

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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# Perrie Lectures 2010

## The 'Rehabilitation Revolution'

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### Introduction

**By way of introduction, let me first tell you something about the origins of the Perrie lectures. As a junior governor grade working in Long Lartin in the mid-eighties I had the great pleasure of working for a truly inspirational governor, Mike Jenkins. Mike was old school, he knew how to run a very effective prison but he also knew the importance of understanding the context in which he was trying to deliver that service. So we keen, eager apprentices, were encouraged to attend erudite seminars on matters of criminology. Returning from one such lecture on the improvement of the lifer management system in Oxford, I said to Mike, 'surely there ought to be a platform for those who work on the front line to have a voice, to express ideas and issues about doing the job on the shop floor?' Mike thought about this for a while and eventually said, 'I think that's a good idea, Trevor, you should organize one!', and that was the origins of the Perrie Lectures. Clearly the format has greatly improved since we created the first of those lectures and I am truly delighted to see that its longevity suggests that we found a basic niche in the market, a cause that has remained constant since those days, with one of its core principles being the opportunity for different perspectives on the same issues.**

### Old school rehabilitation

But I digress. I joined the Prison Service in the late Seventies and the recruitment pamphlet which attracted me said that the purpose of imprisonment was two fold. The first was to keep people secure in conditions of 'humane containment' for the benefit of public protection, with the second being that of rehabilitation. It seems remarkable to me that so little has changed in the intervening 30 odd years. It is entirely true that although the label of throughcare has declined in usage, the concept survives and in fact I am absolutely confident that the notion of rehabilitation is about to see a revival. An example of rehabilitation from the old days comes from my first job as a governor grade in Feltham borstal. It was not the Feltham that we know today but the old Middlesex industrial school

of the late 1830s which, until the Prison Service acquired it, used to have a fully rigged schooner in front of the building which they used to train the waifs and strays of London in seamanship skills before sending them to join the merchant navy. The Feltham that I joined was imbued throughout with the notion of rehabilitation, as was the borstal regime. It was an indeterminate sentence; the harder you worked the quicker you got out but if you messed about you stayed.

I remember spending my weekends writing 'Page 17' reports, a simple report on each of our offenders stating what we'd learnt about them, what we'd done with them and what work we thought remained to be done when we discharged them into the hands of the Probation Service. We duly sent these things off and in return we used to get back a 'Part C' which was a regular, quarterly report from the Probation Officer saying how well or badly that individual was doing. To me that seemed to be basic common sense, that is throughcare in action. The fact that we managed it with a couple of simple reports seems all the more remarkable today. Feltham was also fairly unique in other respects regarding the rehabilitation agenda. For example, we ran a 'drop in centre' just off Trafalgar Square where any ex-offender from Feltham, however ex they were, could drop in, let us know how they were getting on, ask for help with difficulties, and generally share their experiences with any recently released trainees. I didn't think that was innovative, I just thought that was plain common sense, but clearly those kinds of services no longer exist, as far as I'm aware, which says something about the way we have reorientated our thinking about our core services and our core purpose.

Going further back in time, Feltham was the starting point for the Lowdham Grange march. Feltham borstal used to put trainees through construction training and in the early 1930s someone came up with the idea of marching these men from Feltham to Nottinghamshire where they could build a 'model borstal'. They trained up a workforce with construction skills, marched them to Lowdham Grange, and built a model borstal on the hill at Lowdham. Practitioners were absolutely convinced that a regime of rehabilitation, as lived and breathed by the trainees and the staff was the way to do business. They were so convinced by the premise that a couple of years later

troops in Stafford prison marched to the Lincolnshire coast to just beyond Boston to found North Sea Camp. The task of those guys was to build a huge sea wall to reclaim the salt marsh and turn it into agricultural land. In his influential pamphlet, WW Llewellyn the man behind the venture described the task as 'reclaiming land and reclaiming lives'.

