

The magazine of the Probation Institute

PROBATION

Issue 9 : September 2018

Quarterly



PSYCHOLOGICAL LITERACY IN PROBATION PRACTICE:

Is a little knowledge
a dangerous thing?

Why I decided to train to
become a probation officer

Strengthening probation,
building confidence

The power of user-led
transformation

PROBATION *Quarterly*

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Welcome to Probation Quarterly Issue 9, which has turned out to be something of a bumper issue. In the ever-changing and fast-moving political scene of Probation, it is important to continue to highlight positive research and work with offenders and victims in the community by practitioners in all sectors of the criminal justice system. This issue publicises a wide variety of work, while maintaining a thought-provoking and reflective stance. We hope that all readers find something that informs, engages and stimulates them.

Following the very successful third Practitioner Conference run by the Probation Institute at the beginning of July, we have a number of articles by people who spoke, ran workshops or were otherwise involved on that day. Jessica Mullen and Anne Fox, of Clinks, challenge the government about the diminishing role of the not-for-profit sector in the delivery of Transforming Rehabilitation.

Charles Howgego of UserVoice celebrates the impact of engaging with those who have lived experience of the criminal justice system and argues that user-led involvement in probation planning contributes to the reduction of reoffending.

Helen Arnold-Richardson and Amanda Kirby advocate the use of an online assessment tool, Do It Profiler, in identifying and working with those who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

In the last issue, Philip Priestley and Maurice Vanstone introduced their recent book, Probation and Politics, and in this issue the book is independently reviewed by a practitioner, Rob Whyman.



John Pollock reminds us of the importance of recognizing and celebrating good work with offenders and victims through the Butler Trust Award scheme. Emma Murray, Will Jackson and Anne Hayes introduce readers to an innovative use of artwork in work with offenders on licence – the game of ‘Probationary’ highlights the random nature of the fortunes of released prisoners.

Ahead of the second Trainees’ conference this year in December (the first was in May), we decided to focus part of this issue on the experiences of those involved with Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP).

Helen Schofield, the PI Acting CEO provides an overview of developments in qualifying training and discusses some of the issues for the future. Aleta Aisagbonhi, a new PQiP learner, gives a moving account of how and why she made the decision to train as a probation officer.

Jacky Burrows, a psychologist who lectures on the PQiP programme, asks the provocative question, ‘Is a little knowledge a dangerous thing?’ and urges practitioners to be sensitive to the potential harm to offenders of their interventions.

Paula Hamilton discusses the ‘feminisation’ of probation and the lack of diversity on the PQiP programme. Kelly Elliott, a former CRC manager, argues for the importance of PQiP in providing appropriate training for workers in CRCs as well as the NPS.

If you feel inspired to contribute to a future issue of PQ, please note that our next deadline for draft articles is Friday 9th November.

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Guidance from the Editor

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

These articles can be about:

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

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

Why I decided to train to become a probation officer – a personal account



Aleta Aisagbonhi

Six months ago I decided to apply for the Professional Qualification in Probation. As with most decisions that we make in life, especially those that will affect our future, inevitably at some point the why becomes important. It is a question I was asked at my interview, by my friends, my family and my current employer. However, it was not something that I asked myself. It is only now that I realise we don't usually ask ourselves why we make the decisions we do, until we hit a stumbling block, until mistakes are made, or until we need a reminder. It is also something that I imagine many offenders are asked by judges, solicitors, family, friends, victims, employers and maybe even probation officers. Maybe it is even a question that seasoned probation officers occasionally ask themselves:

“WHY DO I DO THIS JOB?”

So, I am going to practice what I am sure I will inevitably preach, and I will self-reflect on a decision I made six months ago and I will tell you why I made the decision to apply to train to be a probation officer.



I was a strong, opinionated teenager, that loved to argue with anyone about anything, and I always thought I was right. So, I decided I was going to university to become a solicitor. Four years later I got a qualifying law degree. I didn't get the result I wanted, mostly because I just didn't work hard enough for it, and partly because one year in I couldn't see myself as the strong, 'tough on crime' solicitor I thought I would be. A talk at my university from Sunny Jacobs, and Peter Pringle solidified this for me. They were two ex-prisoners who were serving life sentences for crimes they were later acquitted of. (Look them up, I strongly recommend it.) They offered me my first insight into how helping those that are serving sentences, guilty or not, could have a real impact on individuals, society and rehabilitation. I then selected every criminology and criminal justice-related module that was available to me, and found a clear interest in why people commit crime, and how they could be helped to reform.

Three months after graduating I was working full time as an intern with a college that had an offender learning contract to deliver education in prisons, and I was getting my first real experience working with offenders. It didn't take long for me at all to see past the crime and to the person.

Some of those people had very similar backgrounds to me, a second-generation immigrant, from a single parent, low income background who grew up on a council estate. My mum grew up in foster care, my brother skipped school more than he was there, and yet somehow, we all survived without getting a criminal record.

Why was that? What was the difference between them and me? I still don't really have the answer for that. My first guess was that I had the love and support of my family but, after working with offenders for many years, I know that some of them do too - not all, but definitely some.

Two years later and I was ready to leave my first job teaching in a prison. I had enjoyed that no day was the same - I had taught doctors, celebrities, seen fights, tears, fear and laughter. I had also heard the most shocking stories that soon became so normal and expected it became increasingly hard for me to be shocked by the things I had seen or heard in prison. Sadly, even the most shocking confessions are continually bested. This is an experience I know that many people who work in HMPPS have had and I also know it is the same reason that many have such a powerful belief that interventions and support are the only way to truly rehabilitate offenders, to avoid a 'revolving door' effect for those suffering from trauma and mental health issues.



So, after two years, I knew it wasn't the teaching part of the job I loved. The lesson plans and marking became the most dreaded aspect of my job and something I could not avoid. I successfully applied for a first line management position in an education department at another prison. The why for this job was very easy to answer; the only professional experience I had was teaching in prisons and I wanted to teach less, make a bigger impact on trying to reform offenders and earn more money. At the same time I was applying for this job, I also had a friend who was just coming to the end of completing training with NPS. We would regularly discuss the problem with the criminal justice system today and, dare I say, we shared brilliant, innovative and world-changing ideas for reform.

Almost two years after that I realised several key things:

1. There is no way to get away from lesson plans and marking when working in an education department.
2. As a middle manager, you spend more time working with staff than directly helping offenders, and not enough time with senior management to make an impact on policy reform.
3. More money does not mean more happiness. (This is an idea I am still struggling with and I feel could only be confirmed either way by a jackpot lottery win).
4. The ideas for criminal justice reform that I had were not in fact that innovative; lots of people had them, some even wrote books! Also, people were in fact implementing them, trying to make changes from the ground up, and reform was possible and happening, just not immediately and not for everyone (an unrealistic dream).

So, after thousands of discussions with prisoners about family, crime, the courts, victims, sentence plans, employment and release, as well as the many conversations with my now qualified

probation officer friend and a Facebook tagging in the 'Train to be a probation officer' link, I applied.

Months later after an online application, competency questions, decision-making test, assessment day which consisted of an interview, group interview and written exercise, I was given a conditional offer. After being offered a good office location (I considered myself lucky, after hearing some were given hourly commutes to work and still accepted the office, clearly showing their dedication and commitment to the role) and finally hearing back from vetting I received my contract, handed in my notice and had a 2nd July 2018 start date.

So, here I am one week before I am due to start, and I know my why. I hope that for anyone reading this, it has served as a reminder of their reasons for taking on the difficult role of trying to play a part in rehabilitating ex- offenders. I have occasionally, throughout this sometimes frustrating application process, had to already remind myself why, as I am sure is the case for other PQiP applicants and indeed probably anyone working for the civil service. However, my why always wins out, and I hope it continues to do so.

I am excitedly anticipating my first day, my first month, year and first time I get to work directly with an ex-offender in a probation setting. I intend to bring my passion and enthusiasm to the role, as well as my sense of humour, something that I think is valuable in this type of role. I also hope that the support we give to ex-offenders also mirrors the support that we give to each other in what can be one of the most difficult and rewarding environments to work in.

Roll on 2nd July 2018.

[Editor: This account was written in June 2018 – we wish the author every success in her PQiP]

Probation Training and Qualifications: An overview

Helen Schofield
Acting CEO, Probation Institute

This issue of Probation Quarterly goes out during the important consultation on the future of Probation itself. It is particularly timely to focus part of this PQ on probation training; the future of training and ongoing professional development feature in the consultation and are of great significance, but there is a risk that these issues will attract less attention than the questions about the future structures and systems.

The history of probation training over the last 50 years is in many ways the history of probation and reflects the importance of professional training. The decision to retain probation practice within social work training and in higher education in the early 1970s post Seeborn helped to affirm probation as a profession. The retention, after an extensive campaign, of probation training in higher education in the late 1990s, albeit separated from social work as a distinct qualification, continued the professional status.

