

# HM Inspectorate of Probation

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## **Probation & Youth Offending work: A Tribute to those who do it well**

A lecture given by Andrew Bridges at the  
University of Oxford on 16 May 2011

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### **Opening:**

Well, good afternoon everyone .... I'm very flattered that everyone here has made the choice to come along today and find out what I've got to say on this occasion, virtually my last public appearance as Chief Inspector of Probation. My curiosity is almost as great as yours – like the absent minded but enthusiastic Methodist minister, I can't wait to hear whatever it is I've got to say!

The element of truth in that old joke is that, a bit like preachers who are invited to take the pulpit, you find that when you are asked as a Chief Executive or a Chief Inspector to give a speech on a particular subject, you then have to work out what it is you want to say – it forces you to come up with some seriously thought-through views and opinions on a subject where perhaps you previously didn't have any!

It's an aspect of rising to the top – like cream, or that other stuff that rises to the top – that I hadn't particularly expected when I first came into senior management almost exactly 22 years ago. I therefore had to work out how to give a speech, and at the same time hope that I wouldn't be found out as a total fraud. I'm hoping to get away today on one final occasion without being 'found out'.

On that note of caution, I shall nevertheless explain why I have decided to make my farewell speech a "tribute", and what precisely I mean by that tribute. It's a tribute because I have always been in awe of the colleagues I've seen at every level who've got what it takes to ***influence other people for the better*** through the way that they talk with and listen to them.

You can tell from the title of my talk that this is not a case of unconditional praise for everyone and anyone who has ever been a member of a Probation or Youth Offending service<sup>1</sup> - You wouldn't expect that from an Inspector, would you? I and my Inspectorate colleagues have been very critical at times of what we have seen as Poor or Insufficiently good practice, and I'm not going to withdraw now any of the criticisms we've made on a number of occasions in the last seven years while I've been Chief Inspector.

### **The Fourth Estate: a greedy and lazy wolfpack:**

But I am going to have a go at our noble Fourth Estate here: You wouldn't know from reading Press reports that we ever had anything positive to say about anything that Probation or Youth Offending staff had ever done well. The most striking recent example of this is when we wrote a real 'Prodigal Son' story on London Probation last year, saying that whereas their Public Protection work had been very weak in the past, we were pleased to report that it was now considerably improved, albeit there was still some further progress that yet needed to be made.

Now I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but our noble sturdy journalist friends are not quite as 'independent' as they would have you believe, and with daily news events they have a strong tendency to go to an instant consensus among themselves about what the story is, and then all take the same line in reporting it. They behave like a wolfpack in other words, a wolfpack that is both greedy and lazy. Any England football manager who's ever lost a match – and that's all of them then, isn't it? – can vouch for that.

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<sup>1</sup> In England & Wales in May 2011, a sentenced offender aged 18 or over is managed by one of 35 Probation Trusts, while a sentenced offender aged under 18 is managed by one of 158 Youth Offending Teams or Services.

Because this is where the laziness comes in: if a person or organisation is 'out of favour' with the public – as the Probation Service currently still is - the lazy journalist will simply reproduce the usual bad news story, and indeed resurrect an old one to put in alongside it while they're about it.<sup>2</sup> Our report last autumn was about how much London Probation had improved its practice – but the media headlines were all about what they were still doing badly! A month after we published that London report, Ofsted did a remarkably similar Prodigal Son story about London schools: they used to be bad but now they are better (I paraphrase you understand). This was correctly reported, unlike the London Probation story.

Now I do understand the argument that 'Good News is no News', and as one journalist has rightly said to me twice "It's not news that all your dustbins were emptied correctly and on time last week" – and that's a fair point. But I do get the impression that if Prodigal Sons were out of favour, our press pack could have listened to Jesus recounting the story of the Prodigal Son, and written it up with the headline "Prodigal Son now Stinks". If you know the parable you'll know that this would not be untrue, but it would be yet another case of *hitting the headline and missing the point*..... again.

If this is being quoted for the record let me reiterate: "Retiring Chief Inspector says that the greedy and lazy Press wolfpack often hits the headline and misses the point." This syndrome is of course also seen in coverage of science, medicine and health, as well as of Probation and Youth Offending work.

A further symptom of this is that in my seven years in post I have sometimes been challenged by a journalist, perfectly reasonably, to justify some positive assessment I've made – or, less reasonably, it's been rubbished. OK, these things happen – but I've **never** ever been challenged on any of our negative assessments: "Don't you think you've been a bit harsh/unreasonable?", or "Haven't you just been wise after the event?" - these are questions no media person has ever asked me. Now, in case you're wondering, I'd certainly have very strong answers to those questions<sup>3</sup>, but my point here is that for the reasons I've already given I've never been asked them by journalists.

### **Three-dimensional mundane truths rather than two-dimensional exciting fallacies:**

Does this matter? It does if you agree with a point made by Wilbert Rideau, the black man who served 44 years in Louisiana prisons before his release in 2005. In his book *In the Place of Justice* he mentions, almost in passing, that: "The biggest obstacle to meaningful reform is the popular misconceptions about criminals, and society's misguided efforts to cope with them."<sup>4</sup>

One of the many things that impressed me about Rideau, in his book, was that his account is in three dimensions rather than two. With his original crime he did a terrible thing, which he does not excuse, and it was actually committed at a time when he'd been given a break. He wouldn't have fitted comfortably into the easy category of either a "deserving case" or "undeserving case" in the dichotomy that many people like to operate. Thinking in three dimensions rather than two is so important in Probation and Youth

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<sup>2</sup> I wish I had royalties for the number of times a new 'bad news' story about public protection leads to a 'reminder' story about the Inspectorate reports on either Hanson and White (who murdered the banker John Monckton) or Anthony Rice (who murdered Naomi Bryant). Both reports were published early in 2006. Some recent summaries have even quoted us completely incorrectly, the reader will be astonished to learn. In neither report did we describe the failure as "systemic" – with Hanson & White the failure was "collective", and with Rice the failure was "cumulative", and we explained what we specifically meant by these terms in both instances.

<sup>3</sup> We have gone out of our way to set expectations that are high but not so high as to be impossible – because we want practitioners to achieve the possible, our inspection criteria are pitched so that they are *demanding and yet achievable*.

<sup>4</sup> Wilbert Rideau, *In the Place of Justice*, Random House, New York, 2010; p106 of Profile Books edition 2011.

Offending work, because much of the job is to explain reprehensible behaviour – very reprehensible sometimes – and at the same time one has to reaffirm constantly that to *explain* is not the same as to *excuse*<sup>5</sup>.

So this is one probably final occasion when I can go on the record, as I have done on a number of previous occasions, to highlight that Probation and Youth Offending work is often done very well indeed. I don't retract my previous criticisms of when it wasn't done well – they were still true, at the time – but in the interests of Fair Comment I like to see the positives and negatives in proportion, alongside each other.

