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Quarterly

UMBRELLA REVIEW OF RNR



**Building Probation Capacity:
a critical review**

**Mental health support for
people on probation**

**Interview with Professor
Lorraine Gelsthorpe**

PROBATION *Quarterly*

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Probation Quarterly publishes short articles of 500 - 1500 words which are of interest to practitioners and researchers in public, private or voluntary sector work with people on probation and victims. These articles can be about:

- the activities of the Probation Institute.
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- reports from special events, seminars, meetings or conferences.
- summaries of your own completed research. (Note: we do not publish requests for research participants)
- brief reviews of books or research reports that have caught your eye.
- thought pieces where you can reflect on an issue that concerns you.

The articles need to be well-written, informative and engaging but don't need to meet the academic standards for a peer-reviewed journal. The editorial touch is 'light' and we can help you to develop your article if that is appropriate. If you have an idea for a suitable article, let me know what you have in mind and I can advise you on how to proceed. Please also read our [language policy](#) which asks all contributors to avoid stigmatising language.

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Jake Phillips

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WELCOME TO PROBATION QUARTERLY

PQ33 EDITORIAL: PROBATION RESET AND SDS40



Jake Phillips
Editor, Probation Quarterly

I am writing this editorial the day before around 2000 people get released from prison early under the Government's SDS40 scheme. As many readers will know, this policy is designed to reduce pressure on the prison system which has been at capacity for several months. In comparison to the previous government's attempts to deal with a high prison population, SDS40 is an improvement: at least there has been some time for planning so that fewer people will be released at a moment's notice, to insufficient support networks in the community. Depending on how many people end up being recalled, this should have a positive impact on the running of prisons. However, SDS40 simply pushes pressure onto probation and whilst the probation reset will

have created some capacity it is unclear as to whether it has done enough. Only time will tell what the impact of this will be on public safety, reoffending rates, peoples' experiences of probation and staff workloads. Many people are [predicting](#) the worst with Martin Jones, Chief Inspector of Probation, describing it as a 'roll of the dice' and that 'it is inevitable things will go wrong'. That said, the optimist in me can't help but think that - if successful - these developments could pave the way towards a more parsimonious criminal justice system which keeps people in prison for less time and supervises them in the community for shorter periods. Time will only tell which side of history my optimism will fall.

In this issue of PQ33 we have a range of articles covering evidence, mental health, probation capacity and more. The issue starts with a summary of an umbrella review of the RNR model for delivering probation from Seena Fazel and Louis Favril. The review finds that the evidence underpinning RNR is not quite as robust as published articles on the issue may suggest. Secondly, we hear from Coral Sirdifield, Charlie Brooker and Andrew Fowler on their work on mental health provision for people on probation - their article includes a useful map of what services are available which I am sure will be invaluable to practitioners. Loraine Gelsthorpe is well known in the field of probation, not least as chair of the Probation Institute. I was delighted that she agreed to be interviewed by myself for this issue of PQ: her insights into the challenges facing probation are well worth a read.

Vivian Gieran then provides us with a critical review of a report on building capacity in probation by Leo Tigges and Steve Pitts. We hear again from Joe Winkler in this issue: this time on the theme of sharing best practice in probation between the US and Europe. I was pleased to

present at a recent PI research event on SFOs and regulatory activity in probation: Anne Burrell has provided a useful write up of the event for those who were unable to attend. In our second review of the issue, Lee Morgan's review of *Memory & Injustice: Wrongful Accusations in the United Kingdom* sheds light on the concept of recovery memory syndrome and its implications for probation practice. The final article comes from Lyn Adamson and Matt Long whose article points the way for the current deleterious situation in probation to be used to reinvigorate the demand for a return to social work values and the avoidance of the reductionist agenda.

Finally, I am sorry to say that this will be my final issue as editor of *Probation Quarterly* as I move on to pastures new. Editing PQ for the last three years has been a highlight of my work, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the magazine over this time. Thanks also to Helen Schofield for her support and Richard Rowley's invaluable work on the production side of things. The PI is in the process of recruiting a new editor so watch this space for news on this in due course.

WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE PROBATION INSTITUTE



Helen Schofield
Chief Executive
Probation Institute

It has certainly been a busy summer. As we publish PQ the early release plan -SDS40- is live and practitioners across England and Wales will be responding to the numbers released - each one a significant challenge.

We hope that the huge commitment of practitioners is recognised and fully appreciated by the new Government, HMPPS and the public, and critically supported by essential services in the community. We would also wish that the media could behave in a less sensational manner with regard to early release.

We have exchanged correspondence with Lord Timpson the new minister for Prisons, Parole and Probation. His reply includes very positive comments about probation and the voluntary sector and about the need to look more closely at sentencing. We are pleased to hear Martin Jones Chief Inspector also emphasising the need to look at who goes to prison and why. The letter has been circulated to members.

In our work seeking to influence sentences with regard to effective practice and public opinion we are looking for brief good news stories about supervision in the community. Please send us good news stories to admin@probation-institute.org

We are promoting our next Research Event - looking at the Evaluation of the Newham Y2A Hub and with a contribution from HMIP on their newly released report on the Inspection of probation services for young adults. This event will be online between 12.30pm and 2.00pm on Friday 22nd November. Details are on our [website](#).

We will be publishing this month a Position Paper on professionalism in practice and we are encouraging discussion of this paper thinking about the meaning of professionalism. Please look out for the paper on our [website](#).

Please read the interview with our excellent Chair Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe who talks about her distinguished career in academic research in the field of justice.

And finally we must thank Jake Phillips for his huge contribution to the Probation Institute as editor of PQ for three years. Jake has continued to build up both excellent contributions and readers. Sound plans are in place for the succession for the December issue, but we will miss you in this role Jake. Thank you.



Results from an umbrella review of the evidence underpinning RNR principles: inconsistent and poor quality

Introduction

The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model developed by Bonta & Andrews (2024) has been one of the leading approaches to offender management and rehabilitation over the past decades. Reviews have been published in support, including many written by the developers themselves. The model is constructed around three core principles:

- The *risk* principle (who to treat) holds that the level of intervention should be matched to the offender's risk of reoffending; more intensive treatment should be reserved for those at high risk.
- The *need* principle (what to treat) describes the dynamic risk factors ("criminogenic needs") associated with recidivism that interventions should target, including antisocial personality patterns, pro-criminal attitudes and associates, substance use, and problems related to family, leisure, and work/school domains.
- The *responsivity* principle (how to treat) states that cognitive-behavioural and social learning interventions are most effective in reducing recidivism (general responsivity) and that treatment should be tailored to individual characteristics (such as gender, ethnicity, and motivation) in order to maximize its impact (specific responsivity).

Much of the popularity of the RNR model derives from statements about its underlying evidence base, which is often contrasted to newer models with less well-developed research in support. But is this claim really evidence-based?



Seena Fazel

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Aims and Methods

We aimed to synthesise and appraise the underlying evidence base of the RNR model. To do so, we conducted a 'review of reviews' (also called an umbrella review) to assess the quality and consistency of the published evidence (Fazel et al., 2024). After searching key bibliographic databases for reviews published in the past 20 years, we identified 26 eligible reviews and meta-analyses published from 2002 to 2023 that examined at least one of the model's core principles. We assessed the robustness of this evidence using some validated measures such as the degree of uncertainty, whether there was publication bias, adequate sample sizes to test principles, and methodological quality of the reviews.

Results

For the *risk* principle, based on seven meta-analyses, we found that individuals deemed to pose high risk who adhered to treatment had a decreased risk of recidivism compared to low-risk persons. However, in meta-analyses conducted by independent researchers, around half the effect sizes were not significant for this principle.

In terms of the *need* principle, six meta-analyses indicated small but significant effects for recidivism risk according to the criminogenic needs. In relation to assessing recidivism risk, the discriminative accuracy (as measured using a statistic called Area under the curve [AUC]) of risk assessment tools based on the need principle was modest at best (around 65%, where 50% would be a chance level of such accuracy and 100% perfect discrimination).

We identified 15 eligible meta-analyses on the *general responsivity* principle, for which a third of effect sizes were not significant. Based on five reviews without overlapping samples and potential authorship bias (i.e. those not written by developers and others with potential conflicts of interest), the pooled odds ratio was 1.4 (95% CI 1.2-1.7). This indicates a small but significant effect size (where odds ratios above 1 are deemed higher risk than the comparison).

Based on four reviews, we identified poorer outcomes (attrition or recidivism) in certain subgroups (non-white individuals, ethnic minorities, aboriginal populations, and other sociodemographic subpopulations based on gender and education), indicating some support for the *specific responsivity* principle. In addition, low motivation was associated with higher levels of attrition and recidivism.

Across the different principles, the evidence was mostly of poor quality. One exception was reviews assessing risk assessment tools based on the need principle, which were of moderate to high quality.

Interpretation

We synthesised findings from 26 meta-analyses published over two decades, based on data from more than 450 primary studies. Overall, the statistical support for the individual RNR principles was inconsistent, and the quality of the underlying evidence base was mostly low. Our findings question the long-held claims that the RNR model is evidence-based.

We outline five key limitations related to the reliability and validity of the extant research testing the RNR model and its core principles: potential authorship bias, lack of transparency, substandard primary research, limited subgroup analyses, and conflation of prediction with causality.