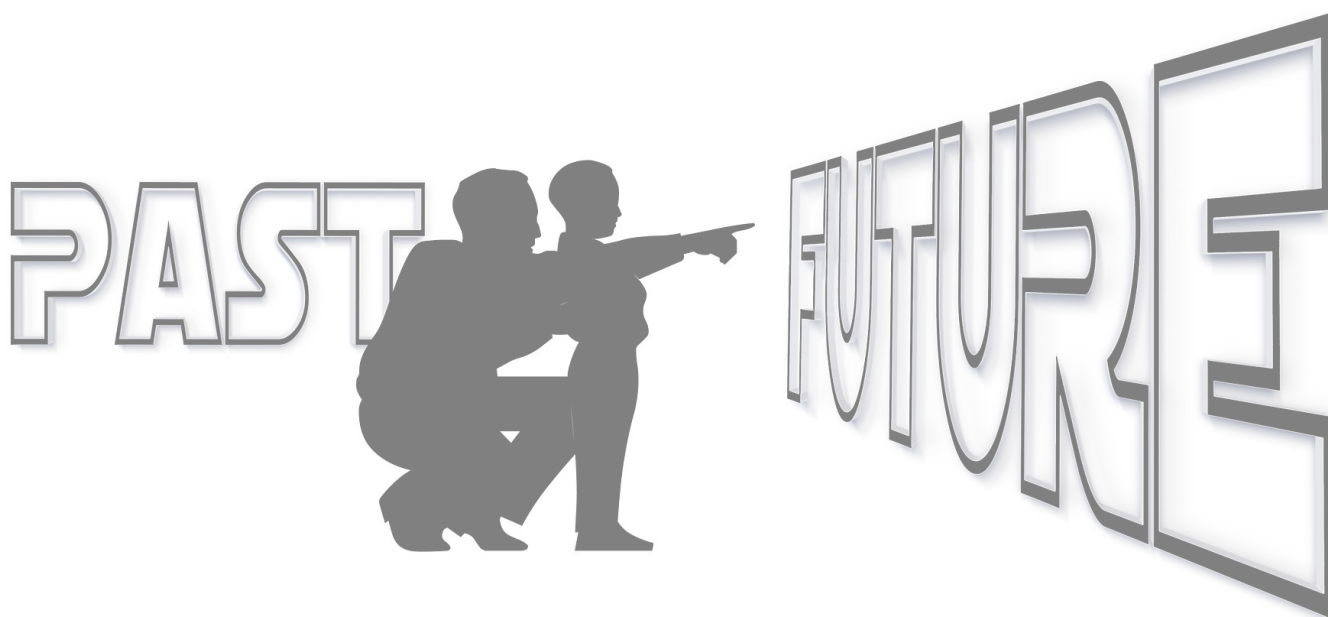
Whichever way the consultation takes us in 2018 - if indeed this is genuine consultation - there may well be further challenges to the higher education status. Question 10 is a very open question inviting a range of ideological answers: "Which skills, training or competencies do you think are essential for Responsible Officers authorised to deliver probation services, and how do you think these differ depending on the types of offenders staff are working with?"

The consultation paper barely uses the term "probation officer" or "probation services officer". It uses the terms "Responsible Officer" and "Offender Manager" somewhat interchangeably. The naming and defining of job roles needs to be addressed not fudged in this consultation. These are critical issues but there are also bigger gains to pursue in the arena of training and professional development.

The decision not to regulate training and qualifications in TR was one of the many serious ideological errors and one which threatened to destroy the consistency of professional training for probation staff - Probation Officers and Probation Services Officers.

A Level 6 (Degree Level) Apprenticeship is currently being developed, with PQiP at its heart. This Apprenticeship is being developed by an Employer Development Group led by NPS and CRCs and is intended for all those currently qualified through PQiP as Probation Officers.

This is an important development not least in having successfully achieved the support of the majority of the CRCs after two years of uncertainty in which a number of the CRCs gave serious consideration to developing their own qualifications for their own "equivalent" roles. Had the Apprenticeship not offered hard cash to the CRCs it is unlikely that they would have cooperated.



The new breed of Apprenticeships led by the new Apprenticeship Institute is far from settled down however, and care will be needed to support and ensure the high quality of this Degree Level Apprenticeship and its implementation. In parallel is the development of the Level 3 Apprenticeship replacing the VQ3 for those roles designated Probation Services Officers and equivalent roles in both NPS and the CRCs. It is well documented that this group of practitioners in both NPS and in CRCs carry responsibilities which would once have fallen to a fully qualified Probation Officer and that consistency of training and qualifications is critical for this group also. There is a pressing need to resolve the naming of these job roles.

An important message for the consultation is that training and qualifications must be regulated for clear roles with agreed role definitions. By regulation we mean legislation. The consultation also seeks views on the proposed Professional Register - how this should operate and for whom. In this proposal there is the opportunity to resolve the job titles and regulate the training and qualifications for agreed roles. It should be stated very clearly in response to the consultation that the Professional Register must include any contracted private providers of Probation Services, should these continue.

Not everyone in MOJ is committed to training Probation Officers in higher education. The closer working relationship with the Prison Service and the introduction of Offender Managers in prisons has prompted questions about the disparity between prison and probation training. Respondents to the consultation should take the opportunity to reinforce the importance of a degree level qualification and why it is so important. Bear in mind that policing has now accepted that a degree level qualification is a necessary outcome of initial training for police constables.



There are gaps in training for probation officers and these include brokering and supporting appropriate commissioned services, irrespective of the role of the private sector.

What of bigger prizes? Given the increasing responsibilities of the role this may be an opportunity to suggest that the qualification for a "Probation Services Officer" and their equivalents should be raised to Vocational Level 4. Police Community Support Officers have introduced a Level 4 Apprenticeship.

For the voluntary sector? The emerging Level 3 Apprenticeship was initially designed to include the voluntary sector. St Giles Trust, PACT and RISE each contributed and supported the draft standard. This support has been lost through delay but in our view this could be rebuilt. The purpose would be to enable voluntary organisations to be a genuine part of the development and management of an appropriate, aligned Apprenticeship, and to draw down funding for training and assessment standards which their practitioner staff could reliably achieve. This step would extend professional training and qualifications to the voluntary sector for the first time, inviting them to join the Professional Register.

A further prize would be to extend the Professional Register to Offender Managers (at least) in the Prison Service and to Youth Offending Practitioners. The benefit of this reach would be to establish one Professional Body across Probation, Prisons, Youth Justice and the voluntary sector working in justice. This would be an independent statutory body having significant scope to advance consistency and professional development across services, a better prospect of resourcing and a breadth of authority currently lacking in any forum.

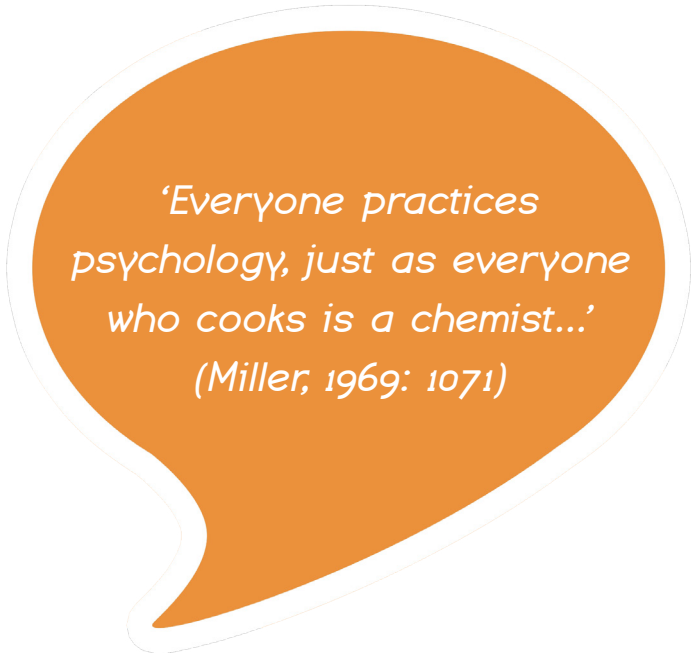
Psychological literacy in Probation practice: Is a little knowledge a dangerous thing?

Jacky Burrows

There's a great deal of truth to Miller's words, but does that necessarily mean we'd like Mary Berry picking up where Marie Curie left off? With large amounts of probation practice now underpinned by psychology, albeit not always popularly (Canton, 2016; Raynor, 2018), the current climate arguably requires higher levels of psychological expertise than ever before, but not necessarily with a corresponding availability of learning opportunities. This disparity appears widely accepted and a review of how psychology is taught to practitioners as non-psychologists and then applied in practice is perhaps overdue. Considering 'psychological literacy', with a focus on ethics and competence may be useful.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LITERACY

'Psychological literacy' generally refers to 'the capacity to intentionally apply psychological science to meet personal, professional, and societal goals'. It's often used to discuss the strengths psychology graduates take to non-psychologist roles and real-life problems, but arguably has relevance to other 'psychologically educated individuals' (see: www.psychliteracy.com/concepts/). With this in mind, Murdoch's (2016) definition may be more valuable: 'the ethical application of psychological skills and knowledge', especially given his concerns about insufficient psychological literacy in some fields and the potential harm that can be caused. This raises two key issues: what the ethical application of psychology means in a probation context, and what sufficient psychological literacy looks like.