However, before my former colleagues, and current victims of our inspections, get too excited about this prospect, I shall go further now in explaining the meaning of my title this afternoon. My topic is not principally about the organisations that currently provide Probation or Youth Offending services: - I, like this Inspectorate that I'm leaving, am not focusing on the *organisations* – I'm focusing on the **work**, whoever does it.

I've seen excellent work done with individuals who have offended - in prisons by Prison Officers, instructors, psychologists and other Prison staff, as well as by seconded Probation Officers; or outside prison by voluntary organisations or even electronic monitoring contractors as well as by Probation or Youth Offending staff themselves. My tribute is to those who do the work well, whoever does it, if they do it well.

Why am I impressed with these practitioners and their managers? Because they are working with *three-dimensional* mundane truths – such as explaining why this individual committed this particular offence on this occasion. But they are doing this work in the context of the *two-dimensional* public debates about the nature of crime that are mainly based on exciting fallacies.

For we have penal hawks that say prison is the only real answer to crime, because it deters the individual and others, and also protects the public; and we have penal doves who say that this only makes people worse and stores up more trouble for the future, and that we should always focus on helping people instead.

These opposing panacea are both two-dimensional exciting fallacies, as indeed are other panacea such as improving the diet of young people, scaring people straight, or religious conversions – these and others are all variously put forward at various times as universal methods of “curing offenders”. So once again now, I am calling for “Less heat, and more light” in our public debates on this subject.

For I have constantly found it bizarre that the public debate on offending is conducted in such a fashion. We probably wouldn't get two medical doctors into a studio, and have one arguing that all patients should be treated with antibiotics, and the other doctor saying that they should all be treated with aspirin. Though I must now immediately hasten to add here that I believe strongly that offending should not be regarded as if it were a medical condition, of which people need to be ‘cured’. Moreover, there are certainly potential pitfalls for us from using terms like ‘treatment’ and ‘dosage’ in our work.

I find it much more valuable for practice to think in terms of ‘desistance’, as usefully employed in recent years by those such as Stephen Farrell, Shadd Maruna, and Fergus McNeill<sup>6</sup>, than think of people who offend as simply being ‘sick’ in some way, and needing to be ‘cured’.

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<sup>5</sup> John Major, mainly a decent politician, once disappointingly asserted that people should “understand a little less, and condemn a little more” – this is not the correct dichotomy.

<sup>6</sup> For example: Fergus McNeill & Beth Weaver, *Changing Lives: Desistance Research and Offender Management* (Glasgow School of Social Work, 2010)

However, and this is where we move from *exciting fallacies* to *mundane truths*, there are some *analogies* that do hold good across the two disciplines. The mundane truth in these and indeed many other ‘personal services’ is that the work is about doing the Right Thing with the Right Individual in the Right Way at the Right Time, although one key difference with both Probation and Youth Offending work is that this individualised service is one that the individual does not necessarily want to receive!

The recipient of the service is therefore not the “client” in that normal meaning of the word, and instead, for the modern effective practitioner, the “client” – the beneficiary of the service being provided – is *society as a whole*, the taxpayer as we sometimes say. Hence success is accordingly defined ultimately in terms of ‘benefit to society’. In the managerial language we currently tend to use, the practitioner is delivering a service to a recipient of that service, but the beneficiary of that service is *society as a whole* – though in many cases we very much hope that the individual who has offended will also benefit in the long run. That’s why I say that it’s *three-dimensional work* being done in the context of a *two-dimensional public debate*.

**What is the practitioner being required to achieve? -**

**- Three (or four) purposes of Probation and Youth Offending work:**

What is the practitioner being required to achieve? I’ve previously suggested, and I still do suggest, that there are three measurable core purposes to be achieved in all cases. There are some additional purposes in some cases, but the core three are:

First, Compliance and Enforcement: The purpose of getting the person under supervision to comply with the requirements of the sentence of the Court, including what we now call Community Payback, and to take Enforcement action should they fail to comply - this ‘**ensuring that the individual serves their sentence**’ is a purpose in its own right, and with care it can be measured as such.

Second, Likelihood of Reoffending: The practitioner should engage with the individual who has offended and get them in turn to engage with a range of *constructive work* – this enables the individual to become **measurably less likely to offend again in future**.

And third: *Risk of Harm to others*: The practitioner needs to monitor the behaviour of the individual, and, using what we call *restrictive interventions* where necessary, take all reasonable action in order to **minimise that person’s Risk of Harm to others**. The Probation Inspectorate has established a way of measuring that too.

When working with under-18s there is additionally a fourth purpose, the ‘Safeguarding’ or Child Protection purpose of minimising the risk of that young person coming to harm, either from self or from others.

Although these first three purposes are separate they do also overlap; and although they overlap, they are still separate, like a three-way Venn diagram, and they are measured by three separate means, as I have outlined elsewhere in a paper, available on our website.<sup>7</sup> They are three separate but overlapping purposes, measured in three complementary ways – or four, in the case of Youth Offending work.

In some cases, whether adult or young, you might find you also have one further purpose to achieve – a restorative justice purpose. This work is normally a good thing, though I’m not saying much more about it today, as this purpose will apply only in some cases.

So, in summary, each practitioner should engage effectively with each individual under supervision to plan and deliver an individualised service that achieves those *three measurable core purposes*, plus that ‘safeguarding’ purpose with those under 18.

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<sup>7</sup> And also reproduced as an Appendix at the end of this paper.

Now I wouldn't think that that's too earthshattering for most practitioners and managers, and nor is it too alien to the best traditions of the past. During the 80-plus years of the "Advise, Assist and Befriend" era it was still normal Probation practice to be saying to the probationer something like "Although what we talk about might be voluntary, actually seeing me each week is compulsory". There were debates about whether Probation work was about 'care' or 'control', and whether or not you could or should do both – but the majority thought you had to do both, even in the 1970s. We sometimes, on occasions, even positively recommended custodial sentences – and I certainly wasn't the only one to do so in that decade.<sup>8</sup>

### **What are individuals who have offended like?**

And what are these people like, the ones who have offended, with whom Probation and Youth Offending staff, and other staff, have to work in order to achieve the three purposes I've outlined? Of course, to the tabloid media they are, in the customary two-dimensional language, "thugs, louts and lags", and to show any trust or optimism towards any of them ever is to be regarded as weak or naïve and to be exposed to the most vitriolic criticism. Even our Ministers are lampooned in the tabloid press as "buffoons" if they dare to show even an ounce of decency towards sentenced offenders. And it's true that many offenders have indeed done some very selfish, thoughtless or mean things, and some much worse – and furthermore I also agree that it doesn't do for well-meaning people to play down the nature and quantity of crime, and its impact on individual victims.

