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Probation & Community Supervision: A 'Magic' Journey

A Day in the Life of...Simi O'Neill

**The Sentencing Review: Putting the system
on the road to recovery?**

Discussion of Current Stalking Provisions

PROBATION *Quarterly*

Editor

Lyn Adamson

Designer

Richard Rowley

Editorial Board

Sam Ainslie

Anne Burrell

Anne Worrall

Contributors

Hayley Atkins

Phil Bowen

Tom Brown

Anne Burrell

Blade D'Arcy

Jonathan Fisher

Jeni Hudson

Jamal Hylton

Jess Lawrence

Gloria McKenna

Simi O'Neill

Zoe Rodgers

Joe Winkler

Chief Executive

Helen Schofield

Address

2 Langley Lane, Vauxhall

London SW8 1GB

Web

probation-institute.org

Social media

[Twitter](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

Email

admin@probation-institute.org

Telephone

0203 0533 551

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SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF PQ?

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

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 (Note: we do not publish requests for research participants)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

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

Disclaimer

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

Lyn Adamson

Editor, Probation Quarterly

Email: lyn@probation-institute.org



WELCOME TO PROBATION QUARTERLY

PQ34 EDITORIAL



Lyn Adamson
Editor, Probation Quarterly

Issue 34 of Probation Quarterly (PQ) is my first issue in charge as editor so I'd like to begin by expressing my thanks to Jake Phillips for ensuring such a seamless transition and all his hard work over the last few years. I would also like to thank the wider team behind the scenes who have all been incredibly welcoming since I took over the role in October. Since PQ began over ten years ago, it has continued to grow, with a well-established reputation for highlighting wide-ranging articles of interest to probation practitioners, academics and those working in or holding an interest in the sector. I know Jake is a hard act to follow and taking over from him is quite daunting, so I'm not planning to make any major changes to the winning formula.

The PQ has become a bridge of research-based or research-informed communication between individuals and organisations that work with people under probation supervision. This ethos has made the PQ what it is today, and it certainly works, so my focus will be on extending the readership and contributions to include more of

the lived experience and raising the profile of the valuable work undertaken within the voluntary sector.

Last week HM Inspectorate of Probation published their third annual report on [Serious Further Offences](#) (SFO), highlighting its findings through overseeing the quality of SFO reviews. Examining a sample of eighty-seven reviews, the Inspectorate Team found forty-six per cent were Good, and fifty-two per cent '*Requires Improvement*'. The Chief Inspector, Martin Jones, shared his concern that this is the second year that the number of SFO reviews completed to the required standard has declined. There is no disputing that probation practitioners work under very challenging conditions. Staff shortages and high workloads are continually cited as contributing factors for performance in LDUs falling below that of what is needed to fulfil the aims and objectives of the Service, despite practitioners' dedication and determination to do their best for their clients, victims and the wider public.

That said, we appear to be embarking on exciting times with the recently introduced [Professional Register Framework](#) which outlines the requirements and guidance for probation-qualified staff regarding professional registration, registration standards and the loss of authority to practice. The establishment of an independent oversight panel, consisting of internal and external members to provide operational oversight and quality assurance processes is welcome too. Hopefully, this Registration Framework will signal some green shoots of optimism after the ongoing turbulence experienced by practitioners during the past decade stemming from Transforming Rehabilitation and the subsequent unification process. To get a sense of how the Register is being received, we would welcome submissions for the next issue which provide early thoughts into the implementation of the Register.

The [Independent Sentencing Review](#) recently commenced by the Labour Government is a further much-welcomed development. This will likely highlight the benefit of community supervision as an alternative to custody within a new sentencing framework. Hopefully, the review, led by the Rt Hon David Gauke and an Independent Panel, will shine a light on the need to have a well-resourced National Probation Service capable of serving the courts, protecting the public and importantly, helping probation clients turn their lives around and move away from criminal behaviour. This is a timely opportunity to focus on the negative impact of sentence inflation and sustainable design solutions that are effective in reducing reoffending. From this, we can anticipate that The National Probation Service will be provided with the resources needed to fulfil its aims and better times will come. The Review focuses on

eight themes and the [Call for Evidence](#) is open until 9th January 2025. With suggestions that the expertise on the Independent Panel is '*Probation light*' I would urge all readers with interest in the issues raised in the Government Guidance to respond directly to the Call for Evidence. Similarly, if anyone would like to share their thoughts and insights about the Sentencing Review with the PQ readership, we would welcome submissions on this.

The narrative begins with an article by Phil Bowen about the Independent Sentencing Review which he wrote for the Centre for Justice Innovation and kindly agreed to share it within PQ. This narrative then moves to a reflective approach, with two articles focusing on the practice of supervision. Jamal Hylton provides some personal reflections and perspectives on key aspects of his time when working as a probation officer and from Northern Ireland, Gloria McKenna reflects on her extensive career as a practitioner and offers a contemporary view of best practice, reiterating the need for safety within the probation supervision process.

Hayley Atkins, an ex-practitioner then shares her experience of and insights from when she was employed in one of the three Multi-Agency Stalking Intervention Programmes (MASIP). She stresses the benefits of replicating these units further afield due to their potential to effectively manage risk within this targeted population. Then, Jess Lawrence from The Practice Research Unit at Interventions Alliance offers an insightful discussion about the experiences of transgender people attending HMPPS Creating Future Opportunities Activity Hubs, advocating for a restorative and more supportive approach when working with transgender people on probation.

Earlier this month the PI hosted an online research event showcasing recent research findings regarding effective probation practice with young adults and some of the barriers experienced by probation practitioners working with this client group that hampers their efforts to reach these recommended standards. Comparisons were made between working with young adults and the wider population, but Anne Burrell noted that discussions by a representative from the Probation Inspectorate Team again drew attention to the lack of time and resources to do the job, despite practitioners demonstrating the will and commitment to their role. Tom Brown and colleagues from Sheffield Hallam University then utilised their article to highlight research which evidences a lack of knowledge about the National Probation Service as a potential career opportunity and other barriers to joining the Service. As Tom et al note, it is difficult to inspire people to want to join the National Probation Service when generally, so little is known about the organisation or the role. Within their article, they suggest a call for action for HMPPS to increase awareness of employment opportunities through raising the profile of probation work and increased research to further knowledge and understanding of barriers preventing people from applying.

As part of the small changes I'm introducing to PQ, this edition offers the start of a new series, A Day in the Life Of. To kickstart this, Simi O'Neill from the Probation Inspectorate kindly agreed to be the first contributor. In this article, she explains what initially drew her to a career in probation. She then shares a whistle-stop tour of her career with insights into her current role, concluding with some thoughts she would want

to pass on to current trainees and newly qualified officers. I hope this will be a regular feature within PQ moving forward so please get in touch if you'd like to share an insight into your role in future editions.

The final contributions in this edition come from the USA. Jonathan Fisher, from the nonprofit organisation, Seeing for Ourselves informs of the success of a photography intervention for people sentenced to Community Supervision in New York and the benefits this has brought about in terms of reintegrating probation clients into the local community and successfully raising the positive profile of community supervision among the wider community. Then last but not least, Joe Winkler provides an explanation of the Florida Community Corrections F.A.C.E.I.T. Program and the importance of engaging people effectively in the early stages of supervision to increase the likelihood of longer-term compliance.

Finally, I'd like to thank all the contributors who have provided submissions for PQ34. You have all contributed to the enjoyment I have experienced in editing my first edition and I hope you'll consider ideas for further submissions and get in touch again. I would strongly encourage more practitioners and probation clients to submit articles, and as always, we welcome contributions from academics, students, policymakers and others from across the voluntary sector and wider criminal justice system. Just drop me an [email](#) please, if you have an idea for an article that you think will be of interest to our readers. Also, if you're not currently a member of the Probation Institute, please consider joining us as [membership](#) is very cost-effective and offers a range of benefits.

UPDATE FROM THE PROBATION INSTITUTE



Helen Schofield
Chief Executive
Probation Institute

Welcome and congratulations to Lyn Adamson, our new editor for PQ. Thanks again also to Jake Phillips for all your work as editor and ensuring the smooth transition over to Lyn.

This is a busy time for the Probation Institute, including two online events in November - on Work with Young Adults and an international event on Professionalisation and Regulation in Probation. Our events are always on our website and regularly circulated to our members.

Regarding Professionalisation and Regulation there is important progress in HMPPS - albeit a little slow - but including the establishment of an independent scrutiny board to oversee the HMPPS professionalisation project. The Probation Institute has accepted an invitation to be a member of the scrutiny panel and we will engage regularly with our members on this important subject.

Equally important is the announcement of the [Independent Sentencing Review](#). We are pleased to see this. Such a review is long overdue. We hope that the review will be mindful of the key messages within the Sentencing Council's Report on *"The Effectiveness of Sentencing Options on Reoffending"* (2022)[1] and the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee Report *"Cutting crime: better community sentences"*.

Early release is one way of reducing prison overcrowding, but better still that more effective use is made of Community Orders in the first place. The Sentencing Review must engage with the wider challenges of rehabilitation - the lack of resources to support those at risk of offending including released prisoners. We will also emphasise how probation work can be more engaged at local community level collaborating and supporting partner organisations closer to the ground, to strengthen and enhance the value of community sentences.

Earlier this year we learned that's the Griffins Society is closing. The Griffins have financially supported and promoted research about women in the justice system for many years. We are sorry to lose this important resource but pleased to be able to host the Griffins Research on the Probation Institute Website from December. We have received a modest donation from the Griffins to enable us to continue their work in supporting research about women in the justice system and we hope to offer opportunities in the new year.