'Everyone practices psychology, just as everyone who cooks is a chemist...'
(Miller, 1969: 1071)

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Explicitly psychological curricula should always include ethical components, and psychologists themselves are ethically required to work within their competence and maintain their continued professional development in order to uphold professional standards and avoid harm (British Psychological Society, 2015, 2017, 2018; Murdoch, 2016). In other fields however, ethical guidance tends to be insufficient to specifically cover the application of psychology.

For example, whilst the psychologist and probation codes of ethics/practice have some commonality, the latter (Probation Institute, 2014) reads as less an aid to defensible, ethical decision-making and as more aspirational in nature. The possibility of causing harm to offenders isn't explicitly mentioned. This is perhaps in part due to a focus on positive values and the structural challenges involved in trying to establish professional standards (Senior, 2018).

However, it could inadvertently narrow practitioners' considerations, especially when it comes to psychological practice. For example, I've often observed practitioners feeling pressured to tick the box of having done 'something', even if they suspect it won't be effective or may otherwise be problematic, yet they rarely seem to counterbalance this with overt consideration of the potential harm. More explicit ethical guidance, especially about harm, might therefore help practitioners to make stronger decisions that they are better able to defend.

CONFIDENCE, COMPETENCE, AND 'CONFIDENT INCOMPETENCE'...?

Although clarifying an appropriate level of psychological literacy for different roles/tasks is beyond the scope of the present discussion, there is perhaps value in considering competence and confidence. My experiences of teaching PQiP learners suggest they're particularly concerned about face-to-face practice, especially anything psychological. This seems to be culturally tolerated however, and any explicit concerns about competence or harm tend to come from practitioners with a psychological background i.e. from those who actually have more knowledge.

The Dunning-Kruger effect is useful here. Complete novices tend to know they know very little, and those with a decent amount of knowledge/skill tend to be better able to accurately assess their competence. However a 'confidence-skill disconnect' has sometimes been observed in which people with a little knowledge can be misguidedly confident in their ability as a result of having an insufficient amount of expertise to be able to accurately assess their competence (Dunning, 2014). Put another way, they know something, but not enough to know what they don't know, and this makes them think they know a lot more than they do!



We are all prone to this type of bias at some point; however, in other fields, it has unfortunately been associated with being more likely to subscribe to psychological myths and also means that it's likely people will unwittingly be less able to fully appraise potential harms. There's anecdotal evidence of this in probation; for example, competence in Socratic method being equated to asking open questions, assumptions about the evidence-base relating to learning styles, and accounts of motivational interviewing that blur with manipulation, coercion, and 'catching them out'.

As a professional group, probation practitioners hold a substantial amount of skill and knowledge. However, under- and over-confidence in their psychologically-informed practice can both be dangerous if they risk harm or conversely result in practitioners feeling immobilised. Again, additional ethical training might help.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many recommendations that naturally flow from this discussion operate at organisational or cultural levels and may include the clarification of appropriate levels of psychological competence for different roles/tasks. However, the following may be useful for individual practitioners and educators:

- Consider and log the potential benefits and harms of different approaches.
- Assess your competence for given activities - it's defensible to sometimes conclude this isn't sufficient.
- Assess whether doing 'nothing' is a more defensible option.
- Ongoing support in bridging academic learning and practice is essential. An expectation of CPD and psychologist input also ought to be essential.

- Any psychologically-based training/ education should include explicit ethical content.
- The psychological content of training should generally be that which is relatively straightforward to apply in order to enhance practice, and the least likely to risk harm. Competency thresholds can be useful for more complex skills.
- Reflective practice is a valuable part of psychological literacy (Coulson & Homewood, 2016) and reflective supervision with someone with sufficient psychological competence themselves could be beneficial. McGovern et al's (2010, cited in Coulson & Homewood, 2016) take on psychological literacy (below) could help to inform discussion.

Overall, broader cultural and structural shifts are arguably needed, especially around ethics and professional standards. Confident psychological competence is valuable for practitioners, offenders, victims, and organisational credibility alike, though what this should actually look like of course remains debatable.



Psychological Literacy

(McGovern et al, 2010)

- Understanding the basic concepts and principles of psychology
- Understanding scientific research practices
- Having problem-solving skills
- Applying psychological principles to personal, social or organizational problems
- Acting ethically
- Thinking critically
- Communicating well in different contexts
- Having cultural competence and respecting diversity
- Having self-awareness



Jacky Burrows is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Sheffield Hallam University and teaches on both the PQiP and undergraduate Criminology programmes. She is a qualified probation officer, a graduate member of the British Psychological Society (MBPsS), and holds an MSc in Applied Forensic Psychology.

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Online screening of offenders for Learning Difficulties and Disabilities - what are the benefits?

Helen Arnold-Richardson and
Professor Amanda Kirby

The prevalence of people with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) has received increasing attention over the last decade. Various publications including *Unlocking Potential-A review of education in prison*¹ and *The Bradley Report*² discussed the difficulties of knowing the exact numbers of people with LDD in custody, with even less information regarding those on community sentences. The 'Coates Review' and the 'White Paper' cited that 1 in 3 people who are in contact with CJS have an LDD. These documents gave a greater emphasis on action not only for identification of offenders who have LDD, but also in staff having the skills to support at all stages within the CJS.

However, because of a lack of clear definitions, systems and processes to screen, it remains difficult to be sure of the specific figures per condition. The range varies greatly, for example from 4% to 56% of offenders having Dyslexia and 30% to 40%+ having ADHD. Debate also continues about which conditions are included or excluded under the umbrella of LDDs in criminal justice, health and social care organisations³. The reality is that all LDD's co-occur or overlap with one another, so a person is quite likely to have challenges in one or more areas. Leaving in or out one condition from the umbrella means that parts of that person's strengths and challenges may not be identified. For example, someone could have reading, writing and co-ordination difficulties, be impulsive and have organisational difficulties, but they may only have been diagnosed with Dyslexia.

¹ Coates, S (2016)

² The Rt Hon Lord Bradley. (2009). *Lord Bradley's Review of People with Mental Health Problems or Learning Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System*. London: Department of Health.

³ Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2015) *A joint inspection of the treatment of offenders with learning disabilities within the criminal justice system - phase two in custody and the community A Joint Inspection by HMI Probation and HMI Prisons*.

The table below shows the percentage of overlap with conditions as recognised in the general population from international research studies.

		Proportion with secondary diagnosis of (%)					
Primary diagnosis		ASD	ADHD	DCD	DLD	Dyscalculia	Dyslexia
	ASD		3-78	25-53	21		14
	ADHD	6		18-53		7-18	18-45
	DCD/ Dyspraxia	6	19-53		25		
	DLD	4-8	26	30-71	25	62	48-87
	Dyscalculia		39	25			26-48
	Dyslexia		18-50	15-25		39-48	

ADHD= Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
 ASD= Autism Spectrum Disorder
 DCD= Developmental Co-ordination Disorder
 DLD= Developmental Language Disorder

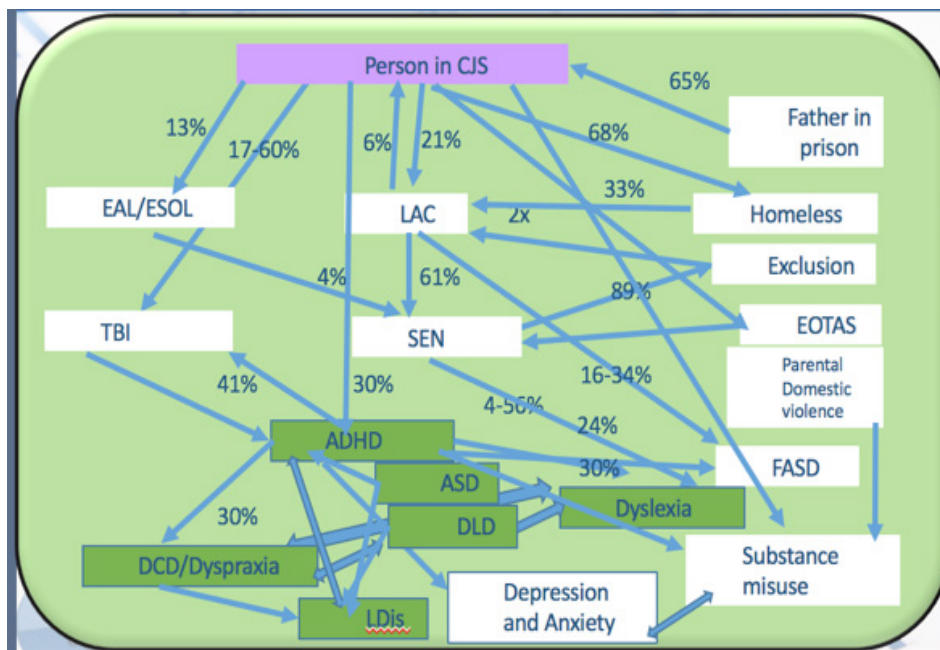
SO WHY DO OFFENDERS GET MISSED, MISLABELLED OR MISDIAGNOSED?