First, the primary studies supporting the RNR model largely rely on research conducted by the model developers (Andrews and Bonta) and their colleagues, which raises concerns about possible authorship bias. For example, of the meta-analyses on the need and general responsibility principles, those authored by the model developers reported the highest effect sizes, suggesting overestimation of effects. Reviews with potential authorship bias also had the lowest quality score. In addition, it is notable that in many of the articles authored by the model developers and their colleagues, potential (financial) conflicts of interest were not reported.

Second, there were important limitations in the reporting standards of the included reviews. Many provided incomplete or no information regarding search strategy, sample size and characteristics, treatments given to control groups, or primary study characteristics and results. This makes assessing the quality of the evidence and the robustness of the findings challenging.

Third, the quality of the primary research underpinning the RNR model is generally low. Most included studies had a case-control design, which is prone to bias. Randomized controlled trials in this area were rare – and the few trials that were included were of poor quality, in particular with regard to control group treatment and reporting.

Fourth, in terms of subgroup analyses, the identified meta-analyses commonly rely on a statistical approach called meta-regression to examine what works, in what circumstances, and for whom. However, these analyses are typically underpowered and prone to confounding owing to differences in study settings and populations. Furthermore, as the RNR literature has primarily investigated recidivism as a binary outcome, more fine-grained examination of the prevalence, frequency, severity, and imminence of reoffending is warranted.

Fifth, the RNR model often conflates prediction with causality, assuming that factors with high predictive power for recidivism also have a causal role. This is problematic because predictive factors, such as socioeconomic status or ethnicity, may serve as proxies for broader structural issues rather than direct causes of criminal behaviour. This can lead to misguided policy implications and interventions that do not address the underlying causes of recidivism.

Conclusion

This umbrella review of meta-analyses examined the quality and consistency of the extant evidence that examines the RNR model. Despite its widespread use in criminal justice and claims from experts, we found that the evidence base in support of the RNR model is mostly low quality and inconsistent.

We outlined five key limitations underlying this low quality that are primarily based on reliability and validity of empirical findings testing the model, and nature of the conclusions drawn. These findings raise important and timely questions regarding the continued application and utility of RNR as a model informing criminal justice services. Higher quality and independent research is needed to support the claims of the RNR principles. Without such evidence, introducing RNR into new jurisdictions should not be recommended. Although it was beyond the scope of this specific review to present alternatives, other research has suggested that (1) risk assessment models for sentencing should not be used in isolation from professional judgement, and that simple scalable models, such as OxRec (violent recidivism) and OxRIS (sexual offending), should be considered (see <https://oxrisk.com>) (Beaudry et al, 2023; Yu et al, 2022), (2) there is now increasing and converging lines of evidence for certain medication classes to reduce recidivism risk: antipsychotics for people with severe mental illness (Sariaslan et al, 2022), and medications for drug and alcohol use disorders.

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**Mental health support for people
on probation**
Sketching the landscape

Introduction

In 2012 we published a study of the prevalence of mental illness amongst people on probation. This was one of the very few studies world-wide, to be based on a random sample. From this, we can estimate that there are currently approximately 93,000 people on probation in England and Wales with a diagnosable mental illness, including 37,000 (41%) experiencing common mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety and just over 12,000 (13%) with a psychosis (Brooker et al., 2012). In comparison in 2014 around 17% of adults (defined as people aged 16 or more years) in the general population met the criteria for a common mental health disorder (Drummond et al., 2016), and the prevalence of psychotic disorders was 0.7% (Bebbington et al., 2016).

Our findings also showed the complexity of diagnosis in the probation population. For example, around 70% of people with a mental illness on probation caseloads also have a significant problem with drugs or alcohol use.

The *National Partnership Agreement for Health and Social Care for England 2022-2025* seeks to improve the quality of services for people in prison and those subject to statutory supervision by the probation service in the community. It states that 'for individuals subject to community sentences or on license or post-sentence supervision, healthcare is provided on the same terms as the general public' (HM Government and NHS England, 2023: 13). However, this ignores the complexity of mental health need that characterises people on probation.



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This complexity can be a barrier to service access as acknowledged in the National Probation Service (NPS) Health and Social Care Strategy which stated that even though people in the criminal justice system:

'have the right to access local health and social care services, they often have problems accessing these services, which are set up in a traditional way that may not be able to cater to their multiple and complex needs' (HMPPS and NPS, 2019: 4).

Similarly, the *Joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for people with mental health needs and disorders* stated that 'there is a shortage of comprehensive and high-quality services to meet the spectrum of mental health needs of individuals on probation supervision' (HM Inspectorate of Probation et al., 2021: 87). Here, inspectors reported a 24-month wait for community mental health team appointments (HM Inspectorate of Probation et al., 2021: 101).

So, we know that people on probation are likely to have complex mental health needs and to struggle to access support, but what exactly is the role of the probation practitioner here? A *National Partnership Agreement* was put in place to support healthcare commissioning and delivery in prisons over a decade ago. As shown above, this has now been expanded to include provision for people on probation. It states somewhat ambiguously that:

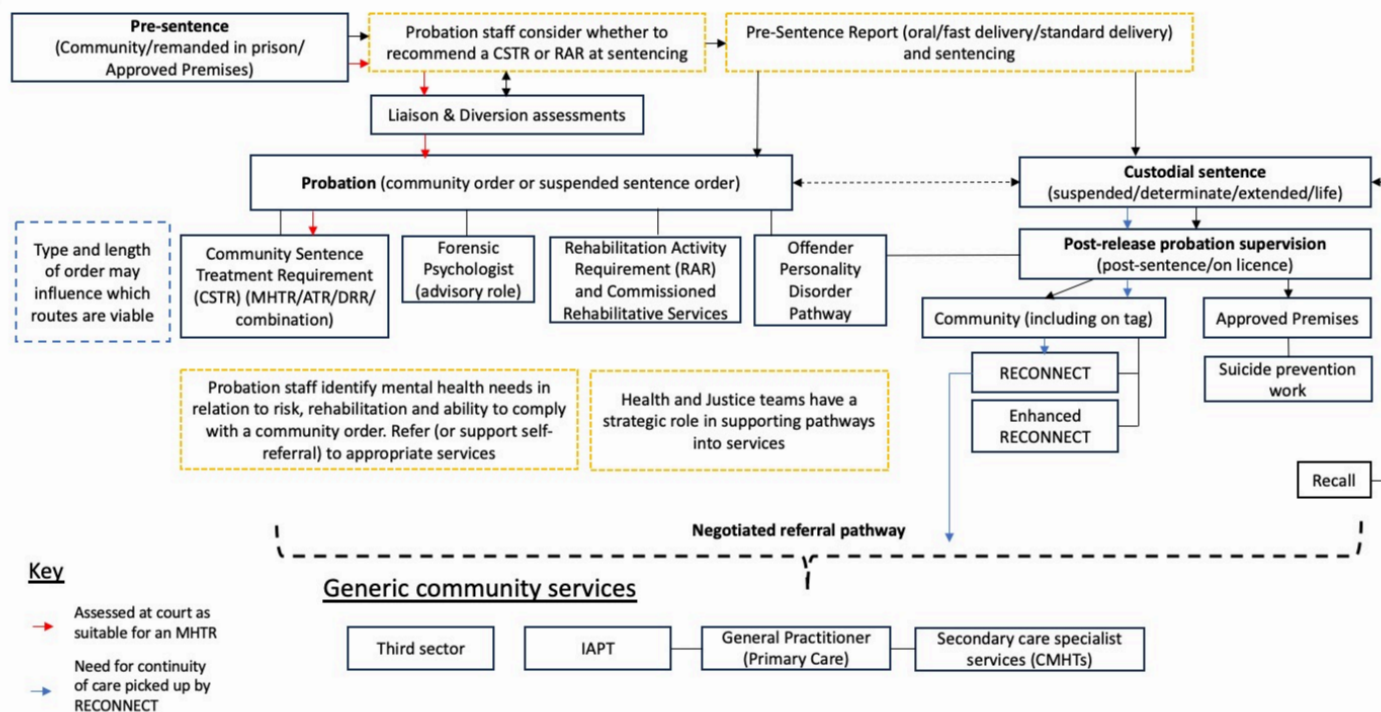
'although the Probation Service does not have a statutory responsibility to support the health and social care needs of individuals under their supervision in the community, it is committed to reducing health inequalities for people in our care, which is central to resettlement in the community and to overall rehabilitation' (HM Government and NHS England, 2023: 13).

More clarity is needed regarding the expected role of probation practitioners in achieving this commitment. Perhaps the closest to a detailed description of probation practitioners' role in relation to health was given in the NPS Health and Social Care Policy 2019-2022. It stated that in the community NPS staff 'consider the health and social care needs of individuals when assessing and monitoring progress and risk factors. NPS staff may also assist individuals in their rehabilitation by supporting and encouraging them to access appropriate treatment and/or services' (HMPPS and NPS, 2019: 6). The strategy included numerous objectives to be achieved through local-level multi-agency working including developing robust pathways into health and social care services for people on probation.

So, if a probation practitioner recognises that an individual on their caseload has a mental health disorder, what pathways can they use to help the individual to access support? Given the amount of change in this landscape in the last decade, we thought it would be helpful to attempt to map the available routes.

