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## Effective Bail Scheme: Summary of monitoring report

**Acknowledgement:** This summary presents the main findings of research conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Justice by Dr Anthea Hucklesby, Kara Jarrold, and Eleana Kazantzoglou of the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, University of Leeds. A summary of the main findings and conclusions of the report are shown below.<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

The University of Leeds was commissioned to collate and analyse monitoring data from the pilot of the Effective Bail Scheme (EBS), which provides bail support and accommodation to adult defendants. The aim of the EBS was to divert defendants from custodial remands, increase court attendance rates and compliance with bail conditions, and reduce alleged offending on bail through bail support and accommodation services using the voluntary sector. EBS operates in Yorkshire and Humberside, originally set up in six courts (Bradford, Hull, Leeds, Scarborough, Sheffield and York). The project began between November 2006 and February 2007. During 2007 it was expanded to several smaller courts covering rural areas in the region including Bingley in West Yorkshire. In late 2007, the scheme was expanded again to cover three further courts in North Yorkshire (Harrogate, Skipton and Northallerton (HSN)). The areas were selected to test the suitability of operating bail support schemes in urban and rural areas. The aim of the research was to examine the characteristics of these defendants, and to extract lessons from the pilot.

The key lesson learned was the need to improve operation, implementation, and governance of the scheme. Establishing a more centralised system of monitoring will assist in the achievement of this aim.

A centralised system will allow for consistency of monitoring by establishing baseline management information requirements. It will also provide data that can be used to examine further the characteristics of the caseloads (such as the experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) defendants), and assist in developing EBS.

Enhanced monitoring and supervision should ensure that the support offered to defendants is targeted, structured, and deals with specific needs. Other areas for consideration include whether bail support and Restriction on Bail (RoB) conditions should be imposed simultaneously, and whether defendants charged with certain low-level offences (e.g. shoplifting, drunk and disorderly) should be considered ineligible for the scheme.

A more consistent and unified approach is required to promote the EBS within the criminal justice system, and to strengthen links with agencies providing drug and other intervention programmes.

<sup>1</sup> On advice of the Ministry of Justice Chief Research Officer, the full report is not being published by MoJ because of data quality issues.

## Main findings

### Take up and caseloads

- EBS take-up and caseloads varied between areas, as might be expected for a new scheme.
- Caseloads were higher than expected because defendants spent longer on the scheme than envisaged, causing capacity problems.

### Defendants' characteristics

- The typical defendant on the EBS scheme was male, in their mid 20s and white.
- The range of offences with which they were charged was diverse.

### Working with defendants

- Most defendants had their needs assessed.
- Procedures to assess the risks posed by defendants were applied inconsistently, potentially leaving EBS staff and mentors vulnerable.

- Some defendants did not have the required number of contacts, and some contacts were by telephone, providing evidence of a potential mismatch between expectation and delivery.
- There was evidence that staff were liaising with, and referring defendants to, other agencies.
- Contact with Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) writers and the provision of final reports to the courts was limited, reducing the potential for defendants' participation in EBS to be considered by sentencers.
- Working practices varied between areas, resulting in experiences and implementation of the EBS differing. This has the potential to reduce the credibility of and confidence in the scheme.
- Take up of mentoring was lower than planned. Only a small proportion of defendants had sustained contact with mentors, raising questions about the effectiveness of mentoring.