The pathway for many into the CJS can be a 'messy' one (as per the diagram below). There are several reasons why an offender could be misdiagnosed or missed, therefore not having their needs recognised or supported:

- **Been a Looked After Child or Young Person (LACYP).** They may have moved from school to school making a referral and follow-up harder to do despite evidence of high levels of learning difficulties.
- **Excluded from school.** There is a high level of undiagnosed LDD in this group, but there remains no mandatory screening for LDD at present.
- **Left school early or not attended school regularly** and not been in a 'system' at all.
- **Not recognised as needing to be diagnosed,** e.g. come from social settings where their parents had similar patterns of difficulties but were never diagnosed and as a result, the parents don't see the challenges in their child as anything to be concerned about.

- **Come from another country** where LDD is less well recognised.
- **Homeless** and not having a G.P to make a referral.
- **Other reasons for symptoms not considered.** There is increasing interest in the association between Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and ADHD. It can be difficult (especially if the question isn't asked) to know whether attention problems are due to ADHD or to a head injury or potentially a combination of the two. In Williams' report 'Repairing Shattered Lives'⁴, he cites that there is evidence from England that up to 60% of young people in custody have reported having experienced a traumatic brain injury. It can also be quite hard determining whether someone has Dyslexia who has left school at a young age and missed out on crucial teaching of reading, spelling and writing skills.

⁴ Williams, H (2012) Repairing Shattered Lives, The Barrow Cadbury Trust.



THE NEED FOR WHOLE PERSON-CENTRED SCREENING AND GUIDANCE FOR PROBATION PRACTITIONERS

The systems in place may preclude appropriate screening or assessments being made:

- **Paper-based systems** may not be accessible for those who cannot read the questions, e.g. with low levels of literacy or for the 10% of people where English is a second language (but there may not be a means of assessing their needs in their home language resulting in limited or little information about their prior educational experiences).
- **Questions relating to the 'other' factors** may not be asked concurrently so conclusions may be biased by the data collected.
- **A lack of confidence and training by the non-specialist LDD staff** to have a conversation with the offender if identified as having an LDD and there can also be a lack of knowledge to know what to do and how to provide support for the offender or make reasonable, practical adjustments.

- **A lack of tools** in place to assist may prevent the process of screening happening or the tools may take too much time or be too confusing to administer, missing key information on the rehabilitation barriers the offender may have.
- **Lack of pathways for onward referral** - there may not be a system in place to know what to do if someone is identified with ADHD or Dyspraxia traits or how to make reasonable adjustments.

In reality, the impact of having an LDD may mean that some offenders may not be able to use public transport to get to meetings or community payback. They may miss appointments due to not being able to plan. They may react badly to a new situation or they may not fully understand what they must do to adhere to their community order. If the probation practitioner knew that the offender had these barriers, practical adjustments and strategies could be put in place to support the offender achieving their outcomes.

THE BENEFITS OF SCREENING OFFENDERS - USING TECHNOLOGY TO HELP

The reality is that even though around 1 in 3 offenders may have an LDD there is a need to understand all barriers and strengths to support their rehabilitation and move towards developing their skills and gaining meaningful employment.

This requires a bio-psychosocial approach - screening in all areas so as not to miss key information about the person that is needed to prepare reports, to plan their intervention or understand why they are not adhering to, for example, probation rules.

One tool that is currently used with offenders in custody across the UK is the Do-IT Profiler which provides:

- a bio-psychosocial approach to identifying the strengths and challenges for the offender through a modular based system completed online.
- quick, consistent screening for LDD traits and assessment tools and resources relating to literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and training for work skills.
- the integration and analysis of the data through the management information platform which provides instant person-centred feedback for the individual, as well as guidance for staff and reports.

The use of such a system could benefit the supervision of offenders by providing:

1. Probation practitioners' training and guidance on how to recognise someone has a learning difficulty or disability and the means to make practical adjustments to help that person attend and participate with their supervision meetings and/or community orders.
2. A system that is accessible for all, both offenders and staff (some of whom may also have LDD), e.g. written material/forms/ letters available in different formats, with easy-read materials as options.
3. Consistent, systematic and time efficient approaches using robust tools that screen and capture information on the strengths and barriers of the offender, providing more information to support the offender in achieving their outcomes.

For more information about Do-IT Profiler, please visit www.doitprofiler.com or contact Helen@doitprofiler.com



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Probation and Politics: Academic Reflections from Former Practitioners

Edited by Maurice Vanstone and
Philip Priestley, Palgrave Macmillan 2016

Reviewed by Rob Whyman, National Probation Service

If there was any doubt about how intrinsically linked probation and politics are, this book expounds the matter comprehensively. You could be forgiven for thinking that this book would just be an open attack on the policy and politicians responsible for the 'destruction' of the probation service. Whilst there are elements of that within the text it is also much more. What you get is a historical overview of probation featuring autobiographical accounts of the authors' own careers and experiences in probation and academia. It not only provides a historical record of the changes and development of probation over the course of its existence but analyses the impact of policy on the service, its staff, offenders and wider society as well as insight in to how the authors' own research has influenced and sought to make sense of this.

The book comprises a series of chapters by illustrious authors, a who's who of probation academics, whose knowledge and experience is unquestionable. The introduction tells us that between them, the authors have contributed more than 900 additions to the professional literature of probation, criminal justice and criminology. The main themes covered in the text include history, values, policy (including regulation and

privatisation), rehabilitation and evidence. Other areas given focus include risk, women, sex offenders and training. The book is aimed at those working in probation, students and anyone with direct or indirect interest in criminal justice. The editors hope that the book will end up on the desks of policy makers and politicians. For anyone wishing to understand where probation has come from and been shaped into what it is today, then it is a compelling read.



It is worth noting that in terms of their practice, the authors all represent a certain time in the probation service's history. Invariably they all trained in the 1970s and 1980s and most had ceased front line practice by the turn of the 21st century. Naturally, given the autobiographical style of the book this period is examined in some detail but it is refreshing, for current

practitioners at least, that these authors don't claim their time represented a 'golden age' in practice and some deny the existence of any golden age. A nice feature of the book is that each chapter starts with a summary of the author's career, including their route into probation, their move into academia and their contributions to the field.

The potency of the book lies in the very fact that this group are both experienced probation officers and highly regarded academics, that their knowledge of the subject is unparalleled. There are no contributions from current or more recent practitioners who have worked through some of the more recent significant changes. Perhaps in time, when such practitioners also make the step into academia they may be able to contribute their voices to future volumes. There is a mixture of optimism and pessimism from the authors when looking to the future and, if anything, perhaps surprisingly a slant towards the former. No one's glasses are so rose-tinted as to suggest that the probation service will be restored fully to any past incarnations, but there is a semblance of hope that probation can at least retain its values.

The power of user-led transformation

Charles Howgego celebrates the work of User Voice over the past ten years.

Now in its 10th year, User Voice has exceeded everyone's expectations in amplifying the voice of the service user within the criminal justice system (CJS). Back in 2008, when the organisation was founded, the idea of a collaborative user-led organisation working at the heart of the CJS would have been dismissed as fantasy – User Voice now operates in 30 prisons, in CRCs in two-thirds of the country and in Kent, Surrey and Sussex NPS.

Founder Mark Johnson has worked hard to make fantasy reality, designing, testing and tweaking a model for using the feedback, views and ideas of service users to shape the services delivered to them. With the service user at the centre, these programmes are fairer, more effective and more efficient, pleasing budget-holders, commissioners and service users in one broad sweep. At the same time, service users experience personal development working alongside their peers and former service users. User Voice staff member Laurance Curran explains how this can work:

“Near the end of my sentence, an engagement team member from User Voice came in and spoke about his personal life journey. He said that you cannot live two lives (a law abiding life and a criminal life). This struck a chord with me. I had my light bulb moment.”

Curran was taking part in a User Voice Prison Council, the model for which has been extended to probation services. The Council model is a democratic system with parties, electioneering, voting and a resultant Council that works closely with prison authorities to improve prison services.

The parties get seats on the Council corresponding to the number of votes they receive and therefore get a mandate to work with the prison or probation authorities to create change in and around the issues their parties represent. These issues could be around things such as regime, resettlement or health services within a prison, or maybe housing and health in probation.

User Voice facilitates the elections and the running of the Councils using former service users to manage the process. It is contracted by prison or probation authorities who value the engagement that User Voice elicits and the improvement to services. In the past year User Voice Councils developed over 200 service user-led solutions to criminal justice issues, 94% of which were accepted for implementation.

