

The magazine of the Probation Institute

PROBATION

Issue 30: December 2023

Quarterly

Probation staff experiences of the unification of services in England and Wales

**'It ain't all doom and gloom
with probation'**

**The significance of hope theory for
people released from prison: new
perspectives for the probation service**

**What does social justice look
like and why is it so elusive for
criminalised young adults?**

PROBATION *Quarterly*

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- 4 How to feature in the PQ**
All you need to know about submitting an article for future editions of the PQ.
- 5 Editorial**
Editor Jake Phillips shares his thoughts on the key themes of this issue.
- 7 A note from the Chair of the Probation Institute**
Update from Loraine Gelsthorpe, Chair of the Probation Institute.
- 9 Probation staff experiences of the unification of services in England and Wales**
Matt Tidmarsh explores probation staff experiences of the unification of services.
- 14 'It ain't all doom and gloom with probation'**
An empirical study by Ailie Rennie of life-sentenced probationers' experiences with probation post-release.
- 19 Sexual Offending, Language and Probation Practice**
Kirsty Teague and Charlotte Oliver make the case for inclusive, and person-centred language for all, and address the implications of terminology usage.
- 24 Experience of participants on the Horizon programme and beyond**
Peter Brown, Thomas Bickley, Andrew Fowler share findings from their research of participants on the Horizon programme.
- 30 The significance of hope theory for people released from prison**
David Adlington-Rivers discusses the significance of hope theory for people released from prison and new perspectives for the probation service.
- 34 Engaging with Black Fathers in the Youth Justice System**
Antony Doherty, Marcia Walker and Alexandra Cox explore how there are several reasons why engagement with fathers, and in particular Black fathers, is challenging in the Youth Justice System.
- 41 Identifying alcohol and drug related harms and appropriate treatment pathways for women**
Sarah Page, Fiona McCormack, Sophie Oldfield and Stephen Whitehead discuss how more work needs to be done to address women's experiences.
- 47 What does social justice look like and why is it so elusive for criminalised young adults?**
The study by Beth Weaver, Nina Vaswani and Trish McCulloch aimed to listen to, and learn from, young adults' experiences and their visions of social justice.
- 54 The need to revisit the concept of Community Justice and the academic study of Probation**
James Tangen provides an introduction to the Special Interest Network for Probation & Community Justice.

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 people on probation 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 completed research. (Note: we do not publish requests for research participants)
- 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. Please also read our [language policy](#) which asks all contributors to avoid stigmatising language.

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.

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WELCOME TO PROBATION QUARTERLY ISSUE 30



Jake Phillips
Editor, Probation Quarterly

EDITORIAL

The Government recently announced plans to reduce the numbers of people being sent to prison for sentences of less than 12 months. Although we await precise details it looks like the presumption against short sentences will be enabled via a move towards suspending short sentences rather than replacing them altogether. This is – on paper – a positive and progressive move: after all, we know that short prison sentences are less likely to reduce people's risk of reoffending when compared to community sanctions (Mutebie and Brown, 2023). Despite the Government introducing these reforms partly (or perhaps primarily) in response to an overcrowded prison estate that is of the Government's own making this should be seen as a positive shift. Whether the use of more community sentences will reduce the number of people in prison is an important question and Carr (2023) is right to point out that probation cannot be seen as a panacea for the prisons crisis.

One thing we can be sure of is that should these reforms come to fruition they will have a significant impact on the size and nature of the probation caseload over the coming years. In 2022, 37,548 people were sentenced to a custodial sentence of 12 months or less (Ministry of Justice, 2023). If just half of those sentences are suspended, the Probation Service will have an additional 18,000 Suspended Sentence Orders (SSOs) to supervise over the course of a year which will then be followed by a move from large numbers under post-sentence supervision to more people serving SSOs. The pressures that the Service is already under in terms of workloads and understaffing have been widely recognised. Without planning and increased resources any potential positive effects of this policy risk being nullified by a workforce that is simply unable to support extra people on the caseload due to workload pressures.

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In this issue of *Probation Quarterly* we start with an article from Matt Tidmarsh which explores probation practitioner experiences of unification. Although the story from probation tends to be negative, Ailie Rennie's research with people who have been released from prison on a life license provides a positive look at how probation can help people given the right circumstances. We then turn our attention to people who are on probation following a sexual offence conviction. Kirsty Teague and Charlotte Oliver provide an insightful discussion of the importance of language when talking about this group while Pete Brown and colleagues offer some insight into the ways in which people experience the Horizon programme.

David Adlington-Rivers then explores the role of hope in probation, arguing that hope can and should play an important role in probation practice, although doing so in the current climate might seem difficult. Tony Doherty and colleagues provide an overview of their work that has focused on black fathers in the criminal justice, providing valuable insight into how this neglected group can be better supported and engaged. Continuing the theme of gender, Sarah Page and colleagues have written a summary of their research into women's experiences of drug treatment adding to the evidence around the need for women-specific treatment spaces.

The penultimate article in this issue comes from Beth Weaver and colleagues in Scotland in which they provide an overview of their work with

young adults and - specifically - how young adults understand and conceptualise social justice. In our final article, we hear from James Tangen who writes about current efforts to set up a probation network in the British Society of Criminology. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to remember and pay tribute to Mike Guilfoyle who was a regular contributor to, and supporter of, PQ. His articles combined his experience as a magistrate and a probation officer to shed light on the realities of practice and the relationship between the court and probation work. Mike will be much missed in the world of probation.

As ever, I hope that you enjoy reading this issue of PQ and please do get in touch if you have any comments, or want to contribute to future issues.

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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PROBATION INSTITUTE



Loraine Gelsthorpe
Chair
Probation Institute

In the early 1980s, having just completed an MPhil in Criminology, I very nearly became a Probation Officer, and had a job lined up with what was called the 'new careers movement' in Bristol (a strand of radical probation practice I seem to remember). But it was not to be, I was persuaded to do a PhD (on women and criminal justice) so remained in Cambridge for a while, thinking that I would turn to probation again later. I did turn to probation, but not as a professional probation officer. Rather, I developed an academic career with a focus on alternatives to custody for young people, decision-making regarding young people within the Crown Prosecution Service, pre-sentence reports, race and gender issues in the composition of pre-sentence reports, community punishments (and the benefits of skills training as part of unpaid work, for instance), plus work on provision for women in the community and generally, on what works in the community. Thus my heart has remained with probation in a number of ways.

It was a great privilege to be invited to be the Chair of the Probation Institute earlier this year (from April 1st), and I am slowly getting to grips with its mission and operation. I am grateful to Helen Schofield, Chief Executive, and to MaryAnne McFarlane as the former Chair, and to

Andy Smith (Vice Chair) in particular, for their guidance and support. During the last few months the trustees have given a good deal of attention to the Institute's vision for the future and there is strong commitment to championing probation work - in all its forms. One big change concerning the future is that in April 2022 the Probation Institute became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This makes it possible to apply for a wider range of grants although we are finding this an extremely competitive field.

The Probation Institute's Probation Quarterly showcases practitioner contributions and provides accessible summaries of new themes and debates. We produce Position Papers (recently on race equality, remote working, PSRs and probation court work for example) with new papers in prospect regarding the effectiveness of probation work, and wider diversity issues.

The Institute continues to hold biannual Research Events and Trainees Events, also monthly lunchtime seminars for practitioners and supporters - all of which contribute to professional development - whether learning from the Magistrates' Association about their questions and concerns or from the Northern Ireland Care Commission about how they manage professional development and registration.

The Probation Institute has carried out important research regarding veterans in the justice system, and offers the annual Sir Graham Smith Awards (opportunities for practitioners to do research). We respond to consultations (most recently the Shadow Front Bench Review of the Justice System, the Home Affairs Committee Review of Community Sentences and we have added our voice to concerns about IPP sentences). We have been consistently and strenuously arguing for external independent professional registration of practitioners and managers. We have a robust group of Fellows who support and help to steer our work, also very strong relationships with the academic community in the justice system. We are members of the European Probation Confederation and we are building links with the Criminal Justice Overseas Territories Network and the International Network for Community Justice. Our website is an excellent one stop shop for reports and news, including an expanding suite of learning resources which are accessible to all at no charge.

Joining the Probation Institute is a statement of commitment to work towards a strong professional future for probation, rehabilitation and resettlement. **Please join us if you haven't already done so, and tell colleagues about the Probation Institute too.** The bigger we are, the stronger we are, and the stronger we are - the more we can contribute to debates about probation, discussions with the Magistrates' Association, with HMPPS, with the voluntary sector and with the Ministry of Justice. We are holding our AGM online for members, on Thursday 25th January.

With all good wishes,

Loraine Gelsthorpe (lrg10@cam.ac.uk)

UPCOMING PROBATION INSTITUTE TRAINEES EVENT WORKING WITH WOMEN

Tuesday 30th January 12.30pm to 2.00pm on Teams

At the first Probation Institute Trainees Event in 2024, Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe and Dr Madeline Petrillo will talk about their research and implications for practice. Loraine and Madeline have researched and published extensively on women in the justice system.

This is an exceptional opportunity to hear from academics who are highly regarded in this important and challenging area and to discuss/ask questions. The event is open all students in the justice field who are members of the Probation Institute. Membership costs £10 per year for students/trainees. Please join here, then register for this event by email to admin@probation-institute.org



PROBATION STAFF EXPERIENCES OF THE UNIFICATION OF SERVICES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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Introduction

In 2014, *Transforming Rehabilitation (TR)* split probation services between a publicly-owned National Probation Service (NPS) and 21 privately-led Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs). The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015) which implemented the reforms argued that competing for probation services would 'unlock the professionalism, innovation and passion of experts' (MoJ, 2010: 9). And yet, just four years later, the Conservative Government announced further reforms, partially in response to critical reports on how *TR* had 'diminished' the profession (HMI Probation, 2017, 2019a). In June 2021, services were 'unified', concentrated within 12 Probation Regions. This article explores probation staff experiences of the unification of services. It draws on my recent research (see Tidmarsh, 2023) to argue that probation continues to be impacted by longstanding issues - namely, high caseloads, poor pay, and staffing shortages - which are contributing to a demoralised workforce.

