

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

RESEARCH PROJECT

RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

We are continuing to see products from our research programme. We have received a literature review on quality in probation supervision by the Sheffield research team and plan to circulate that soon. We'll shortly be receiving a further report on Developing OMFQ looking at how scores relate to compliance and progress on supervision.

Our series of Research Bulletins is continuing well, and we have issued bulletins by Faye Taxman on a US project on proactive community supervision, and Peter Raynor on his study of probation in Jersey. Peter is a member of our Academic Reference Group which acts as a critical friend to the research programme. The group is contributing to a research seminar which we are holding towards the end of September featuring a wide range of

presentations on the topic of engaging offenders. We are collaborating with the academic journal EuroVista to ensure papers from the seminar are widely available. They will also be placed on the OEP EPIC site.

The external evaluation of our pilot work, by our research partners, is proceeding well, and we have been able to report some early feedback from practitioners involved in the SEED and RSM pilots. Elaine Ellis, formally of the East of England DOM's office, is leading our internal evaluation and has had productive discussions with Trusts to ensure we maximise the learning from the pilot work. Thank you to all concerned for your continued support for the research work.

All OEP Research Bulletins to date are available on [EPIC](#):

1. Supporting practitioners in dealing with the emotional impact of their work
2. New Zealand Change Programme
3. The 'Citizenship' supervision system for Offender Managers
4. Making Offender Assessment Meaningful
5. Engaging for Success: Enhancing Performance through Employee Engagement
6. Offender Engagement Requires Engaged Practitioners; Four Hypotheses
7. Promoting Offender Engagement in Sentence Planning
8. Probation as a Means to Teach Offenders Pro social Behaviours
9. Assessing the quality of supervision (based on Jersey study)



RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

The SEED pilot which commenced in eight trusts in March of this year, has nearly reached the half way stage and feedback from practitioners continues to be positive. SEED offender managers at recent steering group meetings felt that their offenders were more engaged and more relaxed resulting in more information being elicited – “they’re giving you gold”. This in turn, they said, had led to improved assessments. Another typical comment was “we’re allowed to be the people we were trained as”.

All the pilot trusts are being evaluated, some internally by NOMS and some externally by Sheffield University. The Sheffield team have recently sent through some initial results based on the analysis of feedback questionnaires completed by practitioners following training events.

Here are some of their findings:

SEED training	Overall percentage (all with a current caseload) N=55
Opportunities to use skills	
Since the initial SEED training, have you had the opportunity to use:	
1a the relationship building material covered in that training?	
Yes, a lot	49.1
Yes, to some extent	49.1
No	1.8
2a the pro-social modelling material covered in that training?	
Yes, a lot	63.6
Yes, to some extent	36.0
No	0.0
3a the motivational interviewing material covered in that training?	
Yes, a lot	40.0
Yes, to some extent	60.0
No	0.0
4a the material on Risk-Need-Responsivity covered in that training?	
Yes, a lot	36.4
Yes, to some extent	63.6
No	0.0

5a the material on CBT (including problem-solving and reframing behaviour) ?	
Yes, a lot	45.5
Yes, to some extent	50.9
No	3.6
6a the input on structuring sessions covered in that training?	
Yes, a lot	63.6
Yes, to some extent	36.4
No	0.0

Use of SEED skills

9 Have you noticed the training making a real difference to the way your supervision sessions have gone?	
Yes, it's improved things	81.8
No difference	16.4
Yes, but it's made things more difficult	0.0
Missing	1.8

RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND
COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

The Reflective Supervision Model (RSM) pilot is well underway across the eight pilot Trusts. Trusts are at various stages of implementing the activities and early feedback has been very positive:

Observed practice and feedback - Managers have been generally reassured by the positive response of practitioners once they are clear about what is going to happen and why. They have reported both very positive sessions where they have been able to give a lot of positive feedback and sessions which have identified a range of developmental needs. Managers are reporting that the insight into practice they are gaining through observing is proving invaluable in enabling them to develop the skills of their practitioners.

Reflective supervision sessions - Managers have been reporting that these sessions are useful although do require practice and a very focussed approach to get the best out of them. We have had some reports that the sessions are taking longer than usual and some that they are actually shorter because they are more focussed, which demonstrates the importance of how this is delivered and the skills of the manager. Some of the most positive feedback has been that when delivered in a thoughtful and prepared way the reflective session manages to cover other issues which supervision would usually cover (e.g. checking the practitioner is aware of risk management procedures and is following them) but in a much more meaningful way.

Action Learning Sets (for managers) - These are in the early stages and the main feedback received to date

has been with regard to the importance of the role of the independent facilitator in setting the boundaries for the group and ensuring it is a time for them to support each other in this structured way. Again many managers are reporting that they are finding it useful but that the skills involved do not always come naturally and so require commitment and practice. We have also received feedback on the importance of the issues brought and where it has been most successful to date have been where genuine problems that managers are struggling with have been brought to the group - this is vital in ensuring that the group is viewed as a valuable use of the manager's time.