This user-led transformation – not just of individuals and institutions, but also, hopefully, of the discussion at a policy and political level – is the heart and soul of User Voice, and what makes it unique. Currently over 90% of User Voice's staff have lived experience – they provide their own insight, and are also best-placed to generate the sort of trust that can elicit insight from current service users.

Prisons working with User Voice regularly report decreases in prisoner complaints and a reduction in the use of segregation. A recent prison election at HMP Maidstone saw a 77% voter turn-out of staff (who are encouraged to vote and be involved in the process) – a sure sign that the prison authorities welcome User Voice's efforts. The governor at Maidstone, David Atkinson, described User Voice's activities as "invaluable".

User Voice started out working in prisons but soon developed a Community Council model working with current recipients of probation services to influence the way they are treated by Community Rehabilitation Companies. These programmes, much like the prison-based ones, are provided via contracts.

User Voice's ability to create trusted environments in which to communicate with service users means it is also used by bodies to run consultations, for example in youth services, and has developed a highly regarded research and evaluation team. Its recent work with NHS England on the use of novel psychoactive substances (formerly known as legal highs eg Spice) in prison is credited with having a huge impact. This work has helped it expand into the health arena, establishing a Health Council model.

It is all part of Johnson's journey away from a chaotic and abusive upbringing in the West Midlands, through drug addiction, prison and homelessness. After successful rehab, he set up a tree surgery business employing addicts and ex-offenders, for which he was recognised with a Daily Mirror Pride of Britain award.

He had seen first-hand how the system dismissed the views of service users, instead imposing on them services designed by remote, out-of-touch powers, creating an 'us vs them' culture. User Voice was set up to counter this approach, trying to create system change within a criminal justice framework under severe pressure from an increasing rate of incarceration, shrinking budgets, a sometimes hysterical media, a misinformed public and, arguably, a lack of political vision.

USER VOICE ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING

“We have a three-pronged approach facilitating change within individuals, institutions and the broader debate, via peer-supported change, User Councils and User Consultations respectively.

This means we can reach the hardest-to-reach people, and their views, and give them voice and hope,” he goes on. “We try to create order from chaos across the spectrum and I don’t know any other organisation working in this way.”

Mark Johnson, Founder of User Voice

User Voice is now a mature operation with five regional offices and 60 staff working across the country, who engaged with over 10,000 service users directly through councils last year. It says that its work building the structures for collaboration between service users and service providers improves rehabilitation. For example, CRCs in which there is an established service user council have on average lower offending rates than those that don’t, and 76% of council members say they are less likely to offend. There are obviously long-term benefits for both provider and user.

User Voice is 95% contractually funded, which gives it a solid platform on which to build, but also means it is operating in what is an increasingly commercial environment, and under threat from organisations willing to ape its model. “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery but I’m very concerned that other organisations will fail – as they have in the past – to understand what user-led values really are,” says Johnson. “Authenticity and democracy are key to creating a system that works for everyone. Any half-hearted attempt is bound to get found out.”

User Voice has recently invested in several new senior team members ready to help expand the adoption of user-led designed or influenced services to build more efficiency and effectiveness into the system. Maybe the odds are still against it in some ways, but User Voice is planning for the next 10 years with confidence.

For more information, email Charles Howgego: chowgego@uservice.org

www.uservice.org

Playing for Change: Using artistic methods to explore experiences of probation



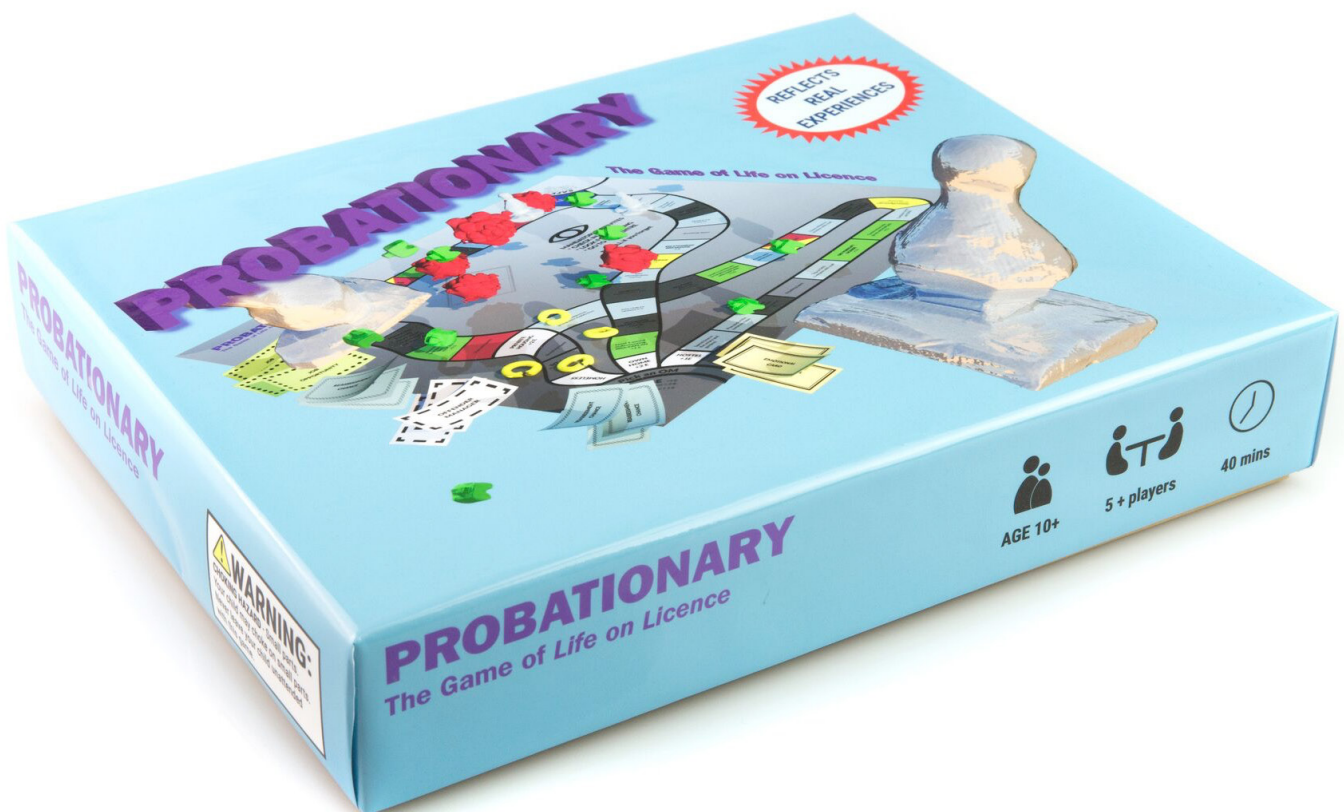
Emma Murray



Will Jackson



Anne Hayes



In the summer of 2016, we embarked upon a pilot project to explore how (if at all) co-produced artworks can influence understandings of criminal justice. As a team, we were influenced by 'artivism' (or the activist qualities of art) and methods through which art can be used to achieve real change in criminal justice policy. From an academic perspective, we also sought to explore what role we might have in this process. Our first purpose was to develop, through art, new ways of understanding and challenging problems in the criminal justice system today, before aligning the artwork's messages with an academic commentary about penal reform. The project focused on probation, and the effects of Transforming Rehabilitation for participants' lived-experiences of being released on license were illuminated.

The result was Probationary: The Game of Life on Licence¹; an artwork which takes the shape of a board game. To play the game is to journey through the eyes of four playable characters as they negotiate the complexities of the lived experiences of the probation process in England and Wales. Through the unique and productive medium of play employed in socially engaged art workshops, artist Hwa Young Jung worked with men on license, alongside artistic producers and facilitators, probation staff and academics. We watched, participated and reflected throughout an intensive five-week programme. This work does not claim to present an accurate or an absolute account of the probation system - instead, as an artwork, it asks us to navigate through a series of different narratives, experiences and emotions in an attempt to better understand, or perhaps to think differently about, these systems and their impact upon the people within them.

As we start to make sense of the Strengthening probation, building confidence consultation, launched in July, we believe this is particularly important. As the government responds to widespread criticism of Transforming Rehabilitation, those who respond to the consultation exercise may well inform changes to a system that Justice Secretary David Gauke

recognises is in need of stabilizing in the short term as well as longer-term improvement. The consultation also raises important questions about how we learn about the functioning of the system and how knowledge informs change to policy and practice.

We propose that Probationary is one way that we might both learn differently and inform forthcoming debates. By immersing players in an emotional experience, the game reveals the subjective, precarious and seemingly random nature of life on licence. Those who engage with the work are implicated in an informative and emotional experience - shaped by the effects of policy failure. We believe that this artwork represents a new way of learning about probation for all who play it and as the sector undergoes further change we are sharing it with many audiences to better understand the works potential.