Llewellyn was responsible for the recruitment of a whole generation of governors who shared the same ideals and principles about rehabilitation. Men like Mike Jenkins and Ian Dunbar and it was Ian, who sadly died in May, who delivered the first Perrie Lecture in 1986. He had also coincidentally been the governor at Feltham immediately prior to my arrival. Ian will be best remembered for his seminal work on prison regimes, *A Sense of Direction*<sup>1</sup>. He wrote it at a point when the Prison Service was experiencing an identity crisis, locked in the dark days of humane containment and 'nothing works'. His work captured the very essence of an effective prison regime focusing principally on the three main areas of individualism, relationships and activity; all of which are necessary elements of a successful rehabilitative prison regime. Ian believed in the ability of offenders to change and the critical importance of hope to sustain them through the dark days of lengthy imprisonment. This he thought could be achieved through positive, hopeful and empowered relationships between workers and offenders, which all feature strongly in current desistance literature.

### End-to-end offender management

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was created six years ago, with the decision to reform the system for managing offenders stemming from Lord Carter's 2003 review of correctional services<sup>2</sup>. This highlighted many deficiencies, particularly how the Prison and Probation Services were working in silos and thus largely detached from each other; with this having a negative impact on offender outcomes, including reducing reoffending. Carter found, for example, that access to services such as drug treatment and education were often dependant on whether an offender was

given a custodial sentence or a community sentence, rather than it being based on individual need. This silo approach also meant that programmes and interventions undertaken in prisons were rarely, if ever, followed up in the community once an offender was released. Carter, therefore, concluded that a new, more holistic approach was needed, with the end-to-end management of offenders achieved through NOMS. Greater choice of service provider and better 'gearing' between demand and supply were also essential.

For prison and probation services to work more closely together to reduce reoffending and protect the public, clearly makes sense. Both services, as well as a multitude of other organisations, must work together

seamlessly if we are to manage and rehabilitate offenders effectively. It is about end-to-end offender management. If we don't do that, then the excellent work carried out by our individual front-line staff in prisons, in probation and by our partners will be wasted, resulting in duplication at best and total loss of impetuous at worst. There cannot be an effective handover of responsibility from one organisation to another at the prison gate. Offender management must be both continuous and coherent to be constructive. By increasing collaboration and working in a more integrated and joined-up way we are able to manage offenders better through their sentence, target our efforts

where they will do the most good and tackle, with offenders, the root causes of their offending.

The journey of the NOMS we have today has not been simple or straightforward, with there being a number of changes in the structure and focus of the organisation in the last six years. In April last year we became an Executive Agency in our own right, we have survived three Home Secretaries, a change of department, two Justice Secretaries and so far the new Coalition Government. The NOMS Agency is going through a continuous process of structural adjustment, most recently the welcome appointment of our new Chief Executive Michael Spurr and the creation of a new leadership team to take NOMS forward. Through these changes we remain focused on key offender outcomes, which are being delivered with ever

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1. Dunbar, I. (1985) *A Sense of Direction* London: HMSO.

2. Carter, P. (2003) *Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime: A New Approach* London: Strategy Unit.

decreasing resources. Our key objectives are therefore to deliver the sentences of the courts, reduce reoffending, protect the public, and do all of this in a cost effective way.

### Throughcare

In April last year the Agency's responsibility for delivering a reduction in reoffending and managing offenders was devolved to ten regional Directors of Offender Management across England and in Wales. Each Director is required to co-ordinate offender management at a regional level for offenders in custody, or in the community, assessing demand, allocating resources across our regions and commissioning services at a local level. Our role is very much that of strategic integrator, with a responsibility to ensure that the services we commission match demand, are effective in addressing the risks of reoffending and achieve more for less. As contract holders we closely monitor the performance of the Probation Trusts and the contracted prisons in our region, as well as having a direct line of responsibility for public prisons. We allocate resources across our regions in accordance with offenders' needs, sentencers' demands and public protection requirements, with reference to value for money and 'what works' principles being the key drivers of the whole system. Furthermore, we manage a mixed economy of providers, with decisions on what work gets done and who it will be done by based on evidence and driven by best value. This joint focus on operational delivery and partnership working empowers staff in our region to deliver services that meet the essential elements of practical throughcare and have the best prospects of success.

