. These guidelines say that Boards, "must publicise offenders' right of access to the Ombudsman."

Conclusion

The results of this survey indicate that there has been insufficient attention given to informing NPS staff about PPO. Consequently, in many areas, offenders have been denied knowledge about a service to which they have a right. This may be at least a partial explanation of the low volume of complaints received by PPO.

There follows a number of recommendations intended to improve matters.

Recommendations

To PPO

1. Issue advice to areas about how to order additional supplies of PPO materials and arrange efficient distribution.

To areas

1. Issue copies of the PPO video to local offices where it should be viewed by all staff.
2. Use PPO publicity materials in place of locally produced materials.
3. Issue renewed guidance to local offices about the display of PPO publicity materials.

4. Ensure that induction programmes for offenders and for new staff provide information about the NPS complaints procedure and PPO.

To the NPD

1. Inform areas that access to PPO publicity materials should be made available to offenders and that local alternatives should not be substituted.
2. Undertake an annual audit of the availability and access to PPO publicity materials.

January 2003

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's Office
Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London SW1P 2BQ