

The magazine of the Probation Institute

# PROBATION

Issue 10 : December 2018

*Quarterly*

## **FUTURE OF PROBATION**

Probation Institute response to the MOJ consultation

### **1,800,000 opportunities missed to end the revolving door**

New analysis showing the scale of the revolving door of crisis and crime.

### **The rise of the far-right terrorist**

Reconceptualising risk in probation practice

### **Housing First**

A creative approach to homelessness



# PROBATION *Quarterly*

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It is now almost a year since Probation Quarterly was relaunched and we have been delighted by both the feedback and the range of people who have written for us - policy-makers, practitioners and academics. This is exactly the mix that the Probation Institute had hoped for. The magazine's success is also due to the creativity and design skills of Richard Rowley. Richard is a criminal justice sector consultant with a background of working in public, private and third sector organisations, so he has a comprehensive understanding of what the magazine is aiming to achieve and his advice and networks have been invaluable.

The future of probation work continues to dominate Probation Institute thinking and Helen Schofield, the Acting CEO, summarises the PI response to recent consultations. David Faulkner, who is a respected expert on criminal justice

policy-making, presents his personal view on the future of probation, and we invite readers to comment on both these articles, either by writing their own article or by sending a Letter to the Editor, for publication in a future issue.

A common theme in this issue is the revolving door of short prison sentences and the challenges presented to all community-based agencies that aim to support vulnerable men and women in the community. Jane Turner and Rachael Smith talked to me about the innovative Housing First approach to homelessness and its importance in integrated homelessness strategies. Christina Marriott, CEO of the Revolving Doors Agency, celebrates 25 years of the agency's work and their new podcast project. On a related theme, Rose Mahon presents an evaluation of the Nelson Trust's work with women who wish to exit from street sex work.

Wendy Fitzgibbon, who gave the Portal Lecture this year at the PI Practitioners Conference, talks about Photovoice, a new method of service user engagement that empowers those with lived experience to express their views in visual, rather than in solely verbal, ways.

The responsibility of probation workers to protect the public is the focus of a challenging article by Kerry Ellis Devitt on the rise and risk assessment of the 'far-right' terrorist and the implications of the Prevent programme. Risk assessment is one of the core skills of all probation work and one that is routinely communicated to sentencers through pre-sentence reports. Stephen Whitehead discusses the Centre for Justice Innovation's forthcoming report on crucial trends in the production and use of these reports.

Searching for meaning and morale in the current uncertain and stressful work environment has led Anne Burrell to invite practitioners to use 'communities of practice' to take control of their work and support each other. Exploring one's own questions and concerns in the workplace is also reflected in Helen Schofield's reminder about the 2019 Sir Graham Smith Research Awards, which are designed to encourage practitioners to undertake their own research within their working environments with the support of the Probation Institute.

Finally, the deadline for submissions for PQ11 is Monday 11th February 2019. Please get in touch if you have an idea for a suitable article.

**Anne Worrall, Editor**

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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.



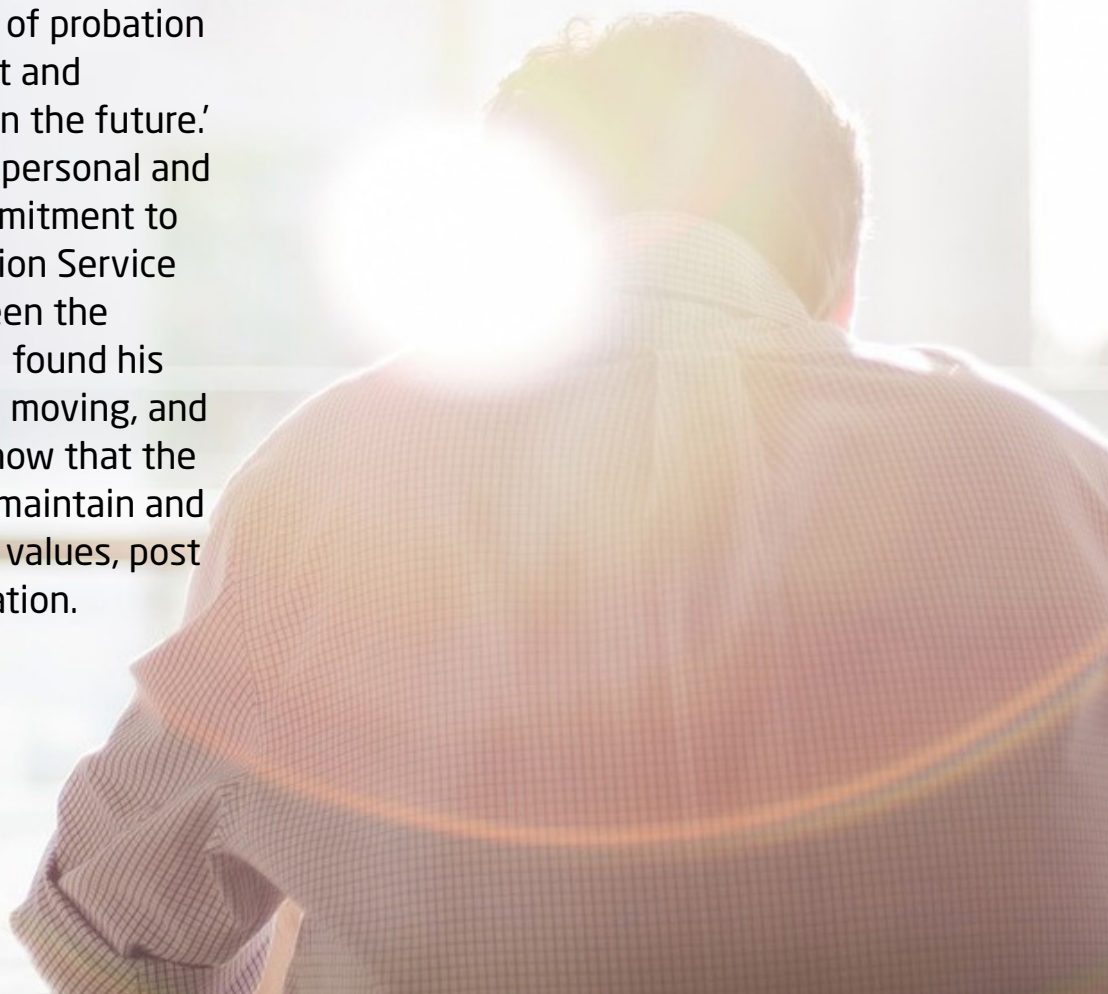
# Communities of Practice and Transforming Rehabilitation

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**Anne Burrell**

**Practice Tutor Assessor and member of the Probation Institute Research Committee**

The June edition of Probation Quarterly opened with a moving and eloquent account by Professor Paul Senior regarding the instigation of the Probation Institute, its values, and aims. He noted that the key to the Institute is 'what we can offer both as a bulwark against the isolation and disillusion of probation staff but also to support and promote good practice in the future.' Paul described a highly personal and enormously strong commitment to the ethos of the Probation Service and, as I suspect has been the case for many readers, I found his comments inspirational, moving, and also encouraging - to know that the campaign continues to maintain and to develop professional values, post Transforming Rehabilitation.



Since my own semi retirement from a newly formed CRC (I continue to work as a part time PTA with the NPS) like many other current and former colleagues, I have watched the fall out from TR with mounting despair. So, what strategies could be deployed to improve morale, to develop professional confidence in probation practitioners of all grades, and to reinstate a sense of meaning in the day-to-day tasks?

An introduction to Systems Thinking led me to an interesting and challenging consideration of the possible place of Communities of Practice in the contemporary world of Probation. An objective of systemic inquiry is to enable the actors, or stakeholders, to utilise their practice experience to develop their own process of improvement, via reflective practice. A recent research study of reflective practice in the NPS post-TR, noted that 'we find an evocative picture of reflective practice enabling probation staff to preserve a sense of identity and derive meaning from within the context of their working environment' (Coley 2018).

Similarly, I was struck by a recent observation, made by a Senior Probation Officer colleague, regarding the current lack of attention to practice experience, in favour of consideration of organisational objectives. This resonated when I read a further discussion by Caulkin regarding a target driven organisational culture. He noted 'the spawning of ballooning bureaucracies to track performance, and report it to inspectorates, that administer what feels to teachers, doctors and social workers increasingly like a reign of fear.' (Caulkin, 2007, cited in Ison, 2017: 227.) Are there parallels here with the current delivery of service by the NPS?