Our membership is still lower than we would wish, or need, to sustain our work. Please consider [joining](#) the Probation Institute today.

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The Sentencing Review: Putting the system on the road to recovery?

The Centre's Director, Phil Bowen, reflects on the announcement of the Sentencing Review and the opportunity it presents to put our criminal justice system on the road to recovery.

The [Sentencing Review](#), announced earlier this week has been broadly welcomed, and a number of people from across the political divides have urged that it is used as an opportunity to stop sentencing being a political football. Some have, however, been unable to resist points scoring about early releases. It is therefore reasonable to be sceptical that politicians will be able to resist the urge, when the Review concludes, to attack recommendations that seek to reduce the sentencing of people for crimes.

However, we have to be optimists. As we highlighted in our paper, *Systems Shift*, back in June, we need to both protect the system from overloading, and then fundamentally shift how our criminal justice system operates. As we recommended, the Government has done some of the first part of this through a series of emergency measures needed to be taken to alleviate the prison population crisis. The Sentencing Review is a larger intervention, aimed at putting the system on the road to recovery.

One of the elements of the review is to "examine the use and composition of non-custodial sentences, including robust community alternatives to prison and the use of fines." At the Centre, we have long called for a new approach to community justice, one that rethinks and shifts how we deliver community supervision. This includes [re-focusing community sentences](#), prioritizing immediacy, and ensuring we use the best technology to assist the frontline in getting out from behind their laptops and into more relational work. We are also glad that the review recognizes that, for some, fines have



Phil Bowen

Director
Centre for Justice Innovation

disproportionately negative impacts, a point highlighted in [our research published](#) in May. Our work on women in the justice system, not least in helping spread [women's problem-solving courts](#), is also being considered as part of the review.

However, we know, and Ministers know, that they are walking a narrow path in trying to reduce overall demand in the system. They know that simply expanding community sentencing, especially with a probation system itself gripped in a capacity crisis, is not a silver bullet. They will have to take proper chunks out of the medium and long-term prison population. And that narrow path shrinks even further because they know they will need to convince the public that this will continue to keep them safe and also not get walloped for it by the media and the Opposition.

However, there is also no other option. We can't go on with waves of increasingly complex cases surging into a system that has become increasingly fragile and more fractured over the past decade. We look forward to engaging with the Review.

A woman with long, light-colored hair is shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is holding a small, glowing orb of light in her hands. The background is dark with many out-of-focus, circular light sources in warm colors like yellow and orange, and some cooler colors like blue and purple. The overall mood is magical and hopeful.

Probation and Community Supervision: A 'Magic' Journey

A good starting point to explain why I feel I have an informed opinion about probation and community supervision begins with my history and what brought me to a career as a supervisory practitioner in the Probation Service. I grew up in and around inner cities, and as with many places, there were varying experiences and influences. The reality was that crime, deprivation, disadvantage, and adversity were apparent. Still, there were opportunities, and positive influences from family, friends and existing or future graduates, professionals, community leaders, and so forth. I found that life was partly about choices and opportunities, and at times, we all navigate complex situations and circumstances. I think that when I learnt to do this for myself, I fell into a career in which I could help others to do this too. Subsequently, I trained as a probation officer approximately 21 years ago, so my HMPPS Long Service Medal is well overdue!

The work we do as probation practitioners relies on the belief that people can change and requires the building of good working relationships with people on probation. The probation supervision setting can provide a vital opportunity for individuals to be supported to identify, pursue, and review necessary or desired changes in their lives (Rex, 1999; Ministry of Justice, 2012). As a probation officer, I've seen first-hand what helps people to move away from offending and to change their lives for the better. I have learned that past behaviour is not the only predictor of future behaviour, because it is important to recognise current behaviour and future potential too (Hylton, 2014). Sometimes there isn't any immediately observable or measurable success, and sometimes individuals reoffend. This is because changing behaviour and overcoming problems is rarely a straightforward development, where problematic behaviours and circumstances suddenly stop, and positive or desired ones will instantaneously follow (Hylton, 2015).



Jamal Hylton

Senior Probation Officer
East of England Probation Region

The key drivers of offending are yet to be fully understood at the individual level, as are the types of interventions that could be most effective (Home Office, 2018). Many will desist from offending after identifying or making changes which enable them to establish a position of stability, safety, and the building of social capital, therefore helping them to legitimately connect and reconnect with society (McNeill, 2006; Weaver and McNeill, 2007; Home Office, 2018). This can include personal, circumstantial, and situational factors such as maturity, education, homelessness, unemployment, finance, debt, mental health, addictions, relationships, and other factors that can be supported in principle (May, 1999).

Findings suggest that individuals supported by tailored interventions and access to specific services can be assisted to improve circumstances through professionals building open, trusting, and consistent relationships with them (Rex, 1999; Phillips et al, 2024). I'd like to see more of this 'wrapping a package around the person', and the development of collaborative supervisory and inter-agency approaches to meet needs, address risks and support desistance.

On Probation

A former Regional Probation Director (Steve Johnson-Proctor) once said,

"Never forget that the greatest source of support for any Probation worker is to be found in the enormous knowledge base of their colleagues' shared experiences".

Accordingly, to draw attention to the importance of supervisory probation practices and the impact they can have in supporting individuals and reducing reoffending, I've shared some examples of experiences working in supervisory settings, with a range of supervised individuals who have exhibited a variety of behaviours including serious violence, group offending and recidivism. These experiences have been anonymised, and their inclusion is undoubtedly selective, in accordance with my more memorable experiences, of which there are many.

Supervisee 1 was one of my earlier supervisory experiences, an older individual with a history of anti-social behaviour and a pattern of assaulting public-sector workers. I knew much of the theory but sat thinking about what to say to this person who, I assumed was different to me in so many

ways. Yet, I found we were not that different. We spent weekly supervision meetings over the next year talking about their anger and behaviour triggers. I had learnt techniques from rehabilitation programmes and had access to an independent anger counsellor. I used the concepts in individual supervision sessions, 'red flags, green flags', 'perspective taking', 'anger cues', and 'fact, opinion, guess'. My learning was to try simple methods, like talking and listening about the thoughts and feelings underlying the offending behaviour. This enabled the introduction of strategies they could use to calm and reinterpret emerging frustrations, rather than reacting aggressively to them. Positively, the Supervisee became increasingly motivated to talk through situations they had encountered and avoided.

Supervisee 2 left school at an early age and had endured transient accommodation since their early teens. They had moved away from offending as they felt they were "too old", had cut ties with former associates, were supported to improve their educational skills, and later helped into mentoring and employment. When exploring their motivations through one-to-one programmes focused on attitudes, thinking and behaviour, they eventually shared that 'lightbulb' moment and explained, "after I was stabbed, I couldn't defend myself anymore. I had to learn to use my head and talk myself out of problems. I'm good at it now, I've a job and a home [and most positively] soon I'll be doing your job". Through talking we were able to ascertain that at the route of this desistance journey was a desire to 'stay alive' and be received back into their family network with trust and respect. The Supervisee certainly had my respect, and it would be a pleasure to one day find them working as a probation practitioner.

Supervisee 3 had in the past been loosely connected to various offending groups (gangs) and attributed their offending to being in the wrong place, lack of money, falling out with family and homelessness. The factors they explained as helping them to move away from offending, were having a stable partner, becoming a parent, and completing a vocational qualification in prison. The Supervisee was positive about completing the qualification, as this had led to a job and legitimate income quite soon after release. At the end of the supervision period, the Supervisee expressed their appreciation for “keeping them motivated, believing in them and encouraging them to do better”. This reiterates the importance of probation practitioners building good working relationships with people on probation, as this can be a motivating factor in changing behaviour and reducing reoffending.

Supervisee 4 was a young drug user with significant health problems. We arranged their supervision and drug service appointments on the same day to support them in engaging. We always met outside because they refused to enter the building for fear of being ‘set up’. Every week we’d walk up the High Street to drug services which they only did because we’d pass McDonald’s and I’d buy the Supervisee chicken nuggets. My manager had a fund put aside for this as it was the only way we could get them to engage. My learning with this Supervisee was simply that, sometimes just showing humanity works (and ditching pre-prepared supervision plans). The goal was to motivate the Supervisee to consistently engage with services to primarily address their drug use. After the supervision ended, I’d bump into the Supervisee from time to time and they’d update me on their progress and ongoing relationship with drug services, which always reiterated the value of the relationship I managed to develop through taking this less prescriptive approach to their supervision.

Supervisee 5 distrusted the police, probation, and the mental health team, and was vocal about this. We overcame this through regular joint meetings with all supporting agencies, during which we just let the Supervisee speak. After about 3 months we had built trust and eventually, we got to a place where we could say “let’s try it this way”, and they’d listen. That’s how we helped the Supervisee engage, reconnect with family, keep a home, and improve independence. The power of communication and taking the time to develop the relationship was essential to the success of this Supervisee.

Supervisee 6 counted their sentence in football World Cups, so when imprisoned for somewhere in the region of 12 years, they were like, ‘boom, 3 World Cups and I’m free’. We once spoke about how they could have made better choices at an earlier stage and they opened up about their journey. At the end, they got up and said, ‘scrap that, I wouldn’t change a thing, I’d have ‘grafted’ more and invested it all in Bitcoin but wouldn’t have committed that last offence’. It wasn’t exactly what I expected, but they were reflecting, showing remorse, and expressing they could have done things differently which is at times all we can ask for as probation practitioners.

