

The magazine of the Probation Institute

PROBATION

Issue 20: June 2021

Quarterly

Probation: unified and rebooted?

A personal view of licence and recall

Being under probation supervision

Autonomy, community, and fish-fries

The highs and lows of working as a probation officer on a remote island

Workload management and measurement

Learning from experience

PROBATION *Quarterly*

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- 4 How to feature in the PQ**
All you need to know about submitting an article for future editions of the PQ.
- 5 Probation in England and Wales: unified and rebooted?**
Editorial from Anne Worrall and Jake Phillips.
- 8 Hello/Farewell**
Welcoming new Editor Jake Phillips and saying a fond farewell to Anne Worrall.
- 9 Personal reflections in practice**
Kulvinder Dhillon reflects on a long career in social work and probation.
- 13 What's going on at the Probation Institute?**
Update from Helen Schofield, Acting CEO of the Probation Institute.
- 14 A personal view of licence and recall**
David Breakspear reflects on being a person under probation supervision.
- 16 Under pressure**
Kevin Ball discusses caseload, workload and staffing in probation services in England and Wales.
- 20 'Double Jeopardy': Domestic abuse in ethnic minority communities and implications for probation practice**
Stacey Musimbe-Rix, KSS CRC Research and Policy Unit, summarises recent research.
- 24 'We've all got a big story': Experiences of a trauma-informed intervention in prison**
Madeline Petrillo, University of Greenwich, discusses her recent research.
- 29 Probation Institute Conference on Recall**
Anne Burrell reflects on the Probation Institute's recent Research Conference on Recall.
- 33 Workload management and measurement**
A personal reflection from Probation Institute Director Mike McClelland.
- 37 Autonomy, community, and fish-fries**
Fiona Campbell discusses the highs and lows of working as a probation officer on the remote island of St Helena.
- 41 An Invitation from The Bill McWilliams Memorial Lecture Steering Group**

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF THE PQ?

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

- the activities of the Probation Institute.
- news about the work of your organisation or project.
- reports from special events, seminars, meetings or conferences.
- summaries of your own 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.

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.

Jake Phillips

Editor, Probation Quarterly

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Probation in England and Wales: unified and rebooted?

Editorial from Anne Worrall and Jake Phillips.

In the aftermath of the reunification of Germany Willy Brandt, then Mayor of Berlin, said 'Now what belongs together will grow together'. The reform of probation services in England and Wales does not exist on the same geo-political plane as the reunification of East and West Germany. However, there is a sense that, at least, the 26th June 2021 marks the end of a period in which a service was controversially split in two, causing considerable damage to previous efforts to support people who had been convicted of an offence. Unification (as it has come to be known) is undoubtedly a positive move but we need to remember it is unlikely to be a panacea for the issues faced by service users, staff and the organisation, and there is still considerable uncertainty especially for staff working in CRCs, some of whom still do not know what the future holds.

Unification will enable better communication for people working with different groups and reduce the need for service users to move across services as their 'risk' changes. Importantly, it will remove the chances of 'immutable lines' being crossed in the pursuit of profit and hopefully lead to a more coherent service for service users, staff, sentencers and the general public.

Yet Brandt's quote is a reminder that it takes time to heal after a schism and we would do well to remember this after June. Things will not be perfect overnight. Resourcing issues persist and workloads in the new service will remain high for some years. Mixed caseloads will pose a challenge for staff who have been used to having homogenous caseloads for the last seven years. CRC service users will have to get used to doing things in new ways and NPS service users will see changes, too. Unification *per se* is unlikely

to deal with the problems of racial inequality identified in a recently published HMIP report on the issue. There is also the risk that some of the innovation seen in CRCs (such as meaningful attempts to engage service users or the use of community hubs to deliver probation services) will be lost in the newly enlarged, centrally driven NPS.

But this is, and should be, a time for optimism and we hope that probation re-finds its voice as a service which advocates for people in conflict with the law. At the very least probation should now, once again, be a coherent service that is back where it belongs: in the public sector. In order to get a sense of how unification went in the immediate, short term we would welcome submissions for the next issue which provide 'early insights' into the unification process.

Several of the articles in this issue deal with unification directly whilst others touch on it tangentially. HMI Probation recently published a research report on the impact of high workloads in probation which, rightly, received plenty of attention. We are pleased that we have two articles in this issue which deal specifically with this important piece of work. Firstly, Kevin Ball outlines the findings of the research whilst PI director Mike McClelland provides a first-hand reflective account of the comings and goings of workload management in probation over the years. We doubt there is an easy answer to the problem of workloads in probation but it is good to see it being raised by HMI Probation and then picked up by the Justice Select Committee in its recent report on *The Future of the Probation Service*.

Continuing with this reflective approach we are delighted to have two articles from practising probation officers in this issue. The first, from Kulvinder Dhillon, is a reflection on thirty years in practice across social work and probation. Providing a unique insight into the way probation officers' belief in the ability of people to change can persist despite shifts in policy towards the technocratic and punitive. In her account of life as a seconded probation officer on St Helena, a remote island in the South Atlantic, Fiona Campbell gives a sense of what it is like to use the skills developed in England and Wales on an island where a small and tight-knit community poses both pros and cons for those working in probation.

David Breakspear, a member of the Revolving Doors Lived Experience Team, uses his piece to think about what the role of probation is, or should be, in our broader sentencing framework. Using his own experience of being under probation supervision he makes a strong argument for abolishing short prison sentences (as has happened in other jurisdictions in recent years) and probation services focusing on trust, time and empathy to improve the way people on probation are supported. Hearing from supervised individuals should be a priority for services and we're really pleased to be able to include David's thoughts here.

Madeline Petrillo provides us with an overview of her recently published article on prisoners' experiences of being involved in a gender-

responsive, trauma-informed prison programme. Madeline's findings are as important for probation practice as they are for prison practice and she usefully concludes with some implications for probation practice. There is clearly a need to respond to trauma appropriately and we are sure that this research will prove useful in this regard. Sticking with academic research, in April the Probation Institute held an online research event on recall in which we heard from a range of speakers who had done research in this important area. Anne Burrell provides a summary of the presentations.

In another important publication from HMI Probation recently we heard about the ways that probation providers are failing to respond to and reduce racial inequality. Our article from Stacey Musimbe-Rix from KSS CRC gives further insight into this important issue. Stacey discusses the findings of a piece of research which examined the intersectionality of race and gender for BAME women victims of domestic violence. With important implications for probation practice the research poses several challenges for the NPS post-unification. We are keen to publish more on the important issue of race in probation with questions such as how probation does or should respond to the Black Lives Matter movement being largely unaddressed thus far. If readers have anything they would like to contribute, please do get in touch.

As probation enters a new era, so too does Probation Quarterly. We are sad to announce that this issue will be Anne Worrall's final issue, having edited PQ for nearly four years. Anne is handing over the reins to Jake Phillips, Reader in Criminology, from Sheffield Hallam University.

Anne says:

"When I became Editor of Probation Quarterly in 2017, the consequences of Transforming Rehabilitation were deep and widespread. My modest vision was that the magazine would be a bridge of communication between organisations and individuals in all sectors working with offenders and victims in the community. I believed that a professional identity could be maintained and developed independently of the organisations in which people found themselves working, whether by choice or necessity. Nearly four years on, I am very proud of what Probation Quarterly has achieved and am grateful to all the people who have contributed to it in any way. There are too many to name here but an exception has to be made for our designer, Richard Rowley, who has been a pleasure to work with and who gives the magazine its unique visual identity."



Anne Worrall
Co-Editor, Probation Quarterly



Jake Phillips
Co-Editor, Probation Quarterly

Jake says:

"I was thrilled and honoured to be asked to take on the editorship of Probation Quarterly, having been a regular reader and sometime contributor over the years. I will admit to feeling slightly trepidatious about my ability to follow in Anne's footsteps, but I'll do my best. I have been researching probation policy and practice since I started my PhD in 2008 and am delighted to be able to be involved in PQ, an endeavour which exists to improve access to academic research for those working in the field of probation and, hopefully, service users. I am not planning to make many changes to Anne's winning formula, keeping the focus on the magazine being 'a bridge of research-based or research-informed communication between individuals and organisations' that work with people under probation supervision. That said, I plan to introduce themed sections and would like to take this opportunity to invite contributions for the next issue (PQ21) which will contain a section on unification and the subsequent issue (PQ22) which will focus on race, racial inequality and Black Lives Matter. I would strongly encourage more practitioners and service users to submit articles but, as ever, welcome submissions from academics, policymakers and others from across the voluntary sector and criminal justice system."

