



# **ACADEMICS AND PRACTITIONERS**

## **COMING TOGETHER TO INFORM PROBATION POLICY AND PRACTICE CHANGE IN WALES**

The Wales-based Probation Development Group are delighted to share these five articles based on our recent work to highlight effective practice and gaps in probation policy and practice offering some contributions towards developing a more integrated criminal and social justice system in Wales.

The Group, which is part of the Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice, was formed following a presentation by former Probation Officer, the First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford, in May 2019, when he set out his broad vision for a devolved probation service in Wales. That event was attended by academics from across Wales' Universities, former and serving probation practitioners and managers, a core of whom agreed to work together to support the evidence-based development of a devolved probation service.

To date the Probation Development Group have published a collection of papers - Towards a Devolved Probation Service in Wales - based on PDG working groups discussing key themes around probation's Values and Principles, Effective Practice, and Governance and Partnerships. The annual Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice conference has been critical to discussing ideas and developing papers with wider academics and professionals with a stake in the future of probation and engaging with policy makers.



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This independent work, which is being shared with the Welsh Government's justice policy team, continues to be informed by other ongoing research in Wales. Notably, the PDG has also been informed by Rob Jones' extensive study into the specific criminal justice outcomes in Wales, including his book *The Welsh Criminal Justice System*, co-authored with Richard Wyn Jones, from the Wales Governance Centre.

In this Welsh section of *Probation Quarterly*, Probation Development Group members share some of their thoughts on the promise of, and important considerations for, a devolved probation service, including:

- A spirited discussion on how changes within probation have impacted on professional values.
- An exploration of whether devolution of probation could contribute to more effective practice.
- Reflections on the critical importance of reviewing Wales level data and outcomes within an England and Wales criminal justice system.
- Consideration of structures and governance of devolving probation with desired outcomes in mind.
- A study summarising emerging efforts to take an 'inclusion health' approach for people on probation in Wales.

Together, the ongoing work of the Probation Development Group contributes learning towards reconsidering probation work in Wales but also has relevance for probation in England and beyond. Whilst focussed on supporting the development of a Welsh Probation Service, the discussions and analysis offered draws from research and experience on over a century of probation practice and governance.

## References

- Borja, S. et al. (2023). *Towards a devolved Probation Service in Wales: A collection of papers by the Probation Development Group*. Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice, University of South Wales. <https://wccsj.ac.uk/en/publications/2024>
- Jones, R. and Wyn Jones, R. (2022), *The Welsh Criminal Justice System: On the Jagged Edge*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.