

The Offender Engagement Programme is an initiative to improve the quality and effectiveness of one to one work with offenders, and reduce reoffending.

MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL SPURR

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MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL SPURR, NOMS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The quality of engagement with offenders is a key factor in helping the system to deliver better outcomes – reduced reoffending and protecting the public, and the creation of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) is about building our evidence base and improving the quality of front line practice.

The progress highlighted in this newsletter is testament to the hard work and innovation by dedicated staff working in Probation Trusts alongside the Offender Engagement Programme team in NOMS. I want to take this opportunity to thank and recognise the efforts of all those staff in Trusts who have been collaborating with the OEP team to develop and test OEP products, and who have been prepared to go the extra mile to promote evidence based practice.

It is encouraging to see that Probation Trusts, including managers and practitioners at every level, have been keen to work with the programme in a collaborative manner : maximising purposeful and effective work with offenders to reduce future offending and victimisation. I am clear that the OEP is intended to bring about long term changes in practice to support front line staff in the use of professional judgement to work most effectively with offenders.

The programme is working with Probation Trusts on further initiatives to build on the existing OEP pilots, such as the project to improve the engagement of recalled prisoners and secure their safe re-release. The majority of Trusts are preparing themselves to use the integrated practice model Skills for Effective Engagement Development and

Supervision (SEEDS) for which the first session to train trainers was held earlier this month. I hope that all Trusts will want to join these initiatives, and develop other approaches which carry the offender engagement 'DNA', as the emerging evidence is beginning to show positive impact for practitioners and offenders.

I look forward to reading reports on the evaluation of the current pilots and the results of this continued collaboration and joint learning. It is a model from which NOMS and the whole system of offender services can gain a great deal, and I am keen to incorporate the learning from the OEP in future commissioning plans and the delivery of front line services.





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EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

The Offender Engagement Programme is testing a range of evidence based practice approaches to strengthen the effectiveness of offender engagement and promote the cultural change which will support frontline practitioners in engaging offenders. The programme team have designed training materials and practice tools in collaboration with frontline offender managers, managers and senior managers, and other stakeholders, and we are testing these through pilots. The enthusiasm within Trusts for this initiative has been demonstrated by the fact that around two-thirds have become involved in our first pilots, which started in Spring 2011 and are due to conclude in Spring 2012. Active collaboration has continued to be a feature, with pilots being coordinated through national steering groups and led locally through steering groups supported by the OEP team.

Building the evidence base
A strong evidence base for offender engagement is a key priority for the OEP. We are working with academic researchers in developing our products and in ensuring the integrity of the evaluation. Pilot Trusts have all have been keen to co-operate in the evaluation by external providers (Sheffield University, and a team from the Institute of Criminal Policy Research, Birkbeck College and Leicester University) and internal OEP researchers.

Trusts involved in OEP pilots
In SEED (Skills for Effective Engagement and Development) a total of 149 managers and offender managers have been trained and re-freshed in engagement skills, and 74 days of training have been delivered by the OEP team to the 8 participating Trusts.

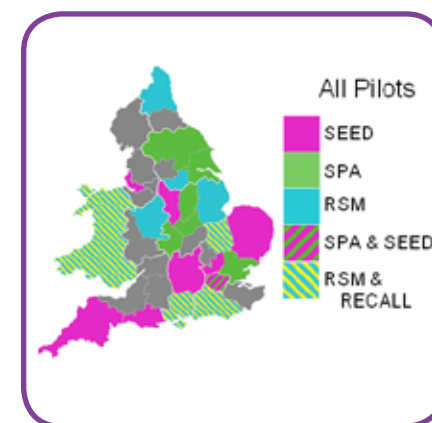
For SPA (Sentence Planning Approaches) over 500 offenders across seven Trusts are involved in the pilots. The training was delivered independently by Probation Trusts.

For RSM 104 probation managers have been trained in eight Trusts through 26 training days delivered by the OEP team.

The Recall Project commencing in 2012 will involve training for managers and OMs in four Trusts.

We estimate that by the time these pilots end, around 4,000 offenders will have been involved.

Maintaining engagement – Middle manager and practitioner stakeholder reference groups were established very soon after the launch of the offender engagement programme, and all but one Trust have appointed



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a representative to attend one or both. The reference groups have been invaluable in helping to develop and test the offender engagement material, and we thank them warmly for their contribution.

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A new joint post with an appointee working to NOMS OEP and the Probation Chief's Association (PCA) has supported collaboration and communication with senior managers, including initiating a Senior Managers Reference Group to support strategic thinking on the learning and deployment of offender engagement approaches. The first face to face meeting held in London in November, was attended by 16 Trust senior managers and we hope more will take up the opportunity in future.