Personal reflections in practice

Kulvinder Dhillon, Probation Officer, reflects on a long career in social work and probation.



I want to share with you some of my experiences during my 30-year career in social work which has included working as a probation officer. I don't claim to have the answers to improve services but I was fortunate to have worked across many types of criminal justice services as a practitioner, supervisor and team manager enabling me to gain valuable experience and work with amazing colleagues. Often the service users I managed were challenging individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds with fascinating life stories.

Looking back at the early stage of my career I had wanted to make a positive difference to people's lives and started out as a volunteer at a local community drug advice centre and homeless shelter. I quickly realised that I was able to listen for hours to people including their partners or others who were worried about their friends' lives spiralling out of control. Most days in the centre I needed to be patient when a person's drug addiction affected their concentration levels and I would repeat myself to them as a consequence, but an important thing I learned was the critical importance of building up trust and rapport with potentially dangerous people in society.

I say 'dangerous', as some people would talk casually about the losses in their life and openly tell me they would do risky things because no one had ever cared about them and they had nothing to lose as the world was against them. Many people including partners, parents and friends would contact the centre to ask about the cycles of addiction and their concern for someone they knew was committing crime. That's when I was introduced to probation staff and other law enforcement agencies including forensic workers and became curious to know more.

As a volunteer I worked extra hours to gain more experience but also realised that crisis intervention did not fall into a routine 9-5 job. I recall taking people to health appointments and accessing emergency accommodation for them, but also remember the warmth and commitment



Kulvinder Dhillon
Probation Officer

I would receive from charitable organisations and people working in the Probation Service who showed a good insight into how to support chaotic individuals appearing before the courts.

I continued to develop my experience and from my volunteering proceeded to obtain sessional work and then paid work in probation hostels. After this time I went on to train as a social worker but took occasional breaks from front line children's work to go to another service as I would become upset when coming across some of the traumatic experiences that children had experienced at the hands of people they trusted. Understanding trauma / lived experiences can be emotionally draining even for professionals who are encouraged to be 'resilient' when faced with such challenges.

Some of those young people's stories of being mistreated have never left me and even though you try to forget these to function appropriately as a dedicated professional it is hard to simply erase such vivid descriptions by offenders of brutality shown to them as children by their caregivers, those persons who abused their positions - not just family members but professionals in the education and institutional care system set up to protect the people they abused.

However such experiences also helped me think about the links between service users who reported childhood experiences of neglect and how they had poor role models in their lives growing up.

I became conscious of the part that people's childhood has played in their adult lives; it is good to know that now more attention is currently being given to care leavers who commit crimes and are being managed by probation, although I am unsure how staff will be additionally trained to meet their needs. Damaged individuals who receive statutory services often have no voice and services may lose sight of how the care system has affected people. However it seems that there is more awareness now around mental health and poor attachment issues amongst offenders which is encouraging. I often reflect about the newly qualified officers entering the probation field with little life or practice experience and how they could be more supported.

When observing new officers spending more of their time in face-to-face work with clients to get to know them more, this is encouraging but some new starters fail to fully appreciate how times have changed and how recruitment used to expect evidence of direct experience of offender management to demonstrate an interest or commitment. However in reality when newly qualified officers' caseloads increase and competing demands are placed on their time to meet organisational deadlines, I hope they will still be able to create time to know their clients, remembering why they joined the profession which will no doubt change again through the reunification processes announced by the Government. Now as a part-time probation officer, I notice changes in probation practices and fundamentally the fluctuating attitudes about how we should 'practise' our supervision with offenders; should we, for example, stop to think about how we interact with each other in teams and re-build team relationships?

As we live in a digital age there seems to be an over-reliance on technology to replace physically interacting with each other. Assessments and reports can become similar in their details, almost 'robotic' when ultimately we are dealing with people's futures and their lives; shouldn't case recording provide a colourful, detailed picture of a person's life story? Often assessment is heavily influenced by complex scoring which may be confusing for practitioners to understand or explain; how will this actually assist front line work? How can we create a culture of openness and honesty in the workplace as we would expect of our service users so we can learn from each other better?

One of the most rewarding comments I ever had as a manager came from a parent who had noted positive improvement in their adolescent's behaviour at home which they felt was as a result of the young person's worker spending time to get to know their child and their problems. This feedback could not be measured in figures or targets but in the human empathy context. The parent involved was telling me that her family life had improved as my staff had shown they were interested to work with her and were not prepared to give up trying to engage her challenging teenage son who had caused havoc in her local community.

Conversely I managed high risk BME clients who have reported not being able to identify/ relate or understand the work expected of them on offence focussed programmes which they were placed on. In my view this is an under researched area especially given the changes in demographics in inner cities and over representation of BME service users in the criminal justice system as reported by annual Ministry of Justice publications.

Years ago I remember how some clients respected the professional boundaries in the relationship differently between them and their officer. Attitudes towards the role of the probation officer in the community seemed to suggest that probation staff would have more time to understand their offender and work with them effectively as they knew their situations. This was perceived by some colleagues at the time as being due to the reduced paperwork we dealt with (that is not to say there was none - I do remember Part C paper files) but it was a different, perhaps more simplified method of recording what was happening with offenders we supervised.

Ultimately perhaps just being honest with ourselves and learning from each other's experience more often is a way forward; practice workshops used to be held where teams could do just that in a relaxed forum. There are many aspects of working for probation which I have enjoyed including my specialist roles in the Homeless Offenders Unit, YOT and Crown Court although I most enjoyed my face-to-face, individual work with high risk offenders and partnership work which relied on the 'goodwill' I had with housing providers to accommodate emergency homeless offenders on late Friday afternoons.

I will always be proud to have worked in the organisation across many divisions and in a variety of roles though I do believe that maturity and life experience could be more respected or

valued by team colleagues at all levels. Staff should be able to receive feedback on their views about changes introduced in the organisation and how they deal with the new ways of working. Overall I still believe that a career as a probation officer is a worthwhile opportunity to make positive changes to crime in our society and influence those individuals who pose a risk to others through their behaviours.

Finally I want to share my research interests and I hope one day to proceed with at least some of them. If you share any of my interests and would like to discuss them further, do get in touch through the Editor:

- Cross cultural offender management research projects following my visits to Indian penal regimes in 2011 and 2017 comparing and contrasting interventions designed to reduce risk.
- The lived experiences of looked after children who offend and the impact of 'out of area' placements. What are the impacts on young care leavers' lives and futures?
- Engagement of South Asian sex offenders and examining sex offending intervention programmes with them. How effective are these programmes and can they co-design interventions?
- Examining the patterns of domestic violence in South Asian communities and the role of parental, family influence on behaviour by male perpetrators.

What's going on at the Probation Institute?

An update from Helen Schofield, Acting CEO.

As readers will note, this is the last issue of the Probation Quarterly to be edited by Professor Anne Worrall. Anne took over this role in 2017 and has transformed the PQ into an accessible, busy, stimulating publication widely read across the justice sector. The Probation Institute extends our thanks to Anne and we are pleased that she will continue as a member of our Research Committee helping to steer our research work and arrange research events. We are delighted to be welcoming Dr Jake Phillips from Sheffield Hallam University to become the new editor of PQ ; Jake has co-edited this issue and we look forward to him taking the publication from strength to strength. Professor Paul Senior would be very pleased by this development.

As this is the last issue of the Probation Quarterly before Unification of the Probation Service we are pleased to see that much of the infrastructure is coming into place, albeit that some will take longer to complete. In our discussions with the Reform Team, with Inspectors, Probation Advisory Boards we will be watching some areas closely, including workloads, recruitment, qualifying training and continuous professional development, court work, use of the commissioned services, greater use of community sentences, stronger work with black and minority ethnic individuals, young people and also with families, and service user engagement. We will also be continuing our pressure to establish professional registration and regulation, as this is an important, if challenging time to introduce registration with recognised, supported CPD.

There is no doubt that this is a critical period for Probation, in which practitioners, managers and leaders will all share in building future success.

We are pleased to see the important announcement by MOJ of the rehabilitation services worth £200 million contracted for average periods of three years under the [Dynamic Framework](#). These services including personal support, employment, training and accommodation must now work collaboratively with Probation Practitioners to ensure that the funding reaches service users and makes a real difference to their lives going forward. [Clinks](#) have pointed to the success of a number of larger voluntary sector organisations whilst the small, local and perhaps most dynamic organisations have had little success. Indeed we understand that many simply did not bid as the contracting process was not perceived to be at their level.

In thinking about the future, we are looking at the opportunities offered to us by becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation - a charity which is able to trade. This change would require our members to be more active in electing Trustees and steering the work of the Institute more firmly. We will write more fully on this as we go forward but we would be pleased to hear of any views about such a change.