For example, John Laing Training has provided a wide range of construction based vocational courses to prisoners at The Mount prison since 2004. In the last academic year, 2008-2009, they had achievement rates of 90 per cent and a retention rate of 95 per cent. They have linked up with internal Prison Service systems like sentence planning and the Activities Allocation, and work in partnership with both education and resettlement providers. The courses have produced

numerous success stories of prisoners who have managed to find employment on release, on the back of the training they completed whilst in prison and thus are proving to be worthwhile. For instance, one prisoner who successfully completed the five week Resettlement Course recently wrote to the prison saying that he had secured a job within three months of release. He has a managerial role in a national research facility, managing a team of three supervisors and seven other staff.

However, it is not just prisons that are opening their doors to new providers; the probation service has also been discovering what partnerships with the private and voluntary sector have to offer. In the past year we have transitioned 42 Local Probation Boards into 35 Probation Trusts. These Trusts have entered into contracts with the

Secretary of State for the provision of probation services in their areas. The Trusts are becoming more flexible, agile and locally-focused with strong community links allowing them to use services from the public, private and voluntary sectors to provide the very best route to help rehabilitate offenders in the most cost effective ways. Each Trust is made up of Local Delivery Units that work in partnership to meet local needs, with these units providing a visible local presence in our communities and ensuring that the diverse needs in different parts of the country are met.

### The rehabilitation revolution

Regardless of whether an offender is in prison or on probation, we are all working towards the same aim, that is to stop them coming back and thus ending the revolving door of reoffending. Throughcare must therefore begin at the point of sentence. As one member of my Community Team rather succinctly puts it; 'Criminals in, Citizens out', that is our overriding objective. As practitioners, we take some of the most socially excluded people within society, deliver the punishments handed down by the courts, while at the same time looking to support positive change so that they don't reoffend. It is significant that, on his recent appointment as the new Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Ken Clarke said, 'We must provide protection for the public from dangerous individuals and find ways to improve rehabilitation so to cut the worryingly high rates of recidivism.'<sup>3</sup> More recently the

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3. Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke on announcing the new Justice Ministers' responsibilities, 20 May 2010 available at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease200510a.htm>

Government has made clear its aim to achieve a 'rehabilitation revolution' in the way we deal with our offenders, to radically reduce reoffending and to cut crime. To achieve this, NOMS encourages offenders to address the root causes of their offending and regain a stake in society, most demonstrably through gaining sustained employment. In fact my alternative 'strapline' for NOMS would be 'making offenders pay their taxes.'

The road to rehabilitation begins with individually-tailored sentence plans which offer appropriate interventions to help offenders move away from a life of crime, regardless of whether their sentence is custodial or community based. These interventions, sometimes referred to as the 'resistance' approach, can range from support for coming off drugs, offending behaviour programmes, the provision of vocational training to finding suitable accommodation. These pathways — accommodation, thinking and behaviour, family, drugs and alcohol, education, finance and health — are the bedrock on which NOMS has built its reducing reoffending strategy.

#### **Sentences over 12 months**

Although reoffending rates are still unacceptably high, prison performance between 2000 and 2008 has been impressive, with the reduction in reoffending of offenders serving sentences over 12 months to two years standing at 15 per cent. Furthermore, the reduction in the proportion of offenders serving sentences over two years that go on to re-offend currently stands at an even more impressive 31 per cent<sup>4</sup>. These significant improvements, especially for those serving longer sentences, coincide with the growth in offending behaviour programmes, more education and training opportunities for prisoners, improved detoxification, better mental health provision, the emphasis on prison officers treating prisoners decently and the introduction of compulsory probation supervision for those sentenced to over 12 months. This indicative evidence that an expansion of offending behaviour programmes has helped reduce re-offending is consistent with the evidence base, although they do have to be packaged

properly and fit within the broader approach to reducing reoffending, including the principles of desistance.