The mental health pathway for people on probation

Figure 1 shows our impression of the current pathways into treatment/support that are available. Several initiatives have been commissioned solely by NHS England. These include Liaison and Diversion services which are available at all magistrates' courts in England. Their role is to identify people that may benefit from support due to neurodiversity, mental health and/or substance misuse needs and link them with support, including suggesting diversion away from the criminal justice system and into care. A recent evaluation (Disley et al., 2021) found that the programme increased referrals to mental health and alcohol treatment services and diversion from custodial sentences.

Figure 1: The mental health pathway for people on probation**Criminal justice-specific services/components**

The programme may also highlight that an individual is suitable for a Community Sentence Treatment Requirement (CSTR) through a report that probation staff can consider when making sentencing recommendations.

For those leaving custody, continuity in mental health support can be problematic (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023). The RECONNECT and Enhanced RECONNECT programmes run by the NHS in some parts of England work with people leaving custody to improve continuity of care for anyone with an identified health need. The evaluations of these programmes have yet to report. Concerns have been identified previously about the number of opportunities for information to be lost and trust to break down in the handover planning care for an individual's return to the community (HMIP and CQC, 2021: 59). This may potentially be addressed through resettlement passports to be rolled out digitally in 2024.

There are also programmes that have been jointly funded by NHS England and HMPPS. These include the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway, where the evaluation was severely disrupted by the Covid pandemic, and CSTRs (Mental Health Treatment Requirements [MHTRs], Alcohol Treatment Requirements [ATR], and Drug Rehabilitation Requirements [DRRs]). The latter were introduced in 2005 following their inclusion in the Criminal Justice Act 2003. To date, MHTRs have been under-used.

Quarterly statistics for April to June 2023 show a slight increase, with 37,872 community orders and suspended sentence orders being made, 509 (1.3%) of which include an MHTR. Currently MHTRs are not universally available across England and Wales, but there is an ambition to increase availability.

Whilst the alcohol and drug elements of CSTRs have not been recently appraised and reported, Callendar et al., (2023) completed an evaluation of the outcomes for people with an MHTR as part of a community order. In a sample ranging between 309 and 447 individuals clinically significant changes were reported in at least two of the three scales including measures for psychological distress and depression.

Finally, probation has commissioned health and justice co-ordinators, forensic psychology support, and Rehabilitation Activity Requirements (RARs) - a sentencing option available for those on a community order having been introduced in 2015 as part of the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 (NOMS, 2014). An activity recommended via a RAR could include access to a substance misuse service via Commissioned Rehabilitative Services. A report by HM Inspectorate of Probation (2017) identified a relationship between the use of RARs and a decline in the use of accredited programmes and CSTRs. The rationale appears to be that the move towards speedy justice has seen a preference for RARs as the other options require in-depth and time-consuming assessments.

Concluding Remarks


This article aims to provide a useful overview of the pathways into mental health services for people on probation. It is encouraging to see the investment that has been made into these routes over the last decade to improve access to support. However, these routes are not all universally available across England and Wales, and some of them remain under-utilised. We need more clarity on the role of the probation

practitioner in working with people on probation with mental illness, and whilst research and evaluation work has investigated the effectiveness of some elements of the pathways that we have described, many unanswered questions remain. Thus, more research should be commissioned.

Almost 30 years ago Home Office Circular 12/95 (Home Office and Department of Health, 1995) emphasised the need for active cooperation, information sharing and joint planning of service provision between criminal justice and health agencies. This was echoed in the Bradley Report (2009) which also emphasised the importance of continuity of care throughout the criminal justice system and the need for better quality data on the mental health needs of criminal justice populations. Recent inspection reports can only lead one to conclude that the same recommendations still apply today. Mental health service provision remains insufficient and unable to fully address the needs of many people on probation caseloads, whose needs are unlikely to be captured in joint strategic needs assessments (see HMIP et al., 2021; HMIP, 2020; and HMIP and CQC, 2021). New routes into care are welcome and in time evaluation may evidence whether they help to engage a marginalised population with care. Ultimately however, major investment is needed into community mental health services so that whichever route is taken, people get timely access to effective care. Commissioners need to be cognisant of the complexity of need in the probation population when compared to the general population and improve the availability of services that can work closely with probation practitioners to meet the needs of people on probation.

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**An interview with
Lorraine Gelsthorpe
Chair of the Probation Institute**

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Interviewed by Jake Phillips

You have been the Chair of the Probation Institute for around 18 months now. This seems like a fitting role for you, considering the contribution you've made to the field of probation through your research and other activities but I'd like to start at the beginning: what got you into probation in the first place?

I was always drawn to practice, and to people on the margins - being a child of the Vicarage - and even before University worked as a psychiatric nursing assistant - which was a sociological experience in itself! I worked in a large psychiatric hospital in Nottinghamshire on a psychogeriatric ward with women who had been incarcerated when they were 14 or 15 for having illegitimate children. It was the time of the de-institutionalisation movement and I had no idea where some of the women would live when they left the hospital: I just hoped for community care for them. Many were so institutionalised that it was hard to imagine how they would survive. In the second summer vacation of my time at Sussex University for my first degree I worked for Sean McConville (my tutor) as a research assistant on a major penal history project: this prompted my interest in criminal justice. This continued for a while after I finished my degree, at the same time as embarking on a career in social work, working initially with young people in trouble/troubled young people.

And how did you then end up working in the university/doing research?

After a personal bereavement (my partner) I left social work and came to Cambridge to study for the MPhil in Criminology. The course was wonderfully eye-opening. I had a job lined up in the Probation Service in Bristol for after the MPhil



Loraine Gelsthorpe
Chair
Probation Institute

(the new careers movement in Probation) but was persuaded to do a PhD instead. My thinking was that I would turn to Probation afterwards. It was not to be - my PhD was on girls and young women in the criminal justice system and allied agencies, and one thing led to another.

I subsequently worked for the Centre for Youth, Crime and Community at Lancaster University where Norman Tutt and colleagues were doing some innovative work with local authorities to divert young people from crime, the courts, and custody. Various projects followed including research on Crown Prosecution Service decision-making in regard to young people and the newly formed CPS operational philosophy would be when they made decisions about prosecuting young people.

A further post-doc looked at different regimes in men's prisons in the Midlands and I also did research analysing on race and gender issues in the production of Pre-Sentence Reports. This was the first piece of probation-focused research and it led to engagement with the Ministry of Justice. Working closely with Peter Raynor, we were asked to assist in devising a mechanism to ensure that race and gender issues were properly addressed in probation training and, crucially, in the production of pre-sentence reports. We duly created a checklist of points to consider when preparing reports - a checklist which remained in use for some considerable time.

I was subsequently Principal Investigator for research relating to Community Service Pathfinder Projects, research relating to community provision for women, an Integrated Offender Management project in Greater Manchester, and then led research relating to the function and meaning of the arts for people in prison and in the community. I have been involved in various other research projects relating to supporting people with learning disabilities caught up in the criminal justice system, housing provision for women leaving prison, self-inflicted deaths under community supervision, and trauma experienced by front-line workers in the criminal justice system for example.

What do you think counts as good quality probation practice? How can probation do good for people on probation and the communities it serves?

The notion of 'Doing Good' is very complex ... I think that the evidence suggests that the best form of public protection involves helping to change the hearts, minds and behaviour of those

who are in conflict with the law. But people have to want to change or be persuaded that change would be a good thing. We all know the saying 'you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make the horse drink' - and indeed, sometimes the key work of probation staff is persuading people that they can change as well as monitoring behaviour and protecting the public that way. I incline towards a social work model of practice (as in Scotland, with criminal justice social workers) and think that probation work is best organised locally, and in partnership with local authorities and other local third sector agencies. We know enough about effective supervision (see the review by Joanna Shapland for example: <https://www.cep-probation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/quality-of-probation-supervision.pdf>) to promote good practice. I also think that Approved Premises - often run by Probation - are under-rated and yet can provide a point of stability in people's lives. The best APs support people through difficult transitional periods; indeed, I think that there is scope for APs to be used much more as an alternative to imprisonment.

What are the main challenges for probation at the moment?

There are many challenges, not least a shortage of resources in the form of trained probation staff. Shabana Mahmood, as Justice Secretary, has indicated commitment to recruiting a thousand more trainee probation officers but it is going to take time for them to complete the training. Would that we could entice some experienced probation staff back into the Service! The BBC Panorama report on Probation showed the impact of underinvestment and lack of skilled and experienced staff on the effectiveness of the service in managing serious offenders.

The former Chief Inspector of Probation (Justin Russell) produced an annual report for 2022/23 which indicated a number of pressing issues waiting lists and delays to the assignment of offenders; serious high profile case reviews which have highlighted deficiencies in decision-making, and levels of staff; high caseloads and underfunding to meet demand; recruitment and retention issues combined with reduced experience in staff due to the retirement/ departure of experienced officers (some through the strain and stresses of the job). In addition, a centralised management structure linked to the Prison Service means that benefits of links with local organisations have been lost.

I think that one general challenge is that 'prison-centricity' features very largely in political thinking, media responses to crime, and to some extent in the public view too. It is as if there is no knowledge of core correctional curricula and of effective supervision practice. Perhaps the Probation Service needs a media champion/public relations person to 'sell' the good/effective work it does. I have been struck by the nature of the political pronouncements on recent riots/ disturbances - few of us would argue that custodial sentences weren't deserved by some of the offenders, but in some cases, where there was recognition and remorse in relation to the wrongfulness and harmfulness of actions, unpaid work in the community to give people opportunity to put things right (e.g. repairing damage done to hotels and hostels where asylum seekers are living) might have been a more suitable and educational option. This is not to underplay the nastiness of some of the offending behaviour but to think strategically about what is most likely to impact attitudes and behaviour for the better. Of course, this would require well-trained and experienced supervisors...