Methods

The research presented in this article is part of a broader project on professional identity, culture, and practice following the collapse of the *TR* reforms in England and Wales. Data were generated via semi-structured interviews with 38 members of staff across nine regions. While the study cannot claim to be generalisable to the service at large nor within the regions, it sought to capture a range of job roles. Informants consisted of 12 probation service officers (PSOs),



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nine probation officers (POs), three practice tutor assessors (PTAs), seven managers (Ms), three senior managers (SMs), and four Regional Probation Directors. PSOs and POs were spread across community, custody, and court teams; Ms were predominantly senior probation officers, but some held other oversight roles; and SMs and RPDs had strategic responsibilities over practice, from heads of probation delivery units to entire regions. Twenty members of staff were legacy CRC and 15 were legacy NPS; two had held split roles, while one had joined since unification. Ten men and 28 women were interviewed, a gender split which reflects the 'feminisation' of the service in recent decades.

Unification: Staff experiences of organisational change

On 26 June 2021, seven NPS Divisions and 21 CRCs were realigned into 12 Probation Regions, with all staff becoming civil servants. Regardless of their legacy employment, informants at all levels of the organisation and in all regions were unanimous in their belief that probation should be a public sector enterprise. For many, like PS03, however, positive views were often countered by pessimism for the future:

Obviously, with TR, [probation] completely lost all sense of vision, in my opinion. I just feel like us as staff don't really know where we're sat at the moment. We're so used to change. [...] Reunification will help, but I feel like probation has lost its professional identity.

This sense of loss indicates a continuation of 'change fatigue' (Robinson & Burnett, 2007: 332), of the tiredness of staff who have experienced a constancy of organisational change over the last two decades.

For some staff, like P04 (a legacy CRC member of staff who joined the service in 2020), organisational change entailed a process of becoming:

It felt like, personally, I was becoming a professional when we joined into the Probation Service. I think in the CRCs it all felt a little bit haphazard. I just didn't get that sense of professional identity while working in the CRCs.

Such views were, however, in a minority in this sample; for most, experiences of the Civil Service were framed negatively. M6, for example,

expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived inefficiencies of the Civil Service. Changes which would have been simple to implement from within the private sector, she argued, must now go through several 'levels of bureaucracy':

...the Civil Service is so strange; it is just this big sticky mire, and they can't get anything fixed quickly. Literally, it's taken me ten months to write a national leaflet. I've just had it accepted. [...] What they make you do you won't believe; you have to go through so many levels of bureaucracy.

As such, the most surprising finding from the research was how many legacy CRC staff framed their experiences of working in the private sector in positive terms, often with recourse to the market discourses that were utilised to justify TR:

The innovation, the creativity, the flexibility, and the trust of staff to deliver one-to-one work that wasn't from a centrally mandated, prescribed toolkit. I think we were less obsessed about governance. It was a lot more about doing the do, a lot more solutions-focused. (M5)

Where Chris Grayling, the Justice Secretary when TR was implemented, functioned as a kind of 'bogeyman' on whom to pin much of the blame for the reforms, since unification, this role has come to be occupied by the Civil Service, as a proxy for 'bureaucracy':

Coming in everyday and thinking, I work for the Civil Service and having to do things in a particular way – that, since we've come back together, has been the biggest challenge. I never felt like that in the CRC, and I never felt like that when I was in the Trust. It's the bureaucracy! (PS07)

This pejorative use of 'bureaucracy' suggests that unification has not rehabilitated probation. Indeed, HMI Probation's (2023: 7) most recent annual report noted that performance 'has if anything got worse not better since it came back together in 2021.' Accordingly, the next section reports on the challenges of working in such an environment.

'Overworked, understaffed, underpaid'?

With regard to the impact of unification on caseloads, practitioners' experiences have been shaped by their legacy employment. Efforts to 'blend' caseloads so that 'all practitioners manage higher and lower-risk cases' (HMI Probation, 2021) have reduced workloads for many legacy CRC staff (HMI Probation, 2023). Some legacy NPS staff, by contrast, have absorbed low-to-medium risk individuals onto their caseloads, thereby increasing the intensity of their work:

Coming back together has been very hard with the increase in caseloads. [...] I've just inherited some low-risk cases, but I've [also] got some high-risk cases. I haven't got as many in prison as I used to have, so it's quite intense at the moment in terms of seeing people. (PO3)

Regional caseload variance, during and after TR (e.g. HMI Probation, 2019b, 2022), means PO3's experiences are not generalisable to *all* staff. However, a recent survey of 1,534 probation staff found that 51% thought their workloads were 'not so manageable' (HMI Probation, 2022: 15). This suggests that, for the majority of staff, unification has not alleviated caseload pressures. Informants linked workload issues to the service's struggles to retain staff. Despite recruiting 2,500 staff to the service since 2020/21 (HMI Probation, 2022), there remains a current

shortfall of 1,771 full-time equivalent probation officers against the required level of 6,158. In the year-end March 2023, 2,098 staff left the service, which represents a 10% increase on the previous year (HMI Probation, 2023). Here, feelings of inadequate pay featured prominently among informants' perceptions of retention issues, a point evidenced by a pay claim submitted by the trade unions that represent staff - Unison, Napo, and GMB/SCOOP. It shows that, since 2010, pay has increased by just 1% in real terms compared to 15.8% for the police, 14.6% for local government staff, and 14.2% for NHS staff (Napo, 2022). As such, the combination of high caseloads and poor pay experienced by many staff points to the continued worsening of working conditions after unification:

[Probation] is a difficult job. It can feel quite a thankless job. You put your heart and soul into something and then it doesn't work out. [...] There's a lot of stress and a lot of pressure, and I think we're very much overworked, understaffed, underpaid. (PSO2; my emphasis)

At the time of the interview (in May 2022), PSO2 had worked in probation for just two years, joining a CRC just prior to unification. That she already feels 'overworked, understaffed, [and] underpaid' raises questions about the future of the service. Worryingly, some staff displayed signs of alienation:

We know we need more staff, but the targets don't change. We can't deliver on the targets if we don't have the staff, but we still have that pressure. I think a lot of good will has gone; it's left the building. Certainly, when I was younger, I was happy to do the extra hours and make sure the deadlines were met because I felt it was important and worthwhile. Why the fuck would I do that now? (PO7)

Thus, for P07, a legacy NPS member of staff with 15 years' experience, high caseloads and the ubiquity of performance metrics were contributing to the erosion of 'good will' among staff. This suggests that the pressures under which staff in some regions operate are becoming too onerous when weighed against other organisational priorities.

Conclusion

The unification of services was unanimously welcomed by informants in this study. However, whereas an affinity with the public sector shaped opposition to *TR*, for many staff, experiences of working within the Civil Service were framed as 'stifling' and 'inefficient'. For a minority, the stability and competence gained from a re-grounding of probation in the policies and procedures of the Civil Service was welcome; but for others, this 'bureaucracy' was a source of grievance. If Chris Grayling was the face of the failure of *TR*, then a grey, faceless Civil Service has become the entity to which many staff apportion blame. Such were the frustrations with the perceived overreach of the Civil Service, some former CRC staff reflected nostalgically upon the 'innovation' and 'creativity' of the private sector. Accordingly, while a client-centred ideology of service continues to motivate staff, this article found evidence of the erosion of 'good will' (P07). Not all staff in this study, especially those who migrated from underperforming CRCs, have experienced continued increases in caseloads; but for many, they remain excessively high for a service that is chronically understaffed. These findings conform to the national picture on the challenges of individual workloads amidst staff shortages. This suggests that retention must be improved through pay, but also through workloads that enable staff to realise a client-centred ideology of service. Staff, after all, are the service's most valuable asset; they should be treated accordingly.

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'IT AIN'T ALL DOOM AND GLOOM WITH PROBATION'

LIFE-SENTENCED PROBATIONERS' EXPERIENCES WITH PROBATION POST-RELEASE

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Following a lengthy period of imprisonment and a successful Parole Board hearing, over two hundred mandatory life-sentenced prisoners are released back into the community each year on life licence (Freedom of Information Request, No.220311006). As a result of being convicted of and having served a sentence for murder, these individuals face strict licencing conditions, which if breached could result in their recall to prison. This article empirically examines the relationship between individuals released from a life sentence (henceforth 'lifers') and those responsible for making recommendations about recall decisions (their probation officer(s)) in the first five months of their release. In doing so, the findings are less concerned with recidivism or the provision of instrumental support (like housing or employment-related assistance), but rather probationers' perceptions of the helpfulness of probation and the acute impact this had on their reintegration.

The findings which follow are based on an empirical study of the release of 20 men serving mandatory life sentences in England and Wales. The study adopted a short-longitudinal approach by employing a set of two semi-structured interviews. Focusing on the process of release, participants were interviewed both before and after their release from prison. Following a successful Parole Board hearing which issued their release, lifers in this study were first interviewed (T1) in prison in the days and weeks before returning to the outside world. The second interviews (T2) were conducted in the community five months after participants' release from prison. T2 interviews were largely conducted at probation offices, with three being conducted virtually.



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Of the 20 participants, 16 were reinterviewed in the community (one declined to participate, one could not be located, one was recalled, and one had died since the first interview). With participants' consent, all interviews were recorded, and later transcribed and coded in full, using NVivo software. The names presented below are pseudonyms selected by the researcher.

Findings

Of the 16 participants who were reinterviewed, 12 had never met their probation officer prior to release, with most having been transferred to a new probation delivery unit as a result of an extensive exclusion zone. Despite this, almost all participants characterised their relationship(s) with probation as being positive and constructive, whereby they trusted their respective officer and also believed that they acted in a procedurally legitimate manner (see McNeill and Robinson, 2012; Irwin-Rogers, 2017):

[PO] has full respect for me... He got to know me as a person, as well as my crime, and ultimately, what I was looking to achieve and... you can't ask for more. Somebody who is doing their job on a professional capacity, and sees you in the light that you want to be seen. It takes your breath away. (Andrew, T2)

Feeling able to trust their probation officer and turn to them for help provided a comfort to these men, easing concerns upon returning to the outside world. For Andrew, '[i]t's all about trust, you know, and building that relationship and having that rapport'. Developing such a relationship enabled him to see his licence 'as normal', rather than restrictive. As such, these men fully believed that probation was there to help not hinder: 'they're not just there to recall you, they want us to stay out' (Connor). Moreover, the men articulated their belief that the probation service, and their officer specifically, would act legitimately towards them enabling them to 'speak freely' during supervisions (Derek). This led many of the men to conclude that 'it ain't all doom and gloom with probation' (Mark).