LEARNING FROM PROBATIONARY

Games, particularly 'serious games', are more frequently being used in learning, training and rehabilitative spaces (Ritterfeld et al 2009). The making of Probationary demonstrated to all involved the power of games to inform the learning process. While the workshops provided a space of reflection for those on licence, we were forced to think differently about academic, artistic and professional practice. As has been found in other studies, the value of arts-based activities does not lie in their ability to directly address specific 'criminogenic needs' but instead lies in the spaces they create for learning and reflection (McNeill et al 2011). With an increased emphasis on coproduction and user voice in the criminal justice context (Hutt, 2013) we believe that this way of working has significant potential to inform how we learn about probation and how we seek to inform change.

The workshops led by Hwa Young Jung involved consensus building and through a process of negotiation among participants a collaborative space within which the experiences of life on licence was created.

¹ Created by Hwa Young Jung with men on licence, commissioned by FACT – Liverpool, researched by Liverpool John Moores University and supported by the Howard League for Penal Reform.

The probation service staff who participated in the workshops highlighted the effectiveness of this way of working:

“ It’s quite an interesting way to learn, and I do think that from that hour we had you could probably take in a lot more than you could sat reading pieces of research.

I definitely think it opened my eyes to what other ways you could not only engage people but educate people as well. ”

INFORMING POLICY AND PRACTICE

While the making of the game demonstrated the educational value of coproduction, it is through dissemination – that is through play – that we are seeking to explore the potential of the game to inform debates about the future of probation. Probationary provides a ‘view from below’ and not only gives voice to those experiencing life on licence, but enables the players feel some of the ‘pains’ of probation (see Hayes 2015) and appreciate the importance of relationships between those on licence and practitioners. The practitioners who participated also highlighted the potential of this immersive experience:

“ When we played the game you could feel it, the difficulty of getting round the board and the level of detail and level of intricacy for each step. I was blown away by it. ”

The familiar form of a board game enables us to engage audiences in a collaborative act of play that opens new spaces for conversation. For practitioners, playing the game had the potential to initiate conversations with probationers that could be much more open and useful than standard interactions in supervision meetings. We want to explore the potential of game play to open conversations that inform changes to both policy and practice. As the service faces yet

another period of change, we do not suggest that the artwork holds all of the answers, but rather propose it as a platform upon which to ask new questions.

THE FUTURE OF PROBATIONARY

We recognise that there is a great deal of excellent work being done to explore the therapeutic potential of the arts in the criminal justice system, but the aim of this work is not only to effect change at an individual level, but to seek transformation at a systemic level too. In the current context, we are seeking to utilise the space afforded to the arts in the criminal justice system to ask difficult questions, including of the state, by critically exploring and challenging existing understandings of the experiences of the probation system.

To this end, we are collaborating with the Howard League for Penal Reform to explore the impact that this artwork can have on perceptions of life on licence, as well as the wider potential of this mode of collaborative work between academic, artistic, and penal reform sectors. The utility of Probationary for the Howard League lies in its ability to offer something new to campaign work:

“ Probationary provides a different method by which to engage with the issues, facilitating the potential for greater empathy and a chance to (re)consider the impact of life on licence. ”

Anita Dockley
Research Director, Howard League

The pilot project is now closed but we are exploring the possibility of developing the game as an experiential tool for learning that could have a practical application for practitioners. During a period of further academic reflection the game will continue to be disseminated (see <http://probationary.co.uk/2018/08/05/probationary-on-tour/>).



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Useful Links

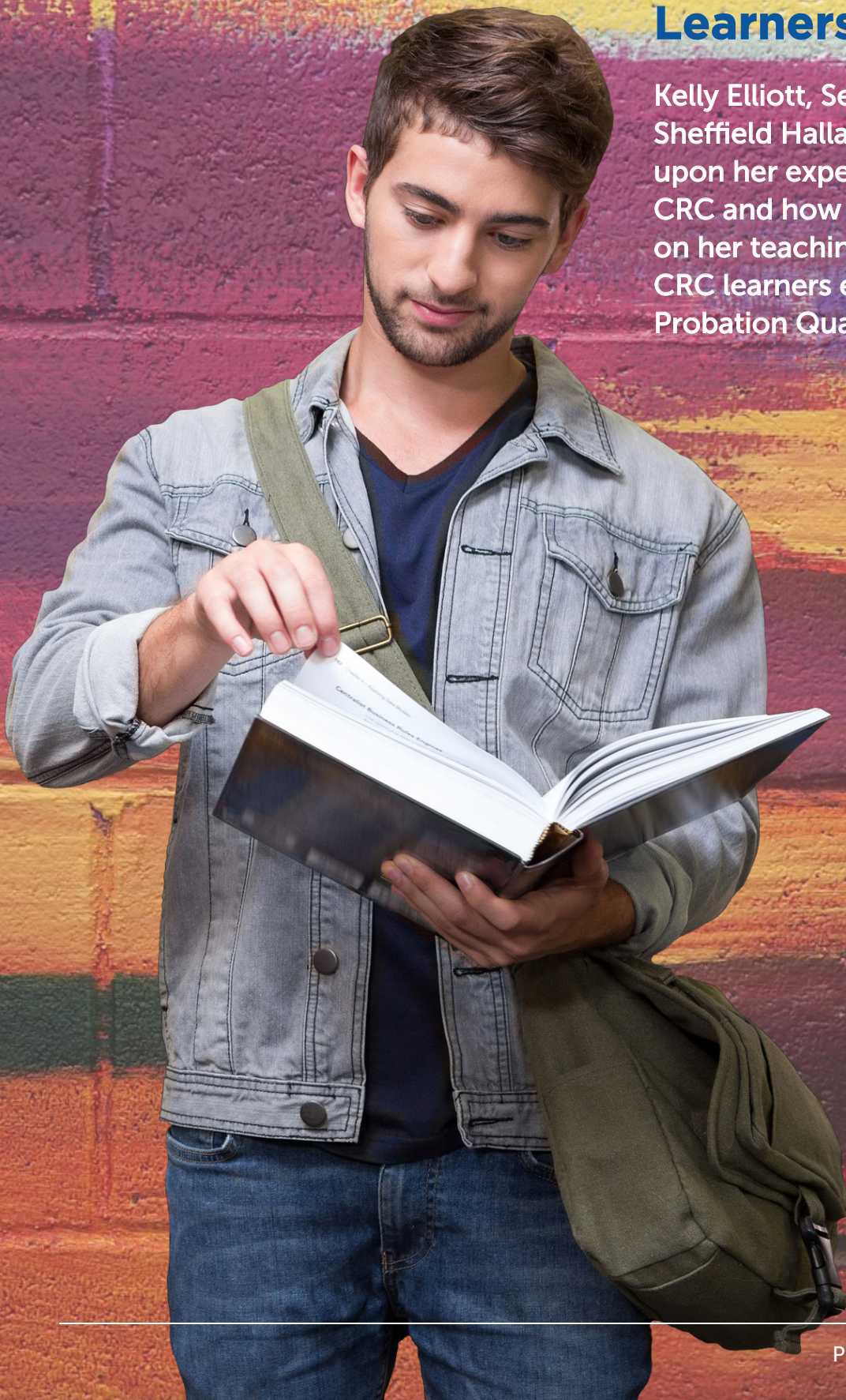
<http://probationary.co.uk/>

<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/research/centres-and-institutes/the-centre-for-the-study-of-crime-criminalisation-and-social-exclusion/artivism/strands/serious-games>

<https://howardleague.org/research/probationary-the-game-of-life-on-licence/>

Teaching and Learning post-TR: PQiP for CRC Learners

Kelly Elliott, Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, reflects upon her experiences within a CRC and how this is impacting on her teaching and delivery to CRC learners engaged within the Probation Qualification.



Having spent the previous years working within Probation and within a Community Rehabilitation Company following the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda, I witnessed first-hand the effects that this had on staff within the organisation.

Retention and employment of main grade probation officers became problematic in the first years. What was also emerging was how quickly the role of a probation officer was developing within the CRC and how vital it was to ensure that the Probation Qualification and academic teaching on the course began to understand the complexity of the new role and organisations, but also ensured that those completing the course were leaving with the rounded knowledge to deal with these demands.

Having been a Senior Manager within a CRC, I had experienced the feeling of being part of a 'lesser' organisation in the eyes of those within the public sector Probation Service and saw how new staff were at times belittled by those they had previously shared offices with. I was aware of the importance of ensuring that the qualification moving forward was balanced and that all learners have an equal experience of the academic programme - hence my fortunate position to move over to become a part of the Sheffield Hallam Team.

My new role has made me appreciate the fundamental concepts involved in the work of a probation officer and how we teach and deliver that academic knowledge, without getting dominated by specific tools, systems or procedures.

Learners need to understand the fundamental importance of assessment, planning and risk management whether this is completed via OASys or another system. We have to remember that this is a tool – a means to an end - and that the offender/service user is key in the assessment journey, and that the skills needed as an officer to interview/challenge and understand the policies and procedures are key to gaining understanding and sound risk assessments. Both organisations are dealing with complex individuals that pose a risk and learners need to understand behaviour and how to challenge this and how to work in partnership with others to manage these behaviours.

