

The magazine of the Probation Institute

PROBATION

Issue 14: December 2019

Quarterly

Co-producing Inclusive Approaches to Justice

New research-based guide for practitioners

The role of lived experience in conducting social research

Families of people serving IPPs and the role of Probation

Victims' experience of magistrates' courts



PROBATION *Quarterly*

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Welcome

We have had positive feedback about our last issue of PQ which we dedicated to the memory of Professor Paul Senior and readers might be interested to know that his family, friends and colleagues raised more than £1100 in donations to Prostate Cancer UK.

In this issue we have three articles about Service User Involvement, all of which originated in presentations at the joint Probation Institute/ HMPPS Symposium on Service User Involvement in April 2019. Beth Weaver and colleagues discuss their research in Ayrshire and present their guide for practitioners; Laura Buckley and peer researcher, Emma Sweet, present their joint HMIP/ Revolving Doors Agency research; and, Sarah Lewis and Noel Moran, talk about the Prison Growth Project.

The fact that there are still over 3,000 unreleased and recalled IPP prisoners serving sentences is a sharp reminder of this controversial, and now abolished, legislation. Harry Annison and Christina Straub talk movingly about the experiences of the families of this neglected group of prisoners who present such a challenge to the concept of supervision in the community. Another challenge is posed by Coral Sirdifield and colleagues in their article about offenders' health needs and the dilemmas of commissioning health services for offenders in prison and the community. Readers might also like to look at the PI Position Paper 2/17 Offender Health at www.probation-institute.org/position-papers/

We're pleased to publish an article that relates specifically to victims of crime. Jo Easton describes recent work by the Magistrates Association on the experiences of victims in court. We would welcome responses to this article

and, in particular, Probation perspectives on working with victims.

Laura Martin reflects on the enduring value base of the present generation of those undergoing qualifying training to be probation officers and suggests that, whatever the organizational changes, the fundamental values that underpin probation work remain tenacious.

Relatedly, Nicola Carr reminds us that, whatever the outcome of Brexit, the UK will remain a member of the Council of Europe and recent new guidelines on the training and development of pris-on and probation workers are highly relevant. Helen Schofield, Acting CEO of the Probation Institute comments on recent developments in plans for future training.

Two articles continue our theme of innovative work with women offenders. Sam Sanderson follows up her article in PQ12 with the final evaluation report from the Sussex Women's Triage project. Dawn Harrison, from Changing Lives, discusses an arts and culture programme run jointly with a CRC. Dawn also has a chapter in a newly-published edited collection that can be downloaded free from the Clinks website.

At the end of another calendar year, I'd like to thank all those who have supported Probation Quarterly, whether by contributing articles or by reading them. Particular thanks are due to our designer Richard Rowley and our newly formed editorial board of Anne Burrell, Sam Ainslie and Steve Collett.

The deadline for submission of draft articles for our next issue (March 2020) is Friday 7th February 2020.

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF THE PQ?

Probation Quarterly publishes short articles of 500 - 1500 words which are of interest to practitioners and researchers in public, private or voluntary sector work with offenders and victims.

These articles can be about:

- the activities of the Probation Institute.
- news about the work of your organisation or project.
- reports from special events, seminars, meetings or conferences.
- summaries of your own research.
- brief reviews of books or research reports that have caught your eye.
- thought pieces where you can reflect on an issue that concerns you.

The articles need to be well-written, informative and engaging but don't need to meet the academic standards for a peer-reviewed journal. The editorial touch is 'light' and we can help you to develop your article if that is appropriate. If you have an idea for a suitable article, let me know what you have in mind and I can advise you on how to proceed.

Disclaimer

All contributors must adhere to the [Probation Institute Code of Ethics](#) but the views expressed are their own and not necessarily those of the Probation Institute.

Anne Worrall
Editor, Probation Quarterly

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LIVE,
WORK,
CREATE.

Families of people serving IPPs and the role of Probation

Harry Annison and Christina Straub, Southampton University,
discuss one aspect of their recent report



It is now seven years since the indeterminate sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) was abolished by a Justice Secretary who had accepted that it was flawed in principle and unworkable in practice. However, many readers will be aware that for the over 8,000 individuals sentenced to IPP, that sentence remained in place. While many have now been released on licence (which, by default remains for life), approximately 3,400 IPP prisoners remain incarcerated: 2,223 who have never been released and a further 1,206 who have been recalled to prison. The most recent statistics show that in the past 12 months to 30 June 2019, more IPP prisoners were returned to custody after licence recall than were released - the first time that this has happened.

The project we report on here focused on the families of people sentenced to IPP for two reasons: first, notwithstanding the range of important reports published on IPP, families' experiences had remained under-explored. Second, we considered that the growing attention in England and Wales on the positive role that families often play in rehabilitation - and the need for institutional support for this - would benefit from a considered examination of the specific issues that face IPP prisoners and their relatives.

This project sought to engage in a spirit of co-production with families of people serving IPPs, operating through a series of workshops, interviews, surveys and informal ongoing dialogue. It built on an earlier empirical study conducted by Harry Annison and Rachel Condry, which had begun to examine the 'pains of imprisonment' experienced by families of IPP prisoners (Annison and Condry 2018). These findings showed many family members to be negatively impacted by feelings of injustice and uncertainty, hope and hopelessness.

As a collaborative project with the Prison Reform Trust, this current project sought to examine in greater detail what could be done by relevant organizations to enable them to support their relative to achieve successful resettlement. We focus here on issues related to the role of probation.

Findings

The workshops, interviews and online surveys we conducted reaffirmed previously reported secondary pains of IPP imprisonment suffered by families, highlighting an urgent need for support. Participants described a reverberation process whereby a prisoner's trials and tribulations exerted an immediate effect on the well-being of the family member(s). As was the case with every relevant part of the penal system, specific organizational issues were identified that exacerbated these pains, or risked so doing.

Specifically, as regards probation, it was common for families to report difficulties in communication. Others shared concerns that the specific nature - and related rules and processes - of the IPP sentence were not always sufficiently well understood by staff. One family member said:

"I think the turnover of staff is probably quite great ... they don't really have an understanding ... of the complex situations of the prisoners and IPP sentences... That's been my whole experience apart from the odd couple of people that have been pretty amazing."

Workshop participant

As this respondent noted, these issues may in part flow from the restructuring of the probation service from 2015 under Transforming Rehabilitation (see Probation Journal, 2019) and the resultant pressures on staff. It is also the case that probation staff who have begun work from 2012 onwards may (understandably) be less cognisant of the IPP sentence and the specific issues relating to it.

Underlying such concerns by families was a common desire to have more opportunities to engage with probation and for their role as 'experts by experience', able to support the rehabilitation of their relative, to be utilized. Many families saw relationships with probation officers as being key to holding IPP prisoners back, or indeed propelling them forward towards a more positive future. The relevance of probation – offender managers in prison and offender supervisors in the community – to efforts at progression, the parole process, setting and supervision of licence conditions, and recall, was palpably felt. Related to this, family members pointed to the value of continuity and consistency in probation officer relationships with IPP prisoners, in supporting sentence progression and resettlement.

One contentious issue was the use of Approved Premises (APs). These were commonly perceived as being treated as the default option upon an IPP prisoner's release. Reasons for this were often not fully understood and families perceived their own views on how best to support the IPP prisoner often to go unheard.

At the same time, many participants expressed a concern that while often leaving them feeling excluded in terms of decision-making processes, organisations relied on family members too much to do the 'heavy lifting' in resettlement work. One respondent said:

"Not everyone's got the resources to be able to do that ... or don't want to do that. They've had a lifetime of managing very difficult stuff and maybe they don't want it anymore. There's an expectation that families can go on and on providing it – well, no, they can't, because ... you're depleted."

Workshop participant

Licence conditions were another factor contributing to families' and IPP prisoners' anxieties. The awareness that freedom could be taken away – often for reasons not fully clear to the individual – over a potentially life-long licence period contributed to a feeling of being stuck in an ongoing nightmare. For this reason, release from prison often did not in fact bring relief:

"Having been through this process many times, it just gets harder and harder each time. It's just the beginning, the release ... it doesn't go away. You're living with it the whole time."

Workshop participant

What were the guidelines concerning, and limitations upon, who could recall an IPP prisoner? For what reasons could recall take place? Under what circumstances? What would happen following recall? Who could one contact when a recall had taken place? Families often struggled to have these questions answered, and reported feeling abandoned in the aftermath of a recall if it did take place. One mother described herself as:

"a broken person when my son was recalled ... on the ... [latest] occasion, I was desperate ... I didn't know what to do with myself."