In line with Lewis' (2014) findings on relationships with probation practitioners, developing positive working relationships encouraged and enabled the men in this study to be more open and honest with their probation officer. Not only did this include talking about their successes and progression, but also (perhaps more importantly) discussing the challenges they were facing, as Wayne described:

I don't have to hide anything, if I'm upset, if I'm angry, if I'm tearful, if I'm fed up, I don't have to hide anything in here. So there's no mask for anybody, I don't have to pretend to them that I'm happy or I'm content. (T2)

Beyond trust and legitimacy, probation officers also provided expressive support to their probationers. Such support consisted of emotional and psychological assistance, most obviously in the enhancement of participants' sense of value and worth. For example, Wayne's probation officers 'noticed straight away' that he was struggling with his mental health upon release, and subsequently assisted him in seeking medical treatment, checking in more frequently to see how he was doing. Knowing he did not have to battle through his mental health on his own and that he could instead ask for help was a big comfort to Wayne, and made him feel better about his predicament just by having someone to talk to. The support which was provided upon release even made Danny question why 'people moan about probation' when he 'actually love[d] coming'.

The perception and receipt of support had a significantly greater impact on these men's attempts to reintegrate when they had fewer other forms of social support in the community. Being treated with respect and humanity enabled the men to feel 'more human', as if their probation officer was seeing them as 'a person' and not 'an offender' (James). This was not interpreted as their PO being passive or infantilising, but rather as administering an ethic of care (Dominey and Canton, 2022). Building genuine and caring relationships went beyond pure notions of risk management and further provided these men with validation and recognition of their attempts to lead a prosocial life. For James, probation was considered to be the place he most belonged, and where he could be 'completely naked' without fear of judgement.

For two participants, however, their relationships with their probation officer(s) were significantly worse than anticipated. For these men, their probation officer had hindered, rather than helped, their reintegration. For Christopher, this was largely related to new licence conditions being added post-release that he considered misrepresentative of how he saw himself and of the details of the offence. The judgement Christopher received from probation was described as being more impactful and damaging than what he experienced from strangers on the outside. Gary, on the other hand, had anticipated being able to build a strong relationship with his new probation officer (like the one he had developed on the inside), but had found this was not the case. Instead, Gary described 'be[ing]

thrown in the lion's den, [with] no support, no help' which he felt had resulted in him ending up homeless for several weeks. Both men were indignant at being the object of suspicion; classified as someone who posed an enduring risk to the public that required stringent and indefinite monitoring. They begrudged how criminal justice professionals, and in particular those responsible for them remaining in the free world, failed to acknowledge their transformation, continuing to see them not only 'badly' but also 'as bad' (McNeill, 2019:225).

Further, both men were told by their probation officer that they had almost been recalled for minor incidents arising from miscommunication, but were instead given warnings. Such experiences generated a sense of precarity for the men about remaining in the outside world (Durnescu, 2011; Harris et al., 2020). Interactions with probation following these events were subsequently experienced with trepidation, where conversations around 'support' were instead considered to be disingenuous and as a means to 'catch [them] out' (Gary). Both men resultantly criticised the unidirectional nature of probation, feeling as if probation was done to them, rather than *with* them.

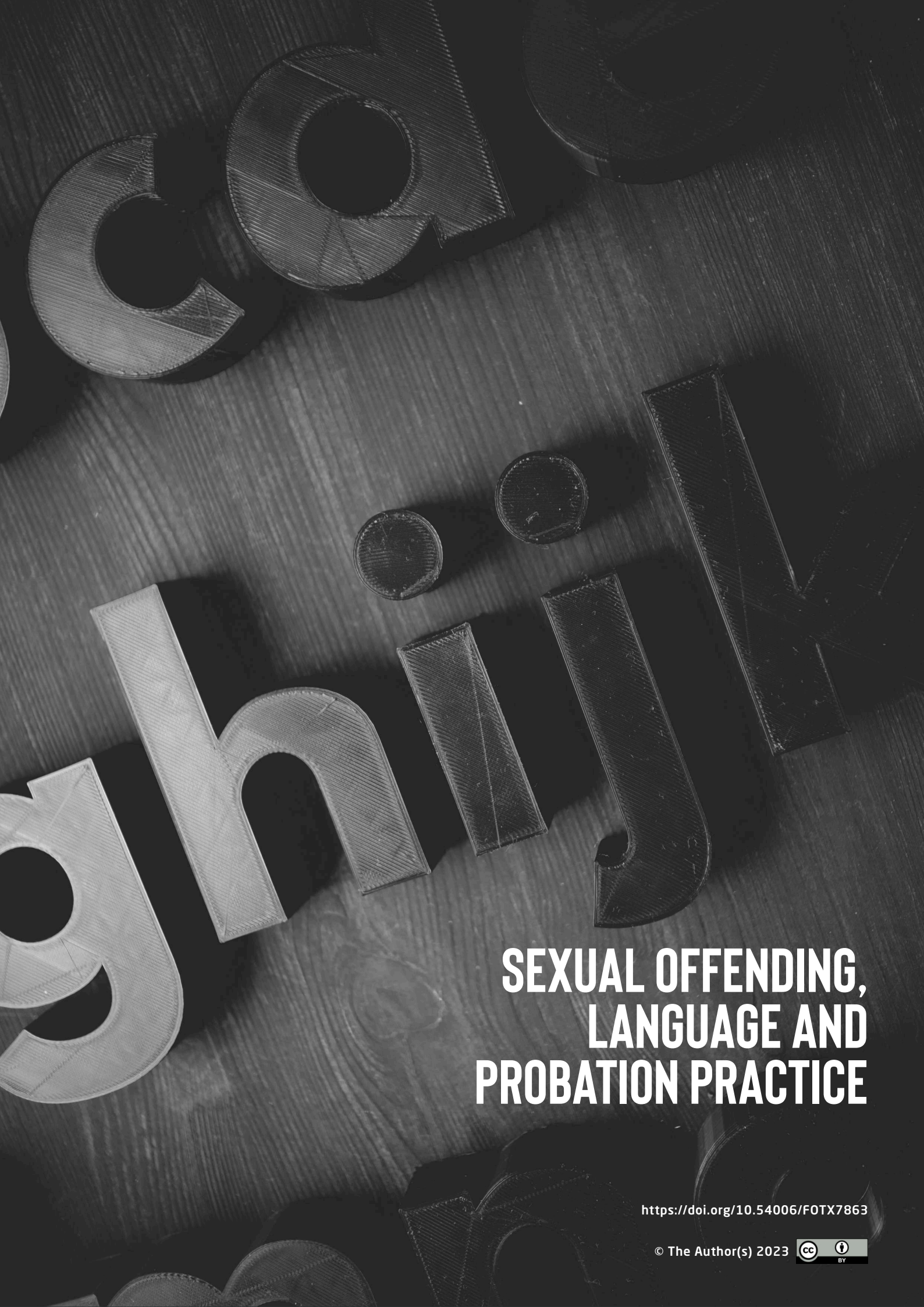
Conclusion

Most of these findings were inconsistent with my previous work (see Rennie and Crewe, 2022), that examined life-sentenced prisoners' anticipations of being on licence and under supervision, in which participants presented fearful and mistrusting attitudes of their probation officer(s). In this study, however, longitudinally following participants through the release process placed these anticipations in conversation with their lived experiences. Anxieties related to having not met their probation officer, for example, were instead mediated by their interactions with and treatment by probation upon release. As a result, the vast majority of participants (with the exception of two) described their relationship with probation as being overwhelmingly positive. These findings seek to draw attention to the importance of probationer-probation officer relationships for returning lifers, particularly for those with few or no other forms of social support.

However, whilst the men were largely complimentary of the individualised treatment they received from specific officers, they did remain critical of the operational and risk-related need to be supervised and managed in the community. The ability of individual officers, therefore, to legitimate the process of supervision and/or narratives of selfhood may be limited by the legal requirement of probationers to report to them, both physically (by turning up) and through the communication of potentially risk-related information.

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SEXUAL OFFENDING, LANGUAGE AND PROBATION PRACTICE

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The label 'sex(ual) offender', is commonly used to describe those with a sexual offence conviction. Yet, this labelling does much to discourage rehabilitative efforts and undermine the reintegration journey. Increasingly, there is acknowledgement in academia, policy and practice that language matters. Within probation, for example, there has been a move to using more inclusive terminology such as 'person on probation'. This has replaced the often 'offender' laden policy documentation underpinning probation practice and is a seismic change in the right direction. However, parallel to this positive change, discourse surrounding individuals who have a conviction for a sexual crime remains, overall, unchanged. This differential approach contributes to 'othering' and has stigmatising and ostracising qualities which can have detrimental long-term consequences and subsequently impede probation practice. Utilising our experiences as researchers undertaking work which involves understanding the experiences of people with sexual convictions, we (i) make the case for inclusive, and person-centred language for all, and (ii) address the implications of terminology usage.

Why does language matter?

As Harney and colleagues (2022: 99) write in their article advocating for person-centred language within the criminal justice system:

'The words we use have the power to respectfully, and accurately, represent people and ideas; they also have the ability to perpetuate ignorance and bias, leading to stigmatisation, discrimination, and dehumanisation.'



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However, the language used to refer to people with a sexual offence conviction, particularly within the media, frequently relies on negative descriptive terms such as 'beast', 'paedophile' or 'pervert' (Harper & Hogue, 2017). Research examining the effect of labels has produced findings consistent with labelling theory, providing insight into how language can prompt more punitive judgements of people with sexual offence convictions (Harris & Socia, 2016; Imhoff, 2015; Lowe & Willis, 2020). Lowe and Willis (2020) also found that with increased exposure to offence-based labels, researchers, criminal justice professionals, and the wider public were more likely to use an offence-related term (e.g., sex offender) rather than a more neutral, person-centred alternative (e.g., person with a sexual offence conviction). The use of stigmatising, or offence-based, language is of concern, particularly for its ability to impact probation practice and the encouragement of desistance. This labelling is likely to negatively influence the process of secondary desistance, which involves the development of a non-offending identity, and tertiary desistance, which involves 'how one sees one's place in society' and how they are received by others (Maruna & Farrall, 2004; McNeill, 2016, p. 201). Whilst the terms used in the context of probation are typically more clinical than emotional, phrases such as 'probationer', 'offender' or 'POP' are still replete with messaging that ties the individual to criminality (Phillips & Bower, 2023).

In context, it matters *who* and *where* labels stem from. Probation practitioners are change facilitators, 'empowering supervised individuals to make lasting changes to their lives through building good and trusting relationships with them' (HM Prison & Probation Service 2021, p.7). Indeed, Lewis (2014) highlights the importance

of acceptance, respect, support, empathy, and belief in enabling a positive relational climate which can in turn have a powerful impact upon the person on probation in relation to their beliefs and behaviour (Lewis, 2014). However, there are tensions within probation practice owing to the politicised nature of the work. Kemshall (2016), for example, links this to the significant role that risk plays in the practice of probation and the bifurcation of working with the police in the management of people convicted of sexual offences. In addition, we, as researchers acknowledge the turbulent recent past of probation set against the backdrop of transforming rehabilitation and subsequent reunification. As such, there is often much change, some of which is unevidenced, unagreeable, or both.

