

**OFFENDER MANAGEMENT NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE
(OMNI)**

**REPORT TO BOARDS AND TRUSTS ON THE PROBATION
ASSOCIATION'S OMNI IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
APRIL 2008**

A Background

i) In 2007, following a piece of work commissioned by the Audit Committee of Northumbria Probation Board which showed significant failings in the performance of the central OMNI information technology contract in Northumbria, the (then) PBA surveyed all (then) Boards in respect of their experiences of the OMNI contract. A total of 35 responses to the survey was obtained, representing some 83%, with respondents including the overwhelming majority of Metropolitan Areas and all Areas in Wales.

ii) In summary, the survey's findings showed that:

- The OMNI contract had yet to deliver the range of benefits that it was intended to deliver for Areas, although some improvements over the previous STEPS contract had been achieved.
- Contractor performance information was lacking in comprehensiveness, transparency and accessibility to Areas.
- Areas were not in a position to make an informed judgement about the value for money of the contract at local level.
- There were fundamental concerns about the lack of a full Disaster Recovery solution encompassing all Areas and some Areas did not appear to have local alternative arrangements in place.
- Change Control arrangements, Mobile Computing provision, support to Assistive Technology users, the Requests for Service process and Desktop Internet Access provision were components of the contract which were failing Areas to varying degrees.
- Steria (the main contractor) had failed to provide the accreditation training intended by the contract to enable local IT staff to undertake enhanced system privileges, which was having a range of adverse effects in some Areas.

iii) These findings were reported to the August 2007 meeting of the NOMS Audit Committee. The Committee commended the report for the breadth of its evidence base and supported the PBA recommendation that the survey report be referred to the NOMS OMNI Contract and Service Management Board (CSMB), of which the PBA had recently secured membership, for actioning.

iv) As a result, the PBA convened and chaired a sub-group of the CSMB to work through the detail of the survey findings and arrive at a set of improvement actions for the delivery of the OMNI contract in Areas. The sub-group brought together senior representatives of NOMS OIS (Offender Information Services) and the main contractor, Steria, along with the Systems Managers from three Probation Areas – Greater Manchester, London and Northumbria (who were also members of the CSMB). The group was convened and chaired by PBA Governance Manager Mike Caldwell and met on four occasions between November 2007 and March 2008.

v) The purpose of this report is to advise Boards and Trusts of the progress which has been achieved to date by the PBA OMNI Improvement Project Group and how this work is to be taken forward in future.

B Context Issues

i) In seeking to arrive at ways of improving the delivery of the OMNI contract in Areas, over time the group became more aware of the wider setting within which the contract was operating and how certain inter-dependencies had hindered the local delivery of OMNI to an extent. For example, the creation of national data centres - the necessary prerequisite for a full Disaster Recovery solution for Areas and a key part of the OMNI “Transformation Programme” – was intended to be linked to the implementation of the C-NOMIS case management software. Whilst both were expected to be implemented to a common timetable, the NOMIS programme in probation was suspended and the deployment of C-NOMIS was eventually cancelled by NOMS as late as January 2008.

ii) It also became apparent that NOMS OIS and Steria were already working towards improving at least some of the aspects of OMNI which had been highlighted by the PBA report. Nevertheless it is fair to state that the formation of this group was the catalyst for bringing a level of scrutiny to the delivery of OMNI which, in all probability, would not have come about otherwise.

iii) A short, interim progress report on the group’s work was made by the PBA to the February 2008 meeting of the NOMS Audit Committee. In general terms the meetings of the group were reported as constructive, with the various intended actions giving the potential for bringing about significant improvements to the delivery of the OMNI contract within Probation Areas. The PBA did express its concern about the ability of NOMS OIS to resource some improvements, such as the implementation (subject to proof of concept testing in Areas) of the use of mobile “Blackberry” hardware for improved e-mail access. The report also noted the willingness and enthusiasm with which all of the members of the group had tackled the task.

C Improving OMNI in Areas

i) In summary the work of the group has resulted in, or contributed to, the following outcomes:

Contractor Performance Information

- 29 Probation Areas have now been provided with the new HP Area service desk tool, which enables an Area to log and track the resolution of local incidents at Area level, and this will be rolled out to the remaining Areas in the near future.
- NOMS OIS is testing “Digital Fuel”, a performance reporting tool which is intended for implementation by Areas in line with the planned migration to the national data centres (see National Disaster Recovery Arrangements below), that will enable Areas to generate a range of local contract performance data.
- The OMNI Monthly Performance Report, produced by Steria for the meetings of the OMNI Contract and Service Management Board (CSMB), has been enhanced in its scope and detail and an Area version of the report is made available through Steria Area Service Managers.
- Communication to Areas about OMNI developments has been improved by the publication by NOMS OIS of the “Newsbytes” (monthly) and “OMNI Weekly” electronic newsletters.