Supervisee 7 is my most memorable story and concerns a young person I worked with through their time in prison, back into the community, the family home, and into college, all while struggling to keep away from negative peers. I remember shortly before the end of the supervision period the Supervisee got into university and dropped in to share the news. When I congratulated the Supervisee for what they had achieved, they said, “We did it together”. In truth, I did very little and for me, this is what probation and community supervision work is about, helping and overseeing people lead and change their lives for the better.

The Overall Message

There is no 'magic ingredient' to these stories of rehabilitation and change, a question a Justice Minister once asked me. The real explanation is in the commitment of supervised individuals in pursuing and achieving progressive life changes, and the dedication of the professionals within probation and community services working together to support them.

The importance of the supervision session and investing in developing practitioner skills and availability, including the empowerment to be creative, autonomous, and flexible alongside access to suitable resources, is key to the effectiveness of rehabilitation approaches. This could be further explored through the continuous focus on understanding and improving what is achieved within the 'black box' of probation supervision and the wide-ranging roles of supervisory practitioners (Hylton, 2015; Raynor, 2019).

The way forward in shaping wider solutions for probation strategies to improve re-entry, resettlement, and rehabilitation should come from frontline supervisory practitioners and those successfully ceasing offending and completing periods of supervision. With the right conditions, the people in prison and on probation today can and do become the professionals and leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, future justice policies must benefit from incorporating input from those currently in prison and on probation with positive messages against the negative forms of behaviours and lifestyles of which they were formally part. (Hylton, 2014; Weaver and McNeill, 2007).

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4

The Four Safety Lenses: A Framework for Safe Probation Practice

Introduction

For those of us who have worked in the justice system for many years, the language of best practice became very prevalent in probation practice and many other fields of public service from the 1990s. Like much of the language in public service which came from the world of business, it can put us all at risk of neglecting that people are at the centre of all we do. To this end, I conceived the idea of the Four Safety Lenses in the pursuit of safe probation practice.

The Application of Four Safety Lenses in Probation Practice

The conflict between the care and control functions (Doran and Cooper, 2008) has long since been acknowledged in probation practice. In our pursuit of ensuring the safety of those involved in the justice system, it is essential to strike a balance between our obligations for public protection and our responsibilities for rehabilitation. This has been a particular interest for me from early in my career as a probation officer. When I was studying for my social work qualification 40 years ago, I did a piece of research on the care/control continuum, influenced by Paul Senior's article published in 1984 on 'The Probation Order: Vehicle of Social Work or Social Control?'

As I have matured in my career I have become committed to the idea of safe practice. In many respects this has been a reaction to the best practice narrative which has been pervasive in both probation and other services over the last 30 years. There appears to be a contradiction in using such language when there has been so much publicity regarding the budget and resource constraints in the public sector in the last number of years.



Gloria McKenna

Probation Officer
Probation Board for Northern Ireland

At the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), we are scrutinised by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate for Northern Ireland to ensure our practices are both appropriate and effective. Their latest reports (CJINI, 2020; 2024) often highlight the importance of safeguarding others, particularly when discussing our duties regarding public protection and risk management. Similarly, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation emphasises the need to keep others safe in their inspections and this is again echoed in His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Risk of Serious Harm Guidance (HMPPS, 2023).

In everyday practice, however, there is a risk that an overwhelming focus on public safety could lead to a narrow approach in probation work. Such an approach may overlook the individual's criminogenic and personal needs, potentially undermining the social work aspect vital to the role of a probation officer in Northern Ireland. With this in mind, I sought a more holistic perspective on safety, resulting in the conception of the Four Safety Lenses.

The Four Safety Lenses

The Four Safety Lenses are designed to help probation practitioners maintain a balance between public protection and rehabilitation, risk management and desistance. This is fundamentally about balancing care and control. These challenges have long been recognised in frontline practice and are understood to exist on a continuum.

I propose that a probation practitioner's positioning on these continuums is influenced by their professional values, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as the specific circumstances and offending history of the individual they are supervising. To ensure that practice remains holistic and that safety is an overarching feature of the probation practitioner's role, I would suggest that the following Four Safety Lenses should be integrated into practice:

- Keeping Others Safe
- Keeping the Individual Under Supervision Safe
- Keeping Oneself Safe
- Keeping the Organisation Safe

Each lens is interdependent, contributing to risk assessment and risk management. The emphasis placed on each lens varies according to the level of concern regarding the risk posed by the individual being supervised.

Integrating the Four Safety Lenses

These lenses also provide a framework where professional curiosity is crucial. Professional curiosity has become a priority across the justice sector (HMI Probation, 2022). The focus on

keeping others safe, for instance, will dictate the degree of professional curiosity required. Supporting an individual on their path to desistance necessitates a keen application of professional curiosity to ensure their own safety. Equally, practitioners' safety is greatly enhanced by their ability to exercise professional judgement, which is underpinned by being professionally curious. Keeping the organisation safe involves adherence to policies, procedures, and practice standards, while also considering reputational risks. Relying on the harmonious operation of all Four Safety Lenses, I propose is pivotal to safe practice.

The importance of professional curiosity in maintaining safety in practice cannot be overstated. Focusing solely on keeping others safe, particularly when managing individuals assessed as posing a risk of harm, may lead to prioritising external controls such as approved accommodation, electronic monitoring, or curfews. However, these measures alone are insufficient. The challenge lies in supporting the individual under supervision to grow and develop, fostering hope and a commitment to their future. This is in keeping with the desistance narrative (Maruna, 2017). It involves helping the individual to acquire new skills and establish supportive networks, which also contribute to their safety. To move away from offending behaviour, safety for the individual is essential and encompasses emotional, physical, and psychological dimensions. This is also in keeping with trauma-informed approaches which are receiving widespread attention, locally and internationally.

I will now explore activities under each lens to demonstrate how safety can be operationalised in service delivery. Some of these suggestions have come from practitioners in PBNl who attended practice development seminars where the Four Safety Lenses were introduced:

Keeping Others Safe - Our Public Protection Responsibility

- Analyse and understand the criminal record to be well-informed about the individual's offending history.
- Identify any past, present or potential victims and any specific targeting or profiling behaviours.
- Understand the individual's life situation and social network.
- Assess risks to others to identify if children or adults are at risk due to the individual's lifestyle and behaviours.
- Access as many sources as possible to triangulate information for comprehensive assessments.
- Be aware of a history of aggression and note any past aggression or violence towards others, including professionals.
- Plan for contingencies to avert situations where there is a potential for harm.

Keeping The Person Under Supervision Safe - Our Rehabilitation Responsibility

- Understand vulnerabilities by getting to know the individual and their circumstances.
- Be alert to signs of grievance in the person's narrative and behaviours and address these.
- Link the individual to relevant services for issues such as substance abuse, mental health, employment, domestic and sexual abuse and suicide prevention.

- Coordinate with healthcare professionals to support the individual in attending to their health needs.
- Work with the individual to gain insight into their behaviour and promote foresight by encouraging the individual to plan for a more positive future.
- Mirror the individual's behaviour to increase their self-awareness and build understanding.
- Provide constructive feedback to support the individual's development.
- Model pro-social behaviour by acting as a role model.
- Be present, stay engaged and focused during interactions with the individual.
- Honour the core conditions of the person-centred approach, utilising empathy, unconditional positive regard, and transparency.

Keeping Oneself Safe - Our Professional Responsibility

- Seek managerial oversight when unsure or facing challenging situations.
- Utilise team knowledge by drawing on the experience and support of colleagues.
- Maintain a growth mindset and pursue continuous professional development.
- Be mindful of the need to protect professional credibility.
- Avoid taking unsanctioned risks that could jeopardise your reputation.
- Explore all possibilities for ensuring the safety of others and the individual under supervision.
- Collaborate with services involved with the individual.
- Record interactions to promote accountability for both the practitioner and the individual under supervision.

Keeping the Organisation Safe - Our Professional Accountability

- Follow organisational policies, procedures and practice standards.
- Maintain records and keep all documentation accurate and up-to-date.
- Exercise professional judgement in all situations.
- Use supervision to reflect on practice and consult with a manager or colleague if you feel unsafe or face professional challenges.

It is recognised this is not an exhaustive list of activities but they serve to illustrate the practical application of the Four Safety Lenses.


The Interplay of the Four Safety Lenses

It is crucial to highlight that no single safety lens guarantees safe practice alone. Safe practice relies on the dynamic interplay of all Four Safety Lenses. Committing to safe practice aligns closely with trauma-informed practice as the promotion of safety is a central value in both approaches. The simplicity and applicability of the Four Safety Lenses makes them appealing to practitioners who can adapt them to their specific work setting. In a sector where best practice is often cited but can feel contradictory due to service cuts, these lenses provide a practical and adaptable framework.

The Four Safety lenses are easily transferable across the public sector, particularly for staff delivering frontline services. Given the constraints on budgets, and the reunification of the Probation Service, it may be prudent for practitioners in England and Wales to integrate the Four Safety Lenses. This can serve to enhance professional curiosity in the pursuit of safe practice.