Readers may like to see the [Annual Report](#) from the Probation Institute. Also the most recent Position Paper on ["Use of the Protocol for Pre-Sentence Report before Plea"](#).

A personal view of licence and recall

David Breakspear from Revolving Doors Lived Experience Team, reflects on being a person under probation supervision.



I would like to begin by letting you know I understand that to do what needs to be done is weighed down by the heavy caseloads which probation officers are given. This also makes time a precious commodity, especially the time to spend with supervised individuals. I am also aware of the utopian vision regarding reducing reoffending. A complex algorithm that sees me, after, coincidentally, being out of prison for the same amount of time I was sentenced to in 2015 - 3 years 9 months - finally having an effect on the statistics.

From my perspective, I have seen the relationship between probation and supervised individuals suffer since they made determinate prison sentences a 50-50 affair. Half in, half out on licence. Between 2019 and 2020 there were approximately 27,000 recalls. A figure which to outside observers may seem high, but, with on average 60,000 people released from prison each year, and the percentage reoffending, it is not that shocking. However, a figure which does shock me, and one that further damages the important relationship between the PO and supervised individual (SI) is that almost 9,000 of those 27,000 were on a short sentence licence. This figure also shows there are a disproportionate number of women among the 9,000. Most of those people could be better and safely supported on community orders. Those serving longer sentences are less likely to reoffend than their short term counterparts probably because they had the time in prison to get their individual needs met.

We all know that reoffending is most prevalent among those who serve sentences of 12 months or less, and we also know that 9,000 of those were recalled back to prison. By no means do I blame probation officers for that - they do not

write the policies. I would like to see sentences of 12 months or less abolished for several reasons and the benefits I can see for the NPS are many, but the most important aspect is the amount of time which would be freed up for POs to be able to do the job they joined up for, instead of feeding a revolving door of going in and out of prison.

Is there a risk to be managed regarding those who are mainly responsible for the draining of probation's resources, or are there needs to be met in reducing their chances of reoffending? Probation officers need to focus on:

1. Building trust - recognising that distrust is rife and power imbalances exist. Perhaps peer support is a solution. Reducing Reoffending Partnership's Transition and Hope peer mentoring project is a perfect example.
2. Taking the time to really understand people before it is too late. Find out what the real needs are, not just the risk factors that might lead to reoffending. More trauma informed, more detailed assessments, that are genuinely done together, will require more time, less rushing, and less box ticking.
3. Showing empathy, and building it into the system, making probation more humane. Make the service more flexible and meet people where they are at, understanding that the underlying causes of crime, like poverty and trauma, or the resulting mental health, homelessness, and addiction, is never going to be an easy fix.

When you are a part of a jigsaw there is always the bigger picture.



Under pressure: caseload, workload and staffing in probation services in England and Wales

Kevin Ball, Senior Research Officer, HM Inspectorate of Probation.

HM Inspectorate of Probation's inspectors interview hundreds of probation officers and probation service officers every year to inform our inspections and capture the lived reality of rehabilitation and public protection work.

A recurring theme in these conversations since the *Transforming Rehabilitation* reforms has been the anxiety, stress and fear created by unmanageable workloads.

Our recently published *Research and Analysis Bulletin* is an attempt to understand the complexity of caseload, workload and staffing issues in probation services in England and Wales. The report is based on an analysis of official statistics, and our datasets of over 3,000 case inspections and over 2,000 probation staff interviews. In addition, we held a series of interviews and focus groups with senior leaders in both Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS) to look at the future prospects for the probation service and working patterns. We also commissioned Manchester Metropolitan University to review and summarise the international evidence on probation caseloads. Our key finding is that the quality of work to support rehabilitation and public protection is impaired when probation workers hold a caseload of 50 or more cases. Staff and managers agreed that 50 to 60 cases should be the ceiling for an individual caseload. A single 'magic number' for caseload size cannot be set as there are too many variables in play such as the levels of administrative support, the interventions and services that can be accessed, and the wide and



Kevin Ball

Senior Research Officer
HM Inspectorate of Probation

complex spectrum of service user needs and risks. Nevertheless, the unified service should be mindful that the aims of probation can be undermined as caseloads approach and exceed 50 cases. As one CRC leader put it:

"more than 45 cases is just too many life stories to try to absorb."

These findings are cited in the recent House of Commons Justice Committee report on the future of the probation service,¹ leading to their recommendation that:

"the Ministry of Justice commit to ensuring that individual caseloads do not exceed a baseline figure of 50."

¹ House of Commons Justice Committee. (2021). The future of the probation service eighteenth report of session 2019-21 (<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/466/the-future-of-the-probation-service>).

Figure 1 – Our key findings



The impact of workloads on individual officers was distressing to read. Many told us of being “at breaking point”, of feeling “burnt out” and being in a “state of panic” about their working life. Some told us they were not supported by their managers and organisations. As this CRC officer told us:

“I’ve put in stress forms and they’ve been ignored. I have given up putting them in now.”

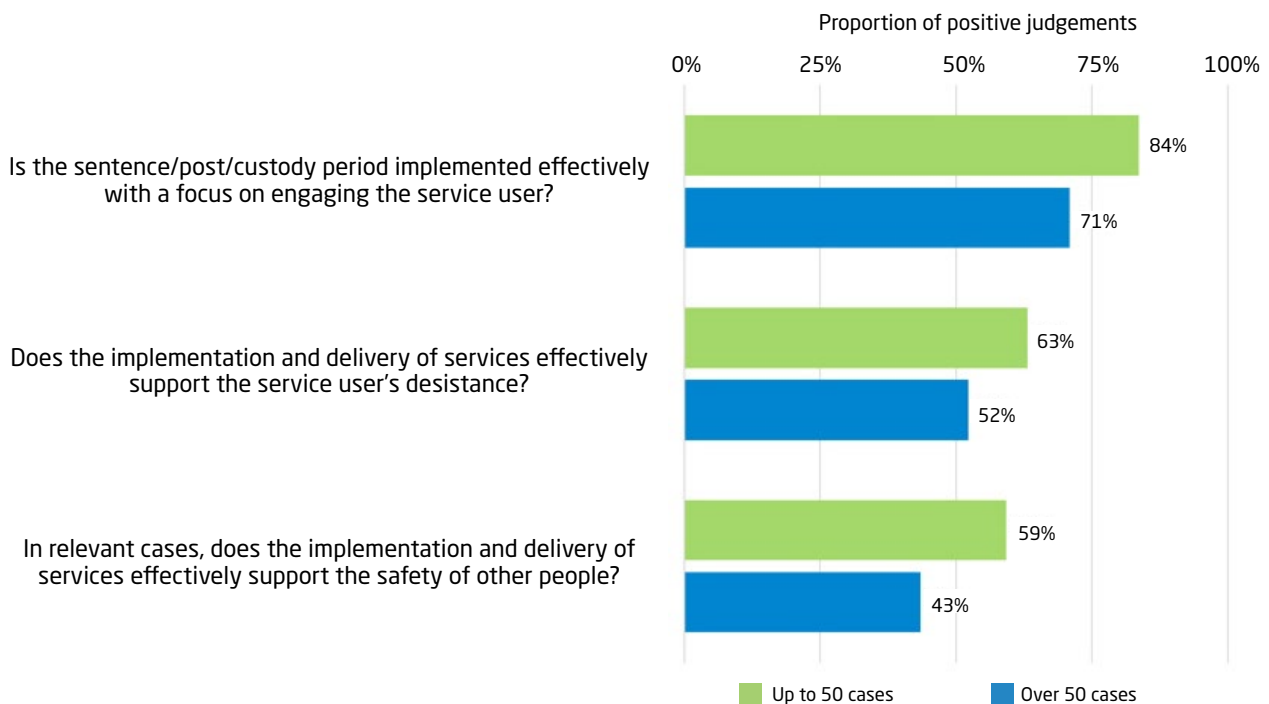
Other staff told us they felt they could not go on sick leave despite severe stress because they would feel guilty about adding to the burden of colleagues.

Some staff told us they wanted to leave the profession, a senior probation officer stating:

“[it] is a hostile environment... A job that was done by two people is now done by one.”

We found a strong relationship between caseload size and critical elements of probation work as shown in Figure 2. Staff with unmanageable workloads were aware of their inability to deliver a good quality service, and to develop and maintain the all-important relationships with service users. One probation officer in the NPS stated:

“I feel exhausted and scared that if there is a Serious Further Offence, I will be unable to defend my decisions.”