In that context, what advice you give to people thinking about entering the profession?

I would certainly encourage people to think about a career in the Probation Service - a challenging and rewarding occupation in equal measure, but at the same time I think that the Probation Service needs to do more for its staff in order to retain them. The Service needs to provide space for reflective practice, recognising the need for ongoing training and support within the Service. Probation staff are not mentioned often enough in debates about public service occupations and appropriate financial rewards.

I would also encourage trainees to join the Probation Institute - for access to a supportive community of practitioners and CPD opportunities.

And what advice would you have for the people who are leading probation?

I would encourage those leading Probation to think about other management structures and models of practice. In a way, probation staff have as much to do with police staff as they do prison officers and so a localised structure which facilitates closer links with the police, local authorities and allied agencies is critical. Youth Justice Teams/Services have core principles of practice but work within a multi-agency structure to facilitate sign-posting to ongoing support. Very often, offending is just one problem amongst many for people, and so to address the 'offending behaviour' without addressing other challenging factors in people's lives (homelessness, addiction, loss of hope and so on) won't take us very far. This doesn't mean providing 'goodies for baddies' as I have heard it put, but investment in accommodation and support services so as to lead to changes in behaviour in order to protect the public.

Community Centres for women have a strong record of success via their holistic approach to supporting women who have offended (see the summary provided by the Tavistock Institute: <https://www.tavinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Women-and-Girls-Briefing-Report-Final-web.pdf>). The good news stories of people changing their attitudes and behaviour because of the commitment and support of probation staff is too often overlooked.

I would also encourage those leading Probation to read, inwardly digest and act upon the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee report *Cutting Crime: better community sentences* (published in December 2023) which sets out the case for change to restore confidence in community sentencing rather than the over reliance on sending people to prison. There is a mistaken belief in deterrence-based sentencing - as if the harsher the penalty the greater the deterrence. There is very little research evidence to support such thinking - though it is a popular political view. Governments should promote what is effective (based on research findings) rather than what seems politically expedient at the time - and if this means challenging popular public opinion - then governments should do this in the interests of ensuring real change in attitudes and behaviour, and public protection.

The long-term vision and focus of Probation needs to be on communities served by local government. The Service needs to be placed-based with the whole system and governance focused on applying a holistic approach to offender management that prevents reoffending and builds trust in criminal justice.

I know you don't have a crystal ball but what do you think the future holds for probation?

I wish I did have a crystal ball...it is very hard to predict the future direction of probation, I just hope that there won't be further financial cuts and that the commitment to generate more trained officers will be followed through. Ideally, probation and community penalties would come to the fore; confidence would be restored in Probation (via experienced officers working in the courts so that magistrates receive information from trusted colleagues). Moves to professionalise probation staff are important; some see the embeddedness in the civil service as too constraining, but others see this as improving their status. What is key here is the need to recognise that probation work is an essential part of the criminal justice system which should not be constraining. Creativity and experienced probation voices should be heard in thinking about what works.

And, finally, what role does the Probation Institute have in all of this?

The importance of the Probation Institute has grown in recent years. The PI serves to champion probation work (in all its forms), and to support probation staff and trainees through a number of CPD opportunities: research-based training seminars, regular monthly professional discussions, and research opportunities. The Probation Institute publishes discussion papers, 'think pieces', this magazine (*Probation Quarterly*), and is a key player in debates about future directions for criminal justice. In references to HMPPS (His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service) the emphasis is often on prisons - the Probation Institute speaks up for probation and will continue to do so.



A critical review

**Building Probation Capacity:
What Works? Learning from the
European experience of
Probation Service Development
in the 21st Century**

Research Report:**Building Probation Capacity: What Works?
Learning from the European experience of
Probation Service Development in the 21st
Century****by Stephen Pitts and Leo Tigges**

Respected 'supranational' bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and Council of Europe (CoE) encourage and promote community sanctions and measures through the promulgation of international standards instruments, such as the UN's (1990) *Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules)* and the *European Probation Rules* (2010) respectively. Such standards, by their nature, are relatively uncontested in terms of their acceptance by relevant authorities and their applicability in the development and operation of probation services and organisations. *The authors of Building Probation Capacity: What Works?* (Pitts and Tigges, 2023; p.31) however, have justifiably "...observed that these [international standards instruments] do not address the process of 'getting there'" and that "furthermore, there exists no clear analytical or development framework for probation capacity building and no comprehensive studies have been conducted to discern different approaches and their effectiveness." In essence, while it is clear that the UN and CoE, for example, hold up their respective standards for implementation by Member States, that is not accompanied by a similar clarity in advice on how to achieve those standards, in organisational terms, in practice. And that is especially true when any jurisdiction seeks to set about developing a probation system and requires the necessary 'capacity' to do that 'from scratch.'

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Probation Service

While Pitts and Tigges point out that even the term *capacity building* is not necessarily universally agreed, the definition of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is cited (p.31) as offering a useful possibility in that regard, being:

The process by which people, organizations and society systematically stimulate and develop their capability over time to achieve social and economic goals, including through improvement of knowledge, skills, systems, and institutions- within a wider social and cultural enabling environment." (UNDRR, 2011)

The motivation to carry out the Building Probation Capacity study stems in large part from observations and analysis made through the author's work over many years in their countries of origin and many other contexts, and particularly in relation to probation capacity-building in a range of countries. This has led to their increasing awareness of the complexities and challenges of even understanding, let alone building capacity in developing probation organisations, structures and systems. Simply put, while many have argued for such capacity-building initiatives, up to now there has not existed a shared understanding and agreed model for describing and achieving success in developing probation systems. The report authors acknowledge that their observation of that need was recognised and supported - financially and otherwise - by a number of bodies, including the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) and a Dutch Charity, the Nationale Reclasserings Actie (National Probation Action). A small Scientific Board, comprised of Professors Rob Canton (England), Ioan Durnescu (Romania), Peter van der Laan (Netherlands), and Anton van Kalmthout (Netherlands), provided academic, technical advice and support to the project. The assistance of elements of the European Union (EU), Council of Europe (CoE) and the Confederation of European Probation (CEP), among others, is also acknowledged, reflecting the widespread recognition of the value of carrying out this research project.

The study set out initially to answer two questions:

1. To what extent a model, tested and refined during the project, provides a framework or "language" to assist probation capacity building? and
2. What factors support, or hinder, success in probation capacity building?

Those questions were supplemented by a further question, during the course of the project:

3. To identify steps that international bodies could take to support probation development and further probation work at the global level.

The authors of the study - Stephen Pitts and Leo Tigges - have extensive experience in the field of probation work, at various levels and roles, at national, continental and global levels. It is clear from the content of the report that, in addition to their many years' experience, Stephen and Leo are hugely committed to and personally invested in the development of probation internationally. They are very well-known and respected in this field globally; this must have increased their access *per se* to survey respondents and is likely to have maximised the quality of the information accessed via data collection.

The report is structured as follows, comprising six substantive chapters: 1. Introduction, 2. Methodology, 3. Findings and Implications from Country Field Work, 4. Findings and Implications, 5. Literature Review and 6. Conclusions and Recommendations. Those chapters are preceded by an Executive Summary, as well as Background Notes, Contents and Acknowledgements. There are a further 177 pages in the latter part of the report itself, comprising References and five Annexes, covering Methodology, Domains and Enablers (of probation organisation), Discussion of Literature, and Summary and Consolidation of Key Findings. There is a further Annex containing six individual country reports conducted as part of the study, which is available and can be accessed separately.

The methodology employed incorporated a literature review and the study, under a number of headings, of development of probation in several European countries. The latter is supplemented by knowledge of developments in other jurisdictions (in Europe and elsewhere), as observed by the authors, in addition to engagement with other relevant bodies. It draws and benefits from the extensive contacts of the authors and the experiences of those with whom they have engaged. In many respects, the authors are hands-on 'players' or perhaps respondents to the research, providing a qualitative input throughout, to the findings, conclusions and recommendations. The report sets out four key areas of findings, products or outcomes of the research, described as the 'Essential Takeaways':

- 1. The development of a model or 'language' of capacity building** to support relevant exploration, discussion, planning, review and future change in practice,
- 2. Identification of ten probation capacity-building 'success factors'** (partnership approach, shared vision, context/complexity, responding to resistance, networks and alliances, strategy, project management, technical and 'soft' skills required, collaboration with supranational bodies and built-in evaluation, research and reporting,
- 3. Risk factors in capacity building** (including net-widening, resistances, high caseloads, potential dominance of control measures over rehabilitation),
- 4. Recommendations to support probation development globally** (build a worldwide probation network, platform or organisation, revisit and update existing

recommendations and guidance on supervised community-based sanctions, ensure that relevant budgets at the disposal of the UN and others have a focus on probation development, strengthen data collection and dissemination, promote research, evaluation and improved communications).