But, as people in this theatre will already know well, offenders are not a separate class of monstrous sub-humans – another exciting fallacy – but instead we know that over a third of males over 30 have a conviction for an imprisonable offence, and quite a few more have committed such offences without being convicted. Offending behaviour, in various forms, is as we know much more widespread than is popularly imagined. The mundane truth here is that the Criminal Justice System is only dealing with certain parts of the whole spectrum of offending behaviour that is going on at any one time. Within that spectrum, some of those 'offending individuals' have, in doing so, additionally betrayed the trust sometimes invested in them by a Probation Officer or a Judge.

The fact that offending is a wide continuous spectrum also illustrates why the alternative presupposition, to see offenders as a separate group of people who are sick and need treatment, is also two-dimensional, and therefore problematic and ultimately unsatisfactory, even though there are the various parallels with medicine that I think are sometimes interesting to make, when it comes to describing what I mean by an individualised service<sup>9</sup>.

If we therefore find useful, as I do, the language of those who talk about *desistance*, and even the *path to redemption*, and the idea of thinking of it as a *personal journey*, especially for those with either a long or a dramatic criminal record, how does the effective practitioner assist this journey?

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<sup>8</sup> True, we were somewhat hit and miss in those days when it came to public protection, though I do recall a colleague of mine in Swindon in the 1970s threatening a young man with breach if he didn't come with him right now to the VD clinic (as they were then called) to get treatment for his sexually transmitted disease, because the young man worked in a fairground, and my colleague Chalky White rightly considered him a health danger to young women. Chalky was actually reprimanded by the Assistant Chief for exceeding his legal powers – technically correct. But most of us thought - and I still think - that because he then took the young man in person to the clinic himself when his bluff worked – to the benefit of both the individual and any potential future victims - that Chalky did a good job that day, and indeed most other days too for that matter.

<sup>9</sup> My *a fortiori* argument here is that if a medic needs to apply a highly individualised approach to doing the right thing with the right individual in the right way at the right time when treating the sick, then that individualised approach is *even more* necessary when dealing with an even wider spectrum of individual needs and circumstances.

It was in order to achieve the second of those three purposes, to help people to learn and change and thereby become less likely to reoffend, that most practitioners came into these types of jobs. And it certainly helps if these workers are not stuck on just one approach to achieving that. Any worker who thinks that every case they work with just needs 'helping', or 'saving', or 'curing', or 'punishing', is certainly failing to handle each case as an individual human being – though they may have some success with the cases who happen to respond to their preferred approach.

I'll say more shortly about assessments that tell us more about the worker than it does about the person under supervision, but my point at this stage concerns our core presuppositions about offending and those who offend. During my two year Diploma in Social Work at Leicester in the early 1970s, to qualify me as a Probation Officer, some of us were keen in those days to reject the 'psychosocial' theories, that offending was a personal dysfunction mainly inside the offender's own head, and we examined with interest the alternative idea of offending as alienation, and as a quasi-political rejection of conventional society.

In practice, in my career since then I have perhaps come across a few individuals with that conscious aim to rebel against conventional society, but they've been a tiny minority. What is most striking to a practitioner, in my experience, is how far most of the individuals we see have very conventional aspirations, and so often their offending arises out of their failure to be able to conform, or to achieve their rather conventional aspirations by legal means. As one very blasé 16-year-old persistent offender put it to me once in Huntercombe Young Offender Institution, not far away from this University, "My problem is that I've got a champagne lifestyle and a lemonade income."

Like him, many do very selfish and mean things as a consequence of their own failure – and I've hated being a victim of crime when it's happened to me – but I'm constantly reminded that a large majority of people who have offended are much more conventional in their aspirations than I had ever expected when I first started this career. Offenders of all ages encompass a wide range of individual human beings, and it is with this wide range that we want our practitioners to work effectively, and to achieve the purposes I outlined a few minutes ago.

### **What does *Doing Probation & Youth Offending work well* look like?**

What does it look like, when you do Probation or Youth Offending work well?

Most of you know the answer to this already, at one level. As a practitioner you've assessed each of your 50 or so cases sufficiently well: you have placed on the record why you think that this particular individual committed these particular current offences at this time, and you have planned what you think should be done in future to make further offending less likely. In oversimplified words, you have analysed what the problem is, and you have proposed what you think should be done about it.

(By the way, I have to advise you at this point that all my experience as an Inspector, and prior to that as a practitioner and manager, has been that practitioners have until now tended to be much better at saying what the problem is, and not so good at saying what they plan to do about it – but today we'll focus on those who do both well.)

As a good practitioner you will have done both – that's the assessment and the plan – and then you've taken that individual with you as you've *engaged* him or her in that plan, and under your direction the main purposes of supervision get achieved, under the three headings, or more, that I outlined earlier.

There are lots of ways of achieving those purposes with each very different and individual case, and the effective practitioner uses good interpersonal skills – 'social work skills' we

used to call them, but the label's not important – to *engage* with the individual under supervision, and draw them down the path of *wanting to change* and then *learning to change and improve*, especially to achieve that second purpose of becoming less likely to reoffend.

What was once called the “casework relationship”, increasingly pooh-pooed for most of the last thirty years or so, has recently re-emerged as “engagement with offenders”. It's clearer now than it sometimes used to be that the effective use of the practitioner's interpersonal skills should not be seen as an end in itself – as the “casework relationship” sometimes seemed to be regarded in the past – but it should instead be seen as an *influencing skill* – and as a means to an end. It's a means of influencing someone under supervision to turn up to their appointments, engage constructively in the supervision process, and thus become less likely to reoffend. And it's the practitioners who do this well that impress me.

Linked to this point I would add, from personal experience in the late 1970s, that the most satisfying cases were the tiny number where I said or did something which then had a ‘transformational’ effect on the person under supervision. To be candid, it was a pretty rare event, and with one exception I had not been *implementing a plan* – rather, I had simply seized an opportunity to get through that person's defences. These occurrences were rewarding, but very unusual, at least for me.

#### **Tools that help the practitioner to do the work well:**

Hence an important new factor in the last 15 years has been the advent of structured assessment tools. These were necessary, because researched experience had shown that assessments that relied solely on an individual practitioner's personal judgement were not particularly effective, and often said as much about the practitioner's personal interests as it did about the individual being assessed. (Incidentally, I gather that research into medical diagnoses has led to some similar findings in medical practice too.)

The new assessment tools usually incorporate an actuarial element that implies some kind of ‘prediction’ – a prediction that is often misunderstood. It doesn't say that this individual is, say, 70% likely to reoffend; instead it says that of 100 people *with the same history, profile and characteristics as this individual*, 70 will reoffend and 30 won't. What the tool won't, and indeed can't, tell you is *whether this individual will be one of the 70 or one of the 30*.