Figure 2 – Probation inspector judgements on the quality of delivery by caseload number

We end our report by looking at some promising developments to improve the situation. Many of these initiatives were found in the CRCs, and it is important that these are carried forward into the unified service:

- administrative support hubs found in some CRCs took away from the frontline much of the paperwork and data entry for court work and scheduling and monitoring programme interventions.
- community hubs (which we covered in another report) encourage compliance and access to wider services.
- co-location of agencies, again more common in the CRCs, reduced workload by encouraging sharing information and easing referrals to other services.
- employing support workers with lived experience encouraged compliance and take-up of services amongst some CRC service users.

The Covid-19 pandemic has 'opened the eyes' of the senior probation leaders we interviewed to the possibilities of remote supervision, more home visits, digital delivery of interventions, and

working from home in the new unified service. All the senior leaders we spoke to were impressed and grateful to all staff for their resilience and hard work in these extraordinary times. As an NPS leader put it:

"everyone has been remarkable, we never stopped."

Moving forward, the success of the unified service, which launches in June, ultimately depends upon a realistic financial settlement for probation. The new service must be able to recruit, train and support sufficient qualified staff to deliver the blended caseloads that practitioners will be managing once again. As stated by our Chief Inspector, Justin Russell:

"We will pay close attention to plans to recruit more staff and introduce more balanced caseloads. This is a critical opportunity to reduce workload pressures and raise the quality of supervision and support."

Read the full report on [HM Inspectorate of Probation's website](#)

'Double Jeopardy'

Domestic abuse in ethnic minority communities and implications for probation practice

Stacey Musimbe-Rix, KSS CRC Research and Policy Unit, summarises recent research.

Though perhaps most commonly understood as a legal term, “*double jeopardy*” was also used by Frances Beale in 1969 to describe the plight faced by black women due to their race and gender. 52 years on, the Black Lives Movement (BLM) has brought the structural inequality faced by ethnic minority communities to the forefront. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an exponential rise in domestic abuse (DA) cases and has further widened the gap between white and minority ethnic victims. It is important, therefore, as practitioners, to examine how race and DA intersect, and what implications this has for our work with DA survivors from minority communities.

This article draws on research undertaken by KSS CRC Research and Policy Unit, entitled ‘*Domestic Abuse in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups*’, and published on their website in October 2020. Readers wishing to explore the topic further can access this research at: www.ksscrc.co.uk

Domestic abuse is a prevalent issue in probation practice, and is widely accepted as one of the root causes for female criminality. DA affects victims in comparable ways, but there is evidence to suggest that those from minority backgrounds, particularly from migrant communities, are disproportionately impacted. The Office for National Statistics (2019) data shows that in the year 2018-2019, the rates of DA were highest amongst minority communities, particularly those of mixed ethnicity.

Race and experiences of criminal justice

Crenshaw (1991) coined the term ‘*intersectionality*’ to describe the multiple barriers faced by Black women due to existing on the

intersection of gender and race, and therefore experiencing different layers of oppression. BAME communities largely face obstacles due to their race, and this is particularly evident within the criminal justice system, where there is a noticeable disparity in the treatment of minority communities compared to their white counterparts.

‘Minoritised women are not fairly treated by the police, and their interactions and access to justice needs to be reviewed in the criminal justice system, as a whole. It cannot be separated from a wider context of institutional racism, which has led to historic and current over-policing, surveillance, and hyper-visibility of BAME communities within the criminal justice system.’ (Lovatt et al., 2020:2)

Institutional racism within the CJS, particularly the police force, has been well documented since the inception of the Macpherson Report. Institutional racism can be found in the dichotomy of actions and inactions by the CJS. On one hand BAME communities are subjected to over-policing of acquisitive and non-intimate violent offences, whilst on the other, domestic abuse is under-policed due to ‘*multiculturalism*’ (Siddiqui 2018). Siddiqui highlighted that terms such as these are often ‘*veiled language*’ used to justify a non-interventionist approach in minority communities, particularly in instances of Honour Based Violence (HBV). HBV is defined by Safelives (undated: 15) as:

‘a collective and planned crime or incident, mainly perpetrated against women and girls, by their family or their community, who act to defend their perceived honour, because they believe that the victim(s) have done something to bring shame to the family or the community.’

Indeed, the very high profile cases of Banaz Mahmood and Shafiea Ahmed have shown us the institutional failings of a 'non-interventionist' approach when dealing with HBV in minority communities.

Moreover, placing a positive responsibility on minority communities to deal with a public issue (Siddiqui, 2018) does very little to restore confidence in the criminal justice system. HBV like other forms of domestic abuse is a public issue, and the onus should not be on the victim to redress the harms caused. The sensitive way of dealing with HBV is through what Siddiqui (2018) calls '*mature multiculturalism*', which acknowledges the diverse cultures in minority communities and sensitively intervenes to tackle abusive practices such as HBV. Despite some progress being made in tackling HBV, there is still evidence to suggest that many professionals feel ill equipped to identify warning signs and behaviours that constitute HBV (Safelives, undated). A lack of awareness can lead to a lack of appropriate intervention which weakens BAME victims' trust in professionals.

The history of distrust between BAME communities and the CJS makes it more likely that BAME women would seek informal sources of support before turning to the police (Imkaan, 2020). Beyond the police, there is evidence of some public services and charities being directly discriminatory towards BAME victims (Lovatt et al., 2020). Research from Safelives (undated) has shown that some BAME individuals were apprehensive about disclosing the abuse due to '*specific issues related to racism including stereotypes about refugees and migrants*'.

It can also be difficult for individuals from minority communities to disclose, due to the strong notion of protecting the community and

BAME victims can often suffer longer before disclosing domestic abuse, particularly to professionals (Safelives, undated).

Financial vulnerability, DA, and BAME women

Financial insecurity can compound the effects of DA. BAME women are more economically vulnerable compared to their white counterparts and the COVID-19 pandemic has only served to widen the gap. Over twice as many BAME women and men reported losing financial support from the government (42.5% / 48.3%) compared with white women and men (12.7% / 20.6%) (Fawcett Society, 2020). For some migrant women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), lost jobs during the pandemic has meant reliance on their perpetrators, and subsequently exposure to economic abuse. This has also forced some victims to stay in abusive relationships as they have found it difficult to, or been unable to, access benefits (such as refuge) that might enable them to move on (Imkaan, 2020). It has been well documented that during the pandemic refuge spaces, which are publicly funded, have been largely inaccessible for migrant women with NRPF (Imkaan, 2020).

The responsibility of probation to BAME victims

In order to perform its rehabilitative function effectively, probation needs to be a safe space for service users, paying particular attention to those who are also victims of domestic abuse. Limited knowledge of BAME communities (Lovatt et al., 2020) can lead to stereotyping and inappropriate responses.

It is incumbent upon professionals such as probation staff to not only increase their knowledge base but to treat minority communities as stakeholders in their own safety and work with them and BAME organisations in order to create appropriate safety plans. A 'one size fits all approach' is not appropriate for individuals from minority groups, and professionals need to adapt their practice to ensure that they are working in sensitive, holistic and culturally appropriate ways, remembering that BAME victims are not homogenous.

Furthermore, it is important to tackle structural inequality at individual and organisational levels. In order to redress longstanding structural inequalities on a macro level, the CJS might be best placed to look at more rehabilitative instead of retributive models of justice for BAME victims of domestic abuse. The Ministry of Justice recognised the need for diversionary approaches for female victims of trauma including victims of domestic abuse and it feels particularly important for BAME individuals, who face double disadvantage due to their race and gender.

Moving forward

As this brief exploration into this important topic has shown, DA disproportionately affects those from minority ethnic groups due to long standing structural inequalities. The pandemic has further entrenched these inequalities, particularly for those with no recourse to public funds. BAME victims are different to their white counterparts and they need to be treated as such. An intersectional lens should be applied when working with victims of DA, remembering that each individual brings with them a unique set of oppressions. The evidence shows us that there is still a long way to go in tackling abusive practices in minority communities.

It is important that professionals responding to DA in BAME communities continue to challenge institutional racism, receive training on working with BAME communities, strive for representation in their organisation, and invest funding in BAME organisations. Moreover, more funded refuge spaces and economic initiatives might be needed for BAME victims in order to redress economic disadvantage. Ultimately, domestic abuse cannot be tackled in isolation without addressing the inequality facing BAME people. Institutional racism and structural inequality perpetuates victimhood and our silence and inaction risks further disenfranchising an already marginalised group.

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'We've all got a big story': Experiences of a trauma-informed intervention in prison

Madeline Petrillo, University of Greenwich,
discusses her recent research.