A Community of Practice has been described as a network which enables learning to occur and where 'learning and decision making can involve discussion and consultation between members of

a working community' (Gobbi, cited in Blackmore, 2010: 147). Social learning can be described as collaborative learning by practitioners, to support their professional development, and which occurs in the public sphere. In systems terms, social learning is characterised as an emergent property - in other words, the learning is continuous over time, as new situations and challenges are presented. One of the appealing features of social learning is that it is the antithesis of the management approach of 'just do it,' since it is rooted in the situation of the learners/practitioners and their lived experience. There is a trajectory of learning, based upon previous knowledge and experience, generating new knowledge based on adapted practice. Ison comments on the need to take heed of the tradition of understanding which exists in a problematic situation (Ison, 2017).

That tradition of understanding - the professional discourse within the NPS - has diminished considerably with the departure of a considerable number of experienced practitioners. Wenger refers to 'more experienced peers as.....living testimonies to what is possible, expected, desirable.' (Wenger, cited in Blackmore, 2010:135). This tradition of understanding, the shared history of practice, now needs to be reconstructed, to reflect the changing world of current probation practice, whilst retaining attention to the ethics, values, and professional knowledge which continue to be relevant.

So we need to move from a scenario where practitioners are 'getting by,' to one where they are 'getting on top of' their day-to-day practice, thus 'creating space for innovation...' (Ison, 2017:191). Communities of Practice, rooted in the Offender Management Units - the local teams of probation practitioners and staff in related roles, such as Case Administrators - could form the foundations for this development.

A Community of Practice has three characteristics (Wenger and Wenger-Traynor, 2015). First is the body of knowledge (the 'domain') about which 'there is a shared passion and commitment.' Second is the community itself and the interaction between people which generates the community, stressing the significance of mutual respect and recognition for the professional role within the community. Third is the actual practice of the community - 'a shared repertoire of resources....ways of addressing problems....a shared practice.'

This model resonates with the ways in which probation practitioners have operated historically. Indeed, my contact with probation colleagues currently suggests that the passion and commitment to the role, and to learning about the role, remain - if somewhat submerged by the day-to-day realities of the job. Similarly, the desire to be part of a group with a shared experience remains vital - not least given the exigencies and demands of the tasks undertaken.

During my own study of systems thinking, I was reminded of a previous experience within a probation context, when a specific model was utilised by operational teams working collaboratively in order to support practice, develop professional confidence, and relate current interventions to the tradition of understanding how probation practitioners operate. This model (SEEDS - Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision) generated Practice Learning Sets for all grades of staff, for the sharing of issues related to day-to-day practice, and to enable collaborative problem solving. This form of social learning

valued the contributions of all practitioners, regardless of their level within the organisation, and their level of experience. For me, this appears a good starting point from which to consider the development of a Community of Practice, not least since a key attribute of Communities of Practice is their capacity to instil knowledge and socialise newcomers - and notably inexperienced newcomers - into the culture of the Community, in ways which are mutually beneficial.

## **So what?**

So, what would it mean to generate a Community of Practice within the OMU? Communities of Practice are notable for their fluidity, in terms of their settings, and their objectives, so it would be feasible for each OMU to devolve a model of operation which specifically suited their needs and purposes.

Whilst not a panacea, the formulation of a Community of Practice within the OMU, led by middle manager SPO grade staff, and facilitated by other colleagues, could instigate a process of shared learning, based on problem solving, rooted in day-to-day practice. (Currently, this model is exemplified on a daily basis amongst practitioners regarding, for example, decisions about enforcement and particularly recalls into custody.) I am aware that this could appear an indulgent use of time for a hard-pressed staff team: in fact, whilst formal timetabling might be important in the early stages, the objective is for the Community to be an embedded aspect of the culture and operations of the Offender Management Unit, generating energy and ideas.



## Conclusions

This proposal for Communities of Practice is aimed at enabling the development of individual practitioners, and thus of effective practice. The model could be of particular value in a situation of high turnover of staff, in generating a culture which enables the socialisation of new practitioners, however inexperienced, into the shared body of knowledge, and the community which espouses it. Through Communities of Practice, it may be possible to generate a strengthened sense of professional identity, both individually and collectively, by developing professional capital.

The origins of this paper rest in the turmoil experienced in our professional lives since Transforming Rehabilitation. The delivery of Probation Services is once again under review, and it seems likely that further organisational change will occur - in fact, the state of flux which exists in the NPS could be regarded as the 'new normal.' It would be easy to indulge in a focus on nostalgia for a state of practice which probably never existed in reality. Equally - how can we enable practitioners to navigate the incessant change which is a feature of their working lives? How can we equip them with the tools of resilience, adaptability, and confidence in the autonomy of their professional role? This model appears eminently accessible to probation practitioners - in fact, its principles appear to have been embedded in past probation work, via the Practice Learning Sets (which I suspect to have been a version of Communities of Practice, if not described as such). Whilst a Community of Practice in one OMU will certainly not solve all the ills which beset the NPS, the model offers realistic avenues of support and learning - and, above all, is achievable.



**Anne Burrell**

Practice Tutor Assessor and member of the Probation Institute Research Committee

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# Probation Institute Responses to Consultations on the Future of Probation

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**Helen Schofield**  
**Acting CEO, Probation Institute**

The Probation Institute made a lengthy and comprehensive response to the MOJ consultation on the future of probation, focussing primarily on Professional Registration and Professional Development.





## Here are the key points we made

1. A Professional Register should be part of an independent Regulatory Body requiring registration and regulation of training and qualifications across core practitioner and management roles in NPS and the CRCs, also offering registration to practitioners and managers in the voluntary sector and offender managers in prisons.
2. Continuous Professional Development through a formal, agreed scheme should be a requirement of registration, supported and resourced.
3. In determining what appropriate training and qualifications should be set down by an independent body, a review of the roles and responsibilities of "Responsible Officers" is required, including the roles known as Probation Officers, Probation Services Officers, Case Managers, Case Supervisors, Offender Managers, Enforcement Officers.
4. The proposed re-integration of core roles for Wales should be applied across England also. We cannot see how the dual model proposed can be helpful. We see the time, money and energy consumed by reconnecting critical responsibilities between the National Probation Service and 21 CRCs with results that do not appear to justify continuing the split. Evidence suggests that a consistent, continuing and positive relationship with the "Responsible Officer" is the best indicator towards successful completion of supervision requirements. This view is not in any way a reflection on practitioners in CRCs.
5. A focussed effort is required to encourage the greater use of adjournments to better inform Magistrates Courts about the risks that individuals present both to others and themselves, and about community sentencing options. We should continue to work for timely justice but reduce the numbers of same day reports.
6. A more robust approach is needed to commissioning providers of effective community services particularly in the voluntary sector and to aligning the public services required for effective rehabilitation - health, housing, benefits, employment



**Helen Schofield**  
Acting CEO  
Probation Institute

services and education. Cross sector Apprenticeships should be put in place to enable voluntary organisations to access funding for professional training.

We also responded to the Labour Party review led by Lord Ramsbotham. Key points include:

- In our view it is perfectly feasible to return Probation to public ownership; we asked for some immediate steps and also for a wider review to address the failure of TR
- The opportunity must be taken to establish an appropriate and inclusive qualification and training structure across NPS, CRCs and the voluntary sector which should clearly be linked with the creation of an independent Regulatory Body and Professional Body
- Return to the public sector cannot be done cheaply; it will require a significant commitment of energy, leadership, training, organisational redesign, recruitment and re-staffing
- Resettlement is an area where Probation's interface with generic service provision (particularly local authority housing and health services) has become increasingly difficult as austerity has taken its toll; shared responsibilities have always been ill-defined and this would be an opportunity to ensure that generic providers' responsibilities are clearly defined, resourced and acted upon
- In our view PCCs should be one part of the local commissioning structures with whom Probation should work.