Accordingly, it is when reflecting on this information that the skilled practitioner makes that assessment, first, on whether this person might become one of the 70 or one of the 30, and, more importantly, plan to take the action that will ***make it more likely*** that the person will become ***one of the 30 who doesn't reoffend***, rather than ***one of the 70 who does***.

What I've just described is Simple to Say, but Difficult to Do, which is why I admire the skilled practitioners who do this well.

This also illustrates why it is not reasonable to expect practitioners, or even their managers, to be able to eliminate risk entirely, either to vulnerable individuals or to the wider public – but it is reasonable to expect such staff to do their jobs properly. To do this the skilled practitioner, accountable to their manager, will take all reasonable action to keep those risks of harm to a minimum. Given that they are working with people who are at liberty in the community – people who have offended who are not, or no longer, locked up, but instead are simply “subject to rules” - it should not be surprising that catastrophes can still happen, even when the work has been very good. Thankfully this is a very rare occurrence – in the order of one in 200 of *cases already classified as being of high or*

*very high Risk of Harm to others*<sup>10</sup> – but it will of course still grab media attention if the impact of the event captures the public’s imagination.

We should be sympathetic and not unduly surprised at this: It is human to have an emotional relationship with Risk. That feeling of “It Could Be You” is the one that encourages people to buy National Lottery tickets, even though the odds are worse than at your local casino or betting shop. And it is the reverse version of the same human feeling that is triggered by news of a new victim of a serious crime. The sheer magnitude of the prospective event brings out that emotional feeling that “It could have been me” that distracts us from the true rational very low probability of that event actually happening.

HM Inspectorate of Probation was one of the very first to declare to the public that point that risk to the public could not be eliminated, but it was right that the public should expect people to do their jobs properly.<sup>11</sup> By saying this we wanted to avoid using 20/20 hindsight to criticise practitioners for failing to achieve the impossible, and instead we wanted to judge whether they were achieving what was possible. To this end we devised our way of assessing with each case inspected whether all reasonable action was being taken to minimise the individual’s *Risk of Harm to others*.

We have been doing that through our case inspections for several years now, and overall, we have seen some excellent public protection work, and we have found that nearly three-quarters of Probation practice, and nearly two-thirds of Youth Offending practice, has met the high level of quality we have been looking for in terms of that public protection practice<sup>12</sup>. I would like to see higher percentages of course, but today my attention is on those who are already doing this very difficult job well, and the majority are.

### **Who does it better than others? What does good practice look like?**

This does lead me to comment briefly on what I find to be another strange phenomenon. Given that this is all individual practice by individual practitioners, it seems strange to me how quickly some people look to jump to the conclusion that one piece of poor practice, or one dodgy Community Payback placement, means that that whole organisation can simply be assassinated. What seems odd to me is that while sometimes we tend to overcomplicate the job – as I’ll touch on later - sometimes, as here, we simplify it too much. It is madness to dismiss the entire value of a particular Probation Trust, Youth Offending Team, or business or voluntary organisation, just on the basis of one piece of poor practice. Alternatively, however, one can judge an organisation instead on the basis of a *representative sample* of its work – which is what the Probation Inspectorate does.

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<sup>10</sup> I employ cautious ‘in the order of’ statistics, on the principle that just because it is difficult to define precisely where a forest begins and ends this doesn’t make it impossible to say something meaningful about the relative sizes of, say, the New Forest and the Amazon rainforest. In this instance I am basing my evidenced assertion on the pattern of figures for Serious Further Offences (SFOs) alleged to have been committed by people subject to Level Two or Level Three supervision under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), although there have been some detailed changes in the recording and reporting of MAPPA statistics in recent years. The most recent ‘MAPPA Annual Report’, for 2009/2010, published by the Ministry of Justice as an independently validated Statistics Bulletin on 27/10/10, reported on page 2 that a total of 9,636 cases were managed at Levels 2 or 3 throughout 2009/2010 (8,793+843). It also reported, on page 3, that 34 of these (31+3) were charged with an SFO (i.e. not necessarily convicted, but the outcome isn’t known until later). This gives a ratio of one in 283 just for those charged. However, although figures from previous years are not directly comparable, because of changed counting arrangements, they have historically shown a slightly higher ratio - so I have found it *safe* to give a figure of ‘in the order of one in 200’.

<sup>11</sup> In February 2006 HMI Probation published An Independent Review of the case of Damien Hanson and Elliot White (who had murdered the London banker John Monckton). The first Principal Finding, on page 4, began with the words: “When an offender is being supervised in the community it is simply not possible to eliminate risk altogether, but the public is entitled to expect that the authorities will do their job properly.”

<sup>12</sup> HM Inspectorate’s ‘aggregate’ reports, published in March 2011, showed that to date 72% of *Risk of Harm to others* work by Probation Trusts, and 62% by Youth Offending Teams and Services, was meeting the high level of quality that the Inspectorate was looking for.

In our inspections we examine such representative samples, and we make judgements about whether a piece of work was done well enough or not, and we aggregate those 100s of qualitative judgements into quantitative 'scores' that report how often different aspects of the work were done well enough. The fact is that even in some of the very low-scoring areas we have still found examples of good practice, and even in the high-scoring areas we have found examples of *insufficient* practice – the difference between the areas is in the proportions of *Sufficient* rather than *Insufficient* quality of work.

And it isn't just about supposedly good versus bad practitioners either, because no one gets all their own cases right all the time: I'm quite clear that during my eight years as a main-grade Probation Officer I sometimes looked back on a day, or even a whole case, and on some occasions I'd be thinking "I think I did OK there", while on other occasions it was "Well I got that one wrong". I very much doubt if I'm alone in that experience.

What makes the difference between whether you get good practice *frequently* rather than *rarely* is if you have the ethos in the organisation of reviewing and learning from experience. A well managed organisation will find ways of promoting that sense that everyone is constantly learning, and is doggedly pursuing the long haul of continuous improvement. And I have to say that I am a much stronger believer in *continuous improvement*, rather than *innovation*. I don't think that inventing new gimmicky panaceas is the most productive way forward when there are over 240,000 adult offenders to be managed in the community – it is more productive to pursue the long haul of continuous improvement, although that can include using *innovative ways of improving*.

This approach requires growing a strong *organisational culture*, which is the cumulative effect of numerous self-reinforcing *informal behaviours* and *mutual expectations of each other* by most staff. This positive culture is not easy to achieve or maintain during periods of repeated organisational upheaval – though not impossible! – so I will introduce at this point the contributions that can be made by managers, inspectors, academics and policymakers to enabling Probation and Youth Offending work to be done well.

### **The contributions of management, inspection, academia and policymaking:**

And I'll start this section with a few words about management and inspection.