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Discussion of Current Stalking Provisions

This article seeks to both raise awareness of Multi Agency Stalking Intervention Programmes (MASIPs) and of the success of the three current MASIPs. This will lead to considering the value MASIPs such as Cheshire's Harm Reduction Unit (HRU) have for the Probation Service in managing and understanding Stalking behaviour. The article will sum up the findings of the MASIP evaluation report (Tompson et al, 2020). Then it will provide a discussion of the "Super-complaint" on the police response to stalking (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2022) and, examine the more recent London Stalking Review (London Victim's Commissioner, 2024) to consider the potential gaps across the country in managing the risk of those committing stalking offences. This article will highlight two key charitable trusts, the Alice Ruggles Trust and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, both of which work to support victims and perpetrators of Stalking and provide necessary training and awareness across the country. The article will conclude that there should be provisions to increase the number of MASIPs across the country to protect and support victims, and effectively manage the risk and support stalking perpetrators.

Firstly, it is important to note that currently there is no legal definition of Stalking in England and Wales. Stalking is explained by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust (2022:7) as "a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim. Stalking behaviour is unwanted, repetitive, and is almost always carried out (or orchestrated by) one individual towards another". The objective of MASIPs is to mitigate the risk and effects of stalking on



Hayley Atkins

PQiP Lecturer

Liverpool John Moores University

victims through the creation of a multi-agency intervention model. MASIPs facilitate coordinated efforts involving both the victim and the perpetrator, while also establishing a critical pathway aimed at addressing the fixation and obsession in perpetrators that may lead to stalking behaviour (Tompson, 2020). Initially, MASIPs were piloted in the Metropolitan, Hampshire and Cheshire Police Services. As the author has previously worked as a probation officer within the Cheshire MASIP, this article is informed by personal professional experience, Stalking Risk Profiling training and the available literature.

Opportunities for probation officers to receive funding for external training are limited. Probation officers linked to Cheshire's MASIPs have occasionally had the chance to undertake an online course in Stalking Risk Profiling, led by Dr. Rachel MacKenzie and Professor Troy McEwan. This involves the learning and understanding of stalking profiles as developed by Mullen et al. (2000). Understanding the psychological profiling of individuals exhibiting stalking behaviours serves as a significant asset for probation officers. This profiling is also utilised by the Clinical Psychologist in Cheshire's Harm Reduction Unit, who collaborates with the Detective Sergeant before conviction and works with probation services to contribute to the multi-agency monitoring of relevant individuals, post-conviction. The referral process to the Harm Reduction Unit allows for discussions on high-risk cases with experienced practitioners, and specialist victim advocates ensure that victims outside of probation's Victim Liaison Officer scheme receive support during police investigations and/or when referred to the Harm Reduction Unit after conviction. One stalking victim supported by Cheshire's HRU, the actress and presenter Denise Welch, said "Cheshire Police's Harm Reduction Unit is something I would like to see everywhere because they were there for our emotional and physical well-being" (Loose Women, 2022).

The three pilot MASIPs, including the Harm Reduction Unit, were all introduced in 2016 and were evaluated in 2020 (Tompson et al., 2020). Several recommendations highlighted the

importance of funding for MASIPs, and key stakeholders raised the requirement for motivated and skilled staff within the teams to support victims and work with perpetrators. The report considered the three MASIP pilots which had the same ideology but in different geographical areas, and how each model suited the force size and location. One critical factor in the success of the MASIPs is utilising thorough data collection to enable the MASIPs to evidence their success and share this with funders and potential future partners (Tompson et al., 2020). It has been found that working as a MASIP resulted in decreased recidivism rates and also an understanding of the early detection of repeat perpetrators was observed. Furthermore, the perpetrators exhibited a level of assurance in their ability to utilise the resources available to them to manage their compulsions and fixations (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2022). Following their own unit's success, Cheshire's Harm Reduction Unit has recently received funding to initiate its own investigation team. It would be prudent for a further evaluation report to be completed to account for this additional resource.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust Super-complaint report found inadequate Police response to stalking is not merely an isolated issue within specific police departments but rather, reflects a broader systemic problem that exists throughout all forces in England and Wales (2022). There were several findings within this report, some of which are directly focused on the Police. Some criticisms though could be supported by probation practitioners.

The following complaints were highlighted within this report (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2022:13-29):

- Police failing to identify the behaviours as stalking
- Police failing to recognise the link between stalking and serious harm or homicide
- Dangerous or unhelpful advice given by police

These criticisms were, however absent in the three areas that have MASIPs and the disparity of the service that victims and perpetrators receive in those areas was vast. This is above-mentioned, but to reiterate, there is clear evidence that knowledge and experience of stalking for those working at the front line are invaluable. Additional training should be provided for those managing people on Probation Orders or Licences, convicted of Stalking offences.

There have been some changes nationally which were summed up by London's Victim Commissioner (2024:1) "Through our work, we have begun to see progress. We saw the extension of sentencing for Stalking 4a offences to a maximum of 10 years in 2017, the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders in 2020, and the introduction of Multi-Agency Stalking Intervention Programmes housed in police forces in Cheshire, London, and Hampshire". Despite this, the stalking legislation faces profound criticism for the disparity between 2a and 4a convictions, 4a being the more serious, and only achieved if it can be proven that the unwanted, fixated stalking behaviour had a substantial impact on the victim. It was recommended by the London Victim's Commissioner that "the Government should legislate to make Stalking Protection Orders a bespoke ancillary order that judges can issue at the point of sentencing, focusing the court's

attention on requirements which would ensure the safety of crime victims" (2024:19). This suggests that despite their introduction, they have not had the desired impact and success through the Courts. The final point of the introduction of the three MASIPs has improved the identification, classification and understanding of people who commit stalking offences in those areas, but legislation needs to go further.

As noted above, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the Alice Ruggles Trust provide awareness, support, and training. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust run the National Stalking Helpline. They also offer training and consultancy across the country, and complete work with perpetrators of stalking offences. "The Suzy Lamplugh Trust works across the public, private and voluntary sectors, offering training, policy writing and other consultancy provisions". They campaign to increase awareness of the harm caused and "demand systematic change." Their longest-running campaign is the licensing of the operators and drivers of minicabs and private hire vehicles, which began back in 1998" (Suzy Lamplugh Trust Website, 2024). Over the past 35 years, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust has influenced changes in legislation to include Stalking as specific offences, and the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders. More recently the Alice Ruggles Trust was established, aiming to educate young people, support those working with children to develop skills, and develop interventions as preventative work for young people (Alice Ruggles Trust Website, 2024). The work of these charitable trusts is undeniably important and invaluable. The implementation of MASIPs across England and Wales is however, unmatched in terms of the potential for proactive and reactive risk management for statutory criminal justice agencies such as the police, probation and the courts.

This article highlights that despite wholly positive findings, no further MASIPs have come to fruition in England and Wales. Whether that be through a lack of funds, unawareness by other areas across the country, or the lack of appropriate skillset and motivation from those who would be needed to set up MASIPs. It is just unfortunate that this has ensured that for almost a decade the support for victims and work with perpetrators remains a postcode lottery across the country. It is hoped that there may be further impact following the London Stalking Review as Watson stated, "all those involved in the criminal justice system have a role to play to make sure Stalking is always treated seriously and those affected, get the support they deserve" (2024:5). Reflecting upon the identified need for support from Stalking victims and perpetrators, the success of the MASIPs currently in place, and the demand for support through two key charitable trusts, surely it is only a matter of time before statutory agencies and stakeholders take note and ensure these models are put in place across England and Wales.

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Working with Transgender People on Probation

Introduction

The Practice Research Unit at Interventions Alliance sought to explore how the justice system works with transgender (trans) people on probation and in the community, by speaking to both trans participants attending HMPPS Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) Activity Hubs and the staff that work there. Although discussed in a community justice context, the findings and recommendations are relevant to any organisation working with or supporting trans people.

There is a growing body of research on the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in the criminal justice system, however only a minority of this work has focussed on the experiences of transgender people. HMPPS policy and guidance for working with trans people predominately discusses those in prisons or Approved Premises, and this focus is also reflected in the extant literature. Research on trans people in the community predominantly considers their experiences of victimisation, discrimination and abuse, with limited discussion of trans people accessing community rehabilitation services. This is an important area of omission and one we sought to address.

The research explored the experiences of trans participants attending CFO Activity Hubs, which were run by Interventions Alliance at the time. HMPPS CFO delivers projects aimed at improving employability, changing lives and reducing



Jess Lawrence
Practice Researcher
Interventions Alliance

reoffending. CFO Activity Hubs provide tailored and holistic support to people on community sentences, licence or Post Sentence Supervision, who may have multiple barriers to engagement.

Two trans participants completed a questionnaire (open June - September 2023) and three took part in interviews (August 2023). Twenty-one staff members completed a questionnaire (open June - July 2023) and five took part in interviews (August 2023).

Trans participants included trans men and trans women at different stages of their transition journey, with diverse experiences in the justice system, prisons and the community. They were all white, identified as a binary gender and were 'out' to staff at their Hub.

Findings

"This is the safest space I've got to come to." (Trans participant)

Trans participants in this research all reported feeling safe and accepted at their Hubs. Feeling comfortable at the Hubs allowed them to engage with activities more confidently, leading to considerable progress in their rehabilitation. Staff were passionate about creating an inclusive environment and attributed this to a collaborative effort between colleagues and all Hub participants. Many factors contributed to this, such as the overall Hub ethos of community and choice, physical signs of inclusivity (e.g. pride flags) and diversity within the staff group. Firm boundaries around behaviour and inclusivity were created for all participants from the point of induction and maintained both formally (e.g. signed agreements) and otherwise (e.g. challenging inappropriate language).