One criticism relates to the length of the report and associated documentation. The report itself comprises 367 pages, with a further total of 267 pages in the combined reports from the six countries (initially five, with one more added later) studied. One drawback associated with the length of the report is the fact that there is a certain amount of duplication, or extended elaboration that might have been avoided, if certain sections were tightened up. For example, literature and methodology are addressed in two separate sections of the report. The impression created is that the authors may not have wanted to lose any data gathered, which is understandable, given the richness of the resulting information and analysis. That said, there would be some benefit for the reader if certain sections were tightened up somewhat.

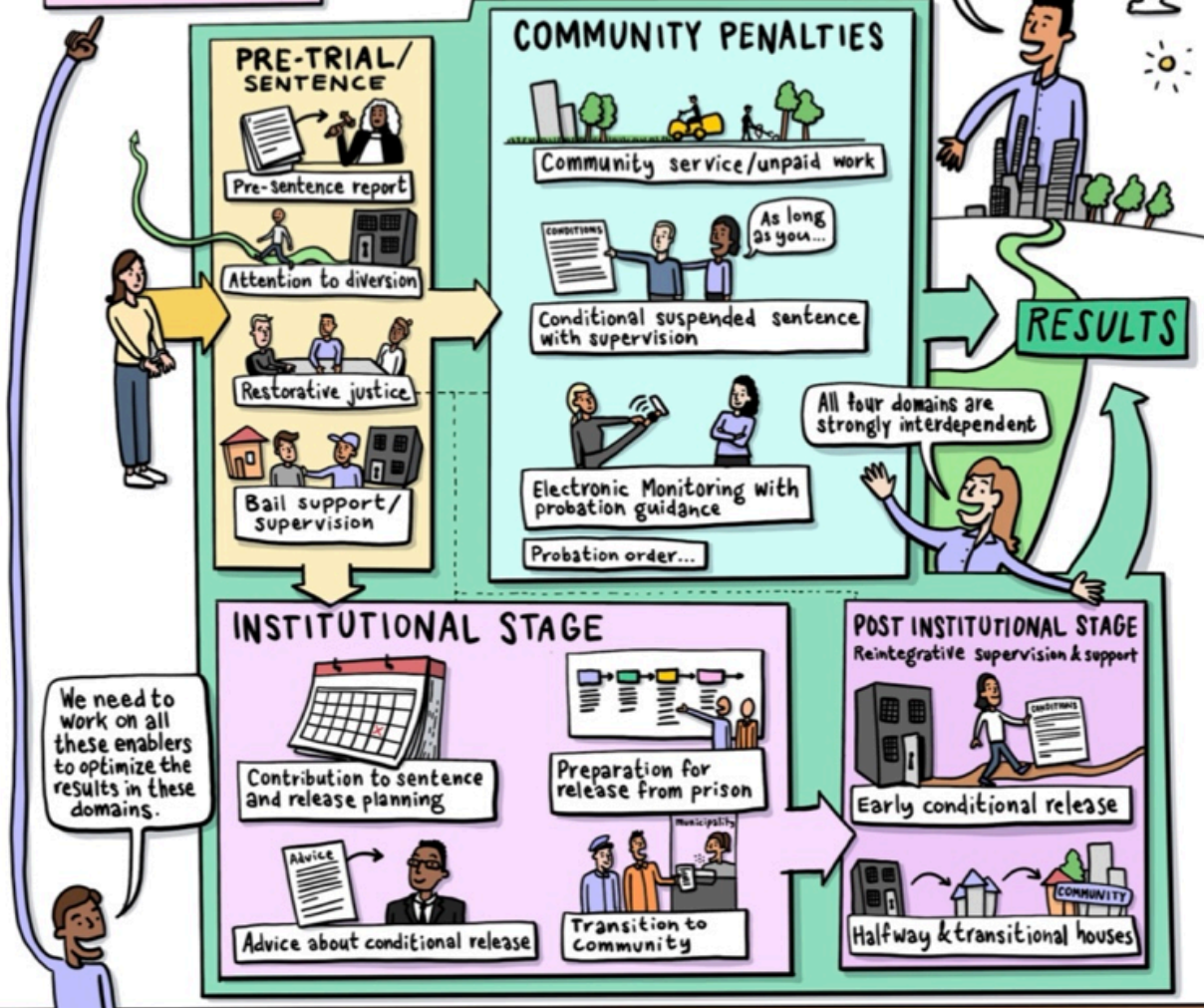
One of the significant strengths of this report is the practicality of its approach and the clarity of its findings and recommendations. This is illustrated no more clearly than in the infographic of the model proposed, reproduced below, which visually sets out the model for developing and building capacity in probation systems. The model incorporates relevant *Domains* (or Areas of Responsibility), which reflect the points of intervention of probation in individuals' lives, from Pre-Trial through to Post-Institutional stages; and the key *Enablers* of probation's capacity development:



PROBATION CAPACITY BUILDING

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY/ DOMAINS

Objectives: reducing reoffending, supporting reintegration, preventing further victims, reduce the use of prison...



ENABLERS



Steve Pitts & Leo Tigges (2023)

BORD&STIFT

The research project undertaken by Pitts and Tigges is a real 'labour of love,' which does achieve its stated goals. The report reflects, in a sense, the culmination of a career-long project in response to a clearly identified need, based on the extensive experience of the authors. It also represents a bold, ambitious and forward-looking step towards improving the availability and practice of probation, in its various forms, across a range of jurisdictions. While the report could be more tightly structured in some areas, there are numerous 'nuggets' of observations and findings that reward the reader throughout. One might speculate if the real proof of its value will be demonstrated to the extent that it might be used in 'real world' developments, specifically outside the European sphere of direct influence. That is not to say that the report does not have applicability in jurisdictions where probation is already established. Either way, the report deserves to be critically reviewed and applied where appropriate in as wide a range of jurisdictions as possible. In that context, the

publication will be of particular interest and relevance to authorities in jurisdictions considering the establishment or further development of probation services, as well as those jurisdictions where probation is already established. Pitts and Tigges have already presented and discussed the key findings of their research report at a number of conferences, including at the World Congress on Probation and Parole, held in the Netherlands earlier this year, which is already a worthwhile and welcome follow-up activity.

The full research report and the separate countries reports, are available on open access on the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) website at: [Building Probation Capacity Report: What Works?](#)



Transatlantic Collaboration

Sharing Best Practices between the United States and European Countries in Probation and Parole Systems

During the 2023 American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) Summer Institute in New York City, a significant discussion took place between Iuliana Carbutaru, Vice President of the Confederation of European Probation, and Joe Winkler, Florida Assistant Secretary of Community Corrections. They explored the idea of probation collaboration between the United States and Romania. This conversation laid the groundwork for what would become a fruitful series of virtual meetings, which Iuliana and Joe affectionately dubbed "Speed Dating."

In the months that followed, probation officers from the United States and Romania met virtually to exchange best practices in probation. These collaborative events were highly informative, highlighting both the differences and similarities in the probation systems of Europe and the United States. Despite some differences, the primary mission in both regions remained the same: public safety.

They continued to promote this transatlantic information sharing at the 2024 APPA Summer Institute in Indianapolis, Indiana. The presentation, "Transatlantic Collaboration: Sharing Best Practices between the United States and European Countries in Probation and Parole Systems," was a focal point of the conference. Sponsored by APPA's International Relations Committee, the presentation highlighted the collaborative efforts between Florida and Romania. It showcased the exchange of best practices in offender rehabilitation programs, innovative supervision techniques, and the critical role of stakeholder collaboration. The session was moderated by Joe Arvidson, founder of The Criminologist Media Group. Joe Winkler set the stage for the presentation, which



Joe Winkler

Assistant Secretary of Community Corrections
Florida Department of Corrections

began with a brief overview followed by a video that provided participants' perspectives during the collaborative events. Following the video, Iuliana Carbutaru spoke about the collaborative efforts and shared a video from two of her supervisors in Romania. The presentation highlighted the strengthened professional relationships that had developed across borders as a result of these collaborations.

Attendees of the presentation gained valuable insights into successful collaboration models and left with actionable strategies for enhancing their own probation and parole practices through international partnerships. The exchange highlighted the importance of learning from different systems and adapting successful practices to local contexts.

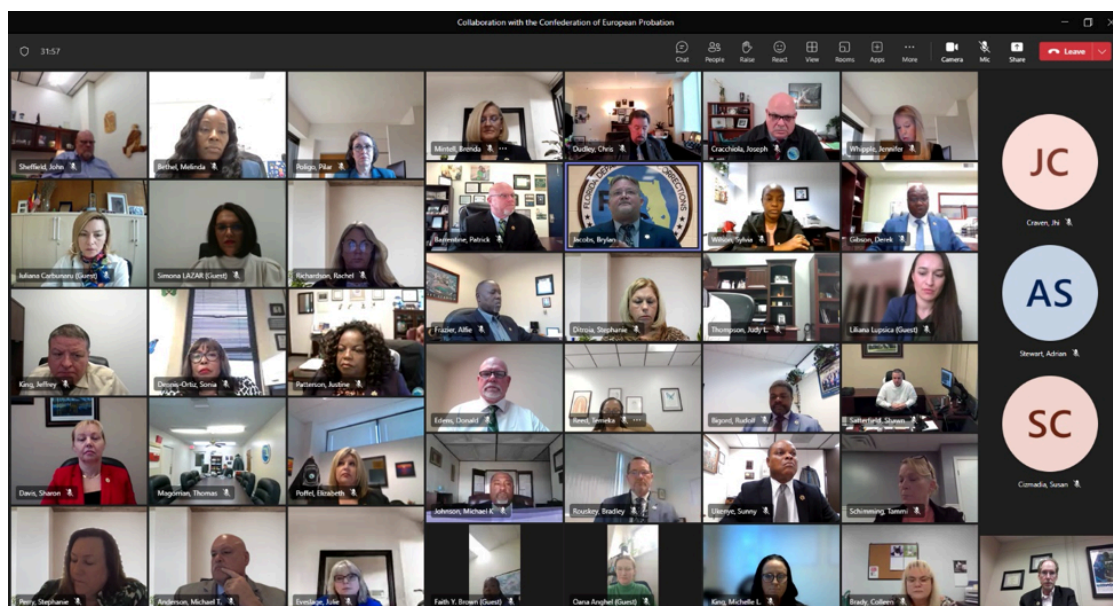
One of the key takeaways from the presentation was the importance of innovative supervision techniques. Both Florida and Romania have experimented with various methods to improve probation outcomes, from electronic monitoring to cognitive-behavioral therapy programs. Sharing these innovations allowed each jurisdiction to consider new approaches and adapt them to their specific needs.