An example of this approach can be seen with 40 year old Richard, who is currently serving a sentence for armed robbery in HMP Chelmsford. When he came into prison he was an alcoholic and drug addict and his wife and children had disowned him. He was immediately placed on the Drug Services Unit which provides Integrated Drug Treatment and successfully completed alcohol detoxification. He was initially prescribed Methadone but, with the help of his counsellors, he has gradually managed to come off this too. He has completed a Community leaders award in Rugby coaching, has become an 'Insider' and additionally qualified as a Health Trainer. Furthermore, he has been offered a job when he is eventually released and is slowly building bridges with his wife and children.

#### **Sentences under 12 months**

Despite the promise seen above, the reduction in the proportion of offenders serving sentences under 12 months who went onto re-offend was only 3.9 per cent<sup>5</sup> and this, combined with some overall disappointing figures in the community, is a stark reminder of the challenge we all face. We know from research that offending declines with age and maturity. Offenders

do 'desist', although the challenge for practitioners is what we can do to accelerate and support this. A recent review of the desistance literature commissioned by NOMS suggested a number of approaches, such as accommodating and exploiting identity and diversity. We already make an attempt at this with individually-tailored sentence plans but clearly we can go further towards the creation of a genuinely 'offender centric' system. By doing this we can create, and maintain, hope and motivation, both achievable through encouraging and respecting an offender's own determination to turn his life around, and by supporting and developing individual abilities and skills (as well as tackling risks and needs). Furthermore, we can build on our understanding of the role and influence of relationships, both between staff and offenders and

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4. Ministry of Justice (2010) *Reoffending of adults: results from the 2008 cohort. England and Wales* London: Ministry of Justice.

5. *Ibid.*

offenders and their 'significant others'. Finally we should support and strengthen the wider social networks that are so essential to turning offenders' lives around.

An example of where such practices are used is Australia, where correctional officers who acted as pro-social models, including encouraging and rewarding pro-social statements and actions, achieved reconviction rates after four years of 49 per cent compared with 73 per cent for other officers<sup>6</sup>. In Canada, the Strategic Training Initiative for Community Supervision showed that trained officers who used relationship building, cognitive techniques and a more structured approach to offender management achieved lower reconviction rates of 25 per cent compared with just over 40 per cent for other officers<sup>7</sup>. Crucially, both studies showed that it is not about the amount of time spent with offenders (sessions averaged less than half an hour) but how that time was spent.

In NOMS we are testing, through the Offender Engagement Programme, the hypothesis that the relationship between the offender and the probation practitioner can be a powerful vehicle for changing behaviour and reducing offending. The aim of the programme is to refocus on what practitioners actually do on a one-to-one basis with offenders in supporting them to turn away from crime, rather than placing too much emphasis on the actual process. This has been seen with John, a Prolific and Priority Offender in his twenties. It is worthy of reflection at this point that in the case of Prolific and Priority Offenders, four fifths of the total costs of the system currently go into the process of trying, convicting and incarcerating the offender with only one fifth at best spent on attempting to change his/her life. When the Offender Manager began working with John in November 2007 he had already accrued 18 convictions for that one year, for which he had mostly received short prison sentences, and thus

seemed impervious to change. John was one of the first offenders to be referred to 'The Bridge Project', an intensive probation project, and alternative to short custodial sentences in Essex. Based miles away from the probation office, participation in the project involved travelling into and out of London before 9 o'clock in the morning, at least three times a week, and against all odds John attended, with his compliance and commitment being deemed excellent. Underpinned by the Offender Manager's support and belief, it has proved to be a turning point in John's criminal career and despite a couple of minor setbacks he has been in full time employment since March 2009 and successfully completed his Community Order, for the first time ever. When asked about his Offender Manager John said: 'He listens. He tells me straight. I can't go too far. It feels like a chore or punishment every day. But he has helped me out a lot. I see him four times a week. He's always in my head.' The Offender Manager gave John a belief in himself. This is a great skill, a crucial element of desistance and a powerful contributor to our 'rehabilitation revolution'.