Negotiating harm

Having a conviction for a (sexual) crime, and considered a perpetrator of harm, factually, may be accurate. However, the framing of 'causer of harm' and 'harmed' can be reductionist, and even harmful. Indeed, research on perpetration-induced trauma exposes the fragility of the victim-offender binary, whilst simultaneously supporting the need for a trauma-informed approach (MacNair, 2015). Similarly, in recognition of the false binary between victim-offender, research has found that there is a link between being a victim of child sexual abuse and later sexually abusing children in adolescence or adulthood (Plummer and Cossins, 2018). Given such manifestations of trauma, it must be the work of all, including academics and criminal justice professionals, to call time on the weaponisation of language (Teague & Winder, 2023).

As we know, criminal justice policy and practice can often be politically motivated and ideologically driven (Prescott, McCartan and Uzieblo, 2022), with many policies and practices reflecting societal thinking of the time. Framing language choice as 'woke gone mad', risks greater societal segregation and divide, which may drive crime and other harmful behaviours potentially increasing the volume and complexity of caseloads for probation.

In comparison to some other criminal justice agencies, probation squarely works in the realms of the (un)holy trinity of redemption, rehabilitation, and risk management (Mair & Burke, 2012). As such, probation disproportionately feels the impact and repercussions of societal, and criminal injustice, exacerbated in no small part due to the positioning of probation as a 'cinderella service' (Robinson, 2016).

Final thoughts

Whilst the task for probation is to consider exercising 'professional curiosity' (Phillips et al., 2022) in their use of language and terminology, for academics the task is to embed, and highlight the principles of public criminology - a sub-discipline of criminology chiefly concerned with issues of citizenship, social justice and human rights - to a variety of audiences. Those working in, or who align their work with, criminal justice should seek to engage with the principles and commitments of public criminology, namely: (i) transparency; (ii) being theoretically informed; (iii) evidence-based; (iv) empowerment driven; (v) committed to practical change (vi) committed to social justice and human rights; and (vii) connecting public issues and private troubles (Carrabine, Lee & South, 2000). These principles and commitments have the power to positively inform criminal and social justice if they can

firstly infiltrate and inform public discourses. As change facilitators, probation practitioners/ organisations liaise with a wider range of stakeholders and have the potential to lead from the front in utilising terminology akin to, 'person with a sexual offence conviction', an evidence-based, empowering, socially just action with the power to make a difference.

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EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE HORIZON PROGRAMME AND BEYOND

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Recently, I was dashing between my computer and setting up the teas and coffees for the group when a colleague interrupted with a question. They wanted to know whether the programmes we run 'work' or whether the men attending are just there to tick a box. I trotted out my usual response, 'they work for some of the people some of the time', but again it made me think that we don't really know why.

It was refreshing that someone took an interest in our work in programmes as it feels like we're on the periphery of probation. When I previously managed a caseload I remember completing a three-way with a facilitator colleague in programmes. The group-room was a place you didn't usually have access to and I remember getting a sense of the intimacy of the space: a man known by his 'Sunday name' to me was addressed using his nickname by the facilitator. The group seemed different from the more formal space of supervision and allowed more intimate relationships to be forged.

My curiosity was piqued and I wanted to 'get stuck in' (as one of the conditions of success on the New Me Strengths programme say (HMPPS 2017: 21)). I began facilitating the Horizon programme for men convicted of sexual offences in 2017. This was where I met Tom whose passion for the rehabilitation of people convicted of sexual offences led us to collaborate and dream a little. Tom was only too aware of the difficulties of life post-programme and post-probation so in collaboration with Andy Fowler we wanted to find out more about what works.



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I became familiar with the 'what works' (Raynor 2003) agenda when I started as a Trainee Probation Officer in 2008. Fundamentally it was an attempt to bring an evidence-based approach to probation practice and introduced the idea of accredited programmes. Whether something works or not is highly contestable, based on the outcomes you measure. As one of HMPPS's accredited programmes, one of Horizon's organizing principles (HMPPS 2018b: 22) is that 'treatment will strengthen the intention to desist from offending'. If the programme is designed to facilitate desistance then we should hear this in participants' accounts. The programme was designed to develop an intention to desist in three ways:

1. To encourage participants to evaluate their behaviour and the consequences. This is encouraged through facilitators using motivational interviewing techniques. Individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for change in their lives, rather than being told what they need to change;
2. To explore the strength and quality of a participant's social network;
3. To give participants the opportunity to consider their goals and monitor their progress through the development of a success wheel, consistent with the Good Lives Model (2023) approach.

We interviewed 15 male participants from the Horizon programme using structured questions. All participant identities have been protected by using pseudonyms. Due to COVID-19 the interviews were conducted remotely and the participants had all completed the Horizon programme either in a group or one-to-one.

Findings

The ability to change

A number of the participants talked about how important the programme was in helping them to see that their life is not over and helped them avoid reoffending. Others described the importance of reflecting on their behaviour, a keystone of motivational interviewing:

Er, but, since going on to the Horizon Programme it, it did help a lot with, you know, trying to, you know, learn me how, what causes behaviours, and, how to, like, you know, stop, not do it again (Brian)

A BBC documentary asked the question 'Can sex offenders change?' (2020), highlighting doubts about the ability of those convicted of sexual offences to desist from offending. This skepticism is evidenced elsewhere, particularly about those who have offended against children (McAlinden 2016). The label of 'sex offender' seems to be one that society sees as enduring and damning, not helped by ongoing fascination with notorious men convicted of sexual offences, like Jimmy Savile, represented recently in *The Reckoning* (2023) by Steve Coogan. This creates an image of everyone convicted of a sexual offence as unrepentant, uncaring and unchangeable which then permeates our consciousness and we absorb them in various ways i.e. via social media or the press. The importance of hope in the desistance process of men convicted of sexual offences has been researched (Farmer et al 2015) and some of our participants found maintaining this a struggle:

it was like that conviction was just weighing me down and not letting me get on with some sort of life, you know, I know its not nice to have this conviction...it staying with me for the rest of my life. (Anthony)

We have to acknowledge the depth, weight and tightness (Crewe 2011) of Anthony's conviction and how he sees this as having a lifelong impact as his conviction will never be spent. Facilitators seek to encourage participants to see a future using a strengths-based approach and this was experienced by some participants in positive ways:

you could see how motivated, erm, they were to actually motivate you and to get you rehabilitated, and to get you to understand that there is a life after the conviction itself (Ken)

The development of goals

The programme develops the idea of citizenship (HMPPS 2018a) and a significant theme from the research was that participants were motivated to give something back:

I would more than happily come down and chat and do a presentation towards the, and pass on this experience, being as, as a user, and my life experiences afterwards, (Edward)

There was some optimism towards goals that were not yet accomplished and the majority of participants had goals around work. In one instance, one of the participants Ian managed to find work. Although work was seen positively, it could also be a source of stress:

it's a big, it is, it is a worry, like, if it, if anyone ever...found out at work what, what would happen (Michael)

These fears are not unfounded unfortunately as a separate participant - Lewis - told us how he

had lost his job on two occasions due to his offending being reported in the mainstream media. As a result, participants had often had to settle for something that did not fulfil their ambitions whilst they were waiting for their offences to become spent. Other participants struggled to find 'any' job. For example, Anthony found that his usual pathway into low-paid work at a high street store was blocked by having to disclose his offending. The Horizon programme does focus on disclosure but it remains a source of frustration for participants who find that their chance of finding employment is dashed when they have to talk about their conviction. This is particularly difficult for participants who saw work as giving them a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Unfortunately, the desire to find work is not often not enough:

And that, I think that is probably the hardest part, is when an agency or a charity who supposed to help people like me find work...turns round to me and says, O sorry we can't find you any work, because of your conviction (George)

Social networks

Positive social networks help expose participants to pro-social, positive beliefs that encourage them to desist from offending (HMPPS 2018). Our participants had experienced very sparse networks, unhealthy online networks or poor connections with their existing friendships/family. One positive social network that a number of participants commented on was that of the group:

Erm...you know, these guys who I sat with every week (...) we became a close-knit group of friends (Dale)

Fred described how difficult it was to lose the group, particularly as contact with other group members was discouraged after the group ended:

I was with them every week...you do develop connections and, yeah, in an sense, in that way, it was upsetting to kind of see them go. (...) it got me out and, obviously, say meet friends...no you can't, because, you're not allowed to have contact with them after the course (Fred)

Group members reflected on the absence in the group or when a particular facilitator would leave. Maintaining support after the programme ended was an important theme in our data with participants expressing real concern about the lack of systems such as Circles of Support and Accountability¹ and the importance of support from family and friends:

So, in this area, it [COSA] doesn't exist, so for people who don't have family and friends, they're screwed basically. (Charlie)

if I'd been on my own in a bedsit ... there's no doubt I would have reoffended' (Dale)

Like a little, just, just a little bit of after care, as an after thought, to say...are you ok? (Julian)

Conclusion

This article began life as the answer to the question of whether the Horizon programme works. The answer is not straight-forward. Largely, participants felt that Horizon encouraged them to address their goals and enthusiastic facilitators can motivate participants to move past feelings of being branded by their offence. Horizon cannot address the sometimes farcical lack of support from supporting agencies or the dispiriting process of disclosing your convictions to a potential employer who suddenly gets cold feet. Whilst the group acted as a temporary community to aid participants, it was discouraged from being an ongoing source of support. It is perhaps understandable in preventing like-minded individuals from offending together but this is highly problematic when it becomes apparent that alternative sources of support are all but absent.


In my experience of holding a caseload, when people reach the end of their sentence one tends to spend less time thinking about them as other pressures take precedence. In relation to people convicted of sexual offences ending their licence/ order the opposite feels true, as this can be a time when they experience the loss of a significant source of support. As much of the support for people convicted of sexual offences is dependent on being on probation an emphasis on establishing connections with friends, family or community organisations that will outlive the length of their sentence will help boost social networks that are often limited.