Workshop participant

Recommendations

Our report (Annison and Straub, 2019) makes the following recommendations specifically regarding probation:

Policy and Practice

- Ensure that families are able to be recognised and involved as advocates for their relative serving an IPP sentence, where appropriate.
- Set clear expectations that Offender Managers and Supervisors will consider and pursue avenues of progression for IPP prisoners and provide support in a timely manner.
- Review the use of Approved Premises as release options, and appropriate alternatives.
- Ensure continuity and consistency in the allocation of, and communication with, dedicated Offender Managers.

Information and communication

- Ensure swift and straightforward communication between IPP prisoners' family members - in particular those identified as advocates - and relevant staff.
- Develop appropriate information materials for families that explain the systems, processes and responsibilities related to the IPP sentence. These would include:
 - Understanding the post-release licence process (for example, suspending some licence conditions or ending the licence).
 - Understanding recall.

Training and guidance

- Improved training to ensure that all staff who come into contact with IPPs understand specific practical implications relating to the IPP sentence, and the ramifications of this for families.
- Develop clear guidance for probation staff around IPP licensing conditions (particularly in relation to recall) and how this affects families' daily lives.

The implementation of recommendations set out in our report would constitute important steps in mitigating the pains experienced by families and reducing barriers hindering efforts to support their relative. The changes proposed would benefit not only the families of people serving IPPs, but also those serving IPPs themselves, relevant criminal justice organizations (by easing the costs and burdens imposed by this sentence), other public services (by reducing the negative health effects experienced by families, for example) and the wider public (by improving the prospects of successful long-term rehabilitation for people sentenced to IPP).

We welcome the progress that has been made over recent years to address the legacy of the IPP sentence: for example the creation of an IPP Action Group within the Ministry of Justice, the elimination of the backlog of parole hearings for IPP prisoners, and efforts to help prisoners who have become 'stuck' in the system. And there are welcome developments relating to probation that may have positive implications for IPP prisoners, including the development of the new OMiC (Offender Management in Custody) model (HMPPS 2019) and efforts to take forward the Farmer Review's broad recommendations for families in a probation context. And, of course, the IPP sentence was not of probation's own making.

There is, however, still more that must be done. We intend our report to be one means by which to continue to engage with probation and other relevant organizations to explore steps that can be taken to enable families to support the resettlement of people serving IPP sentences. The history of the sentence, the recognition by the government of this problematic history, and the growing recognition of the state's general obligations to families affected by the criminal justice system, requires nothing less.

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Acknowledgments

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Improving the Health and Quality of **Healthcare for People on Probation**

Coral Sirdifield, Rebecca Marples, Charlie Brooker, and David Denney present their recent research

Probation Healthcare and complexity of need

On 30th June 2018 there were 261,196 people in contact with probation in England and Wales¹ (Ministry of Justice, 2018). Whilst not everyone in this group is the same, people on probation are often socially excluded, and the limited research available suggests that they have a high prevalence and complexity of health problems when compared to the general population (Brooker et al 2012). Many people in contact with probation will experience negative social determinants of health such as unemployment and homelessness. In addition, their voice is seldom heard by commissioners or those providing oversight and scrutiny of healthcare services.

Despite the high level and complexity of health needs in this group, people in contact with probation face both system-level and personal-level barriers to accessing healthcare. If we wish to reduce health inequalities by improving the health of this population it is essential that they have access to health services which meet their needs. This could also potentially reduce the use of crisis services and the costs associated with this. Moreover, improved health is cited as a pathway out of re-offending.

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning the majority of healthcare for the probation population but previous research suggests that many of them are unaware of this responsibility (Department of Health, 2013; Brooker et al., 2017). This article describes a study which asks whether people in contact with probation are receiving the care that they need, and how we can best ensure that their needs are met. The study funded by the National Institute of Health Research investigated the

range and quality of healthcare for people that are in contact with probation (defined as those living in the community, including in probation Approved Premises and in contact with the National Probation Service (NPS) or a Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)) in England.

The research sought to establish the most effective ways of providing healthcare for people on probation to achieve good health outcomes by investigating current systems, policies and existing procedures within each probation provider to deliver healthcare to people in contact with probation.

We adopted a multi-methods approach combining a narrative systematic review with a survey of key stakeholders in England, analysis of policies and procedures, and telephone interviews to inform case studies in a purposive sample of six geographical areas. A systematic search was undertaken of the published literature and the grey literature, including hand searching of key journals from 2000 to September 2017. Survey participants were also asked to provide examples of evaluations or research undertaken in relation to any aspect(s) of their work in offender healthcare.

Barriers to health care

The review identified numerous barriers to service access that are encountered by people in contact with probation including: low levels of literacy and health literacy; financial barriers; some staff having an uncaring professional demeanour and stigmatising people; people not being registered with GPs; competing priorities making it hard for people to focus on their health; inadequate service provision; and commissioning not being informed by the health needs of people in contact with probation (Sirdifield et al., 2019).

¹ This figure includes those on community sentences, suspended sentences, pre-release supervision and post-release supervision that are in contact with either the National Probation Service (NPS) or a Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)

The research revealed a significant paucity of research on the effectiveness of interventions to improve the health of people in contact with probation. In relation to mental health, a high prevalence and complexity of mental illness amongst this group including high levels of co-morbidity and dual diagnosis was noted. Research papers highlighted the value of specialist mental health probation Approved Premises for improving residents' engagement with mental health services and of implementing psychologically informed and planned environments to improve probation staff's confidence in working with people with personality disorder.

Findings also showed that the rate of suicide amongst people in contact with probation is higher than amongst the general population. Some studies suggested that increased risk of suicide may be linked to mental illness and substance abuse, with risk being particularly high during the time immediately after release from prison (Phillips et al., 2018). Studies also pointed to high levels of drug and alcohol use amongst people in contact with probation (Brooker et al., 2012).

We also conducted six national surveys – sending invitations to participate to all probation Approved Premises, National Probation Service areas, Community Rehabilitation Companies, Public Health Departments, Mental Health Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups in England (n=591). A total of 141 organisations responded to the surveys. We later sent freedom of information (FOI) requests to the non-participating CCGs, Mental Health Trusts and Public Health Departments to acquire key data. This resulted in an additional 325 responses, bringing our total to 466 (78.8%).

Many respondents reported gaps in service provision and/or a lack of clear and understood pathways into services. Other themes included difficulties for those who were temporarily housed in probation Approved Premises and organisational changes resulting in people falling through the gaps in service provision. Respondents also reported an absence of services to meet the needs of groups whilst negative perceptions of people in contact with probation could lead to them being denied access to services. Individuals on probation were also perceived as lacking motivation or ability to attend appointments. Poor information sharing often made it difficult to achieve continuity of care. Staff training in relation to health needs could also be inadequate whilst crucially Probation lacked a voice in the commissioning process.

In order to respond to these identified problems respondents suggested increased investment in service provision, improved speed of access, clear information about the services available and how to access them, specific services and/or access routes for probation.

We also conducted semi-structured interviews with staff from Mental Health Trusts, Public Health Departments, Community Rehabilitation Companies, the National Probation Service and probation Approved Premises in six areas of the country. The existence of many barriers to healthcare were reported including problematic (restrictive and unclear) referral pathways which can be diffuse and opaque, difficulties in accessing GPs, and problems with the continuity of care. Likewise, probation staff also struggle to navigate an increasingly complex and ever-changing health landscape.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Crucially CCGs need to recognise that healthcare commissioning for people in contact with probation is their responsibility not NHS England's. CCGs in association with Public Health Departments should be undertaking 'gap' analyses to examine the complex healthcare needs of people in contact with probation in their areas and the extent to which current service provision meets those needs. The new National Probation Service Health and Social Care Strategy 2019-2022 outlines ways in which routinely collected data in probation might be able to enable such gap analyses. Data from the research literature about health needs is also set out in our toolkit (see below) and could be used to inform commissioning. The research revealed generally that there is a need to improve understanding of the health needs of the probation population, and for improved partnership working between health and justice agencies, particularly with respect to developing mechanisms to support routine sharing of health data at transition points throughout the criminal justice pathway.

Those in contact with probation have high levels of mental health and substance misuse needs. CCGs and Public Health Departments should examine the extent to which services are currently configured to meet these needs. The research also shows that working with criminal justice agencies to address other obstacles to health service access such as GP registration needs to be urgently addressed. Criminal Justice agencies also need to be included in commissioning processes to help improve understanding of the complex needs of people in contact with probation and ensure that services can meet them.

The research also revealed the need for cross-agency training, with respect to supporting people with mental health and substance misuse needs. Mechanisms to support routine sharing of health data at transition points throughout the criminal justice pathway should also be improved. The announcement made in May 2019 that the responsibility for delivery of all offender management services will in future rest with the NPS will remove some of the organisational complexities created by part privatisation that have exacerbated and in some cases created barriers to information sharing. This reversal of policy could impact positively on the possibility of this recommendation being adopted (see <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2019/may/the-system-isnt-working-statement-on-renationalisation-of-probation/>).