# Probation in Post-Liberal England

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## A personal view by David Faulkner

David Faulkner served in the Home Office from 1959 until 1992, being involved in probation's expanding role in prison after-care in the 1960s and becoming Deputy Secretary for criminal justice, including probation, in 1982. He was Principal Private Secretary to James Callaghan and appointed Companion of the Order of the Bath in 1985. He was subsequently a fellow of St John's College, Oxford and an associate at the University of Oxford Centre for Criminology. He has written and lectured widely on how criminal justice policy is formulated and about the relationships between civil servants and elected politicians. His most recent book is *Servant of the Crown: a civil servant's story of criminal justice and public service reform*, published in 2014 by Waterside Press.

The Editor invites readers to respond to this article and a selection of views will be published in a future issue of Probation Quarterly.





The government and the Labour Party have both instigated reviews of the probation service. No-one would deny that change is urgently needed but the government certainly, and the Labour Party probably, will be looking for conclusions which fall conveniently within their own comfort zones. The situation calls for a more radical approach which takes account of the wider social and economic context.

The reviews are taking place at a time of exceptional uncertainty about the United Kingdom's future direction as a country, and for many people their prospects as individuals. The dividing lines are shifting between those who 'belong' and those who are part of the 'other', and between those who command authority and respect and those who do not. Identity is displacing class as an identifier in politics

and social interaction. Old landmarks have disappeared and new ones have not yet taken their place.

It has long been one of the principles of good government and good public management that decisions should be based on rational judgement, attention to evidence and respect for expertise, while decision-makers have at the same time to take account of how things look and feel. They have to pay attention to sensibilities, impressions and emotions. Governments have increasingly done so over the last 25 years, and yet 'ordinary people' have continued to feel neglected and overlooked, by the criminal justice system but also by government more generally. Brexit in Great Britain and Trump in the United States have been attributed to the 'establishment's' failure to respond.



That failure is associated with three things. One is the increasing politicisation of government and public services, as party political advantage, political dogma and party management became confused with, or took the place of, the wider national interest. Another is the advance of neo-liberalism and its substitution of metrics, targets, markets and contracts for professional judgement, public responsibility, public accountability and democratic control. The third is austerity whose effects on probation and prisons have now become all too visible. At the same time the boundaries of criminal justice have been extended into new areas of behaviour, beginning with anti-social behaviour orders, with serious implications for standards of justice. Probation has become essentially an agency of punishment, while the police have increasingly been expected to act as a social service when other services have been withdrawn or not available.

An effective and influential probation service is especially important in a situation of this kind. Probation works in those places where people's lives are most precarious and their future most uncertain, and where the effects of social, economic and criminal justice policy come together. The country needs the service to do much more than punish offenders and coerce them into socially acceptable behaviour. Probation staff should encourage offenders to find opportunities and take advantage of them, to find a direction and purpose in their lives and to have some hope for the future. The service should establish or re-establish a place for itself in the communities which it serves, with a presence, an identity, a sense of belonging and an authority to make itself heard and felt in those communities.

Staff should concern themselves not only with the offenders assigned to them but also with offenders' families and the environment in which they have to make their lives; they should

show that they are responsive to those who are affected by or concerned about crime or trouble in their communities or neighbourhoods, and that they have something to contribute. They should work closely with the courts, other services (and not only those which are thought of as part of the criminal justice system), local government and civil society. They should be out and about and not spend too much time in offices or looking at computer screens.

Probation should not be thought of as being somehow apart from and nothing to do with 'ourselves', or with ordinary people going about their lives. The arrangements for probation's management and accountability should reflect and facilitate that wider role, and should enable work to be arranged to suit local conditions as well as comply with national standards and objectives.

The parameters for the service's reform should therefore include:

- Separation from the Prison Service;
- A local structure based on a suitable number of geographical areas;
- Accountability to probation authorities that are representative of local communities and stakeholders;
- Strong and independent professional leadership;
- The private sector's role, if any, should be confined to specific, limited tasks commissioned by the new probation authorities.



**David Faulkner**



# Housing First - a creative approach to homelessness

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Jane Turner from Brighter Futures, Stoke-on-Trent and Manager of Housing First Stoke-on-Trent, and Rachael Smith, probation officer and senior housing worker from Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company talk to Probation Quarterly Editor, Anne Worrall, about supporting offenders in independent housing.



The Housing First model of dealing with homelessness is not new. It developed in the United States, Canada and parts of Europe (notably Finland) from the 1990s. But a recent research report from the University of York (Pleace 2018), the government's launch in May 2018 of three Housing First pilots in Liverpool, Manchester and the West Midlands, and an article in the Guardian by Aditya Chackraborty (12th September 2018) suggest that it is now a feature of integrated homelessness strategies in several parts of the UK and deserves wider publicity.

The distinctive feature of the Housing First model is an ethical one. It is based on the belief that housing is the key to resolving other personal and social needs and that homeless people are entitled to housing without having to 'prove' themselves in order to be deemed 'ready' for accommodation. Instead, if they are supported to live in independent accommodation, problems such as substance misuse, offending, mental and physical health, finances and employment, will be more resolvable - and ultimately less costly to the government.

Housing First is an innovative approach which can be effective for people for whom traditional homelessness pathways do not work. Housing First England ([www.hfe.homeless.org.uk](http://www.hfe.homeless.org.uk)) has developed a set of principles for service delivery:

- People have a right to a home
- Flexible support is provided for as long as is needed
- Housing and support are separated
- Customers have choice and control
- An active engagement approach is used
- People are supported to identify their strengths, goals and aspirations
- A harm reduction approach is used

Housing First Stoke-on-Trent, managed by Jane Turner, is a partnership between two local not-for-profit housing organisations, Brighter Futures (the lead organization) and Arch, and the lived experience organisation, Expert Citizens CIC. The team comprises two service co-ordinators, three peer mentors and a tenancy sustainment worker.

The project is funded by VOICES as part of the Big Lottery Fulfilling Lives programme, so the profile of customers within the Housing First service must meet at least three out of four of the VOICES criteria of multiple needs (homelessness, mental ill-health, offending behaviour and substance misuse).

Housing First Stoke-on-Trent works with a small caseload of people (currently 14) to find out what their ideal accommodation would be, and help them to find somewhere they can settle and feel safe. This might be with a private landlord or a social landlord. They aim to build up a trusting relationship while looking for a home for customers, so that the right support can be put in place to help the tenancy to be sustainable.

Customers can access a budget to help with setting up their new home, as well as to help them to improve their wellbeing and achieve their goals when they are ready to start thinking about the future. They can have a peer mentor who can help them to build positive networks. When they no longer need help from Housing First, they will be able to stay in their home, provided of course that they comply with their tenancy agreement. Customers can re-engage with the team at any time, to help deal with any problems before they escalate.

The profile of customers is one of long-term or repeated homelessness and multiple needs, where traditional homelessness pathways (eg. night shelter, hostel, transitional housing unit) are not suitable or effective. The only initial requirements of customers are that they want to maintain a tenancy and are willing to engage with the Housing First team. 'There is absolutely no requirement for them to address their substance misuse', Jane says, 'but the evidence is that once they are in a safe and warm place, things begin to settle down and they start to use a little less'.





Probation services in Stoke-on-Trent have had a long-established relationship with Brighter Futures and are supportive of the new Housing First project. The SWM CRC holds the Through the Gate contract for the NPS and the CRC, so housing for offenders on release from prison is a high priority. Housing First is a valuable addition to the local homelessness strategy and Rachael Smith has made several referrals. 'We could use it more if it had more capacity', she says. Jane acknowledges that the caseload is small (they have a waiting list of around 20 and a similar number of referrals have been rejected because they don't meet the criteria), but she says that 'this is a very well-resourced, high cost support service and we have to make sure that it gets to the right people who will benefit most from it'. Stoke-on-Trent local authority is very supportive because Housing First is working with people who have had complex multiple needs, often over many years.

What are the problems facing such an intensive project? Being an offender makes it more likely that a person will be viewed as 'being intentionally homeless' by the local authority, rather than being vulnerable and a priority need case. Social housing is often denied to people with 'unspent convictions' (regardless of risk), which Rachael points out is '100% of our client group' - a practice which she considers to be 'not proportionate, not fair and possibly illegal' (see the article by Unlock in PQ7). The location of available housing may not be suitable for a particular offender yet they are penalised for refusing an apparently reasonable offer, even if it is away from their support networks.