"They took me for a person, and not what was written." (Trans participant)

Some trans participants expressed apprehension when first attending their Hub, due to prior negative experiences with other services (e.g. healthcare), being in prison or Approved Premises. Trans peoples' experiences with both staff and

other service users in the wider justice system differed depending on their specific trans identity but appeared to be influenced predominantly by stereotypes. Generally, trans women were considered with higher levels of caution, non-binary people were met with confusion, and trans men were misgendered more frequently. However, trans participants spoke positively about their relationships with their support workers at the Hubs. They felt they could share what they wanted to, ask for support where needed, and trusted that personal information was treated appropriately. Participants explained the importance of being seen and treated as a whole person, rather than solely as 'a trans person' or 'someone with a conviction'.

"It is mostly the old boys that just see what they see, and say what they see." (Trans participant)

Trans participants reported that some of the other, older participants often struggled with elements of trans inclusivity, so some trans participants chose not to share their gender identity with other participants. There appeared to be a potential difference in the way transphobia and misgendering was seen and addressed by staff, as misgendering was not seen to be dealt with as robustly as transphobic language. Staff discussed the different approaches employed when challenging such comments, depending on the circumstances and who was involved.

"Gendered toilets are hard work." (Trans participant)

Participants who attended Hubs with gender-neutral toilets for everyone valued this provision highly, comparing it to the difficulties they faced using gendered facilities elsewhere. Most trans participants also said that they attended single-gender groups at their Hub with no issues. Staff discussed the factors that required consideration 'behind the scenes' when balancing inclusion and risk management in single-gender spaces. They were sometimes unsure on whether such decisions were fair or defensible in the absence of clear guidance.

"Juggling that risk, in a lot of other jobs, that's not even a thing you have to think about." (Staff member)

Although all staff were skilled in working with people and treating them as individuals, there was a mix of confidence levels when it came to meeting the specific needs of trans people in the justice system. The influence from other areas of a heavily gendered justice system was often reflected in decision making processes and how much support staff felt able to offer.

Some staff struggled to balance 'risk from' and 'risk to' trans participants in particular settings. Occasionally the risk to trans participants resulted in their exclusion from activities, which was argued to be unfair by other colleagues.

"I just use my own ability to just listen, really." (Staff member)

Most staff recognised the uniqueness of every trans person's experience and the importance of listening to an individual's needs. They were also clear on their boundaries when helping with transition-related issues and the importance of signposting appropriately.

The majority of staff said they wanted training, in order to be prepared to work with trans people. Ideally, training would be from someone with lived experience and provide opportunities to ask questions and discuss topics sensitively. Staff already working with trans participants described researching information independently or learning from colleagues (especially LGBT colleagues) and trans participants. Reflective practice and discussions with colleagues and in team meetings worked well for teams with strong bonds and diversity among colleagues.

Implications for Probation

The recommendations from this research can be applied to anyone working with trans people but it should be acknowledged colleagues working in probation and the wider justice system may feel confined by the current remits and restrictions of their roles. Political pressures and legal changes affect many areas of trans peoples' personal lives and also govern the Civil Servants' roles and the systems they operate within.

The heavily gendered manner of operation within the justice system is most evident in prisons, however, probation staff are well placed to build restorative and supportive relationships with transgender people on probation, taking advantage of their ability to resist the traditional division of service users by binary gender.

In order to build these positive relationships, probation colleagues must be aware of the stereotypes and discrimination trans people are likely to have previously faced both in their personal lives and in other services and systems and take care not to replicate or exacerbate these. This extends to the intersection of multiple minoritised identities, such as race, disability and sexuality.

This research shows that feeling safe and accepted allowed trans people to get the most out of services and creating an environment where staff and other service users all treat each other with respect allows service users to engage better and progress. There are big and small ways to encourage this – from stickers to formal agreements.

Although probation staff time is extremely limited, time must be taken to build trust and create a productive working relationship. Probation staff should be conscious of why and

how they are requesting information, and aware that the sharing of this personal information will be dependent on trust between client and officer. Trans people on probation should be consulted on their wants and needs (from pronouns to how they want to deal with misgendering), but care must be taken to treat people as individuals and not just a collection of 'ticks in boxes'. No two people's lives are the same – what's right for one person may not be right for another.

Finally, everyone should be prepared to learn. Probation staff should be trained by people with lived experience, know how to ask questions sensitively, stay informed and link with specialist trans or LGBT organisations. We must practice and normalise talking about gender diversity, celebrate diversity events and keep the conversation going.

The full research report is available on the Interventions Alliance website, or by emailing jess.lawrence@interventionsalliance.co.uk

A person wearing a dark, quilted hooded jacket is seen from behind, walking away on a paved road. The road curves to the left and has a white dashed line. In the background, there is a green rectangular sign on a pole, and the landscape is filled with dry, brownish vegetation under a dark, overcast sky.

Probation Work with Young Adults

Over 40 attendees joined the online PI research event on Friday November 22, including practitioners, academics, and staff from voluntary sector organisations.

This lively and informative event sought to examine current research into effective probation practice with young adults; and some of the barriers to The Probation Service consistently achieving these standards of effectiveness. The first speakers were Dr Jenni Ward, Associate Professor in Criminology at Middlesex University; and Dr Jake Phillips, Associate Professor in Criminology at Sheffield Hallam University. Dr Ward outlined the findings from a process evaluation of the Newham Y2A Hub, which was established specifically to develop a service which could successfully enable young adults (18- to 25-year-olds) to transition from youth services to the adult Probation Service, and, ultimately, to exit the criminal justice system entirely.

Dr Ward noted that there is increasing awareness that young adults are a distinct population within the Criminal Justice System - arising from what she described as their stage of development in the life course, since the *process* of maturation is such a significant feature of this age group. The increasing existence of specific services for young adults recognises that adult justice may not be appropriate - and that a welfare oriented, rehabilitative approach is likely to be more consistent with the needs of, and challenges facing young adults.

The Newham Y2A Hub implements a theory of change model, with a view to interrupting offending. Practice seeks to be trauma informed, and to be strengths based. Although located in a probation office, the Hub has separate facilities, and a separate entrance. Dr Ward showed the



Anne Burrell

PhD student and Practice Teacher Assessor
De Monfort University

conference slides of the environment, which looked comfortable and welcoming, and was specifically designed to be a place where young adults would spend time, rather than simply reporting to a probation office.

Commissioned Rehabilitative Services are co-located at the Hub, with mentors, employment and education advisers, drug and alcohol specialists, and mental health practitioners, all located in the shared space. This multi-agency approach is seen as critical by practitioners in terms of offering a speedy system of interventions. Other services include a food bank and a library, in recognition of the wider needs of the young people who are required to attend.

The researchers also found that this range of resources greatly enhanced the confidence of probation practitioners, previously based in the adult team, in working with young adults – itself a significant achievement, since probation staff have historically viewed working with this age group with trepidation. It was also significant that this staff group had applied, and been interviewed, for the specialist roles; and had been provided with in-person training as a team in order to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in the work.

The evaluation study sought the views of the young adults themselves, alongside practitioners, in a longitudinal study conducted via interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observations. The early findings from the study noted the strong sense of identity, and a collaborative ethos, which had developed in the practitioner team. These features linked to retention of staff, strong ties of trust with supervisees, and high levels of retention and engagement amongst both young adults and probation staff. This was positive to hear, as for the young adults, fear for the future, and having to transfer to adult services – what they described as the ‘other,’ or ‘grey’ side – created anxiety; and probation supervision was perceived to be difficult, with the weight of sentencing extending over long periods, and presenting a possible hindrance to normal life progression.

Dr Jake Phillips considered the implications of the study for the broader future of the Probation Service. He noted that, whilst young adults clearly have greater independence than children – they may be employed, for instance, and possibly living independently of family – but also that these factors can create their own vulnerabilities,

in levels of earnings, and exploitation by older adults. Young adults are held to be culpable for their decision making and the consequences, at a time when their lives are likely to be characterised by precarity. In this context, Dr Phillips noted the positive outcomes of the Hub’s priority of building pro social capital in young adults, highlighted by their involvement in the commissioning and development of the design of the service. Meanwhile, some features of probation practice remain problematic, such as limited flexibility with regard to enforcement and possible re-engagement.

Dr Phillips considered the possibility of some of the positive findings extending to work with probation supervisees more generally, and the value of variation in services, tailored to local needs. This could include courts processes being more aligned to Youth Justice principles of rehabilitation, and a strengths-based approach. He also noted the reduced caseloads of practitioners at the Hub, which enabled more effective relationship building and trust.

The final presentation was by the HMI Probation Inspection Team of Martin Jones, Chief Inspector, and Maria Jerram, Inspector, with regard to their recent report into the quality of services delivered to young people by The Probation Service. (HMIP, 2024.) Current probation practitioner Kyle Hart, who was seconded to the inspection team, was also present. Martin Jones noted that a key finding of the thematic review concluded that, whilst the strategy in probation is broadly right, there are significant issues with delivery, specifically related to workloads, which impacts the capacity to spend time with young adults.

Maria Jerram noted that probation generally has a strong commitment to improving services for young adults, recognising their high levels of need. However, she pointed out that the credibility of this model is challenged by inconsistencies, with sometimes muddled lines of accountability. An example of this inconsistency is the lack of specific data to inform gaps in delivery of services, such as the numbers of supervisees starting and successfully completing programmes. Other instances include the apparently limited training on the use of the maturity assessment; and a lack of understanding regarding differing approaches across teams, for instance, between Supervision and Unpaid Work. Staff felt committed to the work with young adults, but lacked confidence in significant areas, for instance, discussing young adult experiences of discrimination. She also commented on issues in sentencing and court processes, where the emphasis on speedy sentencing may result in young adults being sentenced without a court report, to detrimental effect, in terms of the onerousness of sentences.