¹ At the time of research COSA was unavailable in most areas in the research area

Moving forward, our data suggests that Horizon impacts on some of the areas identified as being responsible for individuals desisting from offending. There remains, however, some societal attitudes that hinder participants from achieving goals which result in them being ostracized from the world of work in particular. Clearly probation cannot change these attitudes entirely, but I wonder whether - given the number of goals relating to work and the desire to give back - there is a greater role for the Probation Service here. Direction comes from Perrin et al.'s (2018: 775) work on mentoring in prisons where individuals were seen as keen to 'make a difference' and continue their peer mentoring roles on release. Opportunities to mentor and support others could be an opportunity for group participants to strengthen support networks, demonstrate change and achieve goals to give back - all key factors in desistance.

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A person wearing a dark jacket and a cap stands on the edge of a dark, rocky cliff. They are looking out over a vast, sunlit landscape that appears to be a field of tall grass or reeds. The sun is low in the sky, creating a strong, warm glow and long shadows. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOPE THEORY FOR PEOPLE RELEASED FROM PRISON

NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR THE PROBATION SERVICE

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I have spent the last 6 years studying hope theory and the proven benefits it brings to people and society. Contemporary hope theory provides the basis for the experience of a better future and was developed by US psychologist, Snyder (1991). It has been used in psychotherapy to reduce depression (Cheavens et al., 2006), is a good coping mechanism for people (Carmichael, 2016), and can lead to a greater purpose in life (Kashdan et al., 2021).

Old psychology primarily used a 'disease' based model to focus on what's wrong with people so they could be fixed, but has since evolved into looking at a person's potential in providing positive psychological interventions, using a strengths-based approach (Seligman, 2002). Hope can be framed within this positive strengths-based model.

My excitement about hope as a positive psychological concept led to my curiosity in its potential to lead to transformations in forensic applications, in what is perhaps regarded as a niche, under-researched discipline of forensic psychological research. I was surprised that more research wasn't available in this important area of forensic psychology. People who have had experience with the criminal justice system are likely to be in a place of despair or turmoil, and projecting oneself into a better future self may make the difference between the merry-go-round and something better that is created by their own imagination. Recent hope successes in forensic settings include hope as a mechanism for positive change (Cheavens & Guter, 2018), and for preparing prisoners for release (van Ginneken, 2015).

I decided to capitalise on hope potential by undertaking research to understand how people in prison experience hope, culminating in a book



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called, 'Freedom is in the Mind' (a self-help book for prisoners). The research method used was interpretative phenomenological analysis using autobiographical accounts from former prisoners from around the world who have since turned their life around, and their experience of hope. The research aimed to interpret what factors increase hope. My research concludes that hope is volatile. In a moment you can feel hopeful, but in the next hopeless, and hope itself doesn't have to be structured in nature, and can be something more abstract (Adlington-Rivers, D & Yaneva, M, 2023). If we can understand the nature of hope for people in and released from prison, then we can try to measure and increase it.

My current PhD research goes further, and focuses on the role of hope and resilience in the long-term desistance from crime, using qualitative analysis, by interviewing a range of former prisoners in the UK who have been released from prison and not returned. This is particularly important as a new perspective for the probation service when dealing with clients using a person-centred approach. The underlying hypothesis for this is that what might be regarded as 'bread and butter' outcomes such as getting a job, finding somewhere to live, and dealing with mental health disorders and addictions (as well as other short-term goals) are not the basis by which foundations are built and can be quickly dissolved (e.g. with peer pressure, sudden setbacks, and a general lack of resilience). If it were this easy then why do many people return to a life of chaos and crime? The hypothesis suggests that to become a 'thrivers' in society, people are required to do more to reach their full potential, in what becomes an all encompassing driver that motivates people to keep going, and surpasses normal limits. The challenge then becomes how the foundations are formed and maintained, as these are what may enable long term success, provide resilience and desistance from crime.

On my social media feed, I often see comments from people released from prison who have given up. They have lost all confidence in projecting a better future for themselves, and some believe that the probation service is part of the problem. I would rather encourage them to make their own commitments to their future (because only they know what a better future is for them), without reliance on others. Expecting others to solve the future without your own ideas of what this looks and feels like is futile, and must come from within. People need to believe that change is

possible. Being told to attend courses or being given other authoritative instructions can affect the level of autonomy a person has. Autonomy is a key driver in increasing hope (Adlington-Rivers & Yaneva, 2023), and therefore its removal could risk non-compliance (e.g. the client does not see its purpose in their future and are simply following orders).

My hypothesis suggests that there are two drivers in reaching full potential - (a) imagining a better future, and (b) understanding the steps to get there. If the role of a future probation service is to facilitate this, then the client becomes more self-sufficient in securing the resources to meet the future, by their own motivations. This shifts the focus of control from probation to the client, in a model where probation becomes the 'facilitator' or 'enabler' of change. It fundamentally changes the relationship between the probation officer and their client, building trust, and belief in the future. The net effect is the potential to transform probation centres into places of hope for people released from prison, starting with the 'bread and butter' outcomes, and moving towards the foundations. This can also be extended to the wider population such as those on community orders and SSOs, providing there is a quality relationship in place.

Hope can be used as a potential protective factor in countering effects of a risk-based approach to clients. Over-emphasis on risk provides a basis for control and lack of autonomy, and shuts down positive, creative thinking. It has remnants of the 'disease' based approach, rather than a 'strengths' based approach. It favours risk over potential. My hope research suggests that when people have more autonomy over decision-making, they will naturally feel more hopeful about the future.


This hope momentum may be the start of a long-lasting positive relationship that can be strengthened over time. As clients regain more control over their future self, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of using hope to help people turn their lives around is that the commitment must come from the individual. Not all people are capable or ready to do this, but for those that are, this is balanced against the excitement that the probation service can become a place where hope is encouraged and practised at the heart of its operation, which in turn may change attitudes and perceptions of what is possible, and improve person-centred outcomes.

Reflecting on the recent Annual Report published by HM Inspectorate of Probation (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023), overall performance of The Probation Service against quality standards has worsened since the re-unification of the service (p.7). Inadequate staffing levels and excessive caseloads will no doubt have impacted on the quality of the relationship between the probation officer and their clients. In some cases, appointments with probation officers were reduced to welfare check-ins (p.9). When the key to success is all about person-centred outcomes to increase desistance and protect the public, it is critical that quality time is spent with clients. Perhaps the situation can be improved if probation officers are supported by 'hope navigators', much akin to the supporting roles of teaching assistant or healthcare assistant, who can work with clients to plan achievable pathways to goals using 'hope plans'. This would free up time for probation officers to focus on the overall performance of the client, and allow more strategic planning for their caseload.

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ENGAGING WITH BLACK FATHERS IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

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In his 2017 review of the criminal justice system in England and Wales, MP David Lammy stressed the importance of system engagement with the parents of global majority children. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice published a review of the progress of the youth justice system in meeting Lammy's challenge (Youth Justice Policy Unit, 2020). Stakeholders participating in the review described much of the engagement with families of global majority children as 'tokenistic,' and said that more work needed to be done to meet the needs of parents in the system. The reviewers concluded that youth justice services should offer suitable and appropriate support and interventions to address the over-representation of minoritized ethnic groups in the system.

The child welfare and youth justice systems have faced scrutiny for their roles in separating children and families; this has long-term consequences for children's well-being. These harms have powerful consequences for global majority children—especially impoverished Black children and their families, who are disproportionately overrepresented in these systems (Cénat et al., 2021, Webb et al., 2020, Hunter, 2022).

However, one area where these issues remain challenging is in engaging with fathers of children in the child welfare and youth justice systems (Harty and Banman, 2023). Children whose fathers are not engaged in their lives face poor long-term outcomes (Coakley, 2013). Black fathers in particular – particularly non-resident Black fathers— receive the lowest level of engagement amongst child welfare and youth justice practitioners (Gupta and Featherstone, 2016). A recent U.S. study (Arroyo et al., 2019) found that child welfare agencies were less likely to identify, engage, and locate Black fathers, relative to white fathers.



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¹ Throughout this article, we will use the term 'global majority' as a term which encompasses Black, Asian, African, dual heritage, and indigenous to the Global South as opposed to BAME or 'ethnic minority' in order to recognise that these groups constitute a majority of the global population.

There are several reasons why engagement with fathers, and in particular Black fathers, is challenging. One of those reasons is the role that stigma plays in shaping frontline worker assumptions about Black men (Gupta and Featherstone, 2016). In public discourse, 'absent Black fathers' are often identified as criminogenic (Cooper et al., 2021). Yet, the often-negative assumptions about Black men have powerful consequences for their long-term life outcomes, from health and well-being to the likelihood of incarceration. Scholars have challenged the narrative of the absent Black father by pointing to the various ways that Black men engage in caretaking and support which are not often recognized in mainstream research and media coverage, although recent shows like ITV's *Black Boys Can Cry* offer counter-narratives.

Indeed, data indicates that fathers are engaged with their children and that lone parent Black families are the exception rather than the norm. In 2021, the Office of National Statistics data identifies that in families with dependent children, 80% of children are raised by two parents. Lone mothers make up 18% of the families with dependent children (although it is important to note that being a lone mother does not mean that the child or children do not have access to their father or to the paternal family). 18% of Black family households in the UK are made up of a lone parent. A report by the US-based Centre for Disease Control (Jones and Mosher, 2013) states that Black fathers – even those who do not live with their children – are more actively involved in their children's lives than male parents of other races.

Another area which contributes to the challenges facing workers in engaging with Black fathers is the use of mandatory risk assessment instruments. Risk assessment plays a role in

determining removal and sentencing and in identifying preventative programmes. However, some researchers have argued that risk has become a proxy for race, and that risk assessment tools can amplify some of the existing problems of racial disproportionality in the child welfare and youth justice systems (Font et al., 2012, Harcourt, 2010). Given the intersection between experience of arrest and race and other systems of disadvantage, it may be possible that Black fathers have disproportionately experienced contact with the justice system, for example. The extent to which this may then impact on a worker's decision to engage with those fathers is an open question.

The Unheard Gender Workshop

In response to the Ministry of Justice review and their own experiences in the field, two global majority youth justice restorative practitioners (Doherty and Walker, authors of this article) formed an ad hoc professionals group focused on fatherhood in the youth justice system in June 2022. The group was made up of practitioners from local London authorities who came together to discuss their experiences and strategies for facilitating systemic change. The members of the group were Black men and women who reflected on their own practices in the context of their identities as Black workers, but also, at times, as Black parents.

The Father's Group identified a recurring theme of fathers not being contacted, consulted or included in the assessment process by youth justice workers. Discussions in the group identified that this occurred across services and hypothesised that this may be related to how fathers are perceived.