Victimisation and trauma are prevalent among women in the justice system and are often not perceived to be amenable to criminal justice intervention. There are compelling arguments that prison and probation are inappropriate settings for trauma-informed programmes because trauma responses can be induced not only by experiencing traumatic events but also by other adversity, including imprisonment (Petrillo 2021). In 2018, I undertook research exploring women's experiences of participating in Healing Trauma, a gender-responsive, trauma-informed intervention currently delivered across the women's custodial estate as part of the *Becoming Trauma Informed* (BTI) initiative. This article introduces the principles of trauma-informed practice and interventions and the key findings from this research, concluding with some of the implications for probation practice.

Becoming trauma informed

The BTI initiative identifies the values and principles of trauma-informed practice that should form the foundation of organisational interaction with women in the justice system. It details standards for 'enabling environments' and the roles and personal qualities of staff involved in trauma-informed, gender-responsive service delivery, based on Harris and Fallot's (2001) principles for developing trauma-informed service delivery systems. These principles are **safety, choice, trust, collaboration, and empowerment**. Interventions such as Healing Trauma represent one aspect of trauma-informed service delivery.

The Healing Trauma intervention comprises six, 90-minute, weekly sessions in closed groups of up to ten women. It adopts an approach that incorporates cognitive behavioural therapy, relational therapy, guided imagery, emotional



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freedom technique, mindfulness, and expressive arts. Uniquely, the programme is peer-facilitated; specially trained Prison Officers (BTI Leads) train and supervise current prison residents to deliver the intervention. Women self-refer to the programme or are invited to participate by BTI Leads. Participation is voluntary and cannot be enforced as part of a sentence plan.

Trauma-informed practice and gender responsiveness

Trauma-informed interventions for women differ from traditional rehabilitative programmes in that they are intentionally gender-responsive. The approaches are underpinned by theories of 'complex trauma.' Complex trauma refers to trauma that occurs repeatedly and cumulatively over a period of time, often resulting from abuse within the family and other intimate relationships from which the victim cannot physically or psychologically escape.

Trauma-informed practice in women's prisons in England is based on Stephanie Covington and Barbara Bloom's (2007:12-14) principles of gender-responsive practice for criminal justice agencies:

- acknowledge that gender matters in women's experiences of offending and the justice system,
- create a women-only environment based on safety, respect, and dignity,
- develop policies, practices, and programmes that are relational and that promote healthy connections to children, family members, significant others, and the community,
- address substance misuse, trauma, and mental health issues through comprehensive, integrated, and culturally relevant services and supervision,
- provide women with opportunities to improve their socioeconomic conditions,
- establish a system of comprehensive and collaborative community services.

Trauma-informed practice in prison

The government's 'Female Offender Strategy' (Ministry of Justice, 2018) echoes the Corston Report's (2007) findings that women in the justice system can be particularly vulnerable in both the multiplicity and complexity of their needs. Many lead lifestyles characterised by multiple disadvantage including substance misuse, mental illness, homelessness, economic deprivation, and offending behaviour that are frequently the product of histories of abuse and

trauma. The strategy contains a commitment to implementing a trauma-informed approach to working with women in the justice system.

Healing Trauma evaluation

A pilot evaluation of *Healing Trauma* in seven women's prisons was conducted during 2018. It involved pre and post group tests that measured changes in symptoms of trauma, followed by focus groups discussions on completion of the intervention. The extent of histories of abuse and victimisation among the women involved in the study was high and most had experienced more than one type of abuse. Of the thirty participants, twenty-five had experienced domestic abuse including twenty who had experienced sexual assault by an intimate partner. Seventeen had experienced childhood abuse including physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Six had experienced sexual assault other than childhood and intimate partner abuse.

Pre and post programme questionnaires were used as a way of formally recording changes participants had anecdotally commented upon as a benefit of the intervention. They revealed noteworthy reductions in symptoms of trauma including depression, anxiety, PTSD, sleep disturbance, dissociation, anger, and aggression following completion of *Healing Trauma*. The focus groups allowed the participants to reflect on participating in *Healing Trauma* in order to explore the experiences behind the reported reductions in trauma symptoms.

The focus groups were participant led but I asked the women to reflect on three key themes,

- their experiences of Healing Trauma,
- the changes they perceived in themselves as a result of the intervention,
- and the main learning they would take from the programme.

The analysis consolidated around the theme of **sharing stories or 'opening up'**, and reciprocal processes between this and **overcoming shame and isolation, reconnecting with their emotional selves, feeling empowered, and creating a safe space in the prison environment**. The full report on the evaluation includes lots of verbatim quotes from the women, and their insights and reflections on their experiences are powerful. Despite the undisputed harms associated with imprisonment, the focus groups revealed that women's past experiences of victimisation and trauma can be amenable to intervention within a criminal justice context. The changes women want to make to their lives after prison are rarely framed as striving to terminate offending behaviours. Instead 'success' is defined as building relationships, addressing substance misuse problems, stabilising mental health difficulties, and achieving a 'normal' life (Heidemann, Cederbaum and Martinez, 2016). The women in this study attest to the value of trauma-informed interventions in awakening these aspirations, and in the case of building relationships and stabilising mental health,

achieving a measure of success. But the women articulate this much better than I ever could so, as an example, I asked the groups if they had the ear of the Prison's Minister, what they would say to him about Healing Trauma and this was Helen's response:

"Anyone who's come to prison, and I personally really think especially women, haven't just come here because they're bored or haven't got something better to do. It's normally really serious trauma they've undergone... We need to treat symptoms of that and the Healing Trauma really does that, and it makes you a human again and puts you back in touch with those feelings that you boxed away and told yourself you weren't allowed to feel. And if we want to release people as functioning members of society, we need to give them that chance to heal."

Implications for Probation

Trauma lingers in the body and can be triggered by what survivors see, hear, feel, and smell (van der Kolk, 2015). The intrusive sensory experience of imprisonment can both exacerbate existing trauma and be itself traumatising (Jewkes et al., 2019). In England and Wales, the disproportionately high levels of self-harm and suicide among women in prison give lie to the idea of prison as a safe, healing space.

For these reasons, trauma-informed approaches instinctively seem better suited to community supervision. Sentencers and responsible officers in Court have been found to be unclear about what provision exists for women in the community and have noted the lack of rehabilitative activities designed specifically for women (HMIP, 2016), creating a reluctance to sentence women to community orders and a decline in their use. A trauma-informed framework for supervising women that includes interventions such as Healing Trauma may enable probation providers to alleviate some of the psychological effects of trauma and respond to the needs of women, improving confidence in the capacity of community supervision to effectively address the factors that contribute to women's crime and criminalisation.

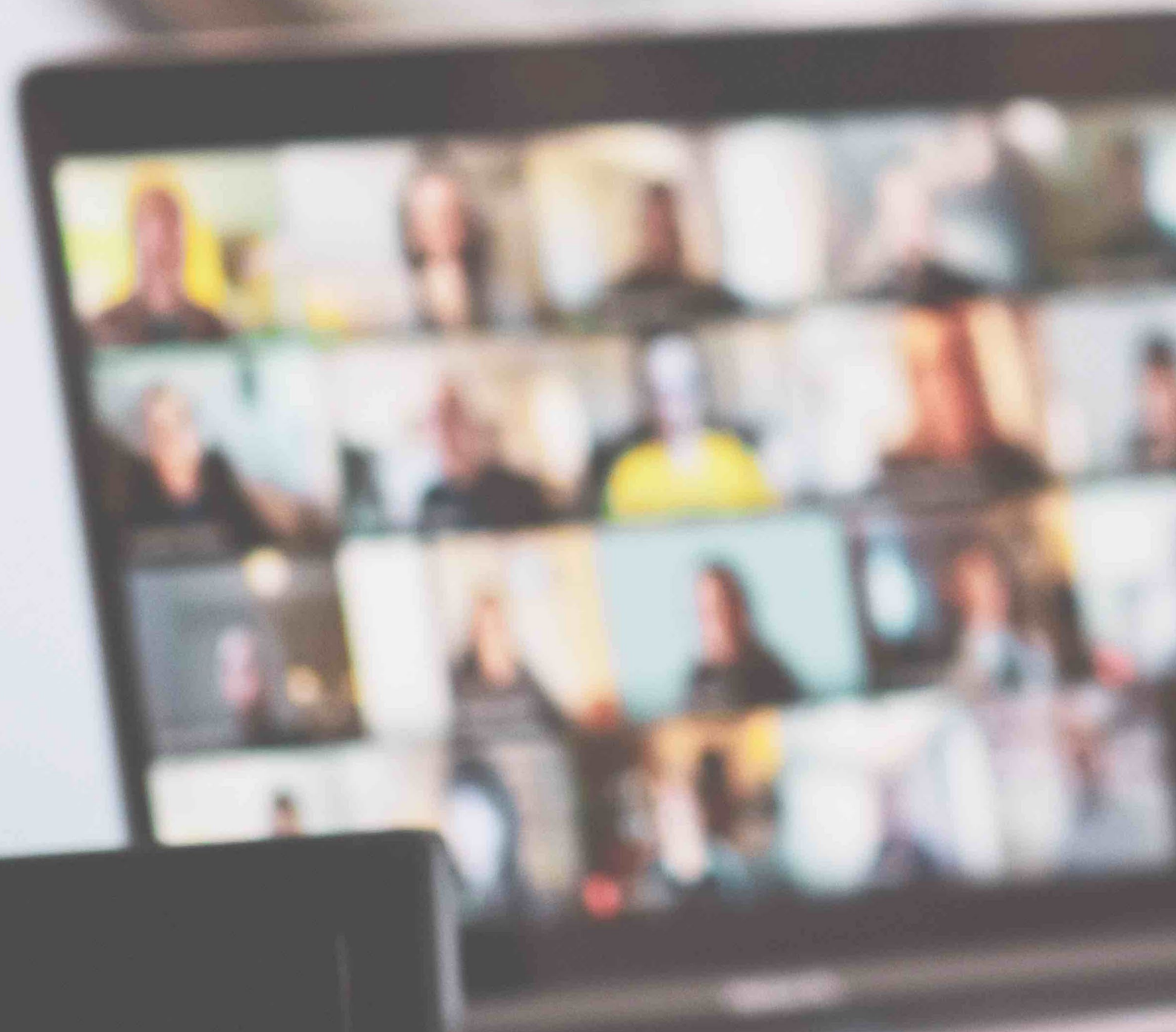
The full report on the Healing Trauma pilot evaluation can be accessed on the One Small Thing website [here](#)