One of the biggest problems for offenders living independently is 'losing control of their property' by opening their doors to friends and acquaintances, allowing them to stay or take over their home. This may happen because the new tenant is lonely, because they need drugs or simply because they are bullied into it. Women are particularly vulnerable to this kind of pressure and Rachael has experience of one woman who had the keys of her property taken from her by a male casual acquaintance on the first day of her release from prison.

Housing First Stoke-on-Trent has had fewer referrals of women than of men but Jane believes that much female homelessness is hidden and unstable (eg. sofa-surfing), often related to sex work and sexual exploitation (see article by the Nelson Trust in this issue of PQ).

The Housing First approach doesn't suit everyone. As Jane says, 'there are a lot of advantages to hostel accommodation - someone else answers the door and you get three meals a day if you want them'. But for those with histories of entrenched homelessness and complex needs, who want to live independently and maintain their own tenancy, Housing First is refreshingly non-judgmental and offers a wide range of intensive support.

For more information contact Jane Turner  
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**Jane Turner**  
Manager  
Housing First Stoke-on-Trent

# 1,800,000 opportunities missed by criminal justice system to end the revolving door

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**Christina Marriott**  
**Chief Executive of Revolving Doors Agency**

To mark our 25th Anniversary, Revolving Doors Agency has published new analysis showing the scale of the revolving door of crisis and crime.

Back in the 1990s, we defined the term revolving door and turned it into a well-known and understood concept in criminal justice. We continue to define that revolving door as low level repeated crime and criminal justice contact, driven by multiple problems, including for example problematic substance use, mental ill health, homelessness and domestic violence and abuse. From being an invisible group as late as the 1990s, people in the revolving door of personal crisis and crime are now the subject of national discussion and debate.





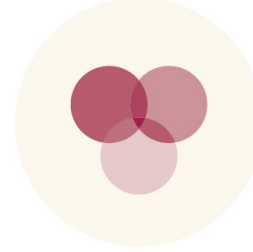
## Our definition of the revolving door is:



Repeated criminal justice contact from police and courts, to prisons and probation



Characterised by low level offences, primarily petty theft and minor drug offences



Driven by multiple problems including mental ill health, problematic substance use, domestic violence and abuse and homelessness

In this our 25th year we wanted to reinvigorate thinking on this issue. Using Ministry of Justice data, we found that last year 60,000 cautions or convictions for minor offences were given to people who had offended 11 or more times for similar offences (we defined this as theft and summary non-motoring offences). The data reveals that these individuals had a total of over 1.8 million previous sentencing occasions where the criminal justice system failed to provide an effective intervention when they were dealt with for similar minor offences. This seems to us 1.8 million opportunities to prevent or to break the cycle of personal crisis and crime.

The scale of the problem will not come as a surprise to people who work in probation or to those who experience the systemic problems for themselves. We know that people in repeat contact with the criminal justice system face a range of multiple problems and that each one compounds the other. For example, three in four people accessing drugs services had a psychiatric disorder in the previous year. Six in ten women in prison have experienced domestic violence or abuse. Each problem makes the others harder to solve. As a member of our Birmingham Forum summed it up:

*"I have done 19 short prison sentences in the last 20 years. A lot of the time I didn't get any interventions [to address] the problems that led me to being in custody – substance misuse, alcohol, drug addiction, homelessness. These are the reasons I was breaking the law - to try and get myself somewhere to live for the night, to fund my addiction and just to survive really."*

## For every 10 people in prison



**6/10**

have mental  
ill health<sup>2</sup>



**6/10**

have a history of  
traumatic brain injury<sup>3</sup>



**6/10**

serving short sentences have  
a drug or alcohol problem<sup>4</sup>



**1.5/10**

were homeless  
before prison<sup>5</sup>



**6/10** women  
**3/10** men

men have experienced  
domestic violence or abuse<sup>6/7</sup>

However, pernicious as it is, we believe the revolving door can be stopped. Our new report, 1,800,000 million opportunities, sets out our ambition to prevent the next generation of young people entering this cycle. For many members of our lived experience forums, discussing what could have been different for them or what could have prevented the revolving door leads to a discussion about early adulthood and childhood.

These experiences are reflected by what we have repeatedly heard from the 2,500 people with lived experience that we have spoken with over the last 5 years. Their accounts paint a stark picture of the combined impact of trauma and poverty in their lives. This is echoed by the evidence which shows that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and poverty are key factors in the lives of people who are in the revolving door. To take one example, compared with people with no adverse childhood experience, those with four or more are 20 times more likely to be incarcerated.





Revolving Doors' ambition is to intervene at the critical stage of young adulthood where people can enter the revolving door, and where the criminal justice system embeds existing disadvantage. This will form a core focus of our work over the coming decade.

We recognise the significant challenges in preventing the revolving door, but take heart from our 25 years of experience in developing models that have now been adopted at national scale. Our impact includes the co-creation of national liaison and diversion services and setting lived experience at the heart of decision-making.

Coinciding with the report, we have launched a new podcast to change the terms of criminal justice debate. In Other Words brings together voices from across the sectors and explores the role of trauma, poverty and wider structural disadvantages in bringing and trapping people in the revolving door of crisis and crime. Our hope is that the podcast will bring fresh thinking on poverty and trauma and the implications for services.

Contributors include, amongst others, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Heriot-Watt University), Professor James Nazroo (The University of Manchester), Dr Nina Vaswani (Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice), Emeritus Professor David Wilson (Birmingham City University), & our Lived Experience Forum members.

You can access the podcasts via our website: <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/why-were-here/changing-policy/in-other-words>

We would like to know what people working in criminal justice and related fields think. Join the debate at [#inotherwords](https://twitter.com/inotherwords) or contact us via [@revdoors](https://twitter.com/revdoors)

Revolving Doors Agency  
<http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/>



**Christina Marriott**  
Chief Executive  
Revolving Doors Agency

# The rise of the far-right terrorist: **Reconceptualising risk in probation practice**

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**A new research unit at Kent, Surrey and Sussex CRC is currently involved in research exploring Prevent case characteristics. Kerry Ellis Devitt, Probation Practice Researcher, sets the context and considers the implications for probation work.**

The probation service holds a great deal of responsibility for both managing and safeguarding people's lives. The cornerstone of the service is its calculations of risk. What is an individual's risk of reoffending? What is the risk of that person being reconvicted? And to what extent does this person pose a risk of harm to the public? (Ministry of Justice, 2009). Though largely this risk of harm is focused on the threat to society in rather individualised ways linked to particular offending patterns, (i.e. risk of harm to a particular person; risk of harm to a business etc.) the service, and its front-line staff, must also be aware of an individual's risk of more widespread and devastating harm - that represented by the threat of terrorism. But where is probation focusing its gaze when it comes to identifying such risk?



## Probation practice and the responsibility to Prevent

Along with education providers, faith leaders, health workers and social care staff, the probation service has been tasked with a responsibility for countering the threat of terror. This responsibility comes in the form of adherence to Prevent, the strand of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, which focuses on 'safeguard[ing] and support[ing] vulnerable people to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism' (Home Office, 2018a, para. 99). In practical terms, Prevent, introduced as a statutory duty through the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, requires the wider community to take action in identifying those deemed to be at risk of radicalisation.

The implementation of Prevent has comprised widespread training across various community sectors. Within this, case studies are being used which depict both Islamist radicalisation and extreme right-wing radicalisation because, as the literature tells us, 'there is no single socio-demographic profile of a terrorist in the UK' (Home Office, 2018a, para. 103). However, though that is the wisdom, what is the reality?

### The problem of bias

Over the past two decades, terrorism in the UK has been firmly placed in the camp of Islamic extremism. The threat has been indelibly cemented as 'other', stemming from people and groups outside of British borders. Whilst a number of attackers in recent years have been found to be nationals of the countries which they have targeted (for example, Salman Ramadan Abedi, responsible for the Manchester bombings, and

Khalid Masood, responsible for the Westminster attacks), their links to international terrorist organisations have secured their place as 'outsiders'.

At the same time, the face of terrorism has been driven through a number of prescriptive narratives. Since the 9/11 attacks, western society has been hard-wired to see the threat of terror placed within a particular demographic. A simple image search on Google, for example, throws up image after image of men with beards and brown skin, armed and dressed in combat wear, usually pictured in locations far removed from anything most of us born and raised in the UK have experienced or understand. And accompanying this visual reminder of what a terrorist 'looks like', we are sold the dangers of a specific ideological position - one that adheres to regressive policies on how lives should be lived and is scaffolded by anti-west propaganda.