The Inspection findings appear hugely problematic in terms of Probation's capacity to work constructively with young adults. The discussion which followed the presentations considered issues which are not confined to work with young people, but which may exacerbate the challenges faced by young adults - the lack of time permitted to prepare detailed pre-sentence reports; the emphasis on risk rather than needs, which now seems embedded in the processes of assessment, sentencing and supervision; the focus for training via e-learning and online training, rather than in person events; and the general shift towards punitive rather than rehabilitative approaches. We also considered the place for voluntary organisations in the contemporary world of probation. Conference attendee Amanda Grey, Social Impact &

Sustainability Manager from WIPERS, a CIC which works with young people caught up in the Criminal Justice system, discussed the critical role of voluntary organisations in working directly with young people, and with training and development of practitioners.

This conference provided valuable insights into effective work with young adults, which was pleasing to hear; and considered the application of similar principles to probation practice more generally. Equally, it was disheartening to learn of the familiar issues raised by the Inspectorate, regarding practitioner lack of confidence, time and resources to do the job for which there is clearly a strong commitment. Helen Schofield, Chief Executive of the Probation Institute, concluded the event by considering what the Probation Institute can do to address some of these issues, perhaps continuing with the dialogue with magistrates already initiated by the PI; and to continue to offer opportunities for specialist learning and development. Helen concluded by thanking Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe, Chair of the Probation Institute, for her skillful chairing of the event; and also thanked all attendees for a lively and informative event.

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How can we 'inspire' people to want to become Probation Officers?

- "What you can't see, you can't be"
-Wright Edelman (2015)

PROBATION
OFFICER

Introduction

Despite being involved in most stages of the Criminal Justice System and supervising some 239,015 people per year (Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service, 2024), the Probation Service appears to have continuously been in the shadows of the Police, Prison and Courts, with Robinson (2016) relating the phrase 'Cinderella service' regarding the NPS to describe the failure of the service to promote itself in the national consciousness. However, why does such a vital part of the CJS remain hidden? The nature of the work could be a factor, with the notion of a service tainted by undertaking 'dirty work' (Mawby & Worrall, 2013).

Given that the NPS deals with individuals who have committed minor to the most serious offences, it may be no surprise that the NPS and its work do not inspire people to want to venture into it as a career, with the Police and Prison services arguably dominating factual and fictional depictions (Mawby & Worrall, 2013). The glamorisation of crime in the media with a seemingly morbid fascination with motivations and the reasons why people have committed crimes may provide a medium in which the Probation Service can establish an identity. However, drawing from Teague (2002), Mawby and Worrall (2013), and the ongoing coverage given to high-profile offences, the role wider media plays in the portrayal (or not) of the Probation Service can have a limiting, or arguably an unhelpful lens on which the public view the service. Conversely, Mawby and Worrall (2013) also highlight that (at least historically) the Probation Service can foster positive relationships with the media. Indeed, most of us will know the range of media platforms on which probation recruitment campaigns have hosted content.



Tom Brown

Senior Lecturer in Criminology
Sheffield Hallam University



Jeni Hudson

Senior Lecturer
Sheffield Hallam University



Zoe Rodgers

PhD Student at Sheffield Hallam University
within the Institute of Law and Justice



Blade D'Arcy

Undergraduate Criminology student and Student
Researcher at Sheffield Hallam University in the
Institute of Law and Justice

Of course, it is vital to recognise the range of influences that may further explain why the NPS may fare worse in the public's consciousness. Savage historical fiscal cuts to the CJS and the penal system are obvious practical barriers to investment in public awareness campaigns (The Bar Council, 2024). However, arguably this only serves to reinforce the need for more focus on the Probation Service compared to the Prison, the Police, and Court Services. While all are experiencing difficulties in recruitment, it appears there appears additional factors as to why the NPS remains hidden.

Academically, a significant gap exists in pre-existing research that explores how the NPS emerges in younger people's consciousness, let alone what may motivate them or act as a barrier to aspiring to become a probation officer. Some studies have retrospectively looked at probation trainees (PQiP) reasons for joining the service (Deering, 2010; Gregory, 2008) and related research associated with the Probation Culture (Mawby & Worrall, 2013; Robinson *et al.*, 2016). These research areas have sought to explore the ongoing tensions regarding the nature and purpose of probation work in times that have seen the metaphoric forced 'divorce' from the historical roots of its links to social work (Canton, 2024) and beyond the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms (Robinson *et al.*, 2016).

Deering (2010) highlighted the increased influx of graduate applications for probation training, with Skinner and Goldhill (2013) raising concerns that this cohort of probation trainees may need more duality of academic ability and social skills to bring these into practice. Until recently, there were two main stipulations for acceptance onto the programme when applying externally: 'prior academic ability' and the need for "a background in supporting individuals facing difficult

circumstances or exhibiting challenging behaviour" (HMPPS, n.d.) Potentially as a reaction to the narrow scope of potential recruits, there is now also a recent route provided for non-graduate applications (HMPPS, n.d.). However, there is still a significant drive towards applicants demonstrating potential academic ability and a range of personal skills drawn from experience, such as emotional intelligence.

As a result, in terms of the aims of this research, early career identification and seeking out arenas for the development of these skills can arguably only serve to increase the strength of recent graduates (please note that there is a third phase of this research planned for mature students who may apply whom already have both life and academic experience, the 'second careerist' cohort as postulated by Mawby & Worrall (2013).

While a plethora of research and theory is devoted to developing generic career aspirations (McLaughlin, 2022), these have been formed from large-scale quantitative studies dominating the US academic field. As a result, the following studies utilise a mixed methods approach to generate and test theory based on the practical and internal factors contributing to the decisions that ultimately affect people's choices concerning a career in the Probation Service. This research draws on the ideas relating to Habitus, which have been utilised in Probation literature regarding the primary (earlier life influences) and secondary Habitus (late education and employment) to understand the development of alignment/attachment to a 'field' of work (Bourdieu, 1984). To explore the early roots of the impact that being a 'Cinderella service' (or more accurately 'Hidden Heroes') has on our younger members of society and present suggestions to inspire the next generation that we have not achieved in the past.

Methods

This paper outlines findings from two concurrent research projects; study one examines college students' perceptions, while study two explores university students' perceptions of the Probation Service (Brown, in progress). Three sixth-form colleges participated in study one, with students primarily studying law, and study two included 50 undergraduate students at Sheffield Hallam University on the single or dual honours Criminology courses (Psychology/Sociology/Law). Once approval was granted, the research team sent an initial survey to all students to indicate the potential uptake towards a career in the Probation Service compared to other careers in the sector, shortly followed by interviews with the students (Krueger, 2014; Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee, 2020). Below are some initial findings from the data analysis stemming from the projects (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patten, 2016).

Influences and Development of Knowledge and Understanding of the Probation Service

Students in both studies raised how a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Probation Service was a barrier to considering the service as a career. For example, within study one, of the 20 students from College one, only 20% expressed interest in a Probation Service career. This finding contrasts the 70% interested in law, 40% in the prison service, and 35% in the Police force. The key reason for this lack of knowledge stems from many students noting that the Probation Service was relatively 'invisible' compared to other criminal justice agencies (Mawby & Worrall, 2013; Teague, 2002), with no uniform, limited visibility within contemporary media and curricula:

"God I need to think. It's going to come in to a lot of TV shows, I'm going to be honest....I can't think of English ones if I'm being honest, just because I feel like England is quite real and they don't do these massive, dramatized things" (University Student: Interviewee 3)

Within study two, only 28% of undergraduate students reported hearing about the Probation Service via their Career Advisor (McLaughlin, 2022), with these points raised by both the college and university students below:

"I know it sounds really bad, but they are just kind of background characters in other people's stories. Usually, people in action, like police officers or the people... Never really the actual officers... So they're kind of not really there" (College 1: Focus Group 2)

"Cause when we had like career fairs or things like that, I didn't get any information about probation service like nothing whatsoever even in the and I've been on both campuses" (University Student: Interviewee 2)

Therefore, while students could briefly outline what the Probation Service does regarding supporting individuals under their supervision, very few could explain the specifics of the role in detail (Robinson, 2016). As a result, the research team were keen to ask the students what could remove the barriers they face when considering a career in the Probation Service.

Removing the Barriers and Supporting 'Attachment' to the Probation Service

Both the college and university students raised the need for increased knowledge about the service and entry pathways, including raising awareness that students are paid to learn (HMPPS, n.d), alongside factors such as disability inclusivity in the workplace and accommodations for aspiring probation officers with previous victimisation and criminal convictions. For example, college students repeatedly asked whether there are accommodations concerning supervising individuals who have committed sexual and domestic abuse, as this posed a particular barrier for some students at College Two.