A consultant to the group (Doherty) suggested that a workshop could be developed to assist services and enable them to critically assess their engagement with fathers. The Unheard Gender workshop was subsequently developed to explore institutionalised marginalisation of fathers, focusing on how youth justice and children's services engage with Black fathers.

In children's services, men are arguably the 'unheard gender'. Family and social work practices and research predominantly focuses on fathers in terms of their function in the family, with limited consideration of their roles, needs, thoughts, feelings and experiences. In addition to developing the workshop, the group worked with Dr. Alexandra Cox to develop a plan for conducting an evaluation of the research and its effects on system practices. They collectively developed a survey aimed at assessing worker perspectives on engaging fathers. The survey has a mix of several questions which assess the level of practitioner engagement with fathers, and in particular, Black fathers, using a Likert scale. It also has questions which inquire about the barriers and challenges in engaging with Black fathers. To date, over 190 workers have been surveyed and three workshops have been conducted for child welfare and youth justice workers in London councils, and over 30 workers have participated in a survey conducted immediately after two workshops. Dr. Cox conducted participant observation at both workshops and Mr. Doherty has conducted a focus group with a group of Black fathers whose children are in the youth justice system. This article focuses on some early findings from this research.

Findings

Barriers to Engagement

The survey and subsequent workshops revealed that there are several key barriers which shape worker engagement with fathers, and Black fathers in particular. Some of those barriers stem from the life histories and experiences of the workers, who shared negative experiences of parenting and being parented by and with Black fathers, which may shape their judgements of the fathers they work with and their subsequent reluctance to engage with Black fathers in practice.

Workers also frequently reported that they would often only contact mothers or female caregivers because those mothers were the primary caregivers of a young person, or the primary gatekeeper to the young person. In the context of very heavy caseloads, workers feel that the additional work required to contact fathers or male caregivers was not possible. Over the course of the workshops, some workers reflected on their own biases about women as primary caregivers which may have also shaped their decisions to contact only those women.

High Levels of Interest in Engagement, but Low Levels of Actual Engagement

The pre-workshop surveys demonstrated that practitioners identified themselves as being confident in their knowledge of the role of Black fathers and fatherhood in children's lives; however, this confidence is not being translated into practice.

The survey has consistently identified low levels of engagement with fathers and even lower levels of reflection of the role of Black fathers in their children's lives. Given the high confidence levels, it would be reasonable to expect that fatherhood was high on the agenda and that innovative, progressive processes and lines of enquiry were being developed; that practitioners would be regularly discussing and engaging with fathers. However less than a third of Black fathers were consulted during the statutory assessment process in one council that is under study.

We also expected that given the number of services whose policies relate to Black families, e.g. disproportionate numbers of Black children entering the criminal justice system and high numbers of Black children entering the care system, that fatherhood would be a thematic line of enquiry for the services. The survey identified that fatherhood was rarely discussed or prioritised in team meetings.

Despite this mismatch between knowledge and action, when workers were asked for ways in which they could better engage fathers, the responses were practical and achievable. Most responders were able to come up with at least one suggestion and admitted to not spending enough time engaging fathers or exploring how fathers were being positioned by services. The survey participants also identified the multiple barriers, societal, cultural and economic, which got in the way of their own understandings of Black fathers.

Father's Voices

One of the key aspects of the workshop has been holding sessions with fathers who are currently being statutorily or voluntarily supported by Children's Services. We have interviewed 14 fathers to date and have identified a number of common themes in our data. Fathers felt pre-judged based on dominant narratives of disengaged or uninvolved fathers. They reported that they were under consulted, and in most cases had not been asked to contribute to family assessments. Those messages were relayed through their partners, rather than directly to them, and this led to a lack of clarity, mistrust and a sense that their input was not valued. The lack of diversity in the workforce was also a common theme, particularly the low numbers of men. At initial contact with services, there was a real disconnect with all fathers saying that the workers did not appear to see them as individuals and that historic misdemeanours that they had committed were often presented as if they were current. This added to the feeling that fathers were not being seen as capable of raising their children: fathers said that they constantly felt they had to prove themselves to practitioners and were only seen as perpetrators even when they were the lead carer or victim of domestic violence.

Risk Management

Another key theme was the issue of risk when engaging black fathers particularly where there had been domestic violence issues.

Practitioners on the workshop, expressed concerns that engagement where there had been concerns regarding abuse or violence increased their sense of being unsafe or at risk of harm from the fathers they're working with, despite the lack of evidence to support that the risk of harm is more likely when engaging black fathers. There were indicators that negative narratives were not being challenged or discussed in reflective practice sessions. It would seem that standard practice is to abstain from engaging with or discussing fathers. In turn, this raises serious questions about how erroneous and negative narratives on fathers are challenged and how this lack of engagement is perceived experienced by Black fathers.

Recommendations

Practitioners should be encouraged to explore issues of parenting as they intersect with race and racism. For example, parents might be exposed to negative experiences of the stop and search of their children, which might be useful to explore in initial assessments. Team leaders - supported by system leaders - should provide opportunities for practitioners to discuss dominant narratives about Black men and Black fathers encourage them to reflect on the impact these narratives may have on their practice. These opportunities should be supported and embedded throughout supervisory practices, quality assurance, and other methods of feedback and supervision.

Systemic practice is an approach to working with families that locates them in a broader social context, understands and validates the importance of the constellation of relationships in a family, and appreciates the ways that fathers are situated in families and the broader perceptions of Black fathers in the social

world. Our research indicates that those teams which have been exposed to this practice are more likely to be able to engage in uncomfortable conversations and challenge of their practice and are less likely to take defensive positions that limit or restrict change. The Youth Justice Board could play a role in encouraging all youth offending teams to receive some training in systemic practice.

Our early research also indicates that more needs to be done to understand the impact of low practitioner engagement with Black fathers on youth offending teams. One way this can be achieved is by adapting data systems to include the collection of data on fathers. e.g. by asking specific questions on father's involvement with their children and recording father's information in initial assessments. For example, the Asset Plus assessment tool can be modified to ask workers to engage with the perspectives of any and all caregivers and providers. Teams can also ensure that effective quality assurance involves checking to see whether sufficient outreach has been done to all available caregivers.

Supervision templates to be reviewed and - where needed - adjusted to invite curiosity from practitioners about how and whether they conduct outreach to Black fathers and ask specific questions on engagement with fathers.

Taken together, these recommendations will enable youth offending services to ensure that they are fully responding to the findings of the Lammy review and the Ministry of Justice's Youth Policy Unit's call to more fully engage with the families of global majority children. This will have a substantive impact on how practitioners engage and support Black fathers and their children.

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IDENTIFYING ALCOHOL AND DRUG RELATED HARMS AND APPROPRIATE TREATMENT PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN

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Annually, drugs cost society over £19 billion (Black, 2020), and recent years have seen increasing numbers of drug-related deaths (Rae et al, 2022). Alcohol costs a further £14.5 billion in government expenditure to address related issues (Petticrew et al, 2018). Violence associated to the drugs market is apparent (Black, 2020) and alcohol related violence in the night-time economy presents challenges for police and emergency services (McGuire, Evans and Kane, 2021). As such, there is a clear business case for preventing and reducing drug and alcohol related harms. The government Harm to Hope drug strategy includes financial uplift to support frontline commissioned services, but seemingly overlooks women's needs (Page, Bratt and Oldfield, 2023), which are not met sufficiently in practice (Whitemore, Page, Jeffrey and McCormack, 2023). Drawing on our recent research regarding women's lived experiences of drug and alcohol treatment, this article reflects on criminal justice engagement. Gender inequalities within the criminal justice system have a long history, with prejudice from women being perceived as 'doubly deviant' for breaking gender norms (Page, Bratt and Oldfield, 2023) and our recent research indicates more work needs to be done to address women's experiences.

In 2022 and 2023 Staffordshire University and Expert Citizens CIC collaboratively collected data with women with lived experience of drug and alcohol services in the West Midlands (N=28) through interviews and focus groups and with professionals working with women (N=9) through world cafés and via professionals (N=5) at focus groups attended by women with lived experience. Further data from professionals (N=17) through interview and group interview was collected by the Centre for Justice Innovation



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Our research was jointly commissioned by the West Midlands Police Crime Commissioners Office and The JABBS Foundation. A final report 'Exploring women's experience of drug and alcohol treatment in the West Midlands' (Whitemore, Page, Jeffrey and McCormack, 2023) is available via the Centre for Justice Innovation website. The overarching recommendations advocate for:

- A. Treatment services to ensure their offer to women meets four basic standards of 1) appropriate treatment locations, 2) women only group work, 3) same gender key worker and 4) flexible appointments;
- B. Treatment services should expand their capacity to meet women's gender-driven needs by 1) trauma informed care 2) domestic abuse awareness and 3) improving support for women from ethnic minority groups and finally;
- C. Improving the multi-agency response through 1) co-location, 2) access to other recovery services and 3) utilising whole-system approaches.

Essentially, women need gender responsive services with a one-stop-shop approach addressing all needs through trauma sensitive practice. Probation officers might consider co-locating and meeting women at treatment services, whether that be in person, or via Teams link up with a treatment practitioner:

So, if they've missed a couple of probation appointments but they're still engaging with me, I would say, 'Right, okay, come into the office because probation is going to see you as well.' (Specialist women's practitioner)¹

Women found it challenging to attend multiple appointments at multiple locations, on top of family caring or work commitments. Professionals highlighted women may also experience mental health challenges, making it difficult for them to consistently attend sessions. Furthermore, women may have a controlling partner hindering appointment attendance:

If you're being controlled and manipulated at home and you feel unsafe, are you going to feel safe enough to go into a service? Have you got autonomy in terms of making that decision...

Women with lived experience described being victims of domestic abuse and child abuse and many had been in looked after care. Women indicated that CJS professionals ask about whether they have been in looked after care in assessment but were unaware of any action taken in response to this information. For example, there were no follow up referrals and women wondered whether professionals assumed that trauma had been addressed earlier in their lives. However, women in our study mostly said they had not been referred as children to a therapeutic intervention that addressed the trauma (Whitemore, Page, Jeffrey and McCormack, 2023). Often women started drinking alcohol and taking drugs as a form of self-medication to block out traumatic experiences.