The local and national steering groups are helping us to improve the supporting materials for the model in preparation for wider distribution. A shared learning event will be taking place in early

October to provide an opportunity for further learning and sharing of ideas across the pilot Trusts. Although some senior managers attended the initial RSM workshops, it became apparent that there was a need for an approach specifically targeted at senior managers. A workshop has been developed and delivered on one occasion to date where it was generally well received. We will continue to test and refine this approach in coming months. A workbook for practitioners is also being developed, with the help of the practitioner reference groups in September. The focus will be the practitioner's contribution to a culture that supports offender engagement. By working with senior managers, middle managers and practitioners we are ensuring a consistent focus on culture and the behaviours which impact on it across the various levels of the organisation. (Contact: wendy.hyett@noms.gsi.gov.uk).



Offender Engagement Programme News

RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND
COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

The Supervision Requirement project is about to move into a new phase. The Responsible Officer pilot will draw to a conclusion and we will begin to scope future options for piloting. We are particularly interested in the current targeting of the standalone Supervision Requirement and any initiatives which Trusts are currently developing. We will be looking at whether some people currently in this group may benefit from the development of alternative interventions. (Contact: jacqueline.o'sullivan@noms.gsi.gov.uk)

QUALITY ASSURANCE

On 20 October there will be an event in Central London to introduce the initial ideas for new quality assurance arrangements. One representative from each Trust is invited. Delegates will be able to provide immediate feedback on the day and then take the issues back to their Trusts for further discussion. After the event in October we will be piloting aspects of the new arrangements. (Contact: linda.neimantas@noms.gsi.gov.uk)

STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

We have established good links with key stakeholders through regular external and operational reference groups. With three pilots now well embedded, along with the evaluation framework, we want to engage with senior probation managers to share strategic thinking about plans for future implementation in Trusts. To this end, we have invited every Trust to nominate a senior manager to take part in an initial teleconference consultation to find the most effective way of briefing and having a dialogue about the next steps in the Offender Engagement Programme.

We are keen to deploy information and learning from the pilots and are planning a joint event with the Probation Chiefs Association in November. This will be an opportunity for pilot Trusts to showcase their work and enthusiastic adoption of

new practices, for all Trusts to learn more about the potential of the Offender Engagement Programme and for constructive collaboration in its ongoing development.

RECALL PROJECT

We are looking at ways in which we can enhance engagement with offenders on licence supervision, and particularly those that are at risk of recall, or indeed have already been recalled. We will be working with the OEP reference groups and colleagues across the country to develop this further. (contact melanie.smith@noms.gsi.gov.uk)



RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

Probation Trusts are continuing to develop their implementation plans for the new National Standards for the Management of Offenders, published earlier this year. The revisions were undertaken by staff in the OEP to enable practitioners to have greater flexibility to use their professional discretion in managing cases. Two Trusts have provided an update on their progress.

Nick Smart, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Operations at Surrey-Sussex says:

The following summarises how our learning from the Professional Judgement Project (PJP) has informed our plans for implementing the new National Standards.

- Placing our implementation plan within a broader narrative about quality of offender engagement

- Sharing this narrative with external and internal stakeholders including interventions colleagues who had felt insufficiently included in PJP.
- Retaining a multi grade project group and a system of team offender engagement champions.
- Implementation workshops on all our service delivery sites. The format is interactive and the workshops are delivered by members of the project group.
- Operating to the new standards involves cultural change. Many practitioners welcome the change but it can also be challenging. Supporting staff in the exercise of their professional judgement is central to managing this change. Professional

discussion and reflective practice will continue to be promoted through team workshops and intranet forums.

- Promoting the use of professional judgement by frontline staff involves managers resisting the impulse to issue instructions or guidance. The challenge for managers is to develop robust systems of quality assurance that address some of the potential risks to this approach including attention to diversity issues. Coaching, training and development activity is then targeted where it is most required. SSPT is also delivering more generic staff support and development activities in the form of practice observations, desistance workshops and peer review of risk management planning.

- Concise and confident recording of professional judgement is essential to demonstrate defensible decision making. SSPT will retain the professional judgement code introduced during PJP to facilitate this. Our Offender Engagement Group is considering what support and coaching we can put in place to assist practitioners to develop their skills in this respect.

“Professional discussion and reflective practice will continue to be promoted through team workshops and intranet forums. The challenge for managers is to develop robust systems of quality assurance that address some of the potential risks to this approach including attention to diversity issues.”

Nick Smart, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Operations at Surrey-Sussex Probation Trust



Offender Engagement Programme News

RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In Bedfordshire, Chief Executive Linda Hennigan writes:

National Standards roll out in Bedfordshire has been informed by our adoption of the Citizenship framework of offender management and the lessons learned from the professional judgement pilot in Surrey and Sussex Probation Trust.

