

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF PERFORMANCE TARGETING: POLICE, PRISONS & PROBATION

*Dr Clare Beckett, Department of Social Sciences & Humanities,
University of Bradford¹*

Abstract

Performance targeting has developed differently in the three key criminal justice agencies, police, prison and probation. The differences have, arguably, reflected both the character of the organisation and the specific history of the agency. Exploration of a performance culture, therefore, should reflect the commonalities and differences in the three arms of provision.

In this article representatives of police, prison and probation present their own accounts of central performance issues (These accounts were made available as workshops during the conference). I, as author, have then brought these accounts together in order to provide interrogation of common, or uncommon, factors that can shed light on the central question: Is performance targeting beneficial or otherwise in meeting the needs of a diverse user group?

Introduction

At the Diversity in a Performance Culture Conference in June 2008, representatives from the three central criminal justice agencies presented workshop papers on their respective organization's approach to