Value for Money/Budget Transparency

- A summary analysis of the service credits paid to NOMS OIS by Steria in 2007/08 for failures in service delivery will be presented to a meeting of Area Systems Managers by NOMS OIS in April 2008, with a view to publishing such data on EPIC as a regular item. As part of this reporting, NOMS OIS intends to make explicit the payment of service credits in relation to the specific services to which the payments related.
- NOMS OIS is also working towards the achievement of OMNI budget transparency by March 2009.

National Disaster Recovery Arrangements

- Subject to a range of further testing, the national data centres are due to become operational during the summer of 2008, with the first Areas “migrating” to these by the late Autumn of 2008.
- NOMS OIS placed information on EPIC in March 2008 making clear to Areas the scope of the intended national disaster recovery arrangements in relation to local business continuity plans.
- NOMS OIS and Steria are reviewing jointly the incident escalation process and major incident process, respectively, and the amended versions will be communicated to Areas via EPIC.
- NOMS OIS have been in contact with the Probation Area Co-ordination Unit (PACU) to ensure that Probation Circular PC 46/2005 “Business Continuity Plan” is updated to take account of the new arrangements.

Mobile Computing

- NOMS OIS has negotiated with CESG, the Government’s information assurance arm, for the number of probation users with broadband access to be increased from the current 500 to 1,500.
- Steria is enhancing the bandwidth for remote access (RAS) so as to improve the dial-up facility and the “time out” period when working on a (RAS) laptop computer has been increased to three hours.
- The piloting of “Blackberry” hardware for remote e-mail access also relates here – see Desktop Internet Access below.

Desktop Internet Access

- NOMS OIS has formulated an Internet Access Improvement Plan, which includes a proposal to enhance the accessing of legitimate web sites by Areas through enabling local control of site access. This proposal is to be taken forward jointly by NOMS OIS and Steria in discussion with Areas via the Internet User Group which comprises Area representatives.
- Another aspect of the Improvement Plan is proof of concept testing in 10 Areas of “Blackberry” hardware for remote e-mail access. It should be noted that currently such hardware would not meet the needs of assistive technology (AT) users.

Requests for Service (RFS)

- The RFS process itself, and how its performance is measured, is being reviewed jointly by NOMS OIS and Steria and has become part of an overall OMNI Service Improvement Plan – see section D on Governance below.
- NOMS OIS has developed and communicated to Areas, via EPIC in February 2008, new Project Initiation Documentation and non-contractual service levels for the production by Steria of a Proposal Document (PD) in response to an RFS from an Area; the scale of charges (“framework rates”) applied by Steria to Requests for Service by Areas were communicated via “OMNI Weekly” in March 2008.
- NOMS OIS has established a New Business Board to govern and quality assure requests from Areas for *new* services, rather than such requests being sent direct from Areas to Steria.

Change Control

- NOMS OIS has established a Change Advisory Board (CAB), whose remit is to govern changes to the delivery of OMNI proposed by Steria e.g. the introduction of updated software. The CAB’s work results in the publication on EPIC of a monthly Formal Schedule of Change (FSC), which describes all changes, whether national or local, approved by the Board.

Accreditation of Area IT Staff for Enhanced System Privileges

- Steria has made recommendations to NOMS OIS for the handing back to Areas of at least some system privileges that were withdrawn when the OMNI contract became operational. NOMS OIS will consult with Areas on these recommendations and there will need to be testing of any proposed return of privileges in at least one Area before handing back can take place.

Assistive Technology (AT)

- Steria has appointed a specialist AT manager, who has visited some Areas in order to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of OMNI services in relation to AT users and subsequently reported on the matter. The resulting action plan will form part of the overall OMNI Service Improvement Plan.

D Governance of OMNI Delivery

i) The OMNI Contract and Service Management Board (CSMB), which is the body responsible for overseeing the performance and continuous improvement of the OMNI contract, meets on a monthly cycle. CSMB membership comprises senior representatives of NOMS OIS, Steria (including the Client Director for the contract), some Area Systems Managers and the Probation Association. The Association will continue its membership of the Board so as to be able to maintain scrutiny in the interests of Boards and Trusts. The Board will in particular be focusing on the overall Service Improvement Plan for OMNI, which will include the improvement actions described in this report.

Mike Caldwell, Governance Manager
April 2008