The problem in all this is that in attuning ourselves so finely to this notion, we fail to notice what is happening elsewhere.

### Hate crime and the rise of the far-right

The growing support for far-right politics has been noted as a concerning trend in the UK and other European countries (Aisch, Pearce & Rousseau, 2017; Chakelian, 2017). And alongside this, has been an apparent rise in hate-related violence.

## The changing face of terrorism

In October, the Home Office released their annual hate crime statistics. Though it was reported that incidents of hate crime had more than doubled since 2012/2013, particularly for religious hate crime, this was mainly attributed to 'improvements in crime recording' (Home Office, 2018b:7). However, what couldn't be attributed to improved practice was the link between this and certain social and political events. Indeed, the report documented peaks in hate crime incidents following the murder of Lee Rigby in 2013, the Charlie Hebdo shooting in 2015, and even more so after the EU Referendum and the terrorist attacks of 2017. Furthermore, data pertaining to 2017/2018 showed that amongst the most likely victims were people with Asian/Muslim backgrounds. In 2017/2018, 0.6% of people identifying as Muslim experienced hate crime compared with 0.1% of people identifying as Christian, and 0.4% of those from Asian backgrounds, compared with 0.1% of those from white backgrounds (Home Office, 2018b).

Adding to this, the UK has also seen several incidents of far-right related terrorism. In 2016 came the murder of Jo Cox by Thomas Mair. In 2017, Darren Osbourne drove a van into Muslim worshippers in Finsbury Park. And in February 2018, Ethan Stables was arrested for plotting an attack at an LGBT event in Cumbria. All three were white-British and shown to have been directly influenced by the ideology of far-right groups such as the National Front, the English Defence League and Britain First.

In September, data held by the Home Office revealed that for the first time since 2001, people with a white ethnic appearance have overtaken people with an Asian ethnic appearance in terms of arrests for terrorist-related activity (Home Office, 2018c). Of these arrests in the year ending June 2018, 67% (234 cases) were for international terrorism and 21% (75 cases) for domestic<sup>1</sup>. This marks a drop of 34% from the previous year for the former and a rise of 23% for the latter.

And what of ideological influence? Drawing on the same data set, figures for 2018 showed that 178 of those in custody for terrorist offences identified with Islamist extremist ideology, compared with 28 who identified with extreme right-wing ideology, and 12 as 'Other' ideology. Though the pendulum still swings heavily towards Islamist extremism, it is important to consider these figures in context. As Figure 1 shows, the proportion of those in prison for terrorist offences due to extreme-right beliefs saw a notable spike in 2018, whilst those in prison for Islamic extremism has seen a relative decline. Indeed in 2016, Islamic extremism accounted for 94% of all terrorist related activity. In 2017 that figure dropped to 90.7% and at the end of June 2018 the figure was at 81.6%.

<sup>1</sup>International terrorism refers to terrorist activity by an individual or group (regardless of nationality) linked or motivated to terrorist groups outside the UK. Domestic terrorism refers to terrorist activity with no links to Northern Ireland or International terrorism.



Figure 1: Number of persons in custody for terrorism-related offences, by ideology, 31 June 2013 to 31 June 2018



Source: Home Office. (2018c). *Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation: Arrests, outcomes, and stop and search, Great Britain, quarterly update to June 2018* (Statistical Bulletin 19/18).

And finally, gender. Though instances of women being linked to terrorism have notably risen over the past decade (4.6% of all arrests in 2008 compared with 11.4% in 2018), the vast majority of such crimes, as with other serious crimes, are still committed by men.

In 2018, women accounted for just 5.4% of all those charged for terrorism-related activity and 4.3% of all those convicted (Home Office, 2018c).

## What does this mean for probation?

Trends such as these speak clearly of the need to start reconfiguring what risk looks like. Though the data still supports the profile of the Asian man, who is a proponent of Islamic extremism and is most likely to be connected to international terrorist groups, we are also looking at a white man, who is a proponent of far-right extremism, and who is connected to domestic terrorist groups.

Prevent must not be understood as a tool to counter Islamic extremism. It is a strategy that has been developed to counter all forms of radicalisation. This understanding is of paramount

importance and, for probation, this means ensuring its frontline staff are not just trained in Prevent protocol but are aware, and working against, any unconscious biases that might be present.

As McIntosh (2013:78) notes in her paper exploring the nationalistic underbelly of Norwegian society following the terrorist acts of Anders Breivik:

*"If Norwegian society is to move forward from this tragedy, it will likely involve a reconceptualization of who is at risk in this current age of terror and what that risk looks like".*

And it is this exact task that is now called for within British society.

For more information on this project and others, contact [Kerry.devitt@kssrc.co.uk](mailto:Kerry.devitt@kssrc.co.uk) and/or [David.Coley@kssrc.co.uk](mailto:David.Coley@kssrc.co.uk)

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# Photovoice and lived experiences of probation supervision

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**Wendy Fitzgibbon, University of Leicester**

**Jayne Henry, Hertfordshire Forensic Services, HPFT**

**Maria Strapkova, University of Leicester**

## Introduction

Despite the expansion of probation supervision, the lived experiences of service users are under-researched. This article discusses a research project which sought to understand the experiences of service users supervised by Probation. The purpose of the project was to offer probation service users, who often feel invisible and ignored, a chance to share their feelings about supervision, through a technique called Photovoice. Photovoice is a new approach to studying probation supervision (Fitzgibbon and Healy, 2017) that shifts the control over the subject of study from the powerful to the powerless. Photovoice provides service users with an opportunity to give voice to their experiences.

Photovoice developed from the work of Wang and Burris (1994) who studied health conditions of women in rural China. Their work enabled major policy changes in the provision of childcare, access to midwives and education. It has been a vital part of community-based participatory research since then and provides a platform for

people to express their views and experiences, from their own point of view using visual images. Mizock et al. (2014:1485) suggested that Photovoice enables participants to express their experiences through an alternative, non-verbal approach that can 'enhance feelings of empowerment, acceptance, self-efficacy, agency and civic-mindedness'. Photovoice starts a dialogue by reflecting on photos, allowing for self-reflection and deeper understanding about phenomena, which often cannot be produced without visual expression.

The photographs in this research are the result of two pilot projects, funded by the Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Services delivered in partnership with the National Probation Service, Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Leicester. The project explored the challenges service users experienced on release from prison and whilst on probation.

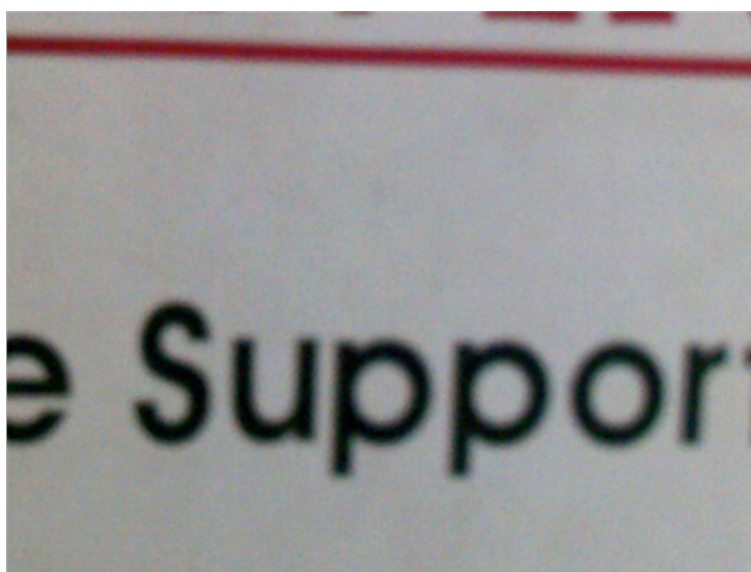
## Findings

Findings from the thematic analysis of the photos and the group discussion transcripts where photographs were discussed, compared and interpreted by the participants. During the analysis process, four overlapping themes were identified:

- Support - the importance of providing support and assistance while on probation supervision
- Pains of probation supervision - the everyday struggle with stigma and labelling while under supervision
- Journey - the challenges associated with uncertainty about the future, mental health issues and feelings of isolation
- Back on Track - the challenges of focusing on the right things in dark times.