We also recommend involvement of criminal justice agencies in Health and Wellbeing boards and other commissioning forums and the co-location of criminal justice and health staff to ensure clear pathways into services for those in contact with probation.

Implementation of these recommendations can be supported by our **toolkit for commissioners and practitioners**. This toolkit seeks to raise awareness of probationers' likely health needs, what is known about the most effective ways of providing healthcare to this group (to produce good health outcomes), models of good practice, and how barriers to providing good quality and accessible healthcare for probationers can be overcome. It is available for free from: <https://probhct.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk>

Dr Coral Sirdifield, University of Lincoln, Rebecca Marples, University of Lincoln, Professor Charlie Brooker, Royal Holloway, University of London, Professor David Denney, Royal Holloway, University of London

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Sussex Women's Triage and Diversion Project **Final Evaluation**

Sam Sanderson presents a second article on the evaluation of an innovative project



The Sussex Women's Triage and Diversion (T&D) pilot known as the Women's Steps to Change (WSTC) project was developed according to the principles of the Ministry of Justice's Whole System Approach (WSA) for Female Offenders. This pilot is based on assessing need at first point of contact with the criminal justice system in order to provide holistic support throughout women's individual journeys. Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) commissioned Emerging Futures to deliver WSTC which operated as a custody-suite based Triage and Diversion scheme from 14 May 2018 to 30 April 2019.

Readers will recall the article we featured in Probation Quarterly 12 (probation-institute.org/magazine) detailing the interim evaluation findings of the Sussex WSTC pilot across all police custody suites. The final evaluation report was concluded in June 2019 consolidating all the findings of the interim report issued in December 2018 to the end of the project pilot in April 2019. This article is our follow-up containing our final outcomes, successes and recommendations.

Whole System Approach

The WSTC is based on the MoJ Whole System Approach for Female Offenders and focused on two core deliverables:

- **A gender responsive and trauma informed approach** - exploring the causes of women's offending, the trauma of being involved in the criminal justice system (CJS) and ensuring that women were supported to manage their complexities and vulnerabilities.
- **Multi-agency approach** - bringing together Sussex-based criminal justice, statutory and third sector agencies to provide a holistic community support mechanism to dealing with their complexities and vulnerabilities.

The aim of the project was to utilise existing resources in a more targeted and efficient approach, avoiding gaps or duplication in service provision. In addition, it aimed to support women to access local provision to enable them to turn their lives around.

The key women's offending pathways to be addressed were:

- Reduced offending.
- Securing benefits and employment/ education/training.
- Moving into and maintaining accommodation.
- Reducing drug and alcohol use, including obtaining methadone prescriptions and attending detox and rehabilitation.
- Improved physical health/emotional and mental health.
- Re-establishing contact with family.
- A sense of purpose and identity through increased confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Improved understanding of women being victims of crime themselves.
- Positive aspirations for the future.

The Model

The defining feature of WSTC is that almost all the frontline staff (known as coaches) had experience of the criminal justice system, and were often themselves in recovery from drug and/or alcohol misuse. Coaches either saw women who were arrested in the custody suite or, if they were not present at the time of arrest, followed up by telephone within two days and arranged to meet them.

The coaches' role was to engage with women who had been arrested, assess their needs, informing them of local helping services and motivate and support them (sometimes by accompanying them in person) to engage with these services. They provided ongoing information, advice and support (often by telephone, text and email as well as in person) until a woman was properly engaged with a helping service or for a maximum period of six weeks, whichever is sooner.

Activity

A total of 356 referrals (of 336 women) were made to WSTC in the 10 ½ month period from 14 May 2018 to 31 March 2019. Almost half (162/332 = 49%) of these women engaged with the project and were supported with a wide range of needs and in particular:

- Mental and emotional health
- Relationship difficulties
- Substance misuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Accommodation
- Physical health

The support was provided both directly by WSTC coaches and by referrals to a wide range of community resources (176 referrals to 52 services).

Impact

110 of 162 women who engaged with the project were recorded as having received substantial support in relation to more than one pathway. The final evaluation by Russell Webster also conducted an in-depth follow-up of a small sample of 22 service users which found that they had fully engaged with almost all the community agencies to which they were referred and made substantial personal progress. For example,

community agencies reported that several have become absent from alcohol and/or drugs (7), had improved their mental health (7), had left abusive relationships (5), had found jobs (3), or moved into stable accommodation (2).

Resourcing was not available to conduct a rigorous assessment of criminal justice outcomes before and after contact with WSTC. A preliminary assessment found that overall offending rates for a sample of 55 women engaged with the project were largely unchanged and very low. Excluding the arrest at the point of referral, thirteen women had been arrested a total of 27 times in the six months prior to contact with WSTC and fourteen women had been arrested a total of 22 times in the six months post-contact.

Feedback

A wide range of stakeholders held very positive views of the project. There was a high level of satisfaction at police engagement with the project, evidenced by a high rate of referrals and service users themselves rated the project very highly. They particularly valued receiving very prompt help and support in a non-judgmental manner. Service users reported feeling empowered and that they had often been able to tackle long-standing issues and problems for the first time. Many did, however, say that they would have preferred to have had a longer and more intensive period of support. When asked how likely they were to recommend the WSTC project to a friend or woman in need, the average recommendation rating was an extremely high 9.8/10. Representatives from the helping agencies to which WSTC referred were unanimous in their positive views of the project, stating that they particularly appreciated the proactive approach and high levels of support given to women in order to enable them to fully engage with the service on offer.

Two probation interviewees stated that magistrates have been impressed by the project, particularly by its ability to provide up-to-date and detailed information on exactly what interventions defendants were participating in with which agencies. Interviewees expressed the view that sentencers had felt more confident in making community orders, rather than custodial sentences:

"An extremely detailed knowledge of local services which gave the women working with WSTC a very holistic package of support".

Conclusion

The holistic approach operated by the WSTC project was found to be effective in diverting women from police custody into the most relevant services to help address underlying causes which drove their contact with the criminal justice system. Any future iteration should consider extending the period of support from six weeks to 8 - 12 weeks in order to maximise effective engagement with community services in line with our service users feedback.

The remit of the project was revised from May 2019 in the light of the recommissioning of the NHS Liaison and Diversion (L&D) scheme within Sussex custody suites. Sussex Police and other commissioners are confident that the L & D scheme will be able to provide the same quality of service to women who are arrested. The evaluation recommends that a proper outcome evaluation of the L & D scheme is undertaken. The WSTC scheme has been repurposed on a reduced budget to work with ten priority vulnerable women offenders as selected by Sussex Police.

The initial assumption of the primary stakeholders was that if the WSTC scheme was found to be successful, it would be extended and become a mainstream component of criminal justice provision in Sussex with the intention of diverting more women from the criminal justice system in line with national policy. This, however, has not been the case. Despite the success of the project, it has been decided to end WSTC's custody suite work, on the, as yet, untested basis in Sussex that the Liaison & Diversion scheme will be as successful in helping women offenders engage with community services. Nevertheless, the learning from this project is important to understand how future gender and trauma responsive provision needs to be commissioned and forms the basis of a successful operating model that has been co-designed by the users of this service.

At the time of writing this article the WSTC Team is working with the Project Manager to scope how they can engage with women at court stage to minimise the need for short-term remands and custodial sentences.

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The role of Lived Experience in **conducting Social Research**

Dr Laura Buckley (Research Officer, HM Inspectorate of Probation) and Emma Sweet (Member of the Revolving Doors Agency Lived Experience Team), review a recent publication



As part of their work, HM Inspectorate of Probation Research team wished to undertake primary research to examine Service User Involvement (SUI) in probation. With a few exceptions (e.g. Clinks, 2011; Hubbard, 2014; Weaver, Lightowler and Moodie, 2019) this is a relatively under-researched area. As such, they were particularly keen to gain a greater understanding of the benefits and challenges of this approach in reviewing and improving the effectiveness of services and interventions. This research had two phases:

1. an initial online survey to all probation providers, to be completed by key SUI staff; and
2. site visits which included focus groups and interviews with staff and service users involved in this work.

HM Inspectorate of Probation is increasingly seeking ways in which to include service users in its work, including its recently published Service User Engagement Strategy (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2019), and this research project provided an ideal opportunity. The added value which those with Lived Experience (LE) can bring to research projects has been previously noted (Revolving Doors Agency, 2016). It is believed that they are able to establish a rapport more easily with those groups where there is a shared experience, as well as highlight aspects of the research which have not been noticed by the other researchers, such as identifying additional areas warranting attention, designing more effective research questions, and picking up on important themes which may not have seemed as significant to others.