¹ All quotes are taken from Whitemore, Page, Jeffrey and McCormack (2023)

We advocate that CJS professionals enquire whether a woman would like to access counselling to address any unresolved childhood trauma. Childhood trauma creates neurological differences demonstrated by dysregulated behaviour (Scott, 2021), which can impact upon adulthood, including reducing life-chances (Hughes et al, 2017). Trauma may manifest in someone reacting aggressively or passively to others. Trauma responsiveness assumes such behaviour is a means of the person communicating that their needs are not being met (Geddes, 2020). As such, punishment for disengagement, or aggressive engagement, may well add to pre-existing trauma. Women in our study talked about prison being trauma inducing and not having opportunity to unpack associated emotions. Trauma might be processed in counselling sessions or through mental health support but many women were awaiting mental health professional referrals and one woman waited several years for her assessment appointment to come through. Women also told us that they had been instructed to address their drug and alcohol consumption before mental health support could be offered. However, women relied upon self-medicating through substances prior to assessment and in early stages of disclosure. As such, professional requests for abstinence before mental health assessment and support is unrealistic. Often women are asked to re-tell their story to multiple service providers, leading to re-traumatisation and creating a driver to using drugs and alcohol to block out pain (Whitemore, Page, Jeffrey and McCormack, 2023). Our research indicates that 99% of the women with drug or alcohol

addictions will have experienced childhood trauma and women need to be worked with in a multi-agency way that encompasses her addictions and her mental well-being simultaneously. Setting up information and assessment sharing protocols would reduce the negative impacts from having to re-tell trauma accounts.

Internationally, leading mental health assessment tools such as the DSM-5 and WHO ICD, cite that drug and alcohol addictions have physical, cognitive and mental health impacts (Page, Bratt and Oldfield, 2023). As such, access to mental health services should be a given. A person's cognitive processing becomes impaired when they become addicted to drugs and/or alcohol and essentially, rational choices pertaining to committing crime when intoxicated is questionable. This belief is acknowledged by the introduction of the 1998 Drug Testing and Treatment Order (DTTO) and associated sentencing guidance mitigations, now replaced by the DRR. DRR groupwork tends to be mixed gender. Women with lived experience and professionals in our research raised concerns that mixed gender groupwork compromised the safety of women:

My experience again of women coming into services, that you do tend to get a lot of predatory males attending services as well. I know over the years it was sort of like a hunting ground. (Drug and alcohol treatment practitioner)

We advocate that CJS community treatment provides opportunity for women only waiting areas and group work, so that trauma needs are better addressed. Women attending women only groups were able to talk about abuses experienced and were seemingly making good recovery progress. Women talked about males targeting the most vulnerable women in the group for relationship purposes and then requesting engagement in sex work to cover both of their addiction habits. McCormack and Fedorowicz (2022) highlight some women experiencing multiple disadvantage, including substance use, engage in 'survival sex' when there is the additional need of housing. With such exploitative practices taking place, mixed gender services present clear safeguarding concerns.

Professionals indicated that most women in their caseloads were court ordered to engage in treatment either through criminal court, or through child protection plans. When ordered to attend a women's only service, women reported feeling anxious upon nearing the end of their licence conditions because support instantly ceased due to CJS funding parameters. We recommend that commissioners consider continuity of care to support crime desistance beyond the life of an Order. Women who had been incarcerated reported feeling vulnerable and unsafe and less likely to disclose in treatment, and several women reported positive prison treatment experiences. Professionals talked about how women found it easier to get an opiate replacement prescription inside prison and it was implied that women might reoffend to get incarcerated to access medication. However, women said that 'through the gate' support was poor and their recovery progress was hindered

when community appointments and helplines were difficult to access. Women and professionals noted that some professionals treated women with disdain and not dignity.

When treatment was part of a child protection plan, women felt fearful about losing their children. Our research found women accused by social services of child neglect often resulted in child removal, which left the women bereft and traumatised (Whitemore, Page, Jeffrey and McCormack, 2023). One woman was referred to bereavement counselling to process grief from child-removal and said this had been helpful. More attention is needed to help women to process child-loss because it can stimulate increased drug and alcohol consumption.

In conclusion, women in our study seemingly make good addiction recovery progress in women only services that attend to holistic needs regarding addiction, mental health, trauma and domestic abuse. Punitive responses from criminal justice professionals may be aggravating trauma and associated addictions. Being more trauma responsive and working collaboratively with support services could have significant positive impacts upon women that ultimately assist desistance from crime.

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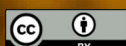
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A full-page background image showing the silhouette of a person wearing a hooded sweatshirt, crouching on a sandy beach. The person is facing away from the camera, looking out at the ocean. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon creating a strong glow and long shadows. The person's right hand is resting on their hip, and their left leg is bent. The overall mood is contemplative and somber.

WHAT DOES SOCIAL JUSTICE LOOK LIKE AND WHY IS IT SO ELUSIVE FOR CRIMINALISED YOUNG ADULTS?

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Introductory context

Young adults are disproportionately affected by changing social, political and economic forces and environments and widening inequality (Nugent, 2017), yet contemporary policies and practices fail to address the harms engendered by poverty, inadequate housing, and an absence of secure employment (Webber, 2022). Rather than ameliorating the social adversities and harms underpinning much offending, young adults are then subjected to state-led individualistic and responsibilising interventions (Phoenix, 2019; Gray and Smith, 2021), resonating with MacDonald et al's., (2020: 14) observation that 'individual behavior trumps structural inequalities' in both policy explanations of, and 'remedies' for, poverty and its effects. Subsequently, young adults from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are overrepresented in the justice system, experience poorer outcomes and are more likely to be reconvicted (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016). However, while socio-economic deprivation and social marginality might be a more visible form of inequality, inequalities also reside in the 'systematic disparities in an individual's or group's abilities: to receive recognition; to influence others' behaviours in order to produce advantages for themselves and the groups they belong to; and to have control of the choices concerning their present and their future' (Bruselius-Jensen et al., 2021: 5-6). As we have elaborated elsewhere (Weaver et al., 2023), this is referred to as epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007). While increasing attention has been paid to the participatory rights of children and young people (e.g. Haines and Case, 2015; Smithson and Jones, 2021), the voices of criminalised young adults remain marginalised and their experiences elided in shaping policy and practice responses. Consequently, perhaps, there is a significant disconnect between policy and practice directed towards criminalised young adults, their lived realities and developmentally-specific needs.



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Methods

In recognition of these enduring and growing socio-economic and epistemic inequalities, this study aimed to listen to, and learn from, young adults' experiences and their visions of social justice in order to influence more socially just responses from our welfare and justice services. We conducted a design-led, participatory study involving 12 criminalised young adults, aged 18-25 in Scotland. This enabled those affected to participate in a communicative space, freely share their experiences, and have their experiences and ideas taken seriously.

Participatory design is a dynamic process that uses design practices to identify and explore problems and solutions using diverse methods and approaches underpinned by participatory practices and ethics. Methods are typically visual or creative, and therefore accessible to diverse groups, and conducive to innovation (Burkett, 2012). They can, then, enhance engagement with marginalised groups who are normally excluded from knowledge production and policy-making (Pain and Francis, 2003; Porche et al., 2022) and help generate solutions that are culturally relevant and trusted (Evans and Terrey, 2016).

Of our 12 participants, (three women, nine men) eight were care experienced, eight had been in prison (either on remand or sentenced), and three were in employment. While justice experience was a prerequisite for participation, the research was not concerned with individuals' offending behaviour but rather their conception, experience and vision of social justice. The three groups each participated in two 90-minute workshops, held one week apart, supported by two facilitators and one note-taker. Workshops were hybrid¹ due to COVID-19 restrictions, and were video recorded

and then audio transcribed, with the exception of Group 1 workshops, in which an observer took handwritten notes.

Before the workshops, participants were given a 'workshop in a box' containing the necessary offline materials, including snacks and mobile data.



¹ While the first group was held entirely online, the remaining two were hybrid in that participants were in the same physical space for the workshops, while the researchers engaged by virtual means.

Workshop one encouraged participants to reflect on their social, physical and institutional environments via a game board (loosely based on *Monopoly*). This activity supported participants to engage in a process of 'diagnosis and critique' (Wright, 2013), to identify and understand their experiences of social (in)justice, and their understandings of the causes and consequences of those experiences. Using creative activities with *Lego*, workshop two focused on envisioning a socially just place that would prevent or address the injustices identified in workshop one. The methods adopted thus facilitated a process of Utopian inquiry (Bell & Pahl, 2018) by supporting participants' critical reflections on the social structures, institutions and practices that shaped their lives, and encouraging the envisioning of alternatives.

Findings

1. What challenges do criminalised young adults face?

All participants described experiencing a range of challenges as a consequence of the social disparities and conditions shaping their situational contexts, socio-geographical environments and personal circumstances. Those discussed most frequently were: negative interactions with the police; life on 'the street' or in the 'schemes' [council estates] and encounters with territorial violence; experiences of family adversity; perceptions of stigma, discrimination and exclusion; and the causes and consequences of mental ill-health, alcohol and drugs. Poverty, homelessness and lack of access to support and perceptions of a depersonalized justice system also characterized responses. The narratives they shared are detailed and, at times, harrowing;

sadly they resonate with much of what we, as researchers and practitioners, know about the realities of criminalised young adults' lives², and as such, we have chosen here to focus on their perceptions of what a more socially just future would require and entail.

2. What does a socially just place look like?

For many participants, a socially just place involved 'a collection of things' that pertained to addressing the material, status and social inequalities that they faced. Frequently, it involved: a safe and secure home; experiencing inclusion and belonging, within families, friendships, communities and society; fair and equal opportunities, or 'path[s] through life' and life transitions; and personalised social support, rooted in understanding and empathy. This reinforced to us the need for policy-makers to look beyond the parameters and purview of penal policy and practice, to re-envision how social justice can be generated before and beyond this space, including how this may be understood and in turn enacted.

The nature of the lives of criminalised young adults means that what they need and seek are the kinds of things that for them are critical to any semblance of social justice, but for others are a norm, and so what is envisioned by the participants may appear modest. For example, a secure and safe home featured in almost all participants' accounts as a foundation for building a flourishing or 'simple life', though this appeared to be aspirational for many:

This is my Lego: that was supposed to be my wee house, it's no very good. I've put a safe environment, a good home. (Pete)

² You can read our findings in full in Weaver B., McCulloch, T., and Vaswani N., (2023) Envisioning Social Justice With Criminalized Young Adults. *British Journal of Criminology*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azad052>

Participants also envisioned social justice as involving fair, equitable and targeted opportunities for all, with emphasis placed on access to work or study.