### Partnership

When it comes to changing an offender, however, clearly we cannot do it alone. The recruitment pamphlet I referred to earlier, acknowledged that

the challenge of offender rehabilitation doesn't fall to the prison system alone, far from it. NOMS is a commissioning organisation, we identify where the demand is and match it to supply, while ensuring that services are delivered both cost effectively and to a high standard. A whole range of organisations; statutory, private and from the voluntary sector, have a vital part to play in the rehabilitation of offenders. Offenders often find it easier to relate to those from external organisations, such as charitable agencies, rather than those in a formal position of authority and we cannot afford to ignore that. We therefore

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6. Trotter, C. (1996) 'The Impact of Different Supervision Practices in Community Corrections: Causes for Optimism', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 29, 29-46.  
7. Bonta, J., Bourgon, G., Ruge, T., Scott, T-L., Yessine, A.K., Gutierrez, L. and Li, J. (2010) *The Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision : Risk-Need-Responsivity in the Real World*, Corrections Research: User Report, Public Safety Canada ([www.publicsafety.gc.ca](http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca)).

attach the highest importance to positive, mutually beneficial relationships with our partners and other stakeholders in the interests of delivering rehabilitation outcomes for offenders and the wider public.

One example of this type of effective partnership working is the Dawn Project in Cambridgeshire. It is available for women throughout the county, especially female offenders and those at risk of offending, as an alternative to the damaging short-term custodial option. The project offers information, support and an opportunity to change, for example, helping women to find suitable accommodation, access education and training programmes, manage their feelings, be better parents

and importantly break the intergenerational cycle of offending. Yasmin, for instance, was a professional woman from a traditional Muslim background, with a law degree.

At the age of 23 she began a relationship with a man who had a well established heroin and crack cocaine habit. Six months later she started taking drugs, was in and out of jobs supporting their habits and had lost all of her friends. By the age of 28 she had been convicted of theft, shoplifting, handling stolen goods and fraud. Previous attempts to come off the drugs had been unsuccessful, it was a conviction for handling stolen goods and a Drug Rehabilitation

Requirement that got her the help she needed. Turning Point gave her one-to-one counselling sessions which forced her to look at her life and challenge her behaviours and as a result she beat her drug habit. Disappointingly however, following the community sentence, Yasmin was caught and convicted for stealing from her employers to feed her partner's drug habit. She was sentenced to attend the Women's Programme, along with 80 hours community service and 18 months supervision. The Women's Programme gave her some structure and helped her to deal with her emotional and psychological issues through group work and peer support. She learnt to identify triggers, risk taking behaviours and coping strategies and now feels that she can move on; having higher self-esteem and better life skills. Without this Programme she would probably have still been on drugs and likely, by now, to have been imprisoned.

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Finally, I want to briefly focus on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, looking at resources first. The Coalition Government was elected on a promise to accelerate the savings programme by £6 billion this year. This sounds like a lot of money but is a complete drop in the ocean with regard to the increasing scale of the national debt. As part of the £6 billion savings plan, we have seen a complete recruitment freeze in the Civil Service, so if this is the effect of a £6 billion saving what will it take to recoup the outstanding £150 billion. The best objective assessment of the state of the finances for the Ministry

of Justice, suggests that by 2014 we will be £2 billion adrift on our spending plans. Those spending plans are based on every single efficiency prisons and probation have thought they might make over that period. The Agency accounts for approximately 50 per cent of the Ministry of Justice spend. If we took £1 billion out of the prison side of the business alone we would have to manage the system with 25,000 fewer offenders in it. If you look at it from the probation perspective, we spend just over £900,000 on the probation budget so a £1 billion saving would mean there would be no Probation Service left at all. So the scale of this challenge is quite dazzling and any notion that we can simply revert to some of the familiar

ideas about what we used to feel comfortable with and what used to work in the past are best forgotten.

