



A Probation Offender Manager's work earns Police comment.
Working at the heart of a system to manage dangerous offenders:
Essex Probation and Police Services.

A serious sex offender, who after serving his sentence was released on Licence to be managed in the community, was recalled to prison by the Probation Service. He had not committed any further offence, but his behaviour, testing the boundaries of his Licence conditions, was enough to indicate that he was not taking the requirements seriously enough.

Released for the second time after seven out of eight years in custody, he had a very short licence period left. The Probation Service was faced with someone who needed a lot of work, and to be taught to manage his own risk. "He was very institutionalised," says his Offender Manager, "and wanted the rules and regulations defined in minutiae.

"We were also convinced that sexual offences were still on his mind. We put in a lot of time getting him to work with our Cognitive Behavioural methods, both to give him a more convincing understanding of his behaviour, and its impact, and to start to take on some responsibility."

The tools at Probation's disposal were important: both working with him, and ensuring he realised there was still a threat to his freedom if he showed any signs of increasing risk.

Even more important was Probation's lead role in the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). In which the Probation, Police, Prisons and other agencies plan for managing each individual who poses a risk. Regular MAPPA meetings agreed the next steps in controlling the behaviour of the offender. There was constant assessment and re-assessment. Police tactics as well, with additional joint Probation and Police visits reminded him daily of the routine he needed to keep. Public Protection was the key.

As a result of this carefully planned oversight, the offender was recalled again by Probation. Behaviour which didn't breach his licence conditions, but demonstrated that his risk was escalating, was sufficient to send him back to prison once again.

Next time round, he will have to be released without a Licence: its time has expired. But the work will continue to settle him into the right accommodation, and to provide both support and surveillance.

An Acting Police Inspector wrote to Probation about the Offender Manager's work with this case:

"I know we discussed on the phone the good work carried out by B in this case but I thought I would follow this up with an e-mail by way of recognising her superb handling of it. Working with B has been I think a really good example of how both agencies can effectively work together and that is due to B's efficiency and total knowledge of her case.

It was very apparent that B had taken the time to know the offender and his case very well. If I ever rang her with a query on almost all occasions she knew the answer without having to look it up. On the rare occasion that she didn't have an immediate answer she found out and got back in touch really quickly. There were frequent discussion between us regarding the offender and lots of good information sharing going on. We also met to discuss him outside of the MAPPA process, in particular to discuss transport and curfews. Other Probation personnel were also involved in these meetings.

I always found B to have a sensible and realistic approach and she was very easy to work with. I really don't think she could have done any more or worked any harder on this case."

This demonstration of real trust and admiration from one agency to another shows not only the positive links developed when dealing with an individual offender who poses problems, but the spirit and commitment between the two agencies that helps provide a realistic and effective service to the public.