Regardless of personal or political views of what has happened post-TR, I am immensely proud of the work completed within the CRCs, the innovation and resilience of staff within the teams I was part of, and also the understanding that the learners who were undertaking the qualification, placed within these 'newly forming' organisations, are developing. We talk about how important an identity is for an offender within a community and how having a positive identity can impact on their sense of belonging. So it is interesting to see that same process being developed amongst the learners in the cohorts who are part of both the NPS and CRC. I witnessed the development of this identity and, more importantly, the ability to challenge each other constructively whilst undertaking a 'live discussion' with a current group of learners from both organisations when discussing assessment and planning and the issue of brokerage.



The concept of brokerage emerged within the Probation context following TR. The CRCs, as interventions providers, deliver interventions for both NPS and CRC cases and these are 'costed'. As a result, the NPS 'purchase' the services from the CRCs - ranging from the delivery of Community Payback hours to the attendance on an Accredited Programme. The services available from each CRC were developed into a Rate Card brochure from which staff, in both organisations, are able to choose and develop specific services and interventions for offenders under their supervision from sentencing into custody and within the community.

A learner mentioned that they did not feel the Rate Card was 'right' and that the CRCs shouldn't be making money in this way. A CRC trainee responded with the following;

“ CRC is a business - that's what it's about. ”

As a former Senior Manager I was proud of that comment, though I'm sure for some readers it will be a shock that such views are already been held by staff within the organisation. What followed from an NPS learner, though, reminded me that these individuals are the staff of these future organisations and will help to shape the future of Probation for years to come:

“ I think that had it gone the other way (interventions to NPS) they would be charging. No one organisation would do work for others without getting paid, either from that company or money from somewhere. ”



It is vital, within my role and as part of the teaching team that we are able to allow these debates to surface - the conflict of the business culture and probation values continues, as we move into TR2 and the new contract process, and is not going away. We must equip learners to feel confident to discuss these issues, develop their own identity as a probation officer within each organisation and be proud of that identity – while also seeing through some of the politics, rhetoric and what I can only describe from my personal experiences as feelings of bitterness about the situation.

I have also realised that, for those of us who have had a number of years of service within Probation, at times we have to let go of the past and look at how we can move forward and support those who are working in the 'now'. I feel privileged to be influencing the probation officers of the future and will continue to challenge the rhetoric around 'lesser or better' in an organisational context, continuing to hold onto the amazing role that probation officers have in influencing and changing behaviour, protecting the public and the communities in which we all live. As we move into the new round of consultation with potential new providers, areas and uncertainty, it is vital that we are prepared for the change and equip learners to deal with this over the coming months and years.



‘Worthy of Recognition: The Butler Trust and its Awards’

John Pollock





In June this year, probation lost one of its most remarkable practitioners when Kathy Baker (who many will know by her maiden name, Kathy Biggar), died a few days before her 71st birthday. She touched many, many lives throughout the Criminal Justice system, and was a friend and former colleague of Simon Shepherd, Director of The Butler Trust, as well as a committed supporter of the Trust's work. Her life – and her ethos – provide inspiring and touching evidence of the difference one individual can make to other people's lives. She also demonstrated that the best probation work is more than special: it's transformative.

The Butler Trust was founded in 1985, 'to recognise and celebrate outstanding practice by those working with offenders, through an annual award scheme.' It was named in honour of R.A. 'Rab' Butler (1902-1982), described in his obituary by The Times as, among other achievements, "unquestionably a Home Secretary of reforming zeal."

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal has been the Trust's Patron since its inception, and has been a constant and supportive presence in its work ever since, presiding over an Annual Award Ceremony and visiting many of the winners in their workplaces. Its original focus was on Prison Officers but, in 2005, marking the Trust's 20th Anniversary, its remit was widened to include the Probation Service (and later on, those in Youth and Community Justice).

Around a quarter of all of our Nominations for Awards now come from the Probation Service, across both the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies, with probation and related work producing many of the winners. To take just one example, Sofia Buncy, a 2016-17 Award Winner, could be found writing on 'Resettling Muslim Women After Prison' in Probation Quarterly's last issue!

I have spent much of Christmas and New Year in recent years writing up winners' stories based on their detailed nomination papers. Some of them are extraordinarily moving, and among my recent favourites is a story of the work of Joanne Wood, a probation officer for Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company. I was also lucky enough to have the privilege of spending an afternoon with Kathy shortly before her death. I would like to share something of both women's spirit with you because, between them, I feel they epitomise the remarkable impact that individuals working in probation – often with very little public recognition – can make.

Joanne's nominator, Shane Bruton of the Resettlement Team at the Crawley Probation Office, summed up Jo thus: "If there was a mould for the perfect probation officer, it would be in the shape of Joanne Wood." Shane described Jo's "incredible empathy with her service users... Time and again [she] makes emotional connections which lead to that breakthrough moment when she knows she's completely won the trust of the service user, and the real rehabilitation work can begin." One example involved a shared passion for bikes: "When the service user wanted a travel warrant one day, she cycled a 10-mile round-trip to deliver them to his door one evening. As she had predicted, they talked about her cycling gear and when she entrusted him with her bike and let him ride it around, he reported back to her that he'd never before ridden a bike he hadn't first stolen."

I was particular touched by another example of Jo's "highly creative approach", also recounted by Shane: "When one of her service users, who was newly out of prison, and wanting to rebuild his relationship with the young mother of his baby, became anxious about an upcoming birthday present for his partner, Jo went around to his

assisted accommodation one evening and together they baked a cake for her. Not only did he experience melting chocolate for the first time in his life, but he learned he didn't have to steal a present for her. He also discovered that his partner – who was brought to tears when she saw the cake – was more impressed by the thoughtfulness and care he'd put into it than any stolen or bought present could have achieved." They've since asked Jo to help them bake another cake – this time for their daughter's first birthday.

Jo herself says, "If you listen to the service users – really listen to them – you'll learn a lot," and she uses her enviable ability to reel off the exact names, ages and birthdays of the children of her cases to 'Only connect!', as E.M. Forster famously exhorted. Or, as one service user put it, "She does empathy, not sympathy."

One can imagine Kathy Baker nodding along to this with her characteristically impish smile. Her greatest contribution to criminal justice is almost certainly The Listeners scheme, now in every UK prison, which she pioneered following a suicide, alongside an imaginative Governor in Swansea. In connecting the dots between her background as a volunteer for The Samaritans and the needs

and capacities of prisoners, she helped unleash a remarkable wave of change, which now includes all sorts of mentoring and peer-led support across the system. Her obituary, published in [The Guardian](#), tells the story of her career in probation in some depth – and is well worth seeking out.

The Butler Trust is proud to have provided some recognition to its winners over the past third of a century, but we also understand that, throughout the system, there are enormous numbers of people whose work, day after day, quietly changes lives. That curious alchemy between people which makes this happen – from character and inclination through training and mentoring to listening and learning – is difficult to pin down exactly, but we all know it when we experience it. Knowing she had only days left, Kathy shared some advice with me she been given by her mother (who survives her), and which she considered words to live by: "Be kind. Be honest. Be true." Meanwhile her advice for those running Criminal Justice services was equally pithy: "Train them. Support them. Thank them."

You can learn more about The Butler Trust, the Awards, and its other work at butlertrust.org.uk and by following them on Twitter [@butlertrust](https://twitter.com/butlertrust).



REHABILITATION TRANSFORMED?

The voluntary sector working in criminal justice is made up of around 1700 organisations with a workforce larger than that of the prison and probation services combined. It has a long history of providing support alongside statutory probation services. These organisations offer specialist services to address the complex causes of offending such as homelessness, unemployment, mental ill health, and substance misuse. They do not, in the main, deliver the sentence of the court. Instead they provide the wrap-around services needed to support an individual to complete that sentence and live a fulfilling life beyond it.

But Clinks' and partners' research² has shown that the vital services these organisations provide have not been utilised to support people under probation supervision as envisaged. In fact the voluntary sector is under-represented, under pressure and under-resourced in the current delivery of probation. Voluntary sector involvement in supply chains is low and charities that are in supply chains have had to adapt services or subsidise them with other charitable funds, undermining their quality and sustainability.

The unrealised vision of creating innovative probation services that contract a range of support to reduce reoffending has led to a lack of clarity about what CRCs and the NPS should be funding. This has negatively affected the ability of the voluntary sector working in criminal justice to fundraise from other sources.

WHAT NEXT FOR PROBATION?

The Ministry of Justice is proposing that future arrangements will be much clearer about what providers are required to deliver – something which Clinks has called for. This will be more clearly focused on 'core offender management functions' and 'delivering the standards that the courts require'.

Beyond that they will also define where probation may seek to commission services, and where they should seek to influence the delivery of other local services. They also state an intention to set out a clearer role for the voluntary sector and better facilitate its involvement in the design and delivery of probation services.