Another crucial aspect of the collaboration was the focus on offender rehabilitation programs. Both regions emphasized the need for comprehensive rehabilitation services that address the underlying issues contributing to criminal behavior. By sharing program designs and outcomes, probation officers in both countries were able to refine their approaches and implement more effective rehabilitation strategies.

Stakeholder collaboration also emerged as a central theme. The presentations and discussions highlighted the importance of engaging various stakeholders, including law enforcement, community organizations, and the offenders themselves, in the probation process. This holistic approach ensures that all aspects of an offender's life are considered and addressed, leading to better outcomes.

The "Speed Dating" sessions between U.S. and Romanian probation officers proved to be more than just information exchanges. They fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect, strengthening the professional bonds between the two countries. These sessions demonstrated that despite different legal frameworks and societal contexts, probation officers share a common goal of improving public safety and offender rehabilitation.

The 2024 APPA Summer Institute presentation served as a catalyst for fostering greater collaboration and innovation within the probation and parole community, both domestically and abroad. It showcased the tangible benefits of international partnerships and set the stage for continued cooperation. As probation officers around the world face similar challenges, such collaborations offer valuable opportunities to learn from each other and enhance the effectiveness of their practices. The ongoing dialogue between the United States and Romania exemplifies the potential for international collaboration to drive positive change in the field of community corrections.



A person's hands are shown from a low angle, holding a large, glowing, spherical object that fills most of the frame. The person is wearing a dark, long-sleeved garment. The background is dark, making the glowing orb the central focus. The text is centered over the orb.

**Probation Institute
Research Event**
**Learning from Serious Further
Offence Reviews**

Introduction

The Probation Institute Research Group organises regular conferences regarding current themes and issues identified through research into probation practice. This summer's event took a closer look at possible learning from recent HM Probation Inspection reports arising from Serious Further Offences.

An SFO review by HM Inspectorate inevitably means that an incident of serious harm has occurred during a period of statutory probation supervision. This means, therefore, that such offences cause irreparable harm and damage to the victims of Serious Further Offences, and to their families and friends. The contents of SFO reports can be excruciatingly difficult to read, and we recognise the pain and distress which this must cause to survivors of such offending, and to those who were close to the victims. The intention of this event was to seek to establish a collaborative approach to the findings and recommendations of SFO reviews, to enable probation staff to recognise possible deficits in professional practice as factors in Serious Further Offences, and to think about how we should learn from SFO reviews with a view to improving practice as a consequence.

Creating the context

Helen Schofield, Chief Executive of the Probation Institute, opened proceedings by talking through the findings of the three most recent SFO reviews; those of the crimes committed by Damien Bendall, Jordan McSweeney and Joshua



Anne Burrell

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Jacques. All these offences resulted in deaths, primarily of women, and, in the Joshua Jacques case, the male partner of one of women. The Bendall SFO included the sexual assault of a child and the murders of three children.

Helen sought to identify themes which were identified by the Inspectorate as relevant to each case, noting the specific issues which were referenced across the reviews. A primary concern is that of safeguarding children **and** adults, particularly women, and vulnerable adults. She noted that the reports consistently emphasise the importance of recording relevant safeguarding information on OASys¹ as a key consideration in the overall risk assessment.

It was notable that, during this part of the presentation, contributors to the chat cited issues of obtaining relevant and current information from other agencies pertinent to risk assessment; and the specific tensions between the time it can take to obtain relevant information, and the requirements of courts for speedy decision making.

This led to a consideration of pre-sentence assessment. Helen noted the specific issues of, firstly, probation practitioners having variable ability to obtain information about adults living at an inquiry address; and relating to the misuse of drugs and alcohol, regarding which assessment can be problematic, often relying on self-disclosure. A number of recommendations in the case of Damien Bendall relate to allowing sufficient time for information to be obtained **and** analysed; and that courts should hold a duty to ensure that sentencing is safe - adjourning cases for more detailed inquiries if required.

Linked to these issues is the question of training practitioners. Much training of trainee Probation Officers, as well as Continuing Professional Development, is now delivered solely online. Whilst this has advantages in terms of availability of staff to participate in such events, online training has its limitations in terms of developing professional practice (see Burrell and Petrillo in Burke et al, 2023).

Relatedly, the SFO reviews in the Bendall and Jacques cases make specific reference to the allocation of cases to trainee and newly qualified

officers, to seek to ensure that practitioners have the relevant experience to supervise cases where the risk assessment has identified possible challenges to effective supervision. In this context, it was notable that opportunities for reflective practice and for mentoring by an experienced Probation Officer colleague - both recommendations in more than one SFO review - were welcomed by practitioners in attendance.

We also see here that HMIP recommendations include responsibilities at both organisational and practitioner level. This raises questions about what happens subsequent to an SFO review. It was helpful to learn that the Inspectorate is launching an online event regarding the use of multi-agency learning panels subsequent to the occurrence of an SFO.

Learning from research: Dr Jake Phillips presented findings from his recent research project, which specifically looked at the learning which takes place following an inspection, with particular focus on the responses of practitioners (Badaccha, Moore and Phillips, 2023). His research suggests that, whilst senior managers in probation make 'extensive use of inspection reports,' there is limited empirical evidence regarding the ways in which probation practitioners may attempt to do so (Badaccha, Moore and Phillips, 2023: 189.) He observed that practitioner capacity to effectively implement change arising from an SFO review will be highly dependent on factors such as workloads, the practitioner's own skills, and the levels of support from the organisation itself.

Jake additionally pointed out that, inevitably, an SFO review will focus on deficiencies in practice, and seek to identify ways to reduce the likelihood of similar further events. In this context, he found that practitioner responses to inspections generally were mixed. Whilst staff found the preparation for inspection could be onerous, and felt it could interfere with their capacity to undertake their day-to-day work, they welcomed the opportunity to talk through their casework with an experienced and informed inspector, within a collaborative and reflective setting.

In this context, Jake argued that the principles of procedural justice need to be prioritised, in order for all the parties involved in SFO reviews to perceive that the processes are transparent, impartial, and respectful. He particularly noted the importance of validation, for staff, and for victims, arising from a Serious Further Offence.

It is worth seeking out Jake's accounts of this research project, which is suggestive of a willingness on the part of practitioners to learn from failures in practice; but at times lacking the means to do so. This perspective was reinforced by comments in the chat, in which practitioners referred to a current focus on workload management arguably detracting from opportunities to sustain relationships with people subject to supervision, and, in turn, to enable effective professional curiosity.

HMI Probation's perspective and objectives

Martin Jones, the recently appointed Chief Inspector of Probation, opened his comments by referring to the fact that there are around 250,000 people subject to probation supervision at any one time; and that there are around 300 Serious Further Offence cases each year. Whilst recent Serious Further Offences have attracted considerable attention, and rightly so, given the nature and extent of the offences involved, he also pointed out that this statistic had changed little over time; and that probation practitioners are routinely managing cases effectively to prevent further offending – a scenario which can be difficult, if not impossible, to evidence. He argued that there is limited recognition of the work conducted by probation practitioners in this regard.

Discussion

The event then moved into a discussion, with questions and points raised via the chat. There was a perception that the recommendations of SFO reviews are rarely a surprise to any of the professionals involved – suggesting that The Probation Service as an organisation has an effective understanding of what is required, notwithstanding failures at both an organisational and individual levels which have resulted in SFOs. Simi Badachha, the head of the probation inspection programme and a former probation practitioner, suggested that it is important to consider what we are trying to improve, and how to achieve that.

Conclusions

This was a well-attended event, with over 140 participants, and a great deal of lively discussion both in the chat and in questions to the presenters. These aspects of the conference are suggestive of a drive to learn from mistakes, and to achieve higher standards of practice at all times, Jake Phillips suggested that it is as important to learn from 'near misses' as it is from actual Serious Further Offences, to identify the points of similarity and, crucially, the points of difference, which may have prevented an SFO, or, at the least, minimised the impact of further offending.

The Probation Institute has campaigned since its inception for professional recognition of probation work; and the current internal professional register goes some way towards that objective. But the PI would argue that **independent** professional status, with accountability via its code of ethics², would be a key mechanism to continuously develop professional practice, at a time when the demands on probation practitioners continue to evolve and change.