The Inspectorate research team approached Revolving Doors Agency (RDA) who agreed to facilitate working alongside a small team of five peer researchers - supported by RDA staff - to help inform the design and delivery of this research project. Those selected all had previous LE of being on probation. They had also all

worked on previous projects with RDA, and as such they were considered to have the skills and commitment required to support this work.

These five peer researchers formed an important part of the research team for this project, making contributions at strategic points which helped to shape and steer the research. Three co-production sessions were held between the peer researchers and the HM Inspectorate of Probation research team. This allowed joint working to:

1. design and quality assure research tools for the site visits;
2. co-analyse the transcripts to develop themes; and
3. 'sense check' the final report.

In addition, two of the Lived Experience Team (LET) supported the fieldwork by going along on site visits, speaking with staff and service users, whilst also gaining a deeper understanding of the research.

One of these peer researchers, Emma Sweet, also spoke at a conference where this project was showcased. She has provided an account of her experience of this project below:

"Being involved from the start of the process, through co-designing the questionnaires, really gave the LET the opportunity to use our experience to give a different perspective on some aspects of the questions. It also allowed us to help shape the direction in regard to who to target to get the key information required for this project.

I was one of the peer researchers who went out on locations alongside the Inspectorate research team. Part of this involved observing a service user council, which I found really interesting. The requests from the service users appeared to be reasonable and the staff's responses to these acceptable.

The feedback during discussions we had with both staff and service users were positive. I even double checked with service users if this was how well it usually worked without being observed and they said it pretty much was. I feel myself and Inspectorate researchers complemented each other during this process. I was able to ask questions outside of the box, as service users' guards went down knowing I was from the LET.

In the co-analysis session the LET recoded and refocused themes. The main theme that stood out as really important for me was that around personal growth and how much SUI really helped people feel part of something. They also felt that it helped with their rehabilitation, which is amazing. Ultimately, the role of probation is to stop reoffending, so SUI having an impact on helping to rehabilitate people is a massive theme to keep in mind.

I believe this project has been an excellent example of how powerful the inclusion of LE can be. It is important that LE is seen for its benefits and the positive impact it can have in finding solutions and improving systems, and I would love to see more organisations embracing the inclusion of LE. It was really encouraging to have the LET so welcomed to be involved by the HM Inspectorate of Probation team and I believe this shows we are moving towards a time where LE is finally being recognised for the value it deserves."

The benefits of undertaking this project alongside those with LE were also seen from a social researcher perspective. An account of this is given by Dr Laura Buckley, Research Officer for HM Inspectorate of Probation:

"As much of this work was being carried out by myself and a senior research officer, we very much welcomed the opportunity to test our ideas with the peer researchers and staff at RDA. When you are so closely involved in the research, having a fresh pair of eyes can help you see

things you had become somewhat blinded to. The added benefit of the peer researchers, however, was that they were not only a fresh pair of eyes, but ones which had two-fold valuable experience. For not only did they all have recent enough experience of being on probation that this landscape was familiar to them, they all had experience of being involved in SUI themselves.

Challenge was very much encouraged from the team and we were always open to hearing their ideas, reflecting on these, and making changes where this felt right. Even though the co-production sessions required a lot of energy from all involved, there was always a great atmosphere. Over time and as we got to know each other better, all sides became more confident in questioning, asking for clarification, and negotiating differing opinions. These sessions helped us to feel more assured in the findings we produced, as the peer researchers helped to provide that extra layer of validity to the appropriateness of the questions, the themes which were emerging, and the overall findings and shape of the report.

Having the experience of themselves doing SUI work whilst either on or shortly after completing probation also allowed the team to illustrate why it was so important to protect the welfare of service users who were involved. Due to their passion and drive to support others and improve the experience of probation, service users often contributed a great deal of time and energy to SUI. However, many were themselves going through a period of recovery and readjustment. As such, it was important to get the balance right by allowing them to reap the many positive benefits of being involved in this work (as detailed in our report), but to also ensure their own safety and to offer the required support. Subsequently, we emphasised in our report that the welfare of service users involved in this work should be held as a priority at all times."

The final research report 'Service user involvement in the review and improvement of probation services', was published in September 2019. In this report, we highlighted the key benefits and challenges for both staff and service users who undertake this work, as well as identifying a number of key enablers for the effective delivery of SUI.

As a final note, the LET suggested at the first co-production session that it would be valuable to also talk to those staff and service users who were not involved in SUI work, to gain a greater understanding from their perspective as to the reasons why this was something they were not currently engaged with. And whilst it was not possible to investigate this aspect within the scope of this project, we feel that this would be a valuable piece of research to be taken forward. We also believe that those with LE could play an important role in facilitating this research.

The report is available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/research-analysis-bulletins/>

With thanks to the LET: Adam Neill, Daniel Vincent, Emma Sweet, Jason Roderickson, and Nadia Butcher.

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Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

Co-producing Inclusive **Approaches to Justice**

Beth Weaver, Claire Lightowler and Kristina Moodie, University of Strathclyde and the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice, introduce their new research-based guide for practitioners



Introduction

This article draws on a two and a half year action research project commissioned to inform and support the design, development, implementation and review of a multi-layered service user involvement strategy across community justice services in Ayrshire. Although documents on how to go about partnership working and enlisting and engaging service users are now fairly common place, research into organisations that have attempted to implement service user involvement is more limited – particularly in the community justice arena.

The terms ‘co-production’ and ‘service user involvement’ can be used to refer to very different activities and expectations, underpinned by different philosophies and ideologies. Despite our title, we use the term ‘service user involvement’ more frequently as the guiding approach here rather than ‘co-production’. Few of the people we spoke to in our research used the term ‘co-production’. However, in practice, there are many different ways of involving people who are supported by services, at different levels, that when taken together comprise a co-productive approach.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the methods underpinning our research prior to providing a brief summary of our learning.

Our Approach

Using techniques of action research, participatory community planning, community mobilisation and knowledge exchange, the approach involved four, generally sequentially but sometimes overlapping, phases undertaken between late 2016 to early 2019. As an outcome of this work, we have produced a step-by-step practice guide, [Inclusive Justice: Co-producing Change](#), which we hope practitioners and service users will find helpful in initiating service user involvement approaches in their own area.

Our approach involved a review of the literature about models of user involvement plus interviews and focus groups with thirty professionals and service users. The analysis of the early data led to the production of a [thematic summary of findings](#) to inform the development of three service user groups in each of the three Ayrshire Local Authorities. Working across the three groups, the research team coordinated and participated in monthly meetings, took on the role of preparing agendas and taking minutes, provided support and advice, and shared learning and reflections across the groups. Knowledge sharing events were also held to celebrate improvements, share learning and provide mutual support.

These groups are the first of their kind in community justice in Scotland, and represent an innovative and collaborative initiative to ensure that those directly affected can inform and shape the design, development, and delivery of community justice services across Ayrshire.

Summary of Learning

Purpose and aims

In the early stages, negotiating and agreeing the aims, objectives and purposes of the group are key. These shape not only the membership and composition of the group, but the approach taken. Having a clear focus for service user involvement is important; rather than generic participatory activities, a clear rationale, and thus purpose, is fundamental to encourage and sustain participation. Some groups found it helpful to agree an annual action plan, once the groups had been established, to assist them to maintain focus, encourage accountability, and convey a sense of progression. The aims, vision and approach taken should, however, be sufficiently flexible and accommodating of change, new members, and subject to regular review.

Membership and composition

Attendance by agency representatives should be consistent so that those service users engaging in the group have the opportunity to form mutually trusting and respectful relationships with them. As the composition of a group shapes the culture of the group, relationships between all group members are key to its success. Our learning suggests that bringing service users, peer workers, front-line practitioners and managers together is most effective. Having a facilitator with experience of service user involvement to guide development in the early stages, as the research team did, is particularly helpful.

Approaches to service-user involvement

Approaches to service user involvement should be informed by and take account of issues of diversity and the different interests, needs, strengths, preferences and capabilities of the members of service user groups, as well as differing service contexts and capacities. Opportunities for involvement need to be meaningful, interesting, (fun even!) and voluntary. At a minimum, approaches to service user involvement should be developed in close consultation with the service user group. Service user involvement is not an end state; it is a dynamic and changeable process that evolves over time.