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Probation Institute Conference on Recall

Anne Burrell, Practice Teacher Assessor,
reflects on the Probation Institute's recent
Research Conference on Recall.



Introduction

'You learn over time to tell people (supervising officers) what they want to hear, rather than what you need to tell them' (Service user).

'Newly released prisoners need to be suited and booted, and ready to make a change' (Probation practitioner)

The theme for the spring Probation Institute Research Conference, staged via Zoom on March 30 2021, was a scrutiny of recent research into current Probation Service policies and practice regarding recall into custody.

Dr Matt Cracknell from Middlesex University, presented findings from his research, completed in mid-2020, into the trends in recall for people subject to Post Sentence Supervision, and its impact. His research question examined the extent to which a consequence of Transforming Rehabilitation has been the 'normalisation' of recall for short-sentenced prisoners. Matt's research aimed to examine the ways in which supervision on PSS was interpreted by practitioners and how it is experienced by both practitioners and supervisees. The research was undertaken with people released from a local Category B prison and with practitioners (PO and PSO grade) based in the associated CRC office. The primary research for the case study was undertaken prior to the Exceptional Delivery Model put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Matt identified some key themes which shape the delivery of PSS for this particular CRC, but which have wider application to Probation Services more generally. He noted that prisoners did not meet their supervising officer until the day of release, which has clear implications for urgent and practical issues, such as accommodation and employment, as well as the establishment of an effective working relationship between practitioner and supervisee. He noted the



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significance of this issue in a context where probation workers routinely held cases of 60 to 70 individuals. A common perspective expressed by practitioners was that they would like to do more with PSS supervisees, but lacked the time and resources to do so - the objective was to 'get someone through' their licence and PSS successfully. This approach was reinforced by the overarching task of meeting targets for successful completions of PSS periods.

In such a pressured context, it seems unsurprising that practitioners held highly pragmatic attitudes towards recall. Matt concluded that the 'revolving door' syndrome had become normalised within this CRC. He noted that practitioners made speedy decisions as to which supervisees were likely to be at high risk of reoffending and which they could work with constructively. These features of PSS were even more explicit where PSS supervision had been contracted out to a third-party organisation - for instance, the allocation of cases was frequently contested, often on the grounds of minor administrative deficiencies in transfer documentation. He noted that these processes had further undermining consequences for the development of a professional relationship, describing a culture where individual supervisees became subject to a 'pass the parcel' scenario.

Matt concluded that there are a number of factors which militate against effective outcomes for PSS, including onerous caseloads and workloads, confusion regarding the role of probation, and an over-reliance on targets. He suggested that the diminution of a full assessment for the courts at the pre-sentence stage has contributed to the escalation in short sentences, and that early interventions, particularly around substance misuse, would reduce the necessity for custody. He considers that there is insufficient regard for the impact of short sentences on families, who are similarly overlooked in supporting their family member on release. Matt will be writing more fully about his research in the next issue of Probation Quarterly.

In response, **David Breakspear**, from Revolving Doors Lived Experience Team, placed his own experience of post custody supervision within the wider context of the sheer volume of recalls into custody – 27,000 in twelve months from 2019/20. He noted that a disproportionate number of recalls are of women and that many recalls and breaches are for people who had received short and very short custodial sentences. He argued cogently for the abolition of custodial sentences of less than 12 months, suggesting that post custody supervision should focus on needs, not risk, and be trauma-informed in order to create an environment which will effectively enable rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. Finally, David argued that short sentences are less effective than community sentences in reducing reoffending (62% and 56% respectively). [See David's article on p.14.](#)

The second presentation was by **David Miners, Inspector with HMIP, and Laura Burgoine, Senior Research Officer, HMIP**, on recall culture and practice – the outcomes of a recent Inspectorate thematic review. The review was instigated following the case of Joseph McCann, who committed a number of serious sexual and violent offences whilst on licence. The study looked at 50 cases in total, of which 32 had been subject to recall. David noted that 20% of these cases were from BAME groups.

Laura provided the wider context, noting that 12% of adults on post custody supervision were recalled during the year preceding the study. At any one time, there are around 70,000 individuals subject to post custody supervision by the Probation Service. At the time of the study, the numbers of recalls were evenly split between the NPS and the CRCs. Around a third of recalls and breaches were of people who had been sentenced to less than 12 months custody; and 4% were IPP prisoners – a significant number, given the import of recall for this group of people, who then have to complete a further parole process before re-release.

Laura noted that probation policy with regard to breach and recall has veered between pressures to reduce numbers, in part due to overcrowding in prisons, and pressures to increase enforcement, in the light of Serious Further Offences – for instance, Joseph McCann and Leroy Campbell. This point was endorsed by David, who pointed out that recall culture is directly influenced by the presentation of such high-profile failures in post custody supervision, notably in the media.

Whilst public protection is perceived to be the overriding consideration, in practice, failure to comply with licence conditions is the most likely trigger for recall. Clearly, there can be a connection between these factors, in that loss of contact with the supervising officer may also reflect an escalation in risk, and David was keen to point out that individual practitioners often went to great lengths to restore contact with supervisees in order to avoid recall. Equally, he concluded that decisions regarding recall need to become more individualised and focused on an analysis of risk and previous patterns of behaviour, with the context for failure to comply being evaluated. He noted that 'probation staff need the time and management support to make effective decisions'. He was also critical of inconsistencies with regard to recall between probation areas.

David suggested that a framework for recall would improve the consistency of decision making, aided by a robust quality assurance process. He argued that, fundamentally, probation workers need to feel confident that they will be supported in their practice with post custody supervisees.

Kate Parsons, NPS practitioner, concluded the conference with a review of her research into what enables success on licence. This project was undertaken with the support of the Graham Smith Award, administered by the Probation Institute. The award provides mentoring from an academic in the field of the research project, to enable current practitioners to undertake small scale research projects in a subject relevant to their work.

Kate interviewed both current licence supervisees and probation practitioners, to identify their perceptions of factors which contribute to success on licence. She interviewed 9 residents at two Approved Premises, all of whom were assessed as high risk of harm. She also interviewed 12 probation practitioners located at 2 different probation offices. Both groups were presented with a vignette, of a hypothetical case in which an individual committed an offence on licence (not a violent or sexual offence) and discussed with participants whether that person could or should be recalled.

This part of the research produced significant differences in the resident group and the practitioner group, the former being far more likely to consider that recall both should and would happen. Kate noted that much of the narrative around recall amongst service users is focused on its unfairness, rather than on what factors make licence supervision a success. She felt that it would be constructive for probation practitioners to discuss with supervisees what is required to enable them to succeed on licence.