1. OASys - Offender Assessment System; the comprehensive assessment tool utilised to assess risks and needs in each case subject to probation supervision.
2. Probation Institute [Code of Ethics](#)

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Review

Memory & Injustice: Wrongful Accusations in the United Kingdom



"Memory & Injustice: Wrongful Accusations in the United Kingdom," edited by Dr. Kevin Felstead, is a thought-provoking anthology that delves into the consequences of pseudoscientific practices surrounding what has become known as recovered memory syndrome. This collection of essays and case studies provides a comprehensive examination of how unrestrained flawed techniques can lead - indeed have led - to wrongful accusations and devastating outcomes such as terms of imprisonment for the factually innocent.

The book comprises a series of contributions from leading experts in psychology, law, and social sciences to offer a multifaceted perspective on recovered memory syndrome. The book begins with an overview of the historical context, detailing how the phenomenon gained momentum in the late 20th century despite a lack of robust scientific backing. This foundation is crucial for understanding the widespread and long-lasting repercussions. One of the book's strengths lies in its powerful personal narratives. The stories of individuals wrongfully accused based on "recovered" memories are both poignant and disturbing. For example, the book highlights the case of Carol Felstead, whose false memories of abuse, instilled by her therapist, led to severe familial estrangement, psychological trauma and her untimely death - the events surrounding Carol's death remain the subject of much debate, with both family and friend alike believing there are myriad questions yet to be asked, let alone answered.



Lee Morgan
Independent Researcher

Another significant case discussed is that of Peter Ellis, a daycare worker whose life was upended by false allegations of child abuse, illustrating the broader societal reach of such accusations. These examples provide a human face to the abstract concepts discussed, further illustrating the emotional and psychological damage inflicted on both the accused and their families. Through these stories, readers gain insight into the real-world consequences of pseudoscientific practices in memory recovery.

Memory & Injustice excels in its scholarly critique of the scientific validity of recovered memory syndrome. Contributors critically assess key studies and psychological practices, exposing methodological flaws and biases that have been overlooked. For instance, Dr. Felstead includes analyses by Dr. Elizabeth Loftus, a renowned expert on memory, who dissects the fallacies in the techniques used to “recover” supposed hidden memories. This rigorous analysis is presented in an accessible manner, making it informative for both general readers and professionals in the field. The book underscores the importance of evidence-based practices in psychology and the dangers of deviating from them.

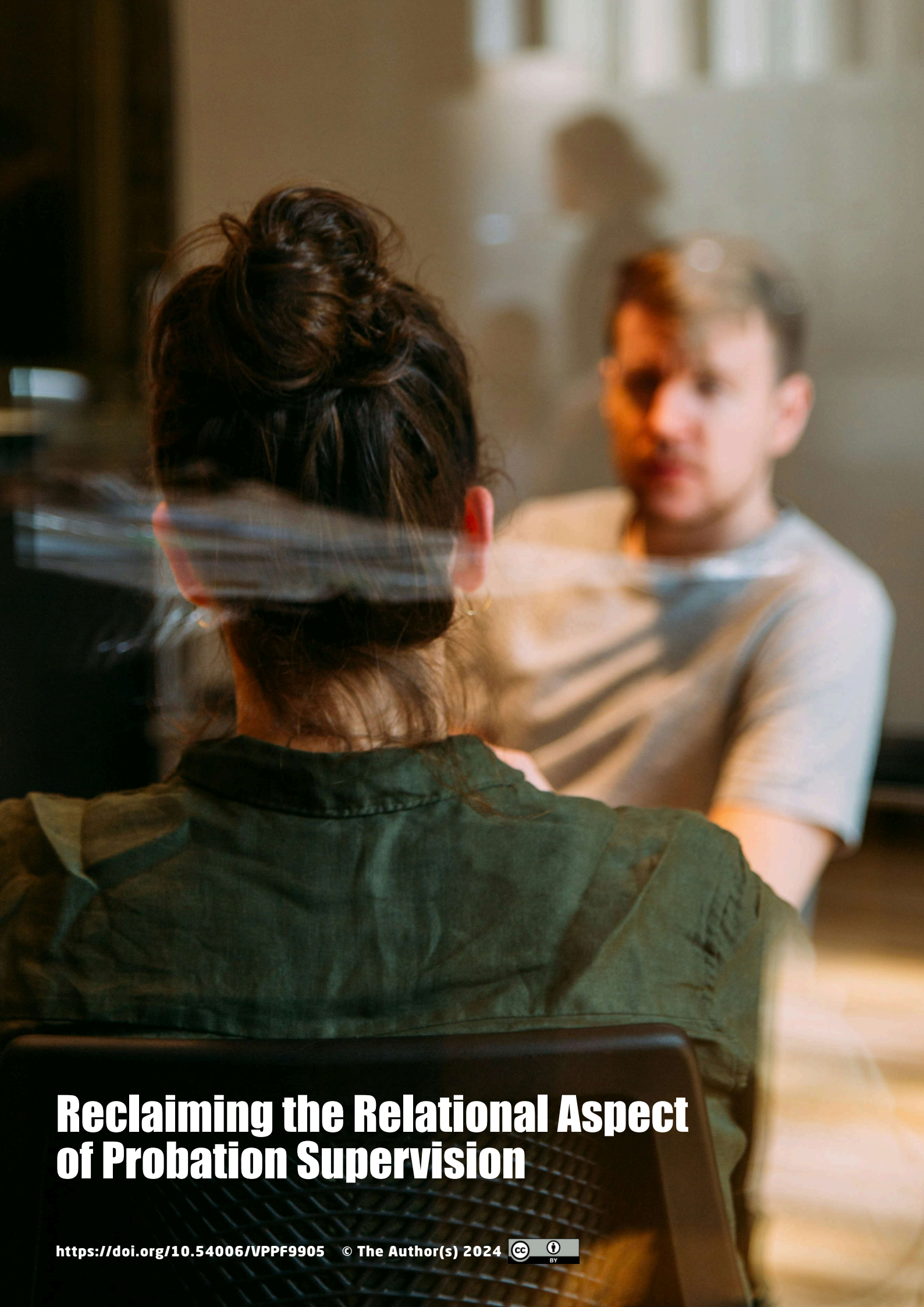
“Memory & Injustice” addresses the legal and ethical implications of wrongful accusations resulting from recovered memories. Several chapters explore high-profile UK court cases, such as the case of the Dawes family, whose lives were shattered by baseless allegations stemming from what the jury were told were recovered memories. The book dissects how the legal system continues to struggle with the complexities induced by fantastical memories, while floating critical questions about the responsibilities of mental health professionals and the legal safeguards necessary to prevent avoidable miscarriages of justice.

In its conclusion, the book calls for significant reforms in both the legal and psychological arenas. Dr. Felstead and his contributors advocate for stricter regulations and greater oversight in

therapeutic practices, enhanced education about the risks of pseudoscientific methods, and continued research into the nature of memory and trauma. Their combined call to action emphasises the necessity of protecting individuals from the iatrogenic harm caused by dangerous memory recovery techniques.

“Memory & Injustice: Wrongful Accusations in the United Kingdom” is a compelling and essential read for anyone interested in the intersections of psychology, law, and human rights. Dr. Kevin Felstead has assembled a powerful collection of essays that highlight the dire consequences of pseudoscience in memory recovery. Through meticulous research and deeply moving personal accounts, this book serves as a crucial reminder of the need for scientific integrity and ethical responsibility in all professional practices.

In sum, “Memory & Injustice: Wrongful Accusations in the United Kingdom” is not only an enlightening anthology but also a clarion call for reform. It sheds light on the dark consequences of pseudoscientific memory recovery techniques and urges a re-evaluation of current practices in both therapy and the legal system. Dr. Kevin Felstead and his contributors have created a seminal work that stands as a testament to the importance of safeguarding truth and justice. This book is an indispensable resource for professionals and laypeople alike, aiming to prevent future injustices and promote a more ethical and scientifically sound approach to memory and the law.



Reclaiming the Relational Aspect of Probation Supervision

Introduction

It was heartening to hear that within the first two weeks of Labour's election, the new justice secretary, Shabana Mahmood announced plans to recruit more than 1000 additional trainee probation officers by March 2025, (Syal, 2024). That said, we need to remember that this is against a backdrop of measures resulting in the release of 1000s of prisoners at the 40% stage of their sentence rather than the current 50% benchmark, (Quinn, 2024) so we may witness heightened pressure on an already over-stretched and under-resourced probation service.

The Dangers of a Reductionist Debate

Concerning with these developments, however, is the danger of getting bogged down in the narrow managerialist debate about resourcing and what organisational sociologists would traditionally refer to as 'inputs'. It is reassuring that the new Government has recognised the need to increase resources to accommodate additional probation trainees. Yet, this moment also provides an ideal opportunity to recalibrate the focus of probation supervision over and above adding additional resources into the existing strategy. Probation advocates must seize the moment to fight to reclaim some of their core values rather than simply calling for more investment. At this juncture, a process of ideological reclamation is just as important as narrow reductionist debates about the material and economic inputs being received from central government.



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Reclaiming Core Values

Whilst probation has undergone huge changes since its creation by the 1907 Probation of Offenders Act, the rehabilitative ideal has remained a constant (Mair and Burke 2012). From 1971 increased demands for professionalism within the service resulted in probation officers being required to qualify as social workers with a specialism in criminal justice and this was further advanced with a probation pathway being part of the Diploma in Social Work when it was introduced in 1989 (Bailey et al. 2007). The effect of this move was to further legitimise the caring, welfare-based nature of the service, as it was considered that many of the values needed to be a probation officer were closely linked to those of a social worker.