Regular meetings enable and encourage participation, while communicating reliability and enabling a sense of progression. The environment in which meetings, activities and events take place should be welcoming and neutral. Providing food can convey a sense of value, worth and appreciation. While serving their own purpose, meetings are not necessarily an attractive mechanism of engagement for everyone. Some people prefer to participate in specific activities with a specific purpose. Community justice service users in Ayrshire particularly enjoyed fitness related activities and projects with a purpose (such as creating a film,

developing a community magazine, engaging in football training or weekly peer support groups) and appeared to enjoy public recognition of their outputs and positive contribution. Engaging a diverse group of service users, with different capabilities, motivations, interests and experiences requires the development of different opportunities to get involved - from one off encounters or events, to ongoing activities and opportunities, for example.

Organisational support and culture

Practitioners, peer workers, volunteers and service users tasked with fostering service user involvement may benefit from structured training, supervision and support, not least where their engagement represents a role transition. Service user involvement requires not only service user buy in, but the buy in and active support of front-line practitioners, which implies the need for direct and proactive engagement with staff. Service user involvement is not an add-on, it should be a core approach to practice and intrinsic to professional cultures and approaches. It also requires leadership and buy-in at a strategic and senior level.

A whole systems approach to service user involvement may require organisational change and, for some, cultural change. Risk averse, conservative, overly bureaucratic and highly professionalised cultures can stifle innovation and negatively influence attitudes. To support service user involvement effectively and achieve maximum impact requires resources - human and financial. Where service user groups were supported by organisational infrastructure and dedicated posts, they were able to progress more quickly. Not unusually the buy-in, particularly from the lead organisation, was key to ensuring the group was energised and everyone kept engaged. This was particularly difficult to achieve where there were personnel changes or where organisations were unclear why they were involved, or had limited direct involvement with service users.

Enablers of service user involvement

To be both effective and sustainable service user involvement needs to be properly coordinated and financially resourced. It is likely to require a dedicated worker and a structured action plan to realise and sustain approaches. Leadership from peers with lived experience is key in terms of reducing social distance through identification-based trust, which encourages participation and engagement.

Supporting service user involvement requires continuous individually tailored encouragement, support, advice and intervention. Frequency and reliability of mechanisms of communication and engagement are key, be that through conversations, meetings, twitter communications, telephone or text. Where there is a gap in communication or opportunities to get together, participation declines.

Challenges

Supporting service user involvement is labour intensive. In the absence of a dedicated development worker, and an infrastructure of supervision and support around that person, there are very real issues of capacity and resource to encourage and coordinate the involvement of both front line staff and service users. Moreover, despite expressing interest in attending activities, this does not readily translate into participation for a range of reasons (practical, emotional, confidence, level of real interest, other competing demands). Some service users do not want to be actively involved in shaping and developing services or activities. It is important not to see this as failure. It is more common for service users to want to be involved in participating in creating outputs and activities with others (where these are of interest, respectful and responsive to interest and needs). For service users who do want to participate and engage, many will also need significant encouragement, and their involvement is based on their relationships with others and a sense of mutual respect, trust and community.

Outcomes, Impacts and Effects

Participation in the groups has given practitioners an opportunity to work with, communicate and relate to other people who use services, and it has strengthened connections and given practitioners a renewed sense of purpose. Most participating agencies already engaged in individual forms of service user involvement prior to the involvement of the research team, in the delivery of, for example, person-centred support, outcomes-focused reviews and/or exit questionnaires. A significant outcome and effect of service user involvement has been the growth of new forms of service delivery in the development of new activities and groups oriented, in the main, to personal growth and skill development, recovery, social inclusion, and health and well-being.

New forms of collective service user involvement have also been developed in each group, and through peer mentoring, peer training, peer support groups and events such as workshops, conferences and a football tournament. A key benefit of the service user groups was the permission it gave to those involved to try things out, and if they did not work as anticipated to amend, abandon or change course. Consequently, the groups energised those involved, rather than being seen as a burden.

Our reflection is that the establishment of meaningful models of service user involvement can significantly change approaches to service delivery across the service. It is an efficient way of achieving a significant shift in approaches and practices, which can consolidate a culture change, already committed to but not necessarily happening in practice, rather than representing a radical shift of power and control.

Victims' experiences of **magistrates' courts**

Jo Easton, Magistrates
Association, summarises
their recent report



The Magistrates Association (MA), an independent charity and the membership body for magistrates in England and Wales, received a grant to carry out a small-scale project looking at what the victim experience is when a case is brought to the magistrates' court, and what can be done by magistrates to improve that experience within the confines of their judicial role.

We collected views of selected magistrates via a survey and used the results to shape the agenda for a roundtable involving about twenty different agencies who work with or support victims. The roundtable included representatives from statutory organisations, smaller grass-roots and larger charities. Partly due to the MA's focus on domestic abuse as a priority policy issue, the majority of organisations represented victims of domestic abuse. While many experiences that victims have going through the court processes are similar, it should be noted that some specific issues arise in domestic abuse cases. In drafting a report bringing together all the views expressed at the roundtable, we tried to focus on those issues relevant for all victims who are attending court. The report¹ summarised some of the negatives for victims attending court and put forward some ways in which their experience can be improved, before focusing on what changes magistrates can put in place to result in better experiences for victims.

There were four key themes that arose out of the roundtable in relation to the biggest problems faced by victims and how to improve them: lack of information, difficulties participating in the process, feeling unsafe and a lack of support.

Lack of information

The first of these themes described victims struggling to get any information about what was happening during a criminal investigation and court process. This related to both general information about what to expect from the process (including what their rights were) and specific details about the case itself. Organisations felt that generally victims were not provided with basic background information about the court part of the justice system. In particular, no one explained to victims what the process of attending court would be like and what they could expect on the day. This left victims feeling stressed and often they were not given the details of anyone they could contact with simple questions like how to get directions to court.

Another issue relating to a lack of information was that victims were not provided with relevant details on their specific case. This included everything from not receiving regular updates about how a case was progressing to the outcomes of specific decisions around bail, expected pleas or what (if any) assessment had been done about ongoing risk to the victim. Victims need to be kept well-informed and given enough information about the court process so they can understand what is happening. It is crucial that victims know what to expect at each point in the process, so being given basic information about the justice system and processes is important. They also need to be informed about their own particular case; if they are not kept up to date, it can impact significantly on their desire and ability to participate in the process.

¹ The full report is available here: <https://www.magistrates-association.org.uk/Portals/0/Victim%20experience%20project%20MA%20report%20August%202019.pdf>

Difficulties participating in the process

The second theme identified was that victims faced difficulty in participating fairly and effectively in the criminal justice process. For many victims, after an initial interview and giving a Victim Personal Statement (VPS), they have no further involvement in the process unless they are asked to give evidence at court. There were a number of issues raised that related to victims attending court to give evidence. These included difficulties getting to court, problems with delays on the day and victims not having a safe space in which to wait before giving evidence. Many of these challenges were practical in nature. Waiting to go into court was emphasised as a particularly stressful time for victims – but conditions within the courtroom itself more directly impacted on a victim's opportunity to participate. The right to participate involves being heard and being able to influence the process and outcome. In relation to victims participating in criminal trials, this can either be through giving evidence at trial, or through a Victim Personal Statement.²

Victims can be supported to give evidence through the granting of special measures which can include assistance with communication (through an interpreter, provision of communication aids or the support of an intermediary), allowing a victim to sit behind a screen or even give evidence via Video Link. The VPS also has a critical part to play in ensuring that victims are heard in the process, especially if they are not called to give evidence. A number of important factors were raised in relation to ensuring victims were able to give a VPS and it was heard by the court. Firstly, there should be consistency in victims being offered the opportunity to give a VPS. Secondly, once a VPS

has been made, it is important that it is taken into account by the court, thereby allowing the victim to influence the process and outcome. Victims must feel that not only have they been heard, but what they said was taken into account. This means benches must make sure it is clear how victims' views and experience have influenced their decisions, especially in relation to sentencing and any additional orders that have been made.

Feeling unsafe

The third area of concern highlighted by organisations was that victims did not feel safe and the fact that these feelings were sometimes exacerbated by engaging with the criminal justice process. Victims may of course feel unsafe for a variety of reasons; anxiety and stress is a common response to the trauma they have experienced. They may also be fearful due to ongoing risk from the defendant. The report identified a number of things courts can do to help victims feel safe, both in relation to supporting their participation in the court process and using protective orders to reduce any ongoing risk. The criminal justice system was seen as the primary way that victims could be provided with ongoing protection, through court orders that require an individual to stay away from the victim.³ The two stages at which criminal courts can put in place protective orders is during an investigation (through bail decisions) or once the case has concluded (through sentencing decisions or ordering civil injunctions).

² A Victim Personal Statement is an opportunity for victims' to explain the impact of the offence: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victim-personal-statement>

³ Protection can also be offered through court orders produced in the civil or family jurisdiction, but this report is focusing on the criminal court.

