

Tried and tested

This is a second generation programme based upon the best available evidence of the effectiveness of the Think First and of the Enhanced Thinking Skills programmes. This new programme will be delivered in all Probation Areas and across the Prison estate in England and Wales.

Evidence from the evaluation of the Thinking Skills Programme within the Prison Service shows that it can lead to a reduction in the reconviction rate of 15% to 20%.



Thinking Skills Programme

Information for Courts

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Thinking Skills Programme

The Thinking Skills Programme is a cognitive skills programme that addresses thinking and behaviour associated with offending. This includes:

- problem solving
- goal setting
- emotional self management
- perspective taking, and
- developing positive relationships

Suitable offenders

The programme is aimed at offenders who have an Offender Group Reconviction Score (OGRS) of 50% which constitutes the core of Probation Service caseloads. Offenders must also demonstrate faulty thinking in the treatment areas targeted by the programme. Offenders' treatment needs will be assessed during the preparation of Standard and Fast Delivery Reports as there is evidence that putting low risk offenders on this programme can increase the likelihood of re-offending. Shift workers with variable shift patterns, those with serious mental health problems, sex offenders and domestic violence offenders are unsuitable for the programme.

Programme Content

The Thinking Skills Programme is an intensive programme, delivered to groups of up to twelve offenders. Evidence suggests that the programme is most effective with offenders who demonstrate faulty thinking. These thinking deficits are assessed in order that we can ensure that we get the right offenders on the right programmes and have confidence that the programme will make a difference.

Attendance

The programme runs for 19 two and a half hour sessions, comprising 4 one-to-one sessions and 15 group sessions. Offenders also attend two sessions in which psychometric tests are administered and a review session with the Offender Manager. Offenders are expected to attend the full programme and must catch up on any missed sessions. If they do not, they are dealt with in accordance with the Probation Service's National Standards and returned to Court after the second unacceptable absence. Programmes are delivered during the day and of an evening in order to meet an offender's availability.

Completion of the programme represents great commitment and motivation on the part of offenders.

Assessing individual progress

Offenders attend a total of four compulsory one-to-one sessions before, during and after the programme. These individual sessions are used to assess the offender's progress through the programme, to reinforce the skills acquisition and to keep them motivated. When the programme has been completed a formal report is written by programme staff for the Offender Manager.

Standard and Fast Delivery

Where appropriate, Standard and Fast Delivery Reports will contain proposals for an offender's attendance on the Thinking Skills Programme. This will be as part of a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order in accordance with Section 202 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

The following wording should be used:

"To participate in the Thinking Skills Programme for 19 sessions in accordance with the instructions of the Offender Manager".