Kate also examined how supervisees and probation workers rebuild trust after recall. She identified that factors which enhance a perception of unfairness include where recall is instigated by a practitioner who was not the Offender Manager; where the breach was a failure to comply with licence conditions rather than further offending; and where recall occurred at a late stage in the licence period. Her findings suggest that individuals subject to recall felt that they had not been listened to. Kate argued that supervisees on licence lack understanding of the process of recall; and that its opaqueness contributes to the sense that decision making is random, rather than the outcome of a considered process. [See Kate's article in [Probation Quarterly 16, June 2020](#)].

Conclusions

The conference contributors and questions from attendees enabled a detailed and thoughtful consideration of recall and breach in post custody supervision and its impact. Key themes across all the research projects included: the lack of formal processes for probation practitioners, which are explicit and understood by supervisees; the vital importance of building a relationship of trust and support; and the provision of enhanced resources for supporting people into suitable work and accommodation, and addressing substance misuse. The notion of quality assurance was welcomed by Helen Schofield from the Probation Institute, and she referred to the PI code of ethics, and proposals for a regulatory body, which would oversee standards of professional practice in probation work.

Thank you to all the contributors for an informative conference, and thanks too to all the participants attending the event. Particular thanks to Jane Dominey, Senior Research Associate at the Cambridge University Institute of Criminology, for her skilled chairing of the event.

Workload management and measurement: a personal reflection

Mike McClelland, Probation Institute Director.

and breathe

Reflecting back

The roots of workload measurement can be traced back to the end of the 20th century in exercises such as the NPS (National Probation Survey) and NARS (National Activity Recording Survey). These were early and quite systematic efforts to measure what work was done in probation. Prior to that, and when I joined the Service in the early Eighties, the concept existed of staffing complements which loosely translated into how many staff at each grade were required in each office. Somebody left and they were replaced. Simple, but also quite effective. That simplicity seems long gone. Higher up the food chain, these deliberations were incorporated into bids to the Treasury for funding as with the 'Standing Committee on Probation Manpower Needs' which existed in the Eighties. Despite having spent twenty plus years being fairly deeply involved in workload issues, through Napo, the process by which demand and supply - the amount of work to be done and the supply of staff to do it, was and remains something of a mystery to me. I long ago formed the view that workforce planning was not a strength of the Probation Service.

WMT

Moving forwards into the current century, workload measurement gradually evolved in a structured way culminating in the Specifications, Benchmarking and Costing (SBC) project from which emerged the current Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) still available and used in the NPS (these letters now standing for the



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National Probation Service rather than Survey!). In essence one specifies/describes each task to be done, examines the range of timings taken to do each task, to then arrive at an acceptable figure from which to work out the cost of doing it in terms of time and ultimately money - an activity-based costing mechanism. It was never really complete in the sense that programme work and managerial roles were never measured and costed.

The project work, with its limitations, was completed around the time that TR arrived and effectively drove a coach and horses through the whole project. It has continued to operate in the NPS but the use of this or any other WMT in the CRCs has been both mixed and patchy. Now the prospect is one of having to incorporate back into the NPS WMT all that work that was outsourced to the CRCs. No small task. Even just counting the number of staff at each grade seemingly presents a huge challenge. Just one figure: in 2006, there were over 14,000 frontline staff (Probation Officers and Probation Services Officers). It will be interesting to see what the figure is when the dust settles on reunification after June.

To this day there are differences of opinion about whether WMT stands for Workload Measurement or Management. The Tool measures and it is then for the various levels of management to manage the workload. This should include having a list of sliding priorities with tasks dropping off the 'to do' list when workload is excessive. In my experience this has never really happened. Everything is a priority and it is no surprise then that staff frequently feel overwhelmed by what is required of them.

Realisation, recognition and acceptance

The HMIP report on Probation caseloads, workloads and staffing issues together with the associated commentary from the Justice Select Committee on the same subject are both welcome. They acknowledge and accept the deleterious impact that excessive workload has

on staff health, well-being and morale as well as on the quality of work delivered. A suggested maximum caseload figure is offered as a partial solution, though again, both bodies recognise that the situation is more complex than a problem solved by a simple caseload cap. Neither do they fail to recognise that there is a mountain to climb in terms of returning to 'normality', whatever that means, following the disastrous episode that was TR followed by the impact of the Covid pandemic.

A huge problem

If anything, the scale of the problem faced is understated. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the entire criminal justice system is on its knees if not actually broken. Repairing it will not be easy and this process will have a huge impact on Probation and its workload, from dealing with the massive backlog of court work to the effect of employing large numbers of extra police officers and the knock-on effect that this will have on future offending finding its way to court. It is well and good to seek to reverse the decline in both police and probation staffing numbers but in a way, this will make things worse before they get better. More probation trainees will require more supervisors who can only be drawn from front line work.

Within Probation itself there is much repair work to be done, not least in dealing with the large numbers of court orders that have not been implemented, on account of the pandemic - Unpaid Work being just one example. The promising developments highlighted in the HMIP Bulletin may help to rescue this situation.

Such is the gravity of the situation now faced by Probation alongside other criminal justice agencies that radical measures must surely be contemplated if the boat is to be re-floated. Often these will be overtly political judgements which very likely will not find favour – like de-criminalising some drugs offences and abolishing prison sentences of less than 12 months. In Probation, the pandemic has forced the hand of many by requiring remote supervision and telephone contact. Once unthinkable – or certainly frowned upon – such practices have now almost become the norm. Whether they should continue post-pandemic are questions to be carefully explored, as too are their impact on workloads. Do these working practices save time, or not, or indeed do they sometimes take longer? All of these issues need to be considered and factored into the WMT. All activities and ways of working should be kept under ongoing review by employers and unions working in collaboration as a basis for arriving at task timings and costs.

Other considerations

There are indications that there will be efforts to improve the service provided to courts by the Probation Service through a reversal of the rapid drift away from Standard Delivery Reports (SDR) to Fast Delivery and Oral Reports. This was a move associated with the mantra of ‘speedy justice’ – which these days feels a bit ironic. Better researched and argued reports are a welcome prospect. However, they come with an upfront price in terms of staff time although,

in the long run, better court disposals, like fewer custodial sentences may actually save money. Most reports are done by dedicated court teams but that does not mean one can discount their input when undertaking workforce planning. Will this remain the case if SDRs stage a comeback? Similar considerations exist with the preparation of parole reports. Report writing has always been a significant element of probation work, and rightly so. It should therefore not be overlooked when it comes to workload measurement, management and workforce planning.

The development of OMIC teams in prisons presents a further complication in terms of assessing workload for Probation as they are mixed-discipline teams. A return to mixed caseloads also seems likely and some shake-up of the provision of service to those leaving prison is needed.

There will be a need to adjust to the new brokering arrangements with the Dynamic Framework and moving to a unified Probation Service will itself have an impact on workload at least in the short to medium term.

All of these issues have implications for the capacity of the NPS. We owe it to the staff for the sake of their sanity, to service users for the quality of service they receive and to the public for the sake of their safety to do the best possible job at assessing the workload of the service – measuring it, managing it and planning for adequate resourcing is crucial for the future of the Service.

Autonomy, community, and fish-fries: the highs and lows of working as a probation officer on the remote island of St Helena

Fiona Campbell reflects on an exciting secondment in the South Atlantic.



In early June 2017, I flew to Cape Town to board the Royal Mail Ship (RMS) St Helena. This 5-day voyage across the South Atlantic Ocean saw me begin my role as a probation officer on the remote British Overseas Territory of St Helena. St Helena is the largest of a group of three islands in the South Atlantic encompassing Ascension Island and the world's most remote inhabited island, Tristan Da Cunha. St Helena's population is approximately 4,500 and it only became accessible by air in October 2017 with the commencement of a weekly commercial flight from Johannesburg. This remoteness is what truly sets St Helena apart from other similarly-sized communities in the UK. As soon as I boarded the RMS, stories were swapped and people set out to find out who you are and your reason for travelling to the island. Many of those employed by the St Helena Government from overseas are Technical Co-operatives known as 'TC's' and the probation officer role is one such position. The St Helena Government receives funding for these roles from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) as an aid-reliant, developing territory to fill skills gaps that manifest on-island due, in part, to the small population size, but also due to the limited opportunities for accessing tertiary education and accredited/professional qualifications. Emigration also plays a significant role, with many of the working population seeking employment off-island where UK salaries are an attractive alternative to the island's average annual income



Fiona Campbell
Probation Officer

of approximately £8,000. It is quite typical that once St Helenians - or Saints as they are known - establish your purpose on the island, this becomes synonymous with who you are, and all anonymity is lost. I once heard it said that when you interview for a role on St Helena you are interviewing for a place in the community, and in my experience this couldn't be truer.