Lack of support

The fourth biggest challenge faced by victims related to the lack of support available to them, both in terms of overall support and the specific support needed during the court process. The issue raised above in relation to a lack of information was linked to lack of support, as organisations felt that if there were better support networks available for victims before the case came to court, it would include providing sufficient information about the process. A particular concern was that where support was available, front line staff did not necessarily have detailed understanding about the court process, so could not help victims in terms of letting them know what to expect. Similarly, it was pointed out that victims often had to deal with varied different processes at the same time, which meant dealing with different agencies or court jurisdictions. In such a situation, organisations reported a lack of communication or liaison between the different statutory agencies involved. Obviously lack of resources has a huge impact on the support available to victims but good practice - including better communication between agencies - can have a positive effect without having massive cost implications.

The report concluded with a number of recommendations for both the MA as an organisation and for magistrates. Many of these relate to raising awareness amongst magistrates about the way victims experience the courts, and the MA has already produced a special issue of our Magistrate magazine highlighting a number of the issues raised in the report. The need for training for magistrates on specific issues like domestic abuse, and particularly newer offences such as coercive and controlling behaviour, was emphasised by several groups. The Judicial College, who are responsible for provision of training for magistrates, has produced a number of useful resources on the topic of domestic abuse, including a recent training pack which was published in the summer of 2019. The MA will continue to work to ensure magistrates understand how to better improve the experience of victims and are committed to taking forward a number of recommendations set out in the report.



Magistrates Association



Jo Easton
Magistrates Association

Hanging on in there: the enduring value base of probation practitioners

Laura Martin from Sheffield Hallam University explores the value base of current PQiP learners



In July 2019 we commenced cohort 6 of the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) at Sheffield Hallam University, welcoming a mixture of recent graduates, seasoned practitioners and many in between. In September the PQiP learners attended their first academic session, introducing them to the Skills in Probation Practice module (SKIPP). SKIPP spans the duration of the academic programme and explores the holistic range of theoretical approaches, practice models and engagement skills that underpin effective probation practice.

The first module block focuses on the development of a practitioner identity, an exploration of values and ethics as well as reflection on what it means to be a probation officer. Here the learners are encouraged to consider Mawby and Worrall's (2013) application of the 'dirty work' model to current probation practice and to think about their own journey into probation through the lens of Mawby and Worrall's three practitioner typologies. These are: the 'lifer', who has spent most of their working life in the probation service; the 'second careerist', who moved to probation after a previous, often unrelated career; and, the 'offender manager', who joined the service after its training split from social work in the late 1990s. By virtue of the time in which they enter the probation services and the pre-requisite of specific criminological and criminal justice 'knowledge', most satisfy the criteria for the 'offender manager' typology. Without doubt, risk assessment and paperwork are accepted as fundamental components of the role and in order to gain a coveted place on training programmes, applicants are required to gain relevant experience of working with vulnerable populations. However, through experience of working with six successive cohorts of PQiP learners and prior experience of teaching on the Probation Qualification Framework, it is hard to find supporting evidence that those currently training to become probation officers evidence a "public protection ethos with little

investment in social work culture [or] ambivalence about the 'relationship'" (Mawby and Worrall, 2013:149-51).

To illustrate, the following word cloud was created from responses to the question "Why Probation?" which was posed to the new cohort of probation trainees (over 100 learners) during their first academic session:



It is hard to reconcile such comments with ambivalence about the value of relationships or an overt focus on assessment and risk management. There are echoes here of Deering's (2010) research which highlighted the enduring nature of social work values, long after the cessation of such training for probation practitioners following Michael Howard's changes implemented in the mid-1990s. Deering encapsulates these values around the enduring nature of the relationship within probation practice, as the mechanism through which to facilitate change and to bridge the gap between opposing intervention approaches.

Whether you are facilitating a cognitive-behavioural programme or adopting a desistance orientated focus, an empathic, pro-social and transparent approach provides a unifying framework and a consistency to the oft-disparate work undertaken with service users.

It is reassuring then that practitioner values can weather the storms of change and they are not swayed by the influences of ideological policies. There is temporal consistency in the research and literature produced by former probation workers, such as Brian Williams who wrote of the importance of valuing service users as individuals capable of change and highlighted the relational aspects of this process (1995) and both Nellis (2002) and Canton (2007) who stress the importance of values and ethicality in practice. It is clear these issues remain the concern of practitioners today evidenced by the responses in the word cloud above as well as by those former practitioners continuing to write on the topic of probation (Canton and Dominey, 2018).

However, it is important not to focus solely on the optimism of those primarily at the beginning of their probation journeys and to also consider the challenges of joining a service that is blighted by the failure of the Transforming Rehabilitation project and bears the scars of fragmentation. Cracknell (2016) reflected on his own experiences as he trained during the separation of the service and the challenges of an academic programme that, in his view, did not necessarily equip learners to be effective, reflective practitioners. He further highlights the dissonance that developed between his ideals and reasons for joining the service and the realities of too little time with service users and too much time in front of a screen.

This aligns well with Harris' (1980) consideration of dissonance which was further explored by Mawby and Worrall (2013). Harris introduced three types: moral, technological and operational

dissonance and they can be seen as equally relevant to the service today. There remains a disconnect between the reasons individuals espouse for wanting to work in probation and the more bureaucratic demands of the role. Inspection reports, newspaper headlines and re-offending data consistently call into question the efficacy of punishment in the community and balancing the desire to care with the need to control remains a constant challenge. It is important then to consider how professional probation learners can be equipped to effectively manage this dissonance and maintain the optimism for the value of probation as demonstrated by the word cloud above.

In order to achieve this, it is important to embed reflexivity into academic programmes supporting the development of practitioners at all levels. Within the PQiP in Sheffield Hallam, this is encapsulated in a range of assessments that require learners to reflect on their own practice and development as well as the values, approaches and models of working which underpin the profession. This supports learners to make the links between the academic work and their practice, exploring the potential for dissonance between the ideal and reality as well as reducing the likelihood that this is seen as an "add-on" rather than a core component of effective development (Cracknell, 2016:214).

Also, we need to recognise that distance learning as a mechanism for professional probation education is unlikely to be replaced by a more traditional, taught course and as such we need to enable learners to become active participants in their education in the same way that service users need to within the supervisory relationship. In this sense the interactions between learners and the academic programme echo elements of social constructivism and co-production, as learners construct their own interpretations of what it means to be a probation officer in the post Transforming Rehabilitation landscape.

This process is enhanced as the PQiP is facilitated by academics who are former practitioners, bringing with them their own experiences of learning at a distance and the challenges of integrating theory and practice. Interactive exercises in SKIPP provide the opportunity for learners to give voice to their own perspectives on the place probation holds within the criminal justice system, its values, artefacts and culture, providing a starting point for debate and critique which is continued throughout the academic programme.

Both of these components support learners to effectively strike the balance between care and control, engagement and bureaucracy, supporting self-efficacy as trainees can ascribe personal meaning to their learning and focus their attention on the operationalisation of their values (Martin and Fowler, 2018).

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The Prison Growth Project: **Transforming Organisational Culture and Identity Collaboratively**

Sarah Lewis (Director) and Noel Moran (Business Manager), Penal Reform Solutions, follow up their presentation at the recent joint PI/HMPPS Service User Involvement Symposium





Penal Reform Solutions

Penal Reform Solutions is a company that aims to promote humanity and relationships within organisations, highlighting the importance of hope and trust within reform and the integral nature of service user engagement to organisational culture change. The Prison Growth Project (see www.penalreformsolutions.com for more information) brought together a number of perspectives, to research and learn about the aspects of practice that nurture and hinder growth. It was an organic and evolving project, whereby residents and staff at a Category C Prison worked together to create a culture of growth. Up until now, prison cultural change has been centred upon the rehabilitation of those that reside in custody. The Prison Growth Project broadened its scope by involving staff, families, visitors and residents in cultural change, recognising the experience of prisons can be painful for anyone who enters into the carceral space. The Prison Growth Project was informed by research undertaken in Norwegian prisons by Sarah Lewis over a three year period, critically examining which aspects of practice support personal growth. From this work, a blueprint was established to consider how the learnings from “exceptional” Norwegian prison practice (Pratt, 2008a,b) can be utilised within an English context.

In 2016, the first English Prison Growth Project was established in a Category C prison in the South West. This prison received a poor inspection result in 2016, justified by the levels of violence, drugs and debt, as well as the permissive culture, which had emerged. The inspection highlighted that on a relational level, there were poor boundaries and discipline and presented the need for a confident and capable staff culture, in order to improve the quality of the prison.