Management generally is about 'Making it Happen', in the words of John Harvey Jones, and so it is very much part of the *doing* of the work. Independent inspection is about *commentating* instead of *doing* – but commentating on how well the work is being done. Inspection is a very privileged job to have – indeed I've upset a few colleagues by pointing out that in theory we can write almost what we like and then publish it at public expense. My point is that inspection is a privilege and that therefore we should take great care with how we exercise that privilege.

I outlined earlier how we produce quantitative scores by aggregating the qualitative judgements we have made about how well practice has been carried out. We aim to do this accurately, fairly, consistently and transparently, and we also aim to behave in such a way that practitioners and managers will want to respond by improving their practice. Inspection is therefore a particularly indirect means of promoting continuous improvement in practice across the country.

(In a brief commercial for the Inspectorate, I'll also mention that because we measure quality of practice, working with *judgements* rather than *rules*, we provide a benefit that no other organisation can provide, thus achieving what the management wonks call 'unique added value'. I also suggest that it's a very poor quality cost-benefit analysis that's being made by anyone who suggests that having the Inspectorate descend on you once every three years or so, to assess a sample of your work, is somehow imposing an unduly heavy "burden" on providers. On the contrary, our inspections are very proportionate.)

Meanwhile management is about achieving continuous improvement in practice in the first place – actually making it happen. It's a genuinely complex job, as I can vouch for myself as a former Chief Probation Officer. For as a manager your influence on frontline practice is still somewhat indirect rather than direct – only on rare occasions can you directly witness and seek to influence frontline practice, unlike, say, Gordon Ramsey directing the chefs under him in his kitchen.

Management of Probation and Youth Offending work has to be largely somewhat indirect – as it also has to be in a number of other organisations – and therefore consists of using a wide range of *influencing skills* and strategies to achieve its purpose. The range of activities and behaviours you exercise as a manager of this work needs to be very varied, but essentially it all adds up to finding and using ways of *making good practice more likely to happen*, and poor practice less likely to happen. I think of it essentially as *growing the right behaviours*.

But don't we just love to overcomplicate this exercise! There's a whole industry of management trainers and consultants banging on about how to improve your management effectiveness by having Visions, Strategies, Business Plans, Action Plans, Plans for HR, Training, Communications, Equalities and Business Continuity – and you must be able to explain and give account for your 'governance arrangements' and relationships with your 'stakeholders'. Now of course there is a nugget of golden truth inside each and every one of these elements of management life, but we tend to overlay them with so much overcomplicated dross that the cumulative weight of all these activities constantly threatens to displace attention from ensuring that the core work is actually still being achieved.

I have certainly noticed during the last 15 years how much management attention and energy is increasingly directed up the hierarchy, constantly giving account to and supporting the apex, rather than directed down towards the front line and making sure that the core work is being done as well as possible. (Numerous practitioners have told us that they feel that the interview they've just had with one of our inspectors is the closest thing they've had to 'supervision' for several years.)

Some organisations try to overcome this problem by appointing more managers, to spread the load of the extra work, but as some of you have heard me say rather a lot over the years, "Managers are like motorways – more often than not they simply create more traffic". A large amount of any manager's time is spent liaising and co-ordinating with other managers, and the more managers there are the more management time is spent doing this liaising, often resulting in each task being done several times, or even creating new *seemingly worthwhile but non-productive* tasks that now seem to need doing. It's a real skill to be able to determine whether a particular manager post *adds genuine value* to the work of the organisation, or whether it is on balance *mainly creating more non-productive work* to be done.

Management work and behaviour is fascinating – I know, I have an MPhil from the School of Management at the University of Bath, and I really enjoyed it – and incidentally my successor Diana Fulbrook also has an M.Phil from the same place - but the mundane truth here is that effective management ultimately boils down to what makes good frontline practice more likely to happen, and ineffective management is what makes good practice *less likely to happen* – and that's it! There's no magic bullet to this, and there are lots of different *influencing actions* (and not just by managers) that can have the same positive effect in the right setting. The good ones are the ones that are all about *growing the right behaviours*.

Of course, practitioners sometimes do the right thing with the right individuals in the right way at the right time most of the time despite the fact that they are not particularly well managed, but they are more likely to work well if they are managed well. So managers impress me when they can show that they were clear what they wanted their organisation to achieve, and then achieved it by *taking their people with them*.

In Probation and Youth Offending work the practitioners are most effective when they believe in their work, so although formal instructions and other documentation might play a small part in the process I think it is when practitioners not only understand what their boss wants them to achieve, but also actually want to *achieve what their boss wants*, that effective practice takes off. In my view the most powerful driver for good practice is an ethos among team members that “This is the way we do things round here”, and where they help each other to achieve that. The team members, whether in a single team or across a large part of the organisation, sometimes grow this pattern of behaviour themselves, but effective managers will be the ones that find ways of *growing those behaviours* in their organisation.

My longer talk about effective Probation management<sup>13</sup> also stresses the importance of *designing* the task well, and also equipping people with the *tools* to do the job – but that will have to wait for another time, because my main focus today is on Probation and Youth Offending practice itself, rather than management.

### **Could we ‘institutionalise’ the Hawthorne effect?**

However, my point about ‘growing a culture’ becomes particularly relevant when we refocus on what it is that makes practice effective. The current emphasis on the ‘rehabilitation revolution’, and the renewed interest in local initiatives, highlights again a curious truth about practice that I have noted for over thirty years now.

It is very clear to me that practitioners working with offenders and others seem to achieve particularly good results when they see themselves as doing something new and exciting. Forty years ago it was ‘Intermediate Treatment’, then there was Groupwork and Family Therapy, then nearly twenty years ago the ‘What Works’ movement was developing, and showing very promising early results. Nowadays there are many new and exciting local projects and initiatives, including many with a strong element of the arts, using drama or dance – and many of them also produce impressive early results.

However, unfortunately, a lesson from the past is that, after a while, and as the numbers of people who have gone through these programmes increase over time, the results start to do that annoying thing that statisticians call ‘Regression to the norm’. As the particular work ceases to be new and exciting the results start to become average again.

Statisticians can indeed be very annoying at times: As we pored over some performance data in my Berkshire days, looking for encouraging trends, our Information Manager would be there, saying “Don’t forget, in data analysis anything unusual or interesting is usually an error.”

But cynicism about effectiveness has never been the lesson I have drawn from this phenomenon. I’m certainly not dissing the whole What Works movement of focusing on evidence-based practice. Because it remains true that work to improve people’s thinking skills, to reduce their addictions, and, especially, to get them into employment – each applied *as needed for each individual case* – is going to be more effective with *numerically more cases* than most other interventions.

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<sup>13</sup> My ancient presentation (November 2003) to new Assistant Chief Officers of Probation can be obtained from the author. Interestingly, I note that I placed an emphasis on the importance of ‘Quality of Engagement’ by practitioners with offenders, and on the need for management to develop that skill.