While this clarity is much needed, there is a potential contradiction and risk in the language used in the proposals. Describing offender management functions as the 'core' of probation risks interpretation that this is also the 'core' of rehabilitation and resettlement. In many cases what is 'core' to supporting a person's desistance is far more complex and the need for services that respond to that complexity, as well as consideration of how probation can secure access to them, must remain central in the development of these proposals. It will be vital, as the new contracts are developed, to ensure that these additional but nonetheless essential services are properly enabled to support offender management.

The proposals do recognise this and ask how the Ministry of Justice can better engage voluntary sector providers in the design and delivery of rehabilitation and resettlement services for offenders in the community. It is welcome that the Ministry of Justice is asking this question openly of the sector and recognising the value of co-designing commissioning and partnership working arrangements.

The MoJ briefly sets out some potential future models for this, such as separate frameworks or dynamic purchasing systems at national and regional levels but the detail is lacking. Given the experience of many organisations under the current system, as well as recent experiences of the commissioning of families services² and the current education contracts commissioning process³, significant assurances will be needed by many in the sector that the lessons of the past will be learnt and applied.

² https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/basic/files-downloads/180705_rr3_how_to_improve_commissioning_draft.pdf

³ <https://www.clinks.org/community/blog-posts/prison-education-reforms-what-are-opportunities-voluntary-sector-organisations>

Another key proposal is to better integrate the CRCs and NPS, in England, by co-locating them in 10 new probation areas, reduced from the current 21. This will mean that the areas in which future CRCs are operating will be significantly larger than they currently are. To ensure voluntary sector involvement it will be essential that consideration is given to the impact this might have on contract size and the provision of specialist and localised services.

In Wales, the proposals are significantly different, with the functions of the CRC and NPS integrated into a single organisation with responsibility for all offenders. Additional services that support rehabilitation and resettlement will then be put out to tenders to enable a range of providers and voluntary sector organisations to compete to deliver them. There is currently very little Welsh voluntary sector involvement in the Welsh CRC's supply chain and this model will need to address this in order to ensure services are appropriately localised.

TRexit or TRlite?

There is much in these proposals to welcome and that responds to the concerns raised by Clinks' research and others. The Ministry of Justice's commitment to openly engage with the sector on all these issues is also good news and hopefully will mean that any future probation system will be able to take full advantage of the skills and expertise that reside in our sector.

It is also clear that the Ministry of Justice is somewhat bound by the parameters of what it can do both politically, to avoid accusations of a full u-turn, and economically, given its current cash-strapped position. The final reforms arrived at after the consultation period must address the fundamental limitations of the current system and not just fiddle with detail and presentation or they will risk not changing anything at all.



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Gender Matters in the PQiP

Paula Hamilton, Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, explores some possible implications of the gender ratio in probation training.

As one of the three nationally contracted Higher Education providers, here at Sheffield Hallam University we are currently delivering the academic component of the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) to the fourth cohort of learners from across the North East and North West divisions. One of the most notable, but perhaps less surprising, features of the first cohorts is the relative lack of diversity in terms of age, ethnicity and gender and the predominance of young, white, female learners. National data from Havas people/ HMPPS (2017) shows that for PQiP cohorts 1 to 3 (including 2A) between 78% and 82% of learners have been women – a pattern of gender distribution that is replicated in the North East and North West divisions.

The age and ethnic distribution of the future probation officer workforce are, of course, hugely significant issues given the widely accepted notion that the probation workforce should reflect the communities they work with. However, it is the feminisation of probation, which continues apace in terms of those recruited to the PQiP, that is arguably one of the most significant changes that has occurred in the organisation but one which has received relatively little attention. While it is not within the scope of this short piece to engage in an in-depth discussion of what is meant by 'feminisation', it should be noted that it is a contested term and refers to a potential difference of occupational culture, not just numerical female domination of an occupation.

From its inception until the early 1990's the probation service was a male-dominated organisation. The 'tipping point' came in 1993 when for the first time there were more women than men probation officers. It has been noted that this shift from a masculinised to a feminised service came, paradoxically, at a time when the then Conservative government ideology and rhetoric had become increasingly punitive and indeed 'macho'; exhorting the probation service to take 'centre stage' in the masculinised penal system or face its own demise, and explicitly encouraging ex-police and armed forces (male) personnel into the service as second career entrants via a direct entry, skills based only route.

Against this backdrop the Diploma in PS (Dip PS) was introduced in 1998. While cementing the break with social work education, the Dip PS resisted the technician, skills-only version of the probation officer envisaged by the Conservatives, retaining training within a higher education framework through the integration of a work-based NVQ alongside academic assessment in a two year qualification. Despite the fact that the Dip PS involved a common undergraduate level for all entrants, it tended to attract mainly female and mainly white graduates in their twenties (NOMS 2013) with the gender ratio at this level in 2007 being 72.86% women to 27.14% men (Ministry of Justice 2007).

In 2010 the Dip PS was replaced by the Probation Qualifications Framework (PQF) in an effort to enable existing probation service officers (PSOs) to train without losing job security and employment benefits via a foundation degree to an honours degree alongside a fast track qualification – the Graduate Diploma – for existing and newly recruited staff with relevant degrees.

In 2016 the PQF was replaced by the Community Justice Learning framework, at the apex of which sits the PQiP. Although access to the PQiP itself is fairly straightforward for those graduates with a relevant degree – and in that respect is similar to the preceding PQF Graduate Diploma – the PQiP is underpinned by a flexible (and complex) matrix of distance learning qualifications that allow learners to 'bridge' their previous learning to make them eligible for the PQiP or provide 'ladders' for learners who have practice experience but little or no academic background.

Therefore since 2010 and the introduction of the PQF, the two main entry points for professional qualification have been progression from probation service officer grade or via a relevant undergraduate degree, both of which in themselves are female-dominated. As offender-facing work has been increasingly devolved to probation service officer grade, the number of PSOs has expanded and the gender balance is broadly the same as for main grade officers.

Meanwhile a gender gap in those going to British universities has also gained pace – in 2016 66,840 more women than men were on degree courses, compared with a gap of 34,035 in 2007 (The Guardian, 5th Jan 2016). More specifically the requirement to have a relevant degree to be eligible for the PQiP in essence means a criminology degree (in the main), itself a female-dominated subject area.

All of this raises three questions – why has the probation service become feminised, but perhaps more importantly, what are the implications of this and, if deemed desirable, what can be done to attract more men (as well as older people and those from minority ethnic backgrounds) into probation?

Some of the potential answers to these questions are explored more fully elsewhere (see for example Annison, 2013; Mawby and Worrall, 2011, 2013), but in terms of explaining how and why the service has become feminised, commentators have highlighted the broader trend of younger women seizing opportunities for work and education and seeing opportunities for professional development and a place for themselves in probation. Also discussed is the idea that due to repeated restructuring and reorganisation and changes to working practices, the 'ideal (probation) worker' (Acker, 2006) has been recast with women responding in terms of adaptability and in addressing competency requirements (Annison, 2013).

In terms of implications, authors have raised issues around the relationship between a feminised probation service and other male-dominated criminal justice agencies, and the difficulties some male officers may face in navigating the feminised environment (Mawby and Worrall, 2011). Significantly however, it has been suggested that the feminisation of probation has not, as might be stereotypically expected, meant a return to the service's traditional social work roots, and furthermore that many women officers see the 'symbolic mother' role as inappropriate, instead seeing their role more as 'symbolic victim' in terms of confronting and holding offenders to account (Mawby and Worrall 2013:137).

This brings us to one of the less well explored areas – the implications of a feminised service for work with, overwhelmingly, male offenders. Mirroring most theories of crime causation, and ignoring the fact that crime is an overwhelmingly a male activity, aside from work with domestic violence perpetrators (and perhaps even less so these days even with this group), policy and practice tends not to explicitly recognise or engage with masculinities and masculine self-identity. My own research has suggested that this is a vital dimension of practice, and that the process of personal change for some men would seem to be predicated on a complex, emotionally charged, reworking of masculine identity which then allows them to move towards desistance.

While of course not suggesting that women cannot help men through this process, it would seem that having regular access to a male role model who displays alternative ways of being a man to the harmful masculinities associated with criminal and anti-social behaviour can be an extremely important element. Such practice that engages with men, masculinities and emotions could, in turn, also be seen as offering an opportunity to have a more transformative effect on the particular discourse of masculinity that is seen to still pervade the criminal justice and penal systems into which female officers seem to have been subsumed (Mawby and Worrall, 2011).

Finally in terms of attracting more men into the service – and a more diverse workforce overall, the recent relaxation of eligibility criteria for the PQiP from a relevant i.e. a criminology degree to any degree may go some way to achieve this but it is still too early to tell. However, it is likely that more radical action, including efforts to raise the media and public profile of the probation service in line with other male-dominated criminal justice agencies, along with continued efforts to maintain and promote the professional status of the probation officer will ultimately be what is needed.



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