

# WELCOME TO PROBATION QUARTERLY ISSUE 24

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## Unification, one year on

It has been almost one year since CRCs ceased to exist and the new Probation Service was created. A unified probation service was a step in the right direction in terms of overcoming some of the structural issues that had caused myriad problems during the TR-era. However, it is also the case that - as forewarned by the Chief Inspector at the time - unification would not be a silver bullet and it is clear that probation services and practitioners are still struggling.

When speaking to probation practitioners, reading about probation and spending time on social media, staffing and workloads occur as frequent issues. I regularly hear about unmanageable workloads, difficulties in recruitment and high staff turnover all of which impacts on the ability of staff to work effectively. Much of this is being borne out in recent HMI Probation reports with the recently published [regional review letter](#) to the East of England highlighting problems of staffing which 'impacts on service delivery across many functions, including sentence management, interventions, courts and resettlement'. But this is also important because of the impact it has on staff. One of the ways in which high workloads impact on staff is through an increased risk of burnout. Academic research shows that burnout is more likely to be the product of poor

working conditions than personal characteristics or the content of work. Burnout takes time to materialise amongst a workforce and so there is a need to deal with this now, to prevent a fully burnt-out and depleted workforce further down the line. We should acknowledge that around 1500 new probation trainees have been recruited and this should - in time - help the situation and so I hope to be able to reflect more positively this time next year.

The articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics which probation practitioners engage with on a regular basis as part of their work, some of which tie into my thoughts above. We begin with an article from Alexandria Bradley and Madeline Petrillo summarising their research on working with trauma in probation. They argue that currently 'the future of TIP within the Probation Service feels fragile' but that the service needs to maintain its commitment to this valuable way of working. In her article on working in a rural probation setting, Lizzie Doble provides us with a personal reflection on her experiences of working in a region which suffers from wider issues (such as a lack of housing and unemployment) and a probation infrastructure which places a greater burden on people on probation by virtue of being rural.

I'd be very interested in receiving similar reflections from other practitioners working in different contexts. Laura Riley reflects on recent changes to the ways in which young people are supported with the transition from youth justice services to adult probation. This has - rightly - been identified as an area that needs addressing and Laura's article provides a useful overview of the issues.

John Stubbins then introduces the work of the Oswin Project - based in the North East of England - focussing on the importance of mentoring within their projects. Becky Shepherd has been doing research looking at the experiences of women working with women - with a focus on vicarious trauma - and uses her article to provide some simple solutions to improve the situation for women practitioners. Anne-Marie Day then provides an overview of her work with youth justice practitioners focusing

on how they balance the need to focus on risk management whilst also trying to adopt a child first approach to working with children in the youth justice system. Suzanne Smith, from the Centre for Justice Innovation, introduces recently published reports on how people who have English as a second or additional language experience criminal justice which will be of real use to probation practitioners. Finally, Philip Mullen's summary of Revolving Doors' Probation Inquiry provides an overview of the main findings from their wide-ranging research conducted by and with people under probation supervision. The findings from this study have important ramifications for probation practice and I hope they will be acted upon by leaders within the Service.

I hope you enjoy reading issue 24 of *Probation Quarterly*. As ever, if you have something you would like to contribute, please do get in touch.

Vivian Geiran  
Shane McCarthy

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