Soon after the inspection, the Prison Growth Project took root and aimed to consider the needs of the prison, its identity as an organisation and how the culture could be improved. From an analysis of the ‘as is’ environment, the findings recognised the challenges the prison was facing and which aspects of practice promoted personal growth. Following a collaborative analysis of the data, the same principles from the Norwegian Growth Project emerged.

These were:

- Experiencing normality - doing activities which mirror the outside community
- Tasting freedom - experiencing moments of freedom, which provide space to reflect upon one’s identity
- Finding pro-social ways of coping with the pains of prison - strategies that help prisoners to manage the inherent pains, which are associated with losing one’s liberty
- Experiencing peace and joy - spaces and activities which promoted as a sense of inner peace
- Meaningful work - finding meaningful activities that are individualised and personal, leading to a more purposive life
- Authentic leadership - promoting a leadership style which is visible, true and trustworthy
- Connecting with nature - the importance of spaces and opportunities that enable people to feel connected to the world around them
- Developing meaningful relationships - central to all other principles, highlighting the importance of deep and positive connections with other people, including peers, staff, families and the wider community.

The Deputy Governor of the prison had the vision of creating a meaningful environment that was person-centred and rehabilitative in nature and this resonated with the ethos and values of Penal Reform Solutions. With his support, the Prison Growth Project worked with staff and residents, to collectively apply the principles of growth to this English prison. It carried out research to understand issues associated with drugs and violence and worked with the whole prison community to actively take responsibility for organisational change. The project designed research with the Growth Team (a group of residents with a passion for change) that was transformative in its nature. Projects included a photo-essay research project, which encouraged staff and residents to capture quality practice through photography and words. These photo-essays not only reiterated the presence and relevance of the principles of growth, but were used as an educational tool to inject hope into the prison, following the poor inspection.

The Prison Growth Project was complemented by the academic literature associated with identity, desistance, hope and rehabilitation and this knowledge was used to continuously learn about meaningful prison practice. The Growth Project designed events to re-create a rehabilitative climate, so that staff and residents could feel how a change in the environment might bring about new ways of working. For example, the Growth Project hosted Wellbeing Days, Information Days, Community and Charity Events, Days of Learning, Celebration Events and a conscious approach to add meaning and purpose into current processes and activities. In addition to this there were several training and coaching packages, including relationship training, reflective practice, growth supervision and jailcraft training for new staff, co-facilitated by experienced staff and residents. This experiential approach was seen to be a great

deal more meaningful and personal than a top-down instruction from above and the notion that rehabilitation is 'done to' an individual, or in this case, an organisation. The aim of the project was to empower and mobilise rehabilitative culture carriers, irrespective of rank or status.

A number of internal research projects took place during the course of the project to provide assurance in the methodology of the project and create opportunities for continuous improvement and learning. The project was also evaluated by the University of Winchester, to provide an independent perspective to the changes afoot. The independent research took place midway through the implementation stage of the project. At this stage the Growth Project had been actively working on cultural change for a period of one year. The findings highlighted the following positive impact, recognising that a wider reach and investment in the project needed greater focus in order to maximise the footprint of the project.

The positive impact of the Growth Project included:

- greater education around rehabilitative culture
- more joint working and unity
- better relationships with staff and residents
- assisting with dynamic security
- positive change to the identity of the prison
- a greater awareness and appreciation of rehabilitation
- the development of positive staff attitudes
- an appetite for change, a greater focus on wellbeing and community
- reducing anti-social behaviours in residents
- embracing diversity and ethical practice
- greater meaning to prison
- a focus on the principle of normality.

In January 2019, the Inspectorate returned to the prison to assess the progress made since 2016. The prison received a four point increase (moving from 6 to 10, out of a possible 16) in the healthy prison measure. The prison moved out of special measures shortly after the results and the largest improvement was observed within the category of Respect. The Inspectors acknowledged the Growth Project and its impact, stating that the research projects aided a good understanding of the issues within the prison, that relationships had improved and the rehabilitative culture was robust and well managed. It also recognised how the Growth Project had influenced the motivation and progression of a lot of residents and staff.

This project was not without its challenges. As with any identity shift, there were obstacles, lapses and relational ruptures between staff and residents and within the Growth Project itself. These were used as opportunities to learn about one another and consider how practice can develop in order to reduce these obstacles, so that a rehabilitative culture can emerge and be maintained.

Upon reflection, the function of hope was a significant driver in the success of the Prison Growth Project, as was the brave and committed attitude from the Governors at the prison. Noel Moran, one of the Growth Project members and now an employee of Penal Reform Solutions states; "Hope is a powerful word and this was central to the ethos of the Growth Project as it strived to nurture hope in every service user and member of staff". In this sense, it was not only focusing on the "service user", but on all users of a shared space - the prison community itself.

This project was a pilot and the first of its kind. It is now working in two more prisons to consider how Growth can be applied to a high security prison and remand prison. Its ambition is to extend into the community, alongside Probation as well as develop its ideas within a school environment, to help prevent offending behaviour

and exclusion. If you are interested in the Growth Project, or have any comments, advice or questions, please contact Penal Reform Solutions on info@penalreformsolutions.com

We are currently establishing Growth Alliances in the South and West region, to bring practitioners together and maximise the collective impact of Criminal Justice. If you are interested please email us.

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Sarah Lewis and Noel Moran
Penal Reform Solutions

New Council of Europe Guidelines for Recruitment, Education and Training of Probation Staff

Nicola Carr, Nottingham University and Editor of Probation Journal draws attention to some highly relevant new guidelines



THINK
OUTSIDE
THE BOX

The Council of Europe has recently adopted *Guidelines Regarding Recruitment, Selection, Education, Training and Professional Development of Prison and Probation Staff*.

The *Guidelines* were developed following a recommendation of the Council of Europe (CoE) Conference of Prison and Probation Services in 2017, in recognition of the need to focus on the training and development of prison and probation staff across the 47 member states of the CoE. Given the broad reach of the Council of Europe and the diversity of legal and penal systems in the member states, the *Guidelines* are broad in their scope and outline general principles regarding recruitment, education, training and professional development of prison and probation staff.

The *Guidelines* cover both prison and probation staff. In some countries prison and probation staff are integrated as part of one agency (Kriminalvarden in Sweden is one example), but most countries have separate employers for prison and probation staff and the *Guidelines* deal with the education, training and professional development separately, while noting the potential benefit of joint-training where a specific common need is identified.

The *Guidelines* specify that a degree level qualification (equivalent to Level 6 in the European Qualification Framework), should be the minimum educational entry requirement for probation staff working directly with suspects and offenders in a supervisory capacity and that this academic degree should preferably be in a social science or cognate discipline. The *Guidelines* are purposefully broad in order to ensure their relevance and applicability across member states, so for instance they do not distinguish between Probation Officer and Probation Service Officer

grades, as most countries do not have separate grades carrying out core probation tasks such as assessment and supervision.

Indeed if one looks at the specifications for the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy, required at Level 6 in the European Qualification Framework - i.e. advanced knowledge of a field of work, complex problem-solving skills, and the management of complex professional activities - then one could certainly argue that the dividing line between PO and PSO grades possibly becomes harder to justify or sustain. Research carried out by the Confederation of European Probation, on becoming a good probation worker (Hanrath and Verbaan, 2019), which informed the *Guidelines*, also shows that England and Wales have been unique in the development of a probation-specific academic qualification. Most other European countries recruit staff with specific degrees (e.g. social work, law or psychology) and then provide in-house specialised training relevant to the probation role.

The question as to whether probation officers should have a broad general education, supplemented by probation-specific training, is one that has been considered since the inception of the profession. For example, Sir William Clark Hall, writing in 1933 about the 'Extent of Probation in England', outlined what he considered to be the 'Essentials of Success' for probation. These included the right choice of probation officer, the fact that probation should be considered a 'real profession', involving a good general education, specialist study and careful training under the tutelage of more experienced officers. These considerations clearly still have contemporary resonance in light of the professional recognition agenda being progressed as part of *Strengthening Probation* reforms.

If one looks to other professions, such as social work, a core part of professional recognition will necessitate the specification of a range of standards encompassing performance, ethics, training and education and continuous professional development. The CoE *Guidelines* draw on the European Probation Rules (2010a) and the European Rules on Community Sanctions and Measures (CSM) (2017). Both set of rules have been developed by the Council of Europe and are grounded in human rights standards and the rule of law, providing a framework for ethical practice (Canton, 2019). Both the Probation Rules and the Rules and Community Sanctions and Measures recognise the multi-faceted roles of probation services and staff, encompassing public protection and the maintenance of legal order, while at the same time supporting the social rehabilitation of those subject to supervision. These principles are echoed in the *Guidance on Education and Training* which notes, for instance, that probation staff should receive training regarding the legal parameters in which they operate, including the importance of rights-based approaches grounded in an ethical framework.