And other specialist interventions too, such as anger management and sex offending programmes, will also have an effect with many other cases, where they have been correctly identified and allocated. Well-focused and designed interventions can produce reconviction rates that are between five and fifteen percent lower than they would otherwise have been<sup>14</sup>.

I'm taking all that as read, as will all the practitioners doing Probation and Youth Offending work well – all these interventions can assist an individual offender on his or her personal journey towards desistance. What I'm adding to all that is an additional factor: what the practitioners themselves see themselves as doing when they are at work – their phenomenology if you like, and the effect that their consequent behaviour has on the person under supervision. What has always struck me is that the thing in common with all the different successful projects, even when using very different methods, is that the practitioners think they're doing something new and exciting, and their enthusiasm is evident to the individuals they are working with, to beneficial effect<sup>15</sup>. However, perhaps, when the novelty has worn off their effectiveness has tended to wane.

So I've had this working hypothesis in the back of my mind for over thirty years now that this phenomenon is a variation of the Hawthorne effect. This was where they experimented with lighting levels in an American factory in the 1930s, and found that production increased whether the lighting levels were increased or decreased – it seems that it was just doing something new and experimental that did the trick<sup>16</sup>.

Probation and Youth Offending practitioners feel enthusiastic and optimistic about what they are doing and have a strong desire to make it work. Enthusiasm is infectious, and it seems clear to me that if it is well focused the person on the receiving end is more likely to respond positively to this enthusiasm and be inspired to change their behaviour. I'm sure that many of you here will have seen that yourselves on occasions.

Remember, my point here is that this enthusiasm is not a new magic bullet, and it doesn't displace the relevance of evidence-based practice, but it is a component that I think is not sufficiently recognised. And it is something that has to be taken into account when looking to draw lessons from new and exciting projects, whether local or national, where the initial success may appear to recede over time. For the lesson from such events is not "It's all a waste of time in the long run". Instead the lesson is to think about how that enthusiasm and excitement can be either prolonged or renewed, to enable the work to continue to be effective. I give a deliberately paradoxical name to what leaders and managers need to do here – they need to try to *institutionalise the Hawthorne effect*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I'm reporting a very broad approximate range here, which reflects the tone of 'What Works?' summaries from a variety of sources. To cite just one, in a dense chapter on the subject, there is a summary table of the "Estimated Percentage Change in Recidivism Rates" for various Adult Corrections interventions on page 39 of *Reducing Offending: A Critical Review of the International Research Evidence, NIO Research and Statistical Series; Report No: 18*, published by the Northern Ireland Office in November 2008. It illustrates the variety of results for different interventions in different settings, and highlights why my claim here could be seen as both too timid and too reckless. However, my comment is also consistent with figures reported by the Ministry of Justice's Analytical Services, and is designed to capture the right tone of what it might be realistic to expect in the long-term when introducing new structured specialist interventions.

<sup>15</sup> For me, this train of thought was triggered in 1979 by my reading of *Prophecy, behaviour, and change: An examination of self-fulfilling prophecies in helping relationships*, by Gerald Smale (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977)

<sup>16</sup> I do realise that there continue to be revisions to the interpretation of the original Hawthorne experiments in an American factory in the 1930s, when an experimental group of workers improved production when the level of lighting changed, whether it went up or down, so I'm making no claims to strict authenticity here.

<sup>17</sup> I'm merely claiming a mundane truth by saying that, alongside other considerations, if the organisation can somehow maintain over a long run the sense among practitioners that they are doing something new and exciting, and engage their enthusiasm, then it will be adding to the effectiveness of their frontline practice.

And this of course readily links with the approach I've advocated elsewhere, such as in my recent work in New Zealand – skilled practitioners will work positively if they are given responsibility to make their own decisions about how to achieve effective results, and be accountable for those decisions, within set boundaries. We see that in the best practice we examine during our inspections – and we also have sometimes seen the opposite, because what you *tell yourself you are doing* can speak volumes. If you think your job is just to 'fill in some forms' rather than 'to plan the work that needs doing' you are hardly likely to inspire the individual under supervision to want to change.

Therefore policymakers and academics, as well as managers and inspectors, can all play their part in promoting practice which encourages and enables practitioners to plan and act skilfully, taking responsibility for, and giving account for, their decisions and actions. It's a bit scary, both for managers who are used to micromanaging, and for practitioners who sometimes ask to be micromanaged, and of course sometimes bad things will still happen, but this job simply doesn't work if you try to operate it through a detailed procedure manual.

Performance targets are one optional approach here, and they are not always necessarily a bad thing – well-chosen ones can usefully focus attention on an aspect of practice that might need to be sharpened up. But although performance targets can be useful,<sup>18</sup> I'm afraid that too often in practice it has been a case of 'Hitting the target and missing the point'. Unintended perverse incentives can lead to unintended perverse effects, such as when the police were incentivised to bring as many offenders as possible to justice it led to the acceleration of many early juvenile offenders into the criminal justice system in the mid-2000s<sup>19</sup>.

Policymakers and managers take note: Make very sure that you've thought through very thoroughly indeed what effect your decision is likely to have on the behaviour of the people who actually do the work. It's no good having 'big picture' strategic ideas, thinking that you can leave it to some other operational people to work through in practice – that's not good enough. You have to be able to see both the wood and the trees – or, if you prefer, to become a brilliant strategist as Napoleon was, you would have to be like him in always knowing where every single gun was. Because sometimes *the detail is how the strategy is achieved* (or is undermined if you get the detail wrong).

And, policymakers, please learn from the evidence, as you expect practitioners to do. If there is one thing that is crystal clear from the last forty years, it is that so-called tough conditional alternatives to prison have up to now unfailingly led to more people ending up in prison. From 1968 to the early 1980s, and from the early 1990s to the present, suspended sentences and the promotion of other so-called 'tough alternatives to custody' have resulted in steady *increases* in the prison population.

This has arisen from the combination of two factors: first, despite everyone's best intentions, many convicted individuals receive the 'tough alternative' sentences when they would not have previously received a prison sentence at all, and second, many of those individuals then reoffend and end up in custody where they might not previously have done so if the conditional alternative sentence had not been passed in the first place.

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<sup>18</sup> For example: Targets for completing Race and Ethnic Monitoring information for each case enabled effective monitoring of proportionate treatment by Probation, and within the Criminal Justice system as a whole.

<sup>19</sup> And targets for Probation to complete initial assessments *quickly* led to many of them *not being done very well*.

On one level, that's their own fault of course, but it's a reality that illustrates that many people who offend simply *don't think about what they're doing* – many of them would benefit instead from training in thinking through the consequences of their own behaviour. (That's if you can engage with them skilfully enough to get them to attend and engage with that training!)