## Support

Participants were mainly positive in their photos about the support that is being provided to them while on probation supervision. However, many participants emphasised that being properly heard and being able to explain their story is sometimes lacking in probation supervision. Nicola, a participant in the study, represented in this photo how receiving support after being released was a vital tool for her rehabilitation.





Sandra explained why she felt differently about her new probation officer and what it was about her work style and their professional relationship that made the probation supervision a positive experience again:

*'first time I met her, I just walked into the room and immediately she gave me that big beaming grin ... and she was so friendly and lovely, and so bloody honest there was no beating around the bush ... she put it straight, I asked the questions and she told me the truth you know.'*

Nicola produced the pictures of her glasses and her own ear and explained how important it was for her to 'see clearly' and to be heard and listened to by her Probation Officer:

### **Seeing clearly**



*'these glasses are me being able to see clearly now that the support is in place and that should be that way it is really' (Nicola)*

## Being heard



*'I did feel like I was heard and I was speaking to (Probation Officer) she really made it much easier, as I found it really hard to communicate... she was really listening then and I just felt like this massive weight has been lifted off my shoulders and she was like this support out there who told me that I need some bereavement counselling, so she was straight on it and she was being amazing' (Nicola)*

## Pains of probation supervision

Participants on probation supervision often shared common themes, such as a feeling of embarrassment, shame, stigma, feelings of being trapped and pain from being involved in the criminal justice system (Fitzgibbon and Stengel, 2017). Participant Tom took a photo of a spider in the net to represent how he felt at the beginning of his journey. Tom explained how hard it was for him to lose his job over his offence and how his role of breadwinner was suddenly insecure.

### Caught in the net



*'he described himself as being a spider in the net ... like the police, probation, counselling, layers, the court, having to sign the register, children services... he was really disappointed that his name was now out there... everyone knew who he was now ' (Probation Officer on behalf of the participant Tom)*



## Journey

The resettlement process back into the community after serving a custodial sentence was a common theme among participants. The journeys from prison and community sentence to 'normal life' were a great challenge for some participants. The next set of photos were taken by Richard who often walks his dog around the canal. He explained that he took these pictures as they reminded him of his journey to freedom. The first picture represented his incarceration, and the last one is where he is now, on the way to freedom.

### Closed gates like prison



### Looked like Freedom



Another common theme was a desire for new beginnings and a fresh start without stigma.

### **New start**



### **Back on track**

Many participants took pictures of the things lacking in their lives that they started to appreciate more after their release. These pictures that represented family life, photos of common things that we use every day that participants could not use in prison, photos of nature and flowers.

### **Focus on my family**



*'this is my family and it's just learning to stop being selfish myself like instead of just putting myself in the middle with my drugs and my drink and you know I have to think about my twins ... I think it's time to put my family first' (Nicola)*

Nicola explained that due to her alcohol and drug addiction, she often neglected her children. She expressed that she would like to change this now and do things the right way.

Another participant Richard, took a photo of a sofa he bought for his wife. He explained that it was very important for him to be able to give back to his wife while she was waiting for his release.

'Never had nothing for years, these make me happy'



*'I feel happy for myself that I can do something for (wife) you know, she waited twenty years ... and I do bits and pieces ... nice and steady, nice and slow and it makes me feel good, I get a buzz out of it at the end ... she would never be able to get that settee, she cannot afford it' (Richard)*



## Conclusion

Photovoice has been used within social research as an empowering method encouraging social action to make changes in policy. It is a powerful tool which gives a voice to people who often feel unheard and neglected by society. Photovoice helps participants build self-confidence and develop new skills through creating images and sharing their feelings in group discussions. The method was positively welcomed by probation officers who were involved in the projects and they were keen to use it in their own supervision to encourage their service users to talk more openly about their feelings and perceptions as well as about daily activities and routines.



**Dr Wendy Fitzgibbon**  
University of Leicester

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# Breaking down barriers to exiting sex work

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**Rose Mahon**  
**Head of Excellence and Development**  
**The Nelson Trust**



From time to time we see articles appearing in local media outlets calling for more to be done to address problems around drug use and street sex working. In general, the narrative seems to have shifted to one of concern for the women involved with police in some areas actively announcing they will not prosecute street sex workers.

The Nelson Trust is a pioneer in supporting women who want to exit sex work. The Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP) was set up specifically to support women who are involved in street based sex working to fund their addiction.





Katie Lewis, SWOP Co-ordinator said, "Working alongside our clients, we have learnt that women in entrenched addiction often experience such a chaotic and unstable way of life that they resort to street sex-work as a survival strategy to get access to drugs or accommodation.

"We recognised that these women are some of the most disadvantaged, marginalised and stigmatised individuals in our communities, and we developed a dedicated service to address their needs. The SWOP service operates across Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire, providing drop-ins, outreach and case work, providing safety advice, harm minimisation and intensive one-to-one support."

The Nelson Trust asked Professor Sylvia Walby OBE and Dr Susie Balderston, from the UNESCO Centre for Violence and Society at Lancaster University, to conduct a study to evaluate the impact of the co-ordinator role of the SWOP. It took three years (2015-2018) and involved Rapid Evidence Assessment, semi-structured interviews with sex-working women, interviews with SWOP workers, volunteers and Nelson Trust staff as well as workshops, conference meetings, observations of the outreach van and interviews with partner organisation workers. The conclusion: SWOP delivers "exemplary concrete outcomes".

The evaluation praised the project for its highly effective crisis intervention, on the streets at night and case work through the day. The service is trauma-informed, gender-specific and non-judgmental. Dr Susie Balderston said, "I have evaluated 35 projects in 15 years, in some of the toughest social conditions and inequality in England; SWOP is the most important and impressive work I have ever seen."

One woman accessing SWOP said, "If you lot wasn't here, a few of us would be dead. It's helpful. If there is someone we need to talk to we can. If there are dodgy punters hanging around then we are aware. A lot of us wouldn't bother going elsewhere to get condoms, clothes and toiletries. It's nice to have some normality, to come and chat and have a cup of tea."

Another client said, "Shows there is something normal away from the life of drugs. Reminds me of how life was before drugs, also helped me want to get clean. I don't feel judged as other people look down their noses at us. People's attitudes change when they know what you're doing."

One of the keys to the project's success is its multi-agency approach. SWOP deals with at least 18 other agencies including local statutory Commissioners and funders across Councils, Police, NHS Specialist Trusts, Ambulance, Hospitals, Housing Associations and the Third Sector.



SWOP offers support and training/coaching for mainstream services to engage on-street sex working women. Eligibility criteria and conditionality from other welfare services can fail women and SWOP offers them a last safety net. The study found it takes up to 64 to 382 days to work effectively with sex-working women.

One of the most important reasons we had for engaging this research by Lancaster University was to share this knowledge with other organisations. We have spent a lot of time over the past 10 years listening to women and learning better ways to engage through a trauma-informed approach. SWOP builds on this work, reaching out to groups of women who experience multiple disadvantages and challenges. We knew the project was working, we were building trust with women and reaching clients who mainstream and statutory services often can't reach. The research report will allow other organisations to learn from this model and apply it in their own contexts.

Dr Balderston has evaluated, mentored and delivered services in statutory and third sectors for 18 years. She is a Research Fellow in criminology and social policy, exploring inequalities, outcomes and justice interventions with women and disabled people (as victim-survivors and/or perpetrators of violence, hate crime, institutional abuse, sex trafficking and rape). She said:

"SWOP is achieving significant and exemplary concrete outcomes for extremely marginalised and excluded women at serious risk of violence and harm. The pathway works from the point of need on the street and through the prison gates, to advocacy and specialist case work, to assist in navigating complex welfare, housing, social care, health criminal justice and family court systems. This includes diversion from custody when appropriate and support to maintain contact with children or support after they are removed. It allows the women to step into Women's Centres where they are not the sex worker and gain access into a specialist service which understand the gender-specific, trauma-informed approaches they need to transcend sex work and substance

use. SWOP is best practice, not just because of what it is, but because of where it is within the Nelson Trust."

The Nelson Trust's trauma-informed approach is led by Kirsty Tate, a Griffins fellow (see Griffin Society article in PQ8). She undertook a piece of research on 'The barriers and facilitators of disclosure for sex working women in residential treatment' which resulted in her developing three interventions which focus on creating a healing pathway for women to recover from trauma associated with adverse childhood experiences and sex working.