Within an already small community there exists an even smaller group of people under the supervision of two qualified probation officers.¹ The community caseload is comprised of around 30-35 individuals and there are between 10-15 individuals in custody at any given time.

¹ The POs must have 3+ years experience and hold a PQiP, PQF Honours Degree/Graduate Diploma and Level 5 Diploma in Probation Practice; Diploma in Probation Studies; or Diploma in Social Work (Probation option); or CQSW (Probation option).

Communication for the most part is easy between agencies due to the frequency of interaction in both professional and personal lives, whether intended or not. A probation officer on St Helena can expect to work across a range of different areas including: the delivery of offending behaviour interventions across community/custody, community service, attendance at Magistrates Court and Supreme Courts, the production of PSRs and risk assessments, chairing MAPPA meetings and strategic work such as contributing to the Safeguarding Board. A key difference between a local role and that of TCs, is that the latter have additional responsibilities to work towards localisation of their posts achieved through the development of, 'succession plans' and contributing to local capacity building through the development and delivery of training. As is often the case in a small population, professionals are also utilised for the skills and experience they have, whether these directly relate to your role or not. One example of this flexibility was the creation of a Youth Diversion Scheme which involved a voluntary intervention pathway for young people between 8 and 18 identified as 'at risk' of offending. Whilst the numbers weren't that high, we worked with 10 young people through this pathway in 2019/20. Another example is that in the absence of any victim specific organisation, probation officers take on some responsibilities traditionally associated with the role of the Victim Liaison Officer.

Many of the acute pressures associated with the probation officer role in England and Wales, such as OASys deadlines and data targets simply

do not exist. The St Helena case management system was developed around the needs of the service by a former NPS IT Manager, then accompanying his wife, the first UK Probation Officer on the island in 2013. This autonomy is undoubtedly one of the best parts of working on the island. There is the opportunity to be creative and to develop services fit for purpose that meet the unique needs of the island's community. Partnership work is an essential element of this and one example where this works well is community service. The St Helena National Trust have responsibility for the conservation of the endemic gumwood tree at the Millennium Forest. Staff have been supporting individuals on community service to fulfil their unpaid work hours at the Millennium Forest for several years now. Having attended the forest recreationally, it was wonderful to see the contributions of service users both through the lens of a probation officer, and as a member of the community benefiting from their efforts. Being able to witness first-hand the positive change individuals achieve is one of the best parts of life as an island probation officer. I've lost count of the times former service users have stopped me in the street, perhaps to introduce me to their baby whose birth I had heard announced on the radio, or who was successful in applying for a job that I had supported them to gain. The way practitioners can work on St Helena supports what we know about good practice; community support and acceptance is essential to achieving positive change. Put simply, on St Helena I felt I was often witness to an individual's journey to desistance.

However, probation practice is never without challenges. On an island where so many live and work where they are born and raised, there are likely never more than one or two degrees of separation. This contributes to a community where there is often less stigma attached to some types of offending. Saints are known for their friendliness and laid-back attitude which can help those sentenced to a period of imprisonment return to their former lives relatively easily. When framed within the context of desistance this is positive: the availability of support networks, opportunities for employment and the development of social capital are plain to see. However, it can pose problems where risk management is concerned and has meant that far-reaching disclosures have been required to ensure that a potential harm and risk is fully understood and managed.

Island life is uniquely wonderful: the community, the fish fries, the hiking, diving and swimming. One month you are spotting humpback whales, another you can snorkel with whale sharks. A work-life balance permits you the time to do these things and throw yourself into experiences outside of your work role such as my own experience as Chair of a young persons' charity. However, the distance remains a challenge: TC's have the opportunity for paid travel to their country of residence only once per two-year contract. Additionally, promotions or specialisms

are simply unavailable on an island that (hopefully) will only ever require two probation officers. Once back in the UK few ex-patriates miss essentials like milk and eggs going 'scarce', the limited opportunities to buy branded items, the capped and unreliable Wi-Fi or the long wait for the monthly call of the supply ship. However, having reflected on my own time on island, these luxuries lose significance and indeed are happily tolerated by most in exchange for the privilege of being part of the St Helenian community and the accompanying fulfilment.

I am extremely grateful to a huge number of friends, family members and colleagues² - both on St Helena and in the UK - that supported me between 2017 - 2021. In March 2021 I returned to the National Probation Service as a Senior Probation Officer for learners on the PQiP. I hope I can share some of my learning and pass on just a portion of the warmth and character of St Helena in this new role.

² Particular thanks are due to: Nicola Brown, Laura Aston, James and Victoria Kellett, Louise Forman and Danielle Kenny.

An Invitation from The Bill McWilliams Memorial Lecture Steering Group

We are delighted to invite you to the 2021 Bill McWilliams Memorial Lecture. This will take place on **Thursday 8 July at 1.30pm.**

The lecture *Public Policy and Probation: Is there a Welsh Way?* will be given by Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS First Minister of Wales with respondents Richard Garside (Director, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies) and Alex Osler (Head of Operations, National Probation Service, East of England). The biographies of our speakers are on page 42.

The programme for the event will be:

1.30pm *Public Policy and Probation: Is there a Welsh Way?*
By Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales
With respondents Richard Garside and Alex Osler

3.00 pm Online debate with the audience

3.50pm Concluding remarks

4.00pm End of event

The lecture will be delivered as a Zoom webinar. Please register for the lecture here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/public-policy-and-probation-is-there-a-welsh-way-tickets-149885207691>

We recommend early registration as the event may become full. The Zoom link will be sent to everyone who has registered a few days before the lecture.

Please pass on this invitation to colleagues and friends. We are particularly keen to encourage probation practitioners to register.

The lecture series is supported by generous donations from friends and supporters. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed in recent years. If you would like to make a donation this year the bank details are: sort code 30 90 66; account number 55276868; account name Bill McWilliams Memorial Lecture Steering Group.

Note: The 2019 lecture, together with all those dating back to 2013 are available to watch/listen to on the following link <http://www.ccsj.crim.cam.ac.uk/mcwilliams>

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales

Mark was born and brought up in west Wales before moving to Cardiff more than 30 years ago. Since then, he has lived in the Pontcanna area of Cardiff. A former probation officer, youth justice worker and Barnardos project leader in Ely and Caerau, he has also been a professor of social policy and applied social sciences at Cardiff University. He has also taught previously at Swansea University.

In the 1980s and 1990s Mark was a Labour Councillor on South Glamorgan County Council, specialising in education issues, including Welsh medium education. Between 2000 and 2010 he worked as the Cabinet's health and social policy adviser at the Welsh Government and was latterly head of the First Minister's political office. He has a 30-year knowledge of the Cardiff West constituency.

Mark became the Assembly Member for Cardiff West in May 2011. He was Chair of the Assembly's Health and Social Care Committee from July 2011 to March 2013 and of the All-Wales Programme Monitoring Committee for European funds from July 2011 to March 2013. He was appointed Minister for Health and Social Services in March 2013, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government in May 2016 and Cabinet Secretary for Finance on 3 November 2017. On 12 December 2018 he was appointed First Minister of Wales and became a member of the Privy Council on 13 February 2019.

Richard Garside

Richard Garside is the Director of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. He joined the Centre in 2003 to set up the '*Crime and Society Foundation*' project, which explored the role and

limitations of criminalisation and punishment as responses to crime. Richard became the Centre's Director in 2006. Prior to joining the Centre, he worked in communications at Nacro, and, before that, at Survival International.

Richard is the lead author of the Centre's keynote annual publication: UK Justice Policy Review. He has also written a range of other pamphlets and articles and is in demand as a conference speaker. He appears regularly in national print and broadcast media as a commentator on crime and criminal justice. He can be followed on Twitter [@richardjgarside](https://twitter.com/richardjgarside)

Alex Osler

Alex has worked in probation for 27 years, first as a probation service officer, specialising in housing support, before qualifying as a probation officer in 1997 and becoming a senior probation officer in 2001. She has a breadth of experience in case management, courts, group work, approved premises and has also had a period on secondment to HMP Bullwood Hall – a women's prison at the time. An assistant chief officer at the point of Transforming Rehabilitation, Alex became the Director of Essex Community Rehabilitation Centre in April 2016 and moved across to the National Probation Service in August 2020 in preparation for unification. Alex is an engaged leader who actively promotes the importance of compassionate leadership, evidence-based practice, service user engagement, the professional relationship, and working in partnership to address criminogenic need and manage risk of harm. Thanks to the sound teaching of Professor Gwyneth Boswell, her mantra is 'accurate assessment, and appropriate intervention' and she is motivated purely by doing the very best we can, with what we have, to deliver quality services for service users, victims and communities.

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