The External Stakeholders Reference Group meets quarterly and is enthusiastically supported by NAPO, the Probation Association, the judiciary, PCA, NOMS HR, User Voice, Probation and Contracted Services Directorate, HMI

Probation and NOMS Probation Training Unit.

The OEP and Probation Chiefs Association held a successful Offender Engagement and Reducing Reoffending Event in November, where Trusts had the opportunity to share their experiences of the OEP approach. Following extremely positive feedback, the OEP plans to hold a second event in Spring 2012.

OEP Achievements at a Glance.

- OEP Pilots across 22 Trusts (Spring 2011-Spring 2012)
- Harnessing academic expertise: contracts with Sheffield University and ICPR, Birkbeck.
- Delivery of SEED- developing practitioners' skills.
- Delivery of RSM- developing a culture that supports offender engagement.
- Delivery of SPA- developing staff skills for engaging

offenders in sentence planning.

- Supporting professional discretion through the National Standards.
- Maximising stakeholder engagement through reference groups, events and communications.





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BENEFITS OF OFFENDER ENGAGEMENT

The role of the Offender Engagement Programme is to bring about intermediate and long term benefits: both the wider cultural change required to promote professional discretion and more effective engagement with offenders to reduce reoffending. At a time when financial constraints create the imperative to do more for less, effective offender engagement makes the best use of probation resources and reduces waste. We are beginning to see some of the following benefits:

- Reduced bureaucracy and greater scope for professional discretion, supporting the frontline to work more effectively with offenders, through new National Standards issued in April, which most Trusts will have implemented by Spring 2012
- More purposeful face-to-face contact with offenders by strengthening and enabling engagement through models currently being piloted, supported by better use of the supervision requirement
- Better evidence on engagement as a result of our internal and external evaluations, literature reviews and research bulletins
- Quality measures in an outcome focussed performance framework; PTRS 2011/2 already marks a move in that direction
- Better compliance and fewer breaches leading to fewer people in prison for breach and less staff time dealing with breach
- Improved staff morale and effectiveness as a result of the above

"The best thing about the OEP is that it is a clearing house for collating and disseminating best practice round the country. This is a good example of how NOMS can add value to Trusts' work."

Nick Smart, Acting Chief Executive, Surry and Sussex Probation Trust.

"I felt valued as a practitioner for the first time in ages! Reflecting on my own practice was invaluable and looking at my development really useful."

Feedback from a practitioner taking part in the RSM pilot.

"Having the ability to contribute (to my sentence plan) meant I would be more likely to work towards the target."

Offender involved in SPA pilot.

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CASE STUDIES FROM SEED AND RSM

Feedback from a practitioner taking part in the SEED pilot.

"I have found using SEED particularly effective with someone who has extensive, mostly acquisitive offending related to alcohol issues and past drug misuse. He has a history of non compliance but we agreed a specific day with a 'window' period of 1½ hours to attend which has worked well. He has usually attended on time but appreciates some flexibility if problems arise for example with travel.

I believe offering a solution to what could be a barrier has helped build a rapport with him. He understands the structure of the session and responds well to this. He likes the set tasks and 'homework' to complete and discuss at the next session. The feedback from an observation by my SPO was very helpful,

in particular around my own practice of reflecting back which has increased my confidence."

Feedback from a practitioner taking part in the Reflective Supervision Model (RSM) Pilot.

"As part of my role in the RSM Pilot, I have now observed a number of sessions of supervision. The vast majority of what I have seen has been very good practice. One example which I think really demonstrates the value of this pilot was an occasion when I sat in with an officer who was using a worksheet to deliver a session on victim empathy to an offender convicted of burglary. This work sheet consisted of fifteen statements which she read to the case and asked them to discuss. The second statement led to a very lengthy discussion, which ended with the offender stating that he "had no idea

about the impact that burglaries had on people". I asked the officer after the session how she thought it had gone, and she stated that it had been "rubbish" as they had not completed the worksheet. This led to an in-depth discussion about what's important in our work, and that such a significant change of attitude is infinitely more valuable than the completion of a worksheet. I think this experience highlights the need for a change in our work, away from a target driven approach to a focus on changing lives."

100% of middle manager participants in the RSM workshop said that taking part in the workshop had enabled them to use reflective practice in their practice.

92% of senior managers said they would be very likely to implement RSM skills in their practice.

88% of practitioners across the eight SEED Trusts said they were likely to use the SEED model in the majority of supervision sessions.