Highlights of the results of the Lancaster University study were delivered at The Nelson Trust's annual conference in June 2018, which focused on the charity's Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP). The Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon, Angus Macpherson, opened the Conference. His office has helped fund the project. The project is generously supported by Lankelly Chase, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Charles Hayward Foundation and The Big Lottery Fund.

If you would like to learn more about how we can help please get in contact with us on 01453 885 633 or email [office@nelsontrust.com](mailto:office@nelsontrust.com)

Download a copy of the SWOP brochure here: <https://www.nelsontrust.com/assets/Uploads/SWOP-Brochure-2018-FINAL2.pdf>



**Rose Mahon**

Head of Excellence and Development  
The Nelson Trust

# How are pre-sentence reports working today?

**Stephen Whitehead, Head of Evidence and Data, Centre for Justice Innovation** discusses the Centre's forthcoming report: *Renewing trust: How we can improve the relationship between probation and the courts.*



The relationship between courts and probation holds the key to tackling the over-use of harmful short-term custody and reducing reoffending. In June 2018, Justice Secretary David Gauke MP called for short-term custody to be used only as “last resort.”<sup>1</sup> But if we are to make this aspiration a reality, we need to ensure that judges and magistrates have confidence in probation’s delivery of community sentences as they represent the only realistic alternative in many cases.

The Centre for Justice Innovation works to promote community sentences as an alternative to custody, and to understand the reason why their use has fallen by 24% since the start of the decade<sup>2</sup>, exploring the way that pre-sentence reports inform sentencers’ perceptions of probation. Pre-sentence reports (PSRs) are a key point of contact between sentencers and probation. They provide judges and magistrates with expert assessments of the risks posed by an offender and the needs driving their offending, and recommend a sentence option which protects the public and supports rehabilitation.

By reviewing the available data and conducting interviews and workshops with practitioners, we have built up a complex picture: one of a system that has been buffeted by a range of policy decisions, but also one where creative and innovative thinking on the ground is finding work-arounds to some of the structural challenges.

In policy terms, clearly the headline issue is the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms which erected a divide between courts and the organisations responsible for delivering the majority of the community sentences they impose. But alongside this radical shift, we have seen an increased emphasis on timeliness in the management of courts. While this is, in many ways, a laudable goal it has had its own impact

on the work of probation in courts. And all of this change is occurring at a time when austerity is forcing every part of the justice system to struggle to maintain basic services with limited resources. Taken together, these factors have formed the backdrop for a substantial shift in how pre-sentence reports are delivered.

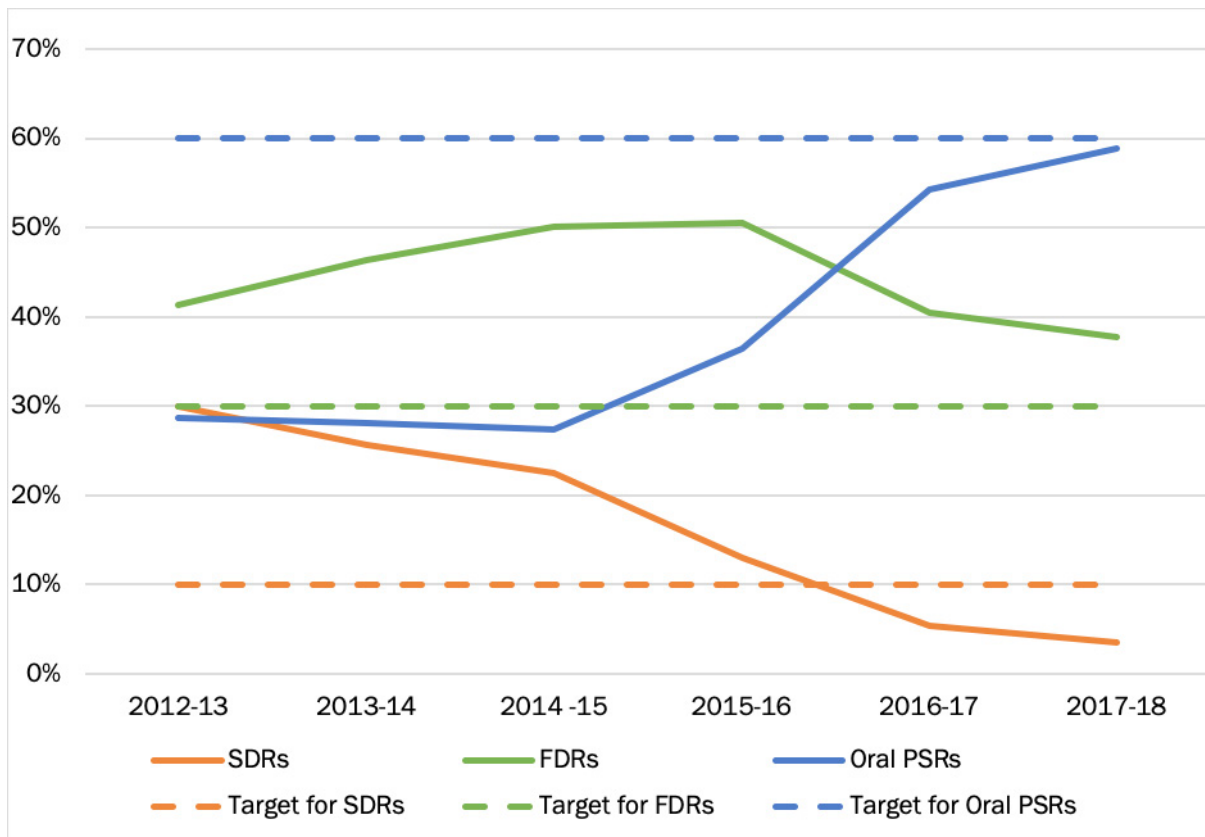
## The changing delivery of pre-sentence reports

In our analysis of data on pre-sentence reports, we found two key trends: a significant reduction in the use of pre-sentence reports, and a change in the way they are delivered. The fall in the number of pre-sentence reports is stark. We have gone from 185,000 in 2012/13 to only 124,000 last year: a fall of almost a third over a period when the number of convictions has remained relatively stable. This fall has been seen in both magistrates and crown courts (though the drop in the former is a little steeper). It’s worth noting, however, that these statistics don’t count cases where previous PSRs are re-used, which may exaggerate the size of the change, but nonetheless it seems significant.

Perhaps more striking, though, is the change in the way that reports are delivered. The National Probation Service’s E3 model set ambitious targets for increasing the proportion of PSRs delivered orally, reducing the use of written fast delivery reports (FDRs) and, in particular, the most comprehensive Standard Delivery Reports (SDRs)<sup>3</sup>. In the three years since the targets were introduced the use of oral reports has doubled – going from 27% of all reports to 59%, while SDRs have fallen dramatically from 22% to only 3%. In magistrates’ courts, in particular, the SDR is almost unheard of, representing less than 1% of all PSRs.



Figure 4: Pre-sentence reports issued by type, 2012-13 to 2017-18



Source: Ministry of Justice Offender Management Statistics Quarterly<sup>4</sup>

In investigating the impact of these changes with probation officers, we found some interesting messages. Firstly, and perhaps most surprisingly, the majority of practitioners we spoke to felt that the oral format was working well for the majority of cases. New arrangements with partner agencies such as police and social work departments to obtain background information and the “safer sentencing” focus on the issues pertinent to sentencing decisions were seen as working well, and both officers and sentencers valued the opportunity to discuss the report in the courtroom. However some long-standing officers did note that the limited recording of oral advice was undermining the traditional value of the PSR as a starting point for sentence planning.

Probation officers were more concerned about the reduction in SDRs and, in particular, whether FDRs were being used inappropriately in some complex or traumatic cases. They noted that the guidance around when to use an SDR was restrictive and reported that they felt discouraged from using their professional discretion to go against that guidance. The key challenge was seen as workload: while FDRs and SDRs were often delivered in a similar number of calendar days, courts staff were expected to complete an SDR with only a half day of work. Probation officers told us that working on this volume of difficult cases was leading to burnout in members of court teams and potentially undermining the quality of advice.