Core values included the ability to assist people to overcome difficulties, assess, advocate and collaboratively build and improve peoples' human and social capital. This was underpinned by psychotherapeutic counselling skills, which were embedded into probation training from the 1950s to the 1970s. Subsequently, treatment progressed to person-centred counselling, which further recognised the benefits of developing resilient professional relationships with clients. It was considered that the strength of the relationship between worker and client enabled the successful use of various behaviour modelling techniques when working with clients who demonstrated resistance to change. This relationship also supported practitioners in making informed decisions about the effectiveness of probation interventions for the clients on their caseloads (Smith 2006).

Losing the Way

By the late 1980s, the emphasis began to change as the pressure of managerialism was felt within the probation service raising questions about the role of practitioners in effectively managing risk. Arguably, risk rather than rehabilitation became the dominant organisational narrative (Robinson 2002). In keeping with this strategy, the Labour Government enacted the previous Conservative Government's new professional qualification for probation officers, the Diploma in Probation Studies (Dip.PS) in 1998. This was an intensive 2-year degree-level qualification coupled with rigorous on-the-job training and completion of National Vocational Qualifications. This qualification was a distinct move away from social work practice, in favour of a rigorous specialist training route (Ward and Spencer 1994) which sent a distinct message from the Government, that the probation service was developing a more technical and punitive attitude (Knight 2014, Durnescu 2011, Hong Chui and Nellis 2003). This new qualification was designed to provide effective and compliant practitioners, to meet the demands of a growing Service, whose priorities would be in keeping with the performance-driven direction of probation since the early 1990s (Deering 2010). This was a further reiteration of the 'scientific management model' (Taylor 1911) that became increasingly evident within probation during the rise of 'new public management' (Hood 1989). This saw the decline of the rehabilitative ideal and the severing of the mission statement of advise, assist and befriend to a more punitive rationale of probation as a law enforcement agency.

From this time probation training has continued to evolve with the Professional Qualification Framework succeeding the Dip.PS in 2010 and the Professional Qualification in Probation commencing in 2016. With each iteration of professional qualification, the main focus has remained on the effective management of sentencing. Sadly, the relational element of the role has become secondary.

My empirical research with probation practitioners and clients during the initial stages of the partial privatisation of probation under the Transforming Rehabilitation strategy (Adamson, 2023) evidenced policies that remained wedded to a top-down approach focusing on quantifiable targets. Consequentially, despite rhetoric to the contrary, this top-down target driven approach further lost sight of more qualitatively based improvements in social outcomes. In my research I found that supervising officers and managers within probation were removed from decisions made centrally that impacted their daily roles and responsibilities. Rather, what had intensified with probation practice were policies and procedures akin to Ritzer's (1993) theorisation of the social process of 'McDonaldisation.' In highlighting the irrationality of various aspects of managerialism, Ritzer (1993) stressed that increased bureaucracy, which relies on standardisation, control, efficiency and calculable predictions, results in organisations becoming less rational, hence the notion of 'the irrationality of rationality'. In the words of one probation officer with 28 years of service:

"Some of the things we have to do are crazy now, in my head I've got this and that to do, but this lad's homeless, what's the priority, but because the deadlines linked to a target, the target's linked to money, it doesn't matter about the lad being homeless, get on with the typing to hit the target as it's linked to money...all the helping stuff, the advise, assist and befriend, which is EXACTLY what the role should be...you just feel like you can't anymore".

Similarly, an officer with 14 years of experience highlighted the essential nature of developing pro-social relationships with clients at the start of supervision to increase the accuracy of assessments but admitted that such practice was rare due to the need to "process people quickly through the system." Similarly, one probation client (male, 48 years old, medium risk) described being "nothing but a number" to his current and more recent officers but spoke warmly about his experiences of supervision a decade earlier. He explained that his then-probation officer displayed all the attributes he believed a supervising officer should have. "She went to extreme measures to help me to get me support, she got me on courses, did worksheets and different things" which was essential to his desistance at that time. He added that this current experience of supervision was "totally different, it's really bad." This was a theme typified throughout this research as each client interviewed described processes akin to a "conveyor belt" (male, 38 years, medium risk) in which they are largely "churned through a system" (male, 42 years, high risk), rather than being empowered to try to desist from crime.

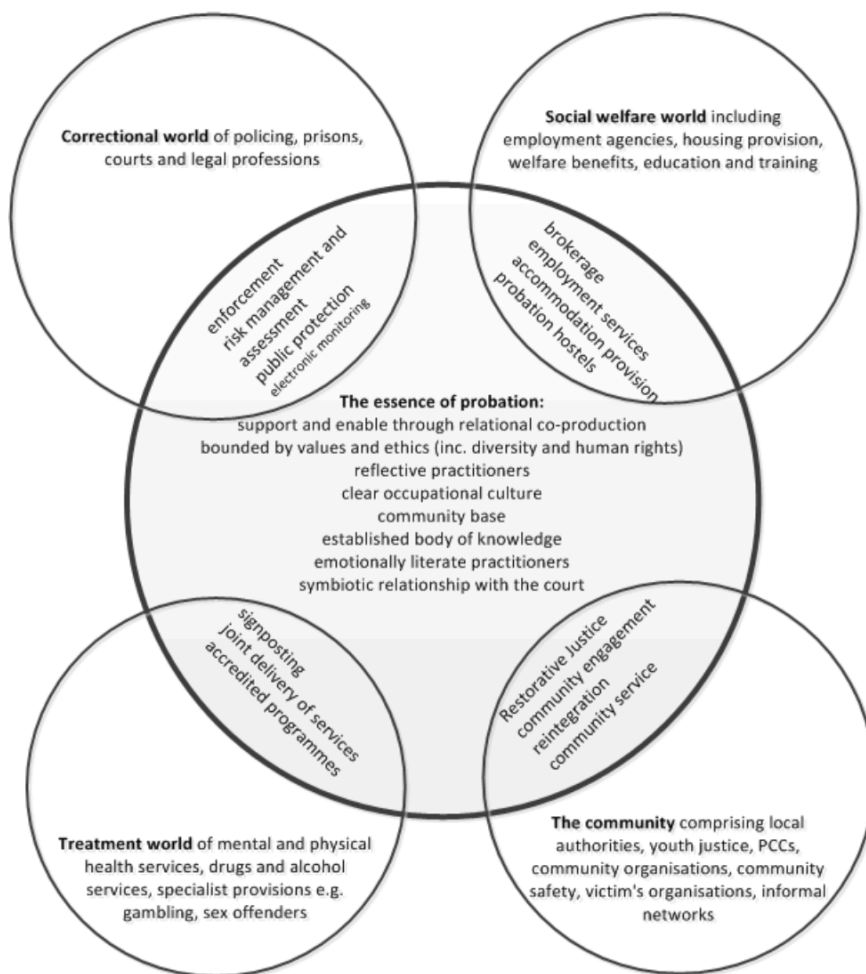
Reclamation of Core Values

The election of the new government is an opportunity for the probation service to renegotiate its organisational identity. Whilst recognising changing times, and certainly not advocating for a full return to historical ways of working, this is an ideal time to reassert the core values of probation and push for practitioners to be able to reclaim their authentic professional values. In 2016, the late Paul Senior and his colleagues met to explore what is at the heart of probation and succinctly articulated their findings in the diagram below.

Senior et al. (2016: 14) explained that the four systems of the 'correctional', 'social welfare', 'treatment' worlds and 'the community', are generally seen to be key elements of the role of a probation officer but 'the essence of probation,' (see figure below), at the heart of this, was identified to 'support and enable through

relational co-production bounded by values and ethics....' This reinforces the need for the relational aspect of the role to underpin probation work.

Prior to reunification, the Probation Reform Programme recognised the need to drive up performance and stressed the remodelled service should 'focus on quality (and outcomes) rather than processes' (Barton 2019). Since reunification, rhetoric in this vein remains prominent in policy documentation, acknowledging the importance of the relational aspect of supervision and the need to prioritise outcomes over quantifiable outputs. However, evidence suggests that the service remains embedded in quantifiable drivers, with high caseloads and staff shortages, which remain to the detriment of the essence of probation (Senior et al 2016).



Conclusion

This paper has briefly outlined how the probation service lost its focus on social work values in favour of a managerial, risk-based approach to supervision. Fundamentally, Ward and Spencer, (1994: 97) described probation work as an inherently “moral activity” which aligns with the recognition of the relational element of ‘the essence of probation’ (Senior et al, 2016: 09). Despite being at the heart of effective supervision, policy and resources prohibit its effectiveness. Surely now is the time for ‘relational co-production bounded by values and ethics,’ as identified by Senior and colleagues (2016: 14) to once again, fully flourish. The Probation Institute continues to lobby for this process of reclamation, but now is the time to engage the new government in a fuller discussion about the need for probation work to return to its social work roots. It is time to reset the pendulum to an approach that prioritises the relational aspect of the role. Practitioners who are better informed about the lives of their clients are more able to manage risk, protect the public and help to reduce reoffending. Surely, returning to a social work-informed approach to supervision would enable this to prosper.

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