If what you want instead is to focus expenditure on imprisonment where *prison most evidently provides a benefit* then you'll do what the whole system was doing in the 1980s, and which the juvenile system is doing now: You build a series of non-conditional measures in the criminal justice system that delay the first sentence of custody for many offenders, who then simply 'grow out of crime' anyway at minimum cost to the taxpayer. I call this 'attrition management' – and it's both economical and surprisingly effective, on any reasonable cost-benefit analysis.

On the same train of thought, the irony for today is that by far the most cost effective reform to current imprisonment practice is one that for political reasons simply can't be done. My analysis last year of the careful documentation by the Ministry of Justice of the End of Custody Licence scheme of 2008-10 showed that the final fortnight or so of an ordinary prison sentence involves locking up about 60 individuals at a cost of around 80 to 100 thousand pounds to prevent just one of those 60 committing just over one fairly ordinary offence during those two weeks or so.<sup>20</sup> That looks expensive, by any rational cost-benefit analysis, as well as rather hard on the 59 or so individuals who are not going to reoffend during that fortnight.

However, this government painted itself into a corner by saying before the election that it absolutely wouldn't ever reintroduce early release – so for political reasons, in the context of the two-dimensional public debate about prison, it's a non-starter.

Overall, my key point here is that in their different ways managers, inspectors, academics and policymakers can all act in ways that make it harder for practitioners to do their jobs properly, or alternatively they can do things that actually promote good practice.

And finally we can also confirm that Probation and Youth Offending work is entirely compatible with caring about the needs of the victims of crime. Sadly, Probation's historic direct involvement with Victim Support schemes in many areas may be difficult to sustain in the current financial climate. However, the work done by Probation Service victim contact units, which is recognisably carried out on behalf of the Probation Service, will continue to be invaluable when it is done well.

Their work shows that although there are clearly some direct conflicts of interest between victims and offenders, Probation and Youth Offending work at its best is about trying to find constructive solutions for both, and is often succeeding. Well done, those of you who are doing such victim contact work that well.

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<sup>20</sup> The Ministry of Justice Statistical Bulletins on the ECL scheme showed that, in round numbers, the release of 30,000 selected prisoners per annum, for just over a fortnight early, led to around 500 of them committing about 600 offences in total each year. [In 2008 31,318 were released early, and 497 individuals committed 658 alleged offences; in 2009, 29,371 were released early, with 454 individuals committing 584 further alleged offences.] NOMS's cited cost of imprisonment was then around £40k per annum. That's about £1,600 for each prisoner for a fortnight, and so the cost of imprisoning the 30,000 per year for a fortnight once again now that the ECL scheme has ended is about £48m. Divide that figure by 600 offences and we have £80k as the cost of preventing each offence. Of course this is not a direct variable cost, but it does become one each time a new prison is opened, or an existing one not closed.

## Summary:

So can I summarise my key points? – I'll have a go:

Probation and Youth Offending work is difficult to do well. You are trying to do the right thing with the right individual in the right way at the right time with a large number of infinitely different human beings. In this sense the work is always three-dimensional work - a mundane truth - but you are doing it the whole time in the context of a wide range of public debates dominated by two-dimensional exciting fallacies.

Management and inspection **can** actually get in the way of promoting improvement in practice if it gets it wrong by overprescribing and monitoring rules and procedures designed to tell practitioners what to do in any eventuality that might arise. But if instead we make it clear what are the bottom-line purposes we're asking practitioners to achieve, and how we are going to measure those, then we can give skilled practitioners the discretion to make their own decisions about how they will work to achieve those purposes with each case, and be accountable for those decisions. That is the much more promising approach for management and inspection – and inspection has moved, and management does appear to be moving now, in that direction.

This means that each practitioner can keep asking herself or himself, not only at formal review times but at other times too:

First: "Am I holding this individual to the terms of the Court sentence or licence?" – that's promoting compliance, and enforcing if and when needed –

Second: "Am I helping this person to become less likely to reoffend in future, and how will I evidence that?" – that's using principally *constructive interventions* to achieve measurably reduced Likelihood of Reoffending

Third: "Am I taking all reasonable action to protect others from harm from this individual?" – that's using principally *restrictive interventions* to minimise the individual's *Risk of Harm to others*

And Youth Offending practitioners have a fourth purpose to achieve: "Am I taking all reasonable action to protect this young person from coming to harm, either from self or others?" – that's minimising risk of harm to self.

## Conclusion:

Relatively speaking, all this is Simple to Say, but Difficult to Do, and yet people who do Probation and Youth Offending work are doing all this well a lot of the time now, and doing that more often and better than before – though obviously I'd very much like it to be even more often. This is what continuous improvement is all about.

Those of you doing this work, in whatever organisations you do it, if you are part of this syndrome of *doing it well now*, and doing it better, and more often, then this is my tribute to you.

**Andrew Bridges**

**HM Chief Inspector of Probation 2004-11**

16 May 2011

## Appendix:

### A discussion re Outcomes of Probation, from October 2010

The subject of Outcomes has always been *important-but-difficult*, and now it is becoming increasingly topical as well.

We have a new Government that says as part of its rehabilitation revolution that it wants to fund future work with offenders through Outcomes achieved rather than simply by volume of work done. (NB the language is now often about “Results” rather than “Outcomes” – but for the moment we’ll treat the terms as interchangeable.) Most informed people would recognise why *funding-through-Outcomes* is a very worthy aspiration, and would also recognise how difficult it will be to achieve in practice.

Looking at the NOMS side of things first, and on the specific problem of measuring reoffending, an enormous amount of work has been done in recent years to find a way of measuring reoffending rates in a way that might work as a performance management measure. The current results of this work are the published Local Reoffending Rates. My sad conclusion, however, is that I am entirely sympathetic to what NOMS is trying to do, but in the end I don’t think this works as a *performance management measure*, although it is certainly useful information. (I return to this point further below.)

Next, on the part of this Inspectorate too, we have sought to give due emphasis in principle to the importance of achieving Outcomes from offender management, and to so we’ve pursued a much broader interpretations of what might count as an Outcome. But I have to acknowledge that we have had pretty mixed success ourselves in managing this in practice.

As a brief background introduction to this, I refer to the chart attached, to illustrate that from the Inspectorate perspective there are three types of purpose that are achieved by supervising offenders. Each of these types of purpose has its own category of potentially measurable Outcome: The first is that the requirements of the sentence have been carried out – this is an end in itself, independent of the other two purposes of supervision. The second is that the offender is demonstrably less likely to reoffend; and the third is that the offender’s *Risk of Harm to others* has been kept to a minimum – there is an important distinction between this and the second purpose.