## The content of pre-sentence reports

The probation officers we spoke to offered a mixed set of views on the content of PSRs since the reforms. In terms of offender assessments, the consensus was that the system was working well - or at least as well as it ever had, given long-standing complaints around the suite of assessment tools in use. However, some did stress the difficulties of establishing a rapport with an offender in the short interval allowed for an oral report.

There was more concern about the quality of recommendations of community sentences. Many of the officers we spoke to expressed real concern that they lacked the information about CRC services that they needed to be able to make detailed and robust proposals which can command the confidence of sentencers. This picture varied significantly across different CRCs however: some CRCs had provided expanded rate cards that offered detailed service specifications, while in other areas courts staff had never seen any rate card at all. Some officers also noted that the design of the Rehabilitative Activity Requirement (RAR) placed further limits on how far they could be specific about the way that an offender would be supported on a community sentence - a concern shared by many sentencers.

Sentencers, in particular, also noted a fall in the use of treatment requirements in community orders. This is backed up by the statistics: the proportion of orders containing drug rehabilitation requirements and mental health treatment requirements has fallen by half since their peaks earlier this decade<sup>5</sup>. In part, this is likely to be caused by the well-documented cuts to treatment budgets<sup>6</sup>. However, some practitioners also suggested that treatment requirements were being displaced by the RAR, either because it requires less pre-sentence assessment, or (less cynically) because it allows a better integration between treatment and other forms of support.

## How can we improve pre-sentence reports?

Our research suggests that while some areas are working well, recent policy changes have had some negative impacts on the delivery of pre-sentence reports which may be undermining sentencers' trust in community sentences. Probation officers and sentencers who took part in our research have highlighted particular issues around the assessments of complex cases, the production of detailed recommendations for community sentences and the use of treatment requirements which all seem to have suffered.

However, participants also highlighted innovations which they saw as having the potential to address these issues. Some of these focus directly on improving sentencing such as the Embedded CRC model in use at Teeside magistrates court where a CRC Probation Service Officer (PSO) is housed with the NPS court team to provide information on CRC service provision. Another promising example is the five-site Community Sentence Treatment Requirement Pilot which seeks to increase the use of those requirements via new resources for on-the-day assessment and enhanced provision in the community.

Other strategies focus on improving sentencers' broader knowledge of community sentences such as in Lincolnshire where the NPS and CRC have collaborated to provide magistrates with high quality training including opportunities to meet with a range of probation staff including former service users. Participants were also supportive of models of problem-solving courts where sentencers conduct regular reviews of offenders under probation supervision, which they felt could reduce reoffending as well as increase sentencer trust.

However, while we believe that these innovations can improve pre-sentence reports, we must observe two caveats. Firstly, many of these will require some investment. While the cost is likely to be less than the savings we could achieve through meaningful reductions in custody, we cannot pretend that improvement can be delivered for free. Secondly, many of these ideas are work-arounds to problems created by TR's break-up of probation trusts. Repairing the damage to sentencer trust will be much easier if we use the opportunity of the end of the current round of CRC contracts to heal the rift in our probation service.

You can sign up to receive a free copy of the report when it's released at <http://justiceinnovation.org/mailling-list/>



**Stephen Whitehead**  
Head of Evidence and Data  
Centre for Justice Innovation



<sup>1</sup> Speech by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, the Rt Hon David Gauke MP, at a reception of the Care not Custody coalition, on Thursday, 21 June 2018. Available online at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/David%20Gauke%20MP%20Care%20not%20Custody%20speech%20210618.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Bowen. (2017) Community sentences across borders. Centre for Justice Innovation. Available online at: <http://justiceinnovation.org/portfolio/community-sentences-across-borders/>

<sup>3</sup> National Probation Service (2016) NPS Operating Model v1 and National Probation Service Probation Instruction 04/2016 Determining Pre Sentence Reports

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Justice Offender Management Statistics Quarterly (various editions) table 4.10

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice Offender Management Statistics Quarterly (various editions) table 4.10

<sup>6</sup> See, for example <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/spending-on-drug-and-alcohol-treatment-slashed-by-105m-in-four-years-a7912531.html>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/mental-health-trusts-uk-funding-government-cuts-royal-college-psychiatrists-a8219486.html>



# Sir Graham Smith Research Awards 2019

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## **Helen Schofield** **Acting CEO, Probation Institute**

Is there a subject within your work that you would like to explore more fully through research? Could this be of benefit to your practice and that of others? Would you like to develop research skills supported by an experienced academic with knowledge of your field?

Through the Sir Graham Smith Research Awards, the Probation Institute annually offers an opportunity to practitioners in probation and rehabilitation services to research areas in which they have such an interest.







A key strand of the Probation Institute, as a Centre of Excellence, is to promote the development of evidence-informed practice, encouraging the greater involvement of practitioners in the evaluation of their work, completing short pieces of practice-based research that contributes to probation knowledge and expertise. The Sir Graham Smith Research Awards are a key element to supporting that approach. They were established in 2002 in recognition of the late Sir Graham Smith's influential leadership in the Probation Service and particularly to his contribution to the development of evidence-based practice.

The Awards are open to practitioners in NPS, CRCs, voluntary organisations or the prison service. All projects must meet the ***approval criteria*** and must be achievable within 6 to 8 weeks. Practitioners often complete the research and the research reports alongside their day job with an allocation of time from their management.

Recent Sir Graham Smith Research Awards have addressed "Reflective Practice", "Integrated Offender Management", "Protective Factors" and "Training for Work with Personality Disorder".

## Applying for the 2019 Sir Graham Smith Research Awards.

The eligibility and selection criteria for the 2019 Award are as follows:

- You must be a practitioner currently employed by either a probation service organisation or an organisation whose work is involved in community justice and rehabilitation. Applications will be considered from practitioners working in the public, private or voluntary sectors.
- Your research proposal should directly relate to evaluating an area of probation or community justice practice. It should have the potential to contribute to the better understanding of the impact of a relevant service, intervention, process or organisational arrangement.
- Your research methodology should focus on data collection, observation and analysis sourced from probation/community justice practice and organisations.
- Your proposal should have clear objectives and be for a relatively short piece of research, which would take approximately 6/8 full weeks to complete; proposals and methodology will be judged against the stated objectives and the practical feasibility of undertaking them within this period of time.

If your application were successful, your employer organisation would be expected to facilitate the research work, granting you the necessary facility time and helping you to access internal data sources where appropriate. Candidates will first need to get permission from their employer before submitting an application for the Award.

## Selection Process

Depending on the range and quality of applications the Probation Institute intends to make up to five Awards, selected from those received by the closing date.

All the research proposals received will be considered by a panel to be convened by the Probation Institute. The panel will reach a decision on the Award winners based on the comparative quality of the information supplied on the application forms as judged against the selection criteria. The selection panel would also have the discretion to seek geographical and organisational balance when making their decision.

## Approval from HMPPS Research Panel

All selected applications will need to be approved by the HMPPS Research Approval Panel. The Probation Institute will work closely with candidates to achieve this approval.

## Carrying out the research

Candidates would be expected to complete the work in approximately 6/8 weeks of effort. The research must be completed anytime between the 1st June and the 31st October 2019, but the candidate would have flexibility within that time period as to when specifically to undertake the work. It is the responsibility of the Award winners to discuss with their employers how they plan to carry out their project (including any time needed to be taken out from normal work to complete the study).

The Institute will also ensure a Mentor is provided for the successful candidates, e.g. from academics and/or Fellows relevant to the topic/methodology style.



## Presenting and disseminating the research

Providing that the research produced from the Award winner is deemed by the Probation Institute to have achieved the expected quality, the Probation Institute will publish, support and promote the research on a national stage.

The Award winner would have the opportunity to present their research to practitioners and others at Probation Institute events.

The Reports will also be made publically available on the Probation Institute website, drawn to the attention of members and relevant stakeholders, including policy-makers, practitioners, service providers and partner agencies.

There will also be an opportunity for the Award winner to feature their work in the Probation Institute's magazine, Probation Quarterly.

Completed [Application Forms](#) should be sent to [admin@probation-institute](mailto:admin@probation-institute) by 31st March 2019

For further information contact Helen Schofield [Helen@probation-institute.org](mailto:Helen@probation-institute.org) or Anne Worrall [a.j.worrall@keele.ac.uk](mailto:a.j.worrall@keele.ac.uk)