I've wrote: for better and fair opportunities, do not judge their past, their criminal record. If they've not had work – don't ask for a reason; make it open to all skills, and experience, to not judge one or the other, like that you have to have a qualification to get in. To have a good age range; some apprenticeships and internships are for set ages. (Anita)

The challenge is that realising these fundamental markers of human and social wellbeing continues to escape our welfare and justice systems. Perhaps one of the reasons for this resides in Bammer's (1991:47) observation that 'even as our radical theories and politics push to extend the boundaries of the possible and unimaginable, we are always bound by and to the very structures we are trying to escape' (quoted in Malloch, 2016: 164).

Concluding Discussion

While it is possible to interpret our participants' visions of social justice as underwhelming, they are, by virtue of this, both achievable and desirable, and if realized, would be transformative in effect (Wright, 2013). Critically, that these fundamental human and social provisions emerge for participants as alternative, imaginary and utopian, underlines the profound disconnect between existing policy and service systems and the life-worlds of the multiply marginalised young adults these systems are imagined to serve. In

contrast to a persisting focus on individual, responsibilising and 'within system' responses to young adults in conflict with the law, and on rational-managerial approaches to reform, the keys to justice with young adults in conflict with the law do not reside in new or improved penal structures, processes and practices; they reside outside of penal systems, in the provision of human and social welfare policies, actions and outcomes rooted in justice principles of equality, democracy, and sustainability (Wright, 2013). As such, our findings accord with Webb's (2006) analysis which proposes that the generation of emancipatory justice in neoliberal societies is unlikely to be achieved through the application of managerial logic but requires instead 'a practice of value', which has become 'far more radical than it seems in a society that is permeated with calculative reason, material self-interest and mass consumption' (Webb, 2006: 33). Yet, as our participants' visions of social justice implied, in seeking to transform society, to facilitate meaningful and sustainable social change, at the very least, this requires a baseline of citizenship below which no individual can descend (Higgins 2011 cited in Levitas, 2013) and this means ensuring at least the right to shelter, food, education and freedom from fear and insecurity (Levitas, 2013).

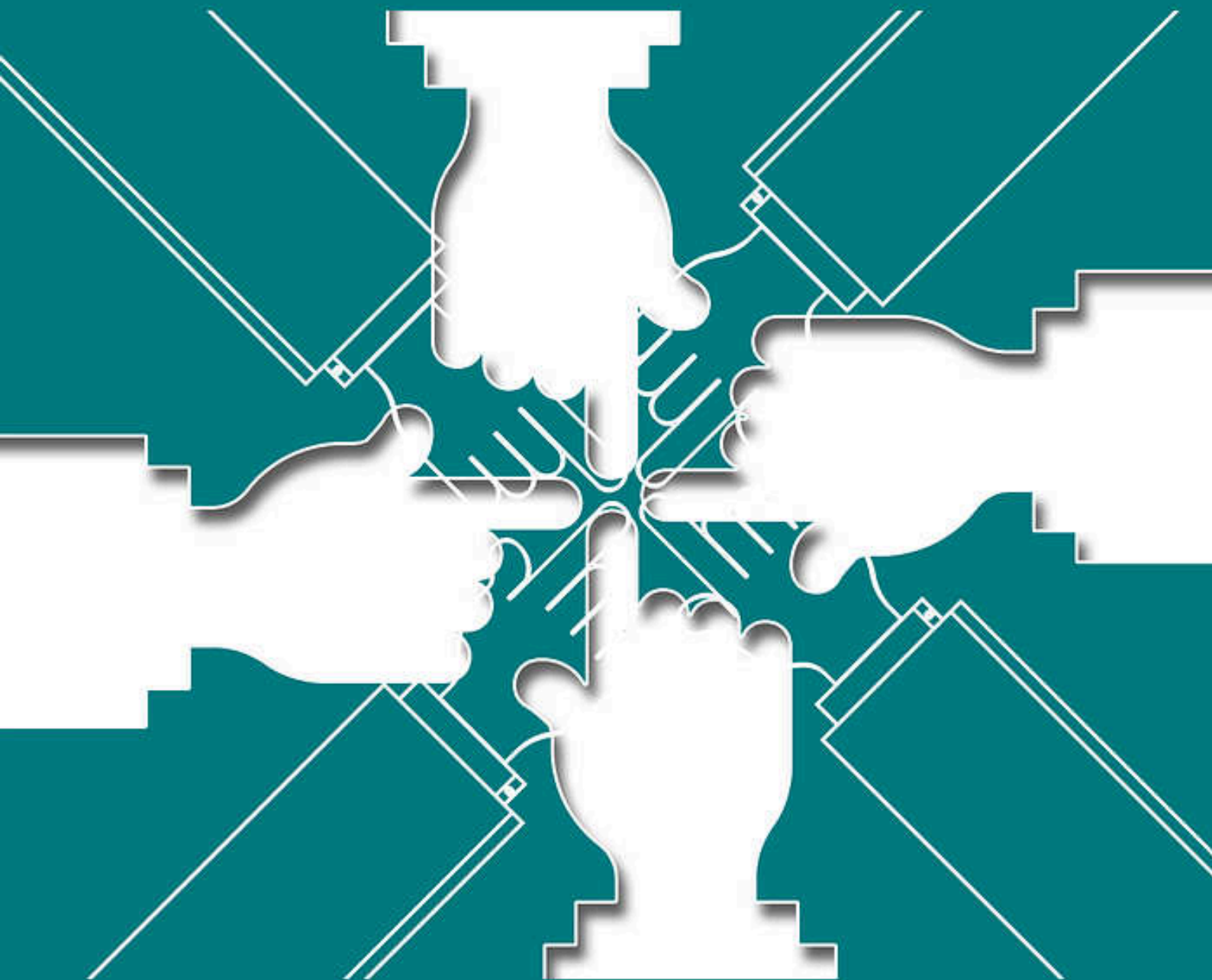
Moreover, that our participants' experiences continue to reflect and resonate with those of others reported across the decades (e.g. McAra and McVie, 2010) accentuates the failure of top-down, neo-liberalist policies to adequately tackle the social inequalities that underpin much crime, criminalisation and victimisation, and their persistence in spite of the increasing evidence challenging such approaches (Scott-Samuel and Smith, 2015).

Relatedly, we have argued that while socio-economic deprivation and social marginality might be a more noticeable form of inequality, inequalities also reside in, and are extended through, the systematic, epistemic exclusion of stigmatised and marginalised individuals and groups from participation in policy development and practice innovations. The significance of this work therefore further resides as much in our findings on what social justice would look and feel like to our participants, as in our emphasis on the need for, and value of, deliberative participation if we are to collectively 'generate justice' (Fraser, 2005) through penal and social reform. We argue that this cannot be realised in the absence of mechanisms that can facilitate and embed the 'epistemic participation' (Schmidt, 2019) of this group in justice policy and practice contexts more broadly. Ultimately, those concerned with remedying social injustices and inequalities need to imagine, articulate and act on radical alternatives (Levitas, 2013) through which social justice might be achieved. This requires the epistemic inclusion and participation of those individuals, groups and communities most affected to co-create solutions - including attention to whose voice is allowed to participate and be heard in the process (Schmidt, 2019), who contributes to that knowledge making, and whose voices and experiences are absent. This requires making space for alternative ways of knowing, being and doing that are more egalitarian, democratic and inclusive in approach.

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THE NEED TO REVISIT THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF PROBATION

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The term *community justice* has been in use for a number of years, with various meanings, and they are not always straightforward. For example, the Scottish Government recently continued a tradition of defining community justice with reference to a range of agencies or organisations working together to address underlying causes of criminal behaviour to protect the public, reduce reoffending and support individual rehabilitative projects. Further afield, in the US, a definition has been proposed that *community justice* should refer to “all variants of crime prevention and justice activities that explicitly include the community in their processes and set the enhancement of community quality of life as a goal”¹. Meanwhile, the evolution and devolution of the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda in England & Wales has resulted in a pertinent moment for criminologists, both academic and applied, to focus attention on probation and community justice. Trauma-informed justice practices, notions of desistance, reform and rehabilitation, and the complexities surrounding broader practices of non-custodial punishments across the jurisdictions of the United Kingdom already provide a rich environment for scholarly enquiry and debate.

It is with these debates in mind that a group of scholars from across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have begun working with the British Society of Criminology to establish a Special Interest Network for Probation &



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Community Justice. The Network is intended to provide a space to coordinate academic activities on these topics; to discuss and debate community justice research from academic, policy and practice perspectives. Whilst initially convened as a group of academics - many of whom have experience of practice within the probation agencies of the UK - a growing number of current practitioners have shown an interest in the development of a Special Interest Network.

¹ Karp, D. R., & Clear, T. R. (2000). Community Justice: A Conceptual. Criminal justice. Vol. 2

The blend of experiences from both the development group and those we have spoken to have prompted us to place a particular emphasis on creating spaces for new voices to emerge by supporting networking between academics, researchers, practitioners and students interested in community justice research and associated issues.

In more practical terms, our plans include convening a calendar of events to support and promote community justice as an area of criminological research at national, regional & network specific conferences/events. For example, we aim to coordinate a stream of papers focused on probation at the BSC's Annual Conference in Glasgow in 2024. We intend to contribute to panels to international events to raise the profile of probation within criminological debates. We also want to have an impact on the future development of probation services, and how they practice community justice, in the UK. As such we plan to facilitate responses to policy consultations and calls for evidence in relation to probation and community justice initiatives. This may include network members contributing to policy briefs and proactively issuing statements about key policy initiatives either individually or in collaboration with professional and practice organisations with an interest in probation and

community justice, such as the Probation Institute and/or the National Association of Probation Officers.

The initial proposal for the Network was submitted to the British Society of Criminology in October this year, and we are awaiting their response. But in the meantime, we do not want to sit idle. If you are currently working in probation or an organisation delivering community justice services, and you have an idea for a research project focusing on an area of your practice, we encourage you to apply for the next round of the [Sir Graham Smith Award scheme](#). The next round will take place in 2024 and applications are currently being accepted by the Probation Institute until Wednesday 31 January 2024; information for applicants is available on the PI website. But there are further opportunities for us to explore probation and community justice through an academic lens. If you are unsure about how to develop your idea, or are looking for academic partners with whom you can collaborate, please get in touch.

If you would like to know more about the ongoing development of this group, please contact Dr James Tangen, Assistant Professor in Criminology at the University of Nottingham (james.tangen@nottingham.ac.uk).

IMAGE ATTRIBUTION

We'd like to say thank you and to acknowledge the photographers that kindly allow their images to be freely useable. For this edition of PQ30 we have used the following images:

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