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A highly interactive and successful learning exchange event was held in November for Trusts to hear about each other's experiences of using the OEP approach. The Offender Engagement and Reducing Reoffending event was conceived as a means of encouraging lateral exchange of ideas and information around offender engagement for Probation Trusts, including those yet to be involved through a pilot. The timing of the event – six months after the commencement of the three core pilots – meant that there were several meaningful developments to debate. The event was planned to be interactive, enabling those directly involved in the pilots at trust level to introduce topics and allow their experience to be the catalyst for discussion. It was run jointly with the Probation Chiefs Association and was sponsored by Steria.

The format was something akin to speed dating, or a World Café, with small groups of people regularly moving between themed tables. Other plenary elements of the programme were added to cover related topics and to break up the sessions. In total there were 74 delegates; 49 from trusts and the balance from NOMS, Steria and the PCA. Speakers were Sue Rex (outlining developments in the OE programme), Nick Shough (introducing the National Treatment Agency's node link mapping approach), Annette McGranaghan (outlining developments in case management systems) and Heather Munro (on behalf of PCA and London Probation).

Facilitators, largely practitioners from pilot trusts, led discussions on six themed tables. Two additional tables led discussions on technology (demonstrating innovations being worked on by Steria) and the recall pilot.

From the evaluation, 100% of the delegates found the programme worthwhile, with the exchange sessions receiving the best feedback. Their format extended the opportunity for direct engagement with those with first hand experience and to allow people to hear in reasonable depth about at least four initiatives/pilots. Learning points were gathered by OEP team members.

The OEP is delighted by the success of this event and look forward to welcoming Trusts to another similar event in 2012.





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HOW DO YOU THINK THE OEP CONTRIBUTES TO GOOD PRACTICE?

"I am so pleased that there is now greater emphasis on the one to one work we do with offenders. Many officers (including me) have always felt that the relationship between offender and officer was a key component of change – a view confirmed by the recent research on desistance – and the OEP has been instrumental in championing that view.

I have always found that working with people in a way that

- recognised and responded to their particular situation,
- acknowledged an individual's positive attributes rather than constantly focussing on 'deficits' and
- recognised the professional obligation to make sessions meaningful and relevant
- to be most effective in encouraging change. I believe that being chosen as Probation Champion of

the Year is an endorsement of that way of working.

In my office (where enthusiasm for the project is overwhelming) there has been a huge change in the atmosphere and the amount of dialogue between officers. People are now actively seeking creative, interesting and meaningful ways of interacting and engaging with the individuals they supervise and are keen to ask for advice and share ideas. We now regularly hold meetings where staff discuss approaches that have worked – or ask for advice when they are 'stuck'.

The recent changes to National Standards have also played a part, because I now have more time to spend with individuals and to plan and deliver sessions – something else that the research indicates is appreciated

by offenders. Furthermore, the use of professional judgement in determining levels of contact, allows me to respond to the individual in a way that is flexible and responsible and prompts a dialogue about assessed levels of risk – not always comfortable, but invariably useful!

This is the job that I came into the Probation Service to do, long may it last!"

Kate Knight, Probation Champion of the Year, and a Quality Development Officer in Surrey-Sussex Probation Trust



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NEXT STEPS FOR THE OEP

- There is evidence that the OEP has contributed to a changed culture and approach in Trusts and the Programme will continue to promote engagement with all Probation Trusts, supporting the key strategic drivers to improve their overall local adult reoffending rates and to perform highly on quality, effectiveness and outcomes, whilst reducing costs
- We will continue to support the current pilots to successful completion in Spring 2012, refining the material and tools in the light of delivery experience, practitioner feedback and our lessons learnt exercises
- An important priority over the next year is to use the evaluation to develop the evidence base to inform the commissioning of offender services in the community and measurement of quality. This will draw on comparisons of compliance and supervision outcomes for pilot and other groups, and analysis of the impact of pilots on offender engagement, from surveys and interviews with practitioners, managers and offenders as well as observation of training and supervision practice
- There has been overwhelming support and feedback from Trusts for an integrated model of RSM and SEED incorporating learning from the sentence planning pilots to facilitate the use of reflective practice across the organisation from senior manager to practitioner, alongside purposeful and effective supervision of offenders. This has led to the development of Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision (SEEDS). The aim of SEEDS is to produce a robust evidence based practice framework which can inform probation practice for 2012/13 and beyond. Trusts consider SEEDS central to National Standards implementation and the associated use of greater professional judgement and focus on quality. To date 26 Trusts have expressed an interest in the model and we began Train the Trainer events in January 2012. If you are interested in implementing SEEDS or would like further information please contact Lisa McDowell on lisa.mcdowell@noms.gsi.gov.uk
- The OEP team is working closely with the National Operational Services Directorate Public Protection Unit to improve the engagement of recalled prisoners to secure their safe re-release. We are working with Trusts which piloted reflective supervision, to maximise management support; the pilots start in January and the team looks forward to working closely with Trusts on this project.