The *Guidelines* also emphasise the importance of protecting the initial period of employment for staff starting out in the profession, by ensuring that newly qualified staff have a lower caseload and receive adequate mentorship and supervision. Recognising the changing contexts of practice, and the fact that considerations regarding education and training tend to focus on newly qualified staff, the *Guidelines* also address the importance of continuous professional development, recommending that where possible they should also be linked to post-graduate qualification frameworks.

Whatever the eventual outcome of Brexit, the United Kingdom will continue as a member of the Council of Europe. The CoE *Guidelines* offer a useful anchoring point as the professional recognition agenda is developed within probation services in England and Wales.

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Nicola Carr

Nottingham University and
Editor, Probation Journal

A long white banner is laid out on a wooden floor. At the top left, there is a green megaphone icon with red lines radiating from it. To its right, the text 'BREAK THE CHAIN AS I MATTER' is painted in large, bold, block letters. 'BREAK' and 'CHAIN' are in blue, 'THE' and 'AS' are in green, 'I' is in blue, and 'MATTER' is in green. To the right of the text is a long, vertical chain of grey links. At the bottom of the banner is a large red female symbol. The banner is laid out on a wooden floor, and in the background, there are orange and black plastic chairs.

Arts and Culture change lives of women on probation

Dawn Harrison, Senior Interventions Officer at Changing Lives, discusses an innovative joint project for women in the North East

We have developed an innovative rehabilitation programme which aims to foster positive change using arts and heritage.

[Changing Lives](#) supports women who have experience of the criminal justice system, working across the North East in partnership with probation provider Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). We are commissioned to work with women across nine hubs in Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, Northumberland, North Tyneside and South Tyneside. The programme is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is run in partnership with Tyne and Wear Archive Museums.

The *Free but not Free* programme was developed after it became clear to me that the women I was working with were not represented in our arts and heritage culture. The women would tell me how they would take their children to places like McDonalds for their visits but the children would get bored and easily distracted. When I suggested they took them to museums or a Roman fort, which was on their doorstep, the response was 'Those places aren't for people like us... what would they think.' It became clear that these women felt excluded and underrepresented in heritage and cultural venues across the region.

Free but not Free has aimed to bring women on probation into our heritage and arts culture and give them a voice by providing them with the means to tell their stories through the creative arts. This includes poetry, art and songwriting to create their own archives for history. To celebrate the success of *Free but not Free*, Changing Lives held an event at Newcastle's Discovery Museum on 22 November, which exhibited a collection of creative works produced by the women on the programme. This unveiled artwork (page 43), historical archives and a performance of an original song and poetry.

We coined the name *Free but not Free* after a discussion with a woman in North Shields hub. She had been in front of a judge that week. He had said to her, 'Young lady you should count

yourself lucky to be walking free today.' She said she walked away thinking 'I'm certainly not free, you can't undo what goes on up there in my head.' So *Free but not Free* was born and it got me thinking about where women's voices are not heard and how we could address that balance.

The programme focuses on human potential and how positive change is possible for everyone. During the course of the eight-week programme, the women have developed a real passion for our heritage and arts culture. They have explored a variety of new experiences and have thrown themselves into the programme. They have had an opportunity to learn about local and women's history. Working with Tyne and Wear Archive Museums, the women visited their historical archives, where they examined photos and records of women who had committed criminal offences during the 1800's. They discussed what their lives may have been like and what challenges they would have faced.

Some of the women also gained a keen interest in the Suffragettes movement, which led them to create their own suffragettes-inspired banner. The banner then went on to be exhibited around Lancashire as part of the British Textiles Biennial exhibition. It was also unfurled by the women on the day of the event at The Discovery Museum, just as the suffragettes did (see image on P43).

Creating their own honest archives has been central to the programme and the women have worked with a variety of creative media and artists. Examples include working with artists at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, completing a poetry workshop with local poet, Rowan McCabe and composing an original song with North East Musician Beccy Owen.

The programme was not without its challenges. Visiting museums and heritage sites could be extremely daunting to many of the women. On one occasion a visit to a museum in Newcastle was very poorly attended with the majority of the group not turning up on the day.

Rather than give up and be deterred by this, I spoke to the women to find out why this experience was so daunting. Instead I arranged for the museum to do some outreach work with the women in a place where they felt comfortable. It was then they were able to open up and engage.

These techniques have been well received and have seen some great results. The programme's predecessor, The Gemima Project, which used a similar approach with women last year, saw all of the women involved move into work or education. The aim of these two projects is to show others the value of using arts and heritage in rehabilitation. For example, one of the women contacted the project to express her thanks and say how it had helped her move on with life. She is now working for a homelessness charity, married and buying a house. Another woman involved with *Free but not Free* said:

'It's made me think differently, it's made me realise that people can listen to me. I've never had that before. I know I can talk about stuff now. The project's helped me to communicate my story, to talk about my experiences.'

Heritage does not solely belong in archives or museums and art is not always found in galleries. But one thing is sure: if you don't engage and tell the story yourself, someone will write it for you. The women have a right to share their stories no matter how unpleasant, because in the grit is where you find the opportunities for learning and reflection. The past year has been about breaking down barriers and providing opportunities to challenge perceptions on all sides, as well as ensuring the women's voices take their rightful place in society and are not lost.

This is a story of first times: the first time the women felt they belonged in an art gallery; the first time they played a piano and heard the tune; the first time they ran around a museum like children; the first time they were encouraged to share all of their story; the first time they

understood similes; the first time they felt understood and rediscovered who they could be....

The Gemima Project also formed the basis of my chapter in a newly-published book, *Crime and Consequence: what should happen to people who commit criminal offences?* (Monument Fellowship 2019). The chapter is entitled 'You're never really free until your mind is free' and tells the story of Gemima. The book is available as a free digital PDF download from the publisher, Clinks at www.clinks.org/publications. It was also one of 12 from the 50 contributions to the book that was chosen to be recorded as a podcast reading, also released by Clinks.

We hope to continue our work with women in the criminal justice system and we are actively seeking further funding opportunities. We have also realised the benefits of programmes of this kind and we are currently exploring the option to offer programmes like *Free but not Free* across all of our services. We feel it would be particularly useful for people accessing our Recovery and Homelessness services, who can also feel stripped of their identity.

It has been great to see such a positive response from both projects, from having my work published in a book, recording a podcast and organising a large event. I hope that its success will inspire others to think about alternative approaches to probation and emphasise the benefits of using our arts and heritage culture.



Dawn Harrison
Senior Interventions Officer
Changing Lives

Probation Institute welcomes articles which **will inform change**

Comments from Helen Schofield, Acting CEO of
the Probation Institute

We are pleased to see two articles reflecting on Probation Training in this issue of the Probation Quarterly: one giving an account of the Council of Europe Guidelines regarding Recruitment, Selection, Education, Training and Professional Development of Prison and Probation Staff; and, one reflecting on the values of current PQIP cohorts.

Nicola Carr's article points to the importance of the European Guidelines as an anchor in the developing Professional Recognition project; the European Standard is a 'degree level qualification as the minimum for probation staff working directly with offenders in supervision roles'. Nicola also rightly points to the blurring over time of the 'Probation Officer' and 'Probation Services Officer' as the Responsible Officer with very different levels of training and qualification.

Laura Martin's article is an important contribution affirming and welcoming the continued emphasis placed by current PQIP cohorts on shared values, and reminds us of the challenge of the dissonances between the bureaucracy and the active engagement required by supervision.

The current Probation Qualifying Programmes are extended to 2021 and are now part of a review which will inform the Recognition Programme. Fundamental questions will, rightly, be asked about entry, training, qualifications and recognition of 'Probation Officers' and 'Probation Services Officers'.

These questions must be used to:

- enhance and broaden access to achieve a truly diverse workforce including people with lived experience
- clearly articulate the values of work in rehabilitation
- identify gaps in current learning opportunities including awareness of the broad canopy of activity that can be harnessed to support ex-offenders in communities
- prepare practitioners for the complex case management roles emerging in the new operational model
- ensure that qualifications, including Apprenticeships, are fit for purpose in the 21st century
- achieve equivalence with the European Guidelines
- resolve the blurred lines between the roles and recognition of 'Probation Officers' and 'Probation Services Officers'.

The Probation Institute has clearly stated that these questions must also be asked about the training and qualifications of front line practitioners in the new Probation Delivery Partners and in the voluntary sector working in partnership. Professional Recognition is a fundamental articulation of the value placed on all front line practice and the management of such practice, wherever this occurs. It is long overdue.



Helen Schofield

Acting CEO
Probation Institute