50 college students, 52% raised this as a barrier to considering a career in the Probation Service, as reinforced in an interview with a college student below:

"Like I say, if someone has past trauma about abuse, if they're dealing with a person with abuse, they might find it difficult to cope with..." (College 1: Focus Group 1)

Consequently, the students wanted to see relatable role models and stories they could connect with personally to visibly see someone like themselves within the role to forge an attachment to the field (Bourdieu, 1984), which both the college and university students saw as crucial in removing the present perceived barriers to a career in the Probation Service. 70% of undergraduate students wanted to see images and hear stories of how people like them had trained to be probation officers, which the following university student reinforces:

"I'd like having someone and describe like day-to-day Probation. Yeah. Because as I've said, I know more about the rest of it and can put myself in those shoes, like you said, whereas a probation officer, it's kind of a blank spot for me, like a grey spot" (University Student: Interviewee 8)

"Probably just for media to be honest, just from how I've been shown how it is that criminals tend to not be a fan of them" (University Student: Interviewee 4)

Moreover, when considering the previous findings, this would help remove barriers associated with what the students referred to as

'family expectations', with some stating that their family would disapprove of a career in the Probation Service. Therefore, the students noted that university outreach would support the recruitment of students into probation programmes and the Probation Service and inform family members of the role of a probation officer, enabling both students and family members to understand the role better.

Conclusion

As a result, the research team recommends the incorporation of the research findings of these studies into the current review by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) regarding the challenges in recruiting and retaining probation officers. Likewise, HMPPS should prioritise an 'outreach' programme to local schools (at all levels), colleges, and Universities to increase awareness of the Probation Service as a valuable and rewarding career to support recruiting new probation service officers and PQiP learners. Additionally, a core part of catching students early in their career decision-making is the need for school and university career services to have the resources to explain and promote the Probation Service as a career to students considering working in criminal justice agencies. Finally, the commissioning of further research would help understand how to encourage the recruitment of 'second careerists' (Mawby & Worrall, 2013) and how we can address the barriers individuals face when considering a career in the Probation Service. This could also include research into what media representations would be the most effective in an accurate portrayal of the role of probation staff and the challenges of the work they do.

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A Day in the Life of...Simi O'Neill

My entry into Probation

From the age of 16, I worked in a career that I loved but felt I could offer more, so I researched working in prisons. I wanted to be a prison officer and then came the opportunity to train as a probation officer, which I thought would be a useful stepping stone. Well, was I wrong about the temporary nature of my career in Probation. Having joined in 2002, it soon became my passion as it was a Service that I strongly believed could support people to desist from offending and this was why I originally joined. I can't deny it was hard work when I became a trainee. Juggling university life and learning the job through work experience was hard. However, the support that was put in place was incredible, from having experienced practice development assessors to peers and colleagues to learn from. The biggest challenge for me was facing some dangerous people but also knowing that I was a young female with different life experiences from those on probation. A strength I believed in was that I felt able to relate to others, being non-judgemental and believing that with the right support, people can change. The training programme was well structured and coordinated, there were high expectations in place with a range of opportunities to learn about probation services, from spending time with the unpaid work team to a period in a local prison. The most difficult part of the training was delivering the Think First programme with trained facilitators. At the time I felt out of my depth working alongside some remarkable facilitators but as time went on, I realised the skills that this opportunity had allowed me to develop.

My Career

When I qualified as a probation officer, there were firm arrangements in place to continue learning. Cases were allocated to me gradually and I was placed in a team where there was a wealth of experience and a high level of support



Simi O'Neill

Head of Probation Inspection Programme
HMIP

available. One thing that I will never forget is the support from my Senior Probation Officer (SPO). I was less confident working with men who had committed sexual offences and to support my development, my SPO co-worked a case with me for four months, where we delivered a one-to-one intervention followed by debrief sessions to make sure I understood why we delivered the work we did and what was planned next. This was nearly 20 years ago and still to this day; I have never underestimated the belief that approach gave me and my confidence in believing that I could be a good probation officer. After that I spent time in the community supervision team, resettlement team, IOM and UPW both as a practitioner and an SPO. What I enjoyed the most was the variety of the job and the people that I met, understanding more about them beyond the offence they had committed. I have no doubt that some people fed me a line or two but there was also a small handful of people where I knew my contact with them made a difference and that's where I could see the real change happening. Whether it was by securing a home for them, seeing them get their first job or just witnessing a reduction in their substance misuse, for them, it was a big deal and for me, it was a positive step in the right direction.

As a probation officer, I learnt that how you engage with others can leave a significant mark on someone else's life. It might not prevent them from reoffending, but there are small steps that can be achieved, and these are not achieved alone. The team around me made my career as a probation officer the most enjoyable but they were also there when things went wrong. My colleagues supported my professional development, providing advice, guidance and emotional support following the death of someone under supervision and difficult SFO discussions. It shows that you are not alone. A typical day as a probation officer, I can't say there was a typical day, I enjoyed the variety, one day could be full of seeing people on probation and the next consisted of oral hearings, prison visits or visiting approved premises.


A Typical Day In My Life

So where has this taken me? I am now the Head of the Probation Inspection Programme. I have been an Inspector and have continued to be in a position where I think I can still make a difference to our communities and members of the public. The biggest challenge for me now is seeing the difficult context in which probation is currently delivering. The highlight is, however, meeting the dedicated and talented people delivering frontline services. It is with no question, that probation staff want to deliver to the best of their ability and when we see this I enjoy being able to shine a light on the positive things we can evidence. But I know that comes with its challenges, workloads have changed and how services are delivered has also changed, which needs to happen as the world evolves. Yet this creates opportunities for innovation and creativity which we also get to see through our inspection programme. My current role provides

the opportunity to travel around the country to meet people across different regions and learn about the various ways probation services are being delivered, something I wouldn't have been able to do before. This enables me to share through our inspections, effective practice that other practitioners can learn from. The variation in activities since being a probation officer has long continued into my current role, from internal meetings, meetings with Ministers and senior HMPPS colleagues to meeting people on probation, victims and their families through our SFO work. I am also excited about the launch of our new Inspection Framework on approved premises which we will commence in 2025.

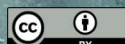
My Advice to Early Career Practitioners and Students

During my visits to various regions, I am fortunate enough to meet with people who are on the probation qualification or newly qualified. I often wish I could say that in time their confidence will grow and in years to come they will look back at their time in Probation fondly. Probation isn't just a job, it's a lifetime career, well that is how it was and still is for me. I think it's fair to say the experience may not be perfect, but there are opportunities to change the lives of others for the good. Applying to be a trainee probation officer was the best career move I ever made, not only did it give me a vocation, but I strongly believe it gave me confidence and the ability to undertake a tough job. It's not an easy job, but it can be rewarding and most of all it can impact the lives of others. If you are thinking about a career in probation my advice is that you enjoy the experience, take time to learn and utilise your colleagues who already undertake some exceptional work.



A Whole New Way to Look at American Probation

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At the end of 2017, the New York City Department of Probation (NYCDOP) invited the nonprofit organisation Seeing for Ourselves to deliver its “participatory photography” programming to the agency’s clients. Such individuals—whose terms may range from months to five years—have committed offences ranging from drug possession to acts of violence but who a judge finds can be safely supervised in the community.

Seeing for Ourselves had previously delivered such programming to residents of the city’s housing projects, leading to a restart of the communities’ financial support by the city and state authorities. Therefore, it was considered that providing an intervention for people sentenced to probation supervision may be beneficial to the NYCDOP and its clients. According to the letter of support penned by the then NYCDOP Commissioner Ana Bermúdez:

“This will have the impact of creating a better understanding of the “photographers” as well as appreciation and support for the bettering of their communities. Moreover, it will help further normalise community corrections as a viable and palatable alternative to jail and prison sentences. Additionally, the Seeing for Ourselves project will provide our clients with new perspectives and skills that could lead to future employment. We believe in the potential of this project to impact the national conversation and further provoke



Jonathan Fisher
Acting Executive Director
Seeing for Ourselves

a continued paradigm shift from continued mass incarceration, to creating and sustaining effective alternatives to incarceration; discourage others from making poor choices; and promote the humanity of individuals who are too often reduced to and viewed as are mere statistics.”

By the time Seeing for Ourselves had completed its involvement with NYCDOP in 2021—the program had become permanently institutionalised at the agency—these aims were on a clear path to realisation.

Background

Like the UK, probation in the US is community supervision, an alternative to incarceration, rather than the concept of early release, which is known as parole. The generation-long negative treatment of probation by the American mass media, portraying it as a slap on the wrist, if not a joke, ironically began just as the criminal justice practice turned punitive in response to the 1972-92 crime wave. Despite rigorous efforts by individuals in the city and across the nation to return to a lawful life, Americans became accustomed to a photo of a mug shot accompanying such stories as “Florida man gets probation for taping dog’s mouth shut.” This and many similar portrayals of probation supervision as a soft option discouraged jurisdictions from utilising the sanction, which originally held a rehabilitative purpose, and so helped feed mass incarceration.

Meanwhile, European media had likewise been disrespecting probation. Participatory photography, known in Europe as “photovoice,” was similarly viewed by European criminal justice reformers as a way of creating a visual counter-narrative that could “normalise community corrections as a viable and palatable alternative to jail and prison sentences.” In a manifestation of synchronicity, a participatory photography initiative serving Scotland and Germany Probation Services began in 2014.

Recently, a competing narrative to the American media’s unflattering treatment of probation has made itself felt. In this narrative, rather than individuals failing probation, the justice intervention itself fails those whom it serves. While the lobbying group Reform Alliance, fronted

by the rapper Meek Mill, leverages such stories for legislative action, one prominent reformer views them as a call for abolishing probation supervision altogether.

Both narratives share a focus on failure, and in this respect typify the approach of American media. (To satisfy—some would say ‘pander to’—viewer interest in what goes horribly wrong, local television newscasts in the US often open with coverage of criminal or accidental violence, a practice famously known as ‘if it bleeds, it leads.’) But this common focus may not be as helpful to criminal justice as a different narrative altogether. Success stories involving agency may do more for reform than more tales of victimisation.

