

COMMUNITY JUSTICE FILES 30

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HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report 2012-13

Based on 58 reports including six thematic reports, *HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report for 2012-13* has highlighted continuing good work being undertaken with adults and young people in the community. The percentage of the adult work examined which achieved a sufficiently high level of quality to minimise risk of harm was 75%, reduce likelihood of reoffending was 74% and support compliance and enforcement was 79%. Youth offending work was also found to be well planned, and in nearly three fifths of the cases inspected there was a reduction in either the frequency or seriousness of offending. However, significant shortcomings were found in adult offending work carried out in prisons. Referring to the role of prisons to punish, contain, deter, but also reform, the report noted that “the opportunity provided by a period in custody to focus on and change aberrant behaviour was... in a significant proportion of cases, being lost”.

In the foreword to the report, the outgoing Chief Inspector of Probation, Liz Calderbank, commended the progress made over the past year, while at the same time raising concerns about the far-reaching changes to rehabilitation work with offenders proposed in the Government’s Transforming Rehabilitation strategy. In particular, she noted that:

The changes rely for their funding on the economies to be introduced by contracting out a large proportion of the work currently undertaken by Probation Trusts and are going to be implemented in a very short time, allowing little opportunity for the development of a shared working culture. Both the scale and the pace of the change is considerable and we are concerned, as an inspectorate, that it is taken forward and implemented without any drop in the quality of work already achieved.

HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report for 2012-13 can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/corporate-reports/hmi-prob/hmi-probation-annual-report-2012-2013.pdf>

Justice Committee – Second Report Women offenders: after the Corston Report

Six years after the 2007 publication of Baroness Corston's report *A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, an inquiry conducted by the House of Commons Justice Committee has proposed that the commitments made by the present Government to improve the women's criminal justice system are "given greater substance and accompanied by measures of success". In particular, the inquiry found:

- There is little evidence that the equality duty, and its forerunner the gender equality duty, have had the desired impact on systematically encouraging local mainstream commissioners to provide services tackling the underlying causes of women's offending, or on consistently informing broader policy initiatives within the Ministry of Justice and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). Both struggle to reflect fully the distinct needs of female offenders. We are extremely disappointed that there is still not sufficient evidence about what those needs are, or how best to address them.
- The most striking incidence of this is the likely impact of the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms which have clearly been designed with male offenders in mind... We consider that there is a compelling case for commissioning services for women offenders separately and for applying other incentive mechanisms that would also encourage the diversion of women from crime.

The Justice Committee – Second Report Women offenders: after the Corston Report can be found at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmjust/92/9202.htm>

70 new' resettlement' prisons announced by the Ministry of Justice

On 4 July the Ministry of Justice announced that 70 existing adult male local training and open prisons are to be re-rolled as 'resettlement prisons'. The women's estate is subject to a separate review. Resettlement prisons are not a new idea. In recent years, three resettlement prisons, Blantyre House, Kirklevington Grange and Latchmere House have accommodated mostly long term prisoners re-categorised as suitable for open or semi-open prison conditions. Resettlement has consisted of work and other 'purposeful activities' intended to prepare them for release. The aim this time however is for resettlement prisons to hold around 50,000 short sentence prisoners in, or close to, the areas in which they will return to live; and for prisoners serving longer sentences to be transferred to a resettlement prison at least three months before their period of custody ends. Announcing the proposals, the Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, said:

Currently a local area could expect to receive offenders from dozens of prisons across the country. This is hopeless. It is little wonder we have

such high reoffending rates when you have a prisoner leaving HMP Liverpool, given a travel permit to get them home to the south coast, and then expected to simply get on with it.

The proposals have been broadly welcomed; although concerns have been expressed about the difficulties of providing resettlement services, including employment, housing, drug and mental health support to prisoners, in overcrowded prison conditions. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of reform and transformation, in reality the proposals as they stand will not reduce reoffending.

A full list of the 70 resettlement prisons by Contract Package Area can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/rehab-prog/resettlement-prison-list.pdf>

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Police and Crime Commissioners: Register of Interests First Report of Session 2013–14

A House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report, *Police and Crime Commissioners: Register of Interests First Report of Session 2013–14* has raised serious concerns about the integrity and competence of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's). Reporting that "apportioning so much power to one individual brings risks of maverick behaviour, which may be magnified for the first police and crime commissioners who wish to make their mark in the new role", the Committee has recommended the introduction of new powers of review and accountability. Specific concerns addressed in the report include the decision of the PCC in Lincolnshire to suspend the chief constable (an intervention ultimately thrown out of court); and "the fiasco concerning the appointment of a Youth Commissioners in Kent". Other criticisms include:

- The failure of 12 PCC's to publish required annual financial information.
- A lack of details concerning PCC's financial and outside interests, including second jobs, pay and allowances, gifts and hospitality. (The report sets out a first register of PCC's interests and expects this role to be taken on in future by an independent body.)
- High barriers to entry including 100 signatures and a £5,000 deposit. While it is accepted this is intended to uphold the integrity of the position, the report finds that "the first police and crime commissioners are a monoculture. Only 1 in 7 are women and there is a complete lack of representation of ethnic minorities amongst the commissioners. All national political parties have made a virtue of the importance of diversity, but this does not seem to have extended to the candidates for police and crime commissioners."

- The recruitment of other staff by PCC's from personal and political contacts, including Chief Executive Officers who throughout the country are paid at widely ranging salaries.

The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Police and Crime Commissioners: Register of Interests, First Report of Session 2013–14 can be found at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhaff/69/69.pdf>

Victims and victim support services

On 29 March this year, the Government published the consultation paper *Improving the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*. Responding to concerns raised in the previous year's consultation, *Getting it Right for Victims and Witnesses*, the consultation proposes to improve the existing Code of Practice by presenting to victims more explicitly their entitlements, and spelling out the obligations upon Criminal Justice agencies to meet those entitlements. The consultation period ended on 10 May 2013 and the Government is currently considering the responses made.

Another recent development concerning victims of crime is the publication of the Ministry of Justice report *Support for Victims: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales*. This reviews public perceptions of support for victims, the information, advice and support wanted and received by victims, and their contact with the organisation Victim Support. The main findings of the report include:

- Public awareness of the organisation Victim Support is high, but more pronounced amongst people living in high-income households, from a white ethnic background, aged 25 and over, with a long standing illness or disability.
- Overall, people are more likely to agree that the Criminal Justice System takes into account the views of victims (62 per cent) than to agree that it gives victims the support they need (46%).
- Support was requested in a relatively low proportion of incidents and a majority of victims who requested a certain type of support said they did not receive it. Victims requested support, information or advice in 19 per cent of incidents and received support, information or advice in 9% of incidents. Victims who perceived the incident to be motivated by an offender's attitude to their race were less likely to say they received support, information or advice.

Policy implications drawn from the findings include:

- The need for a follow-up mechanism to ensure that victim's changing circumstances, requests and entitlements are responded to.
- An individually tailored approach to address the different needs and expectations that victims of crime have.

The consultation paper *Improving the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime* can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182037/victims-code-consultation.pdf

Support for Victims: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/194181/findings-crime-survey.pdf