The Citizenship model was developed in Durham and now operates across the Durham and Teesside Probation Trust (See [OE Research Bulletin](#))

The Surrey and Sussex pilot offered invaluable advice about the scale of attitudinal change required if the use of professional judgement was to become a reality. Crucially the pilot highlighted the centrality of the role of the middle manager in breathing life into the change and turning a set of dry standards into a reinvigorated approach to working with offenders which recognises that risk is dynamic, encourages professional decision making and fosters

offender engagement in line with desistance research.

A real advantage of Citizenship is that it has provided a framework upon which we can determine 'local' standards and 'red lines' which has meant that the transition is experienced by staff as managed and incremental rather than an unseemly haste from all rules oppression to no rules confusion.

This said the concept of professional judgement is key to Citizenship with its modular approach and use of sequencing it provides appropriate assessment staging points but within a framework flexible enough to encompass the more straightforward licence or order alongside the complexities of tier 4 or offenders managed via Integrated Offender Management arrangements.

Staff training and briefing has been key alongside the development within the organisation of a new approach

to quality. The middle manager as coach and mentor, the use of peer review and staff observation and feedback are all seen as important mechanisms with which we can drive quality and reinvigorate professional debate, decision making and challenge. So far, the response from staff has been positive with the changes seen as challenging and liberating.

“Staff training and briefing has been key alongside the development within the organisation of a new approach to quality. So far, the response from staff has been positive with the changes seen as challenging and liberating.”

Linda Hennigan, Chief Executive of Bedfordshire Probation Trust



RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND
COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Before



After



London Probation Trust is committed to improving the quality of engagement with offenders. The Trust's Offender Engagement Project is piloting a range of initiatives aimed at improving the probation experience for offenders, and this starts from the moment they walk through our doors. One element of the 'Contact Environment' workstream has focused on achieving just that by improving the physical environment in which offenders report in five locations. Probation Officer Charlotte Hurcom at Wandsworth LDU, talks about how she and members of her office felt galvanised into pooling their energy and ideas to make significant improvements to the Balham office:

"First impressions last", "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." This highlights the importance of initial

contact; the first impression can set the tone for all subsequent encounters, therefore creating a welcoming and engaging environment that is still a safe environment for staff is an important start to building an effective relationship with an offender.

Generally, people react and behave more positively when they are satisfied with their environment, and they are more likely to treat others with respect when they, themselves, feel respected. This process begins well before the offender meets with a member of staff, so it is important that they feel optimistic and positive about their experience.

The 'Contact environment' pilot aims to create an environment which is conducive to effective engagement with offenders and thereby improves the quality and

effectiveness of one-to-one work with offenders in order to reduce re-offending.

Our probation office in Balham is situated in a busy part of south west London and is a large, nondescript block attached to the Balham Youth Court. The pilot team included the Receptionist, an Administrator, the Local Delivery Unit Co-ordinator, the Building Officer, a Probation Officer and a Senior Probation Officer. Armed with a modest budget we were ready for the decision making!



RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

ENABLING CULTURE CHANGE

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

QUALITY ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

RECALL PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Our aims were to smarten up and add colour to the existing dull, cold and stale reception and interview rooms. We generated a range of ideas and we decided to purchase new seating, flooring, colourful paintings, books and bookshelves, plants and posters. We also put a range of useful leaflets on display. Our team members were diligent in their efforts to complete the project within budget and this was made manifest in an afternoon spent hunting through charity shops for books.

These relatively simple and inexpensive improvements have absolutely transformed the environment. The reception and interview room now look amazing – and that’s not just the staff view. Feedback from offenders on the contact environment unites in the opinion that it is a “*refreshing change*”, “*it is no longer a dull environment like you get at the job centre*”, and “*we appreciate the availability of the books and resources*”.

Before



After



Howard League for Penal Reform Community Programme Awards

The work of several Probation Trusts was recently honoured by the Howard League for Penal Reform Community Programme Awards. Thames Valley Probation received a Community Programme Award for their partnership work with Milton Keynes College that engaged offenders in developing their skills for education and training,

with positive outcomes. Prior to starting the group one offender said “I have never followed anything through” but after engaging in this opportunity she said “This has been my salvation and I am going to continue my studies even when my order has finished as I do want to get employment”. This sense of success and achievement through engagement and co-production can be a powerful agent for positive change (see McNeill, 2009 Towards Effective Practice in Offender Supervision).

Congratulations to Kate Knight from Surrey-Sussex Probation Trust who was recently named Probation Champion of the Year. Kate is an active member of the OEP Practitioner Reference Group and was praised for her outstanding work with offenders.

More information about the Offender Engagement Programme is available on [EPIC](#):

You can contact the OEP team at: offender.engagement@noms.gsi.gov.uk (please note this is a new email address)