The Inspectorate has referenced this to NOMS’s own plain language terms of Punish, Help, Change, and Control – Punish being the first purpose, Help and Change being the second purpose and Control being the third. Anyone can also see that our inspection criteria, the chapter headings in our OMI2 reports, and some of our thematic reports too, all reference these core purposes and Outcomes as the context in which we assess the effectiveness of Probation work, and some aspects of Youth Offending work too.

I will add at this point that in consultative work that I have been invited to undertake in both New Zealand and Northern Ireland that the Probation Services there have found it helpful to reference those three core purposes, with their Outcomes, although the precise choice of language and terminology does vary a little - indeed I note that the current MoJ language refers to Punishment, Rehabilitation and Public Protection as the labels for what I see as these three core Purposes.

But how to assess the achieving of Outcomes in practice?-

- Given that inspection is about assessing the quality of individualised practice – How Often is the Right Thing being done in the Right Way with the Right Individual at the Right Time, to sufficient quality? – we have found the core structure of our methodology to be very useful: we look at Assessments, Plans and Reviews, we look at delivery of Interventions, and achievement of Outcomes. You see that too in our chapter headings.

Yet we know that the chapter in our reports on Outcomes, which ought in principle to be the most important, is probably the least robust of our three key chapters in practice. At one time, when designing the first round of offender management inspections, we explored ways of trying to make the Outcomes chapter the first chapter of the whole report, in order to highlight its importance. But we couldn't make that radical theory work in practice.

What you'll see instead is that we have aimed to assess whether the three key purposes have been achieved - - Starting with Has the Punish purpose has been achieved? -This principally means "were the necessary appointments arranged to enable the person under supervision to comply with the sentence of the Court, or License?" – and/or "where there was a failure to comply, was enforcement action taken properly?"

We then also aim to ask whether all reasonable action was taken to keep this individual's *Risk of Harm to others* to a minimum (the Control purpose), and finally we look for demonstrable evidence that the individual's Likelihood of Reoffending has been reduced (the Help and Change purposes).

In the case of *Risk of Harm to others* we're looking for evidence of vigilance and action taken when information arises of a potential raised danger to others – what we call the investigative approach – particularly by applying what we call *restrictive interventions*.

With likelihood of reoffending we are looking for achievements made through what we call *constructive interventions*, and we look to credit the case with any evidence, even soft evidence, of new learning or changed behaviours by the individual person under supervision.

It's all relatively soft stuff, but in this section we've been trying to provide the opportunity for Probation to show that the offender has made some measurable progress in becoming less likely to reoffend since supervision started.

Returning to the topic in general, I don't think that the problems we experience in trying to find ways of measuring Outcomes is due to a failure by managers or service designers to apply themselves properly; instead I think it is symptomatic of the nature of the work itself – it is difficult, though I believe that there are ways forward.

First, offender management is an individualised service (not *one-size-fits-all*), and so the measurement of progress has to allow for that - it's different with each individual.

Second, more significantly, when any of us attempt to answer the ultimate question of whether reoffending is reducing in reality there is the dilemma of needing to choose between accuracy and promptness -

- the longer you wait before measuring whether an individual or a cohort of offenders have reoffended, the more accurate you will be, but the more useless it will be as a feedback for current managers and practitioners.

The recent introduction of the Local Reoffending Rates looks to me like the 'best available' attempt to find the best compromise between accuracy and promptness, and my sad conclusion is that this 'best compromise' simply isn't going to be good enough for *performance management* purposes. When receiving the latest quarterly report, the Chief Executive is not in a position to be able tell her/his staff specifically what they need to do differently (or more of), in response to the new figures. (However, it will certainly be useful for monitoring national trends.)

In response to these difficulties we in the Inspectorate therefore think we're going to have to find ways of improving our own methodology, in order to provide as intelligent a measurement as we can of what Probation supervision is achieving. (After all, since we expect others to stay on the path of continuous improvement, we should try to do the same ourselves.) To try to improve our own methodology we're currently reviewing our Outcomes sections of our OMI2 reports, and we are seeing ways in which they could be improved, in the light of experience and reflection.

I provide below the chart I referred to earlier. It is an adapted version of the one we published in our Annual Report in July 2010. It represents what we consider to be the three ***separate-but-overlapping*** purposes, the outcomes of which can be measured for *performance management* purposes. It also shows the relationship between them and the ***ultimate long-term aim of reducing reoffending***. This is still the ultimate aim, but for the reasons we've already covered it doesn't work as a short-term performance measure.

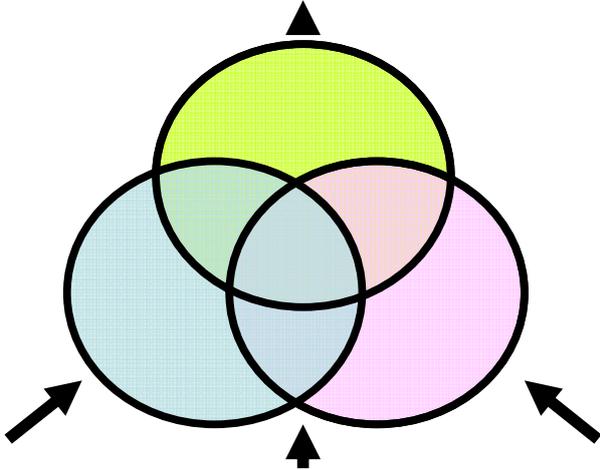
Each of the shaded blocks on the chart are headline summaries of detailed specifications – some of the details need a lot of thinking through, and I am able to assist with this from current and previous experience. Nevertheless, it is achievable in my view, and the chart provides an overview of how Probation Outcomes can be measured.

Andrew Bridges  
HMCI Probation  
October 2010

(Paper first given at a regional briefing in Woking on 7 October 2010)

# Performance measurement overview

Long-term benefits	<b>Reductions in reconvictions</b>
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<b>The Three Purposes</b>	1. Ensure offenders comply with the requirements of their sentence	2. Reduce offenders' likelihood of reoffending	3. Minimise offenders' <i>Risk of Harm to others</i>
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Headline performance measures	Percentage of offenders who have complied, plus who have been properly enforced	Percentage of offenders who are assessed as less likely to reoffend at the 6-month point	Percentage of the <i>RoH</i> work that has sufficiently met the required quality
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Detail of performance indicators that make up the performance measures	1. Offender has Complied with sentence as properly required, or, if not: 2. Officer has Enforced properly [Add 1 and 2 to get the numerator]	Improvement in score for the relevant offending-related factors in OASys at 6 month point, compared with score at start of sentence.	Benchmarked qualitative assessments of cases using the methodology of HM Inspectorate of Probation
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Specialist performance measures	Details to be specified	Details to be specified	Details to be specified
Other management information	Details to be specified	Details to be specified	Details to be specified
Detailed specifications	Details to be specified	Details to be specified	Details to be specified