So what can we do about this? There are a few ideas; they are not that well worked out but they may be the difference between whether we sink or swim. For example, we need to triage before carrying out full assessments on offenders. The notion that we have to have a complete, full diagnostic assessment on every offender in the system before we decide what to do with them is a nonsense because what often happens is we spend all the cash on the diagnosis and then have nothing left for interventions. We therefore need to change our priorities in respect of offender circumstances as they change, reduce the number of priorities in the sentence plan and drive those sentence plans to a conclusion. Furthermore, we need to manage our resources better by avoiding the notion of death by a thousand cuts and take this opportunity for a fundamental service redesign. We must pay attention

to our strengths, outsource the rest and lever in additional funding from other agencies. Of course in this day and age and in these circumstances working across boundaries becomes ever more challenging. It has been challenging between prisons and probation and so we need to work out how to agree common outcomes, and how to avoid unintended consequences. We need to share data, we need to do assessments once and get them right, and we need to not mind who takes the credit for it all. Furthermore, in a world of shrinking budgets, with less flexible cash, innovation becomes even more important.

### Public Protection

Next we have to make sure that we can shift the balance point between public protection and reducing recidivism. We have to influence and persuade a change in public perception and bolster political will to redress the balance. We need to be open and recognise when our efforts fail, and we need to encourage, not punish, staff who take appropriate risks. We should be more measured over recalls because we currently have 12,000 of them in custody, the vast majority of whom are there for reasons of breach of licence rather than for further offending. Along with all of this we need to build better public understanding and confidence, because we cannot do this in isolation or below the radar. We should promote our successes, be honest about those failures, but believe in the value of the work we do. Borrowing from the experience of the police, I think the notion of 'policing with consent' is a significant development in the last couple of decades, and I wonder whether there is an opportunity to have a deal with the public where we punish and rehabilitate with consent. We need to deliver crucially legislative changes and provide appropriate guidelines that reduce the harmful use of imprisonment and limit the size of the judicial system.

### Conclusion

Of course there are challenges ahead but the task is, in my judgement, still doable. Sometimes I think we

spend too much of our time exaggerating the scale, complexity and difficulties of the job rather than just getting on with it. Remember, we have fewer total numbers of offenders on the books of NOMS than there are members of the National Trust; more people will watch the World Cup final in the Calabash Stadium than we have total number of prisoners in our overcrowded prison system; and, most Shire Probation Trusts have fewer offenders on community orders than there are children in a typical urban comprehensive school. So this scale is manageable. Furthermore, there are very few offenders whose path to criminality we cannot trace, or whose risks and needs we cannot identify. We know what interventions work, we know when to deliver them and generally in what dosage and so we know what to do and how to do it. A recent study of the top performing leadership teams in prisons, by the Institute of Criminology in Cambridge, identified that the most important characteristics were optimism and resilience<sup>8</sup>. With these attributes and our know how, we can make a big difference to reoffending. The strapline of the recently launched ex-offender organisation 'User Voice', 'Only offenders can stop reoffending'

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is profoundly true, but we need to be there to help and maintain belief in their ability to change.

We have come through a decade with a heavy and appropriate emphasis on public protection. Prisons have become infinitely more secure and more decent. Probation has focused on compliance, enforcement and the creation of comprehensive risk assessments. These objectives remain relevant to NOMS today and are necessary to maintain public confidence and secure investment but whilst they are necessary they are no longer sufficient. The next decade will therefore be dominated by two realities: a reduction of spend on all our public services and the urgent reform of our thinking, attitudes and delivery of a justice system that has at its core the requirement to transform offenders' lives and deliver the 'rehabilitation revolution'.

*This article is an edited version of the Perrie Lecture*

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8. Gadd, V. (2010, in progress). 'A Typology of Prison Senior Management Style and Effectiveness'.