The Program

During 2018-2021, hundreds of New Yorkers on probation (along with their neighbours, whom NYCDOP makes a point of including in all such programming) enrolled in a college-level course in the art of visual storytelling. They borrowed high-end digital cameras donated by Sigma Corporation of America or Seeing for Ourselves, or used their smart phones, and set about creating a new visual narrative by documenting their lives photographically. Named “NeoN:Photography,” the effort took its place as one of a variety of programs of the agency’s Neighbourhood Opportunity Network (which included music, poetry, and wellness) serving the seven underserved communities that most individuals on probation call home: the South Bronx, Harlem, Jamaica, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, Brownsville, and the north shore of Staten Island.

Starting up slowly in the spring of 2018, with Seeing for Ourselves regarded as an unknown entity in these communities, NeON:Photography would, before long, be swamped by applications. Reportedly, the waiting list now numbers over five hundred. Meanwhile, NYC paid participants stipends in the interest of job readiness—which, along with paid photo shoots and photograph sales, charted a path out of justice involvement going forward.

Galleries around New York City exhibited the most revealing self-captioned imagery, and even the out-of-town media began to take note. A new media narrative about probation was underway. Critical of neither those immersed in it nor the sanction itself, a new focus celebrated those who not only made probation supervision work for them but worked while on probation to reform the practice by documenting their lives photographically.

The effort began to take on the air of the paradigmatic Heroes' Journey. The program started up slowly, corresponding to the Journey's stage of "refusal of the call." But then the Seeing for Ourselves photography instructor taught the students, corresponding to the Journey's stage of "aid from a mentor." The participants accepted a mission to undo negative stereotypes, corresponding to the Journey's stage of "the challenge." Those students on probation were kept on the path by their neighbours also taking the course, corresponding to the Journey's stage of "help from allies." The photographers finally then were able to deliver brand-new imagery to the world to help reset Probation's public image, corresponding to the Journey's stage of "the return."

The Philadelphia Inquirer
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Crime

What if the probation office was a place of joy instead of fear? New York City shows how.

"We're trying to dispel some of the historical trauma that has been in place between probation, law enforcement, and the community," one probation official said.

Andre Whitehead, shown here near the South Bronx NeON, took advantage of photography classes offered at the probation office and discovered a new career path.
JESSICA GRIFFIN / Staff Photographer

by Samantha Melamed
Updated Jan 10, 2020

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Seeing for Ourselves intended to collect these photographs in a book to further promote the new probation narrative but found itself stymied when the pandemic shut down global supply chains, bringing publishing to a halt. Although no one in Seeing for Ourselves had ever made a film before, the nonprofit organisation decided to attempt a documentary pending publishing's revival.

Launched onto the global film festival circuit in 2021, the half-hour documentary In a **Whole New Way** has, to date, been viewed by thousands while amassing some ninety awards. The film was also screened by American public television. Along with encouraging a new public view of Probation, all this may have helped create a fertile environment for legislative reforms. As history has shown, documentaries can and do change the world.

A workshop on the film was held at the annual conference of the American Probation and Parole Association in Chicago in 2022, which was co-hosted by Ana Bermúdez along with Seeing for Ourselves and was received enthusiastically. A [plenary screening](#) of the work at the annual conference in NYC in 2023 was co-hosted by NYCDOP's new leadership team, along with representatives from Seeing for Ourselves and a photographer who is now helping to run the program. The reception here, too, was strongly positive:

I have two words: 'inspirational'—both your personal testimony and the film [said an audience member]. They are inspirational. There's no other way to put it.

The other word I could use here is just 'profound'—the kind of transformation you've documented here that happened in the New York City Probation department and you've created an incredible program.... I just think that we all, as professionals in the field really want to make a difference and should take this lesson to heart. You work in a bureaucracy, and there are a thousand rules and restrictions: 'You can't do that. You can't do this. There's no hope.' All this kind of nonsense that we hear on a routine basis. This is an antidote to that. And I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you've done.

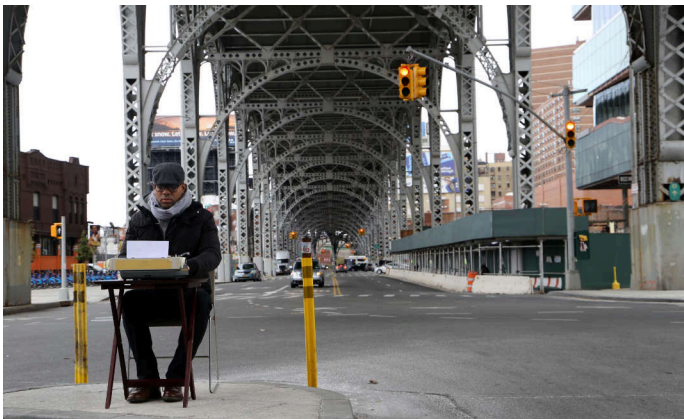
When publishing did revive, what became the eponymous companion book to the film came out in 2023. This work likewise received widespread acclaim, eventually named a finalist in the Next Generation Indie Book Awards (known as the Sundance of the publishing world). The new public narrative about Probation continues to pick up steam. Thousands of LinkedIn Connections have been formed around it, while several New York City justice nonprofit organisations and even prison systems outside the city have expressed a desire to participate in the programming. Course instruction migrated online when the pandemic hit and never looked back, so the concept of including individuals not served by NYCDOP seems eminently viable. If interested, entities in the UK should reach out to the agency for more information and it is anticipated that NYCDOP would welcome that dialogue.



I see the tears you cry and without being told to do so, I comfort you with a kiss.
—Alisha



NYC is all about the hustle. However, it can be a place where unusual,
funny things can appear just about any place.
You just have to keep your eyes open.
—Victorio





Enhancing Probation Success: The F.A.C.E. I.T. Program

Introduction

The first 30 to 90 days of community supervision mark a crucial period for individuals reentering society post-incarceration. Effective communication between probation officers and those under supervision during this time is paramount, setting the tone for successful rehabilitation and community reintegration. Conversely, a communication breakdown can impede progress, leading to potential reoffending and removal from the community. Recognising the significance of communication in these early stages is pivotal for stakeholders in fostering an environment conducive to compliance, rehabilitation, and successful reentry.

A recent study by the Florida Department of Corrections Office of Research and Data Analysis determined that approximately 22% of individuals on supervision were referred to the sentencing or releasing authority for failing to comply with supervision within three months of being sentenced. This highlights the importance of effective communication in outlining the role of probation officers and expectations for individuals being supervised in the community.

Additionally, community involvement and partnerships have become integral to the success of modern probation programs. Probation officers collaborate with community organisations, service providers, and faith-based institutions to



Joe Winkler

Assistant Secretary of Community Corrections
Florida Department of Corrections

offer individuals access to education, employment opportunities, and social support networks. Restorative justice practices, including victim-offender mediation, empower the community to play a role in rehabilitation and foster empathy and accountability among individuals under supervision (Coates, 2000).

In response, Florida Community Corrections initiated the F.A.C.E. I.T. Program in December 2021, originally intended to facilitate sessions with individuals sentenced to supervision and their families within the first 30 to 60 days of placement on supervision. As the program expanded, it reached county probation, jails, and state institutions.



The F.A.C.E. I.T. Program

The F.A.C.E. I.T. program is a two-hour class emphasising compliance with supervision conditions. The acronym represents six essential elements crucial for successful reintegration:

F - Family, Friends, Faith-based Organisations:

Research indicates that family support is pivotal for an individual's rehabilitation journey. Additionally, support from friends and faith-based organisations offers moral backing, guidance, and encouragement, enhancing the prospects of success in rehabilitation endeavours.

A - Attitude: Attitude plays a significant role in determining an individual's success. Cultivating a positive outlook on life is invaluable, influencing cognitive patterns and serving as a cornerstone of personal achievements.

C - Communication: Effective communication is essential for success, involving attentive listening, meaningful dialogues, and conveying messages through non-verbal cues. Individuals under supervision must recognise the importance of effective communication in interactions with various stakeholders.

E - Employment and Education: Securing employment is paramount for successful reintegration, aiding individuals in fulfilling obligations and serving as a deterrent against criminal activities. Employment specialists offer assistance in job preparation, application, and maintaining employment, facilitating the path toward rehabilitation.

I - Improvement: Continuous self-improvement is vital for success, involving regular introspection and commitment to personal growth across all aspects of life.

T - Take Responsibility: Success hinges on taking responsibility for one's actions and rehabilitation journey, acknowledging that accountability rests on the individual's shoulders.

Throughout the course, participants receive continuous reinforcement of the F.A.C.E. I.T. principles. Over 6,000 individuals have completed the program across various settings, with approximately 5% more individuals successfully surpassing the initial 90-day period without being referred back to the sentencing or releasing authority (FDC Bureau of Research and Data, 2023).

Conclusion

The F.A.C.E. I.T. program stands as a promising initiative in enhancing probation success and fostering positive outcomes for individuals reentering society. By equipping participants with essential tools for communication, support, and personal growth, the program contributes to creating an environment conducive to compliance, rehabilitation, and successful community reintegration. Through collaborative efforts and a holistic approach, stakeholders can continue to advance initiatives like F.A.C.E. I.T., ensuring the continued improvement of probation programs and the promotion of positive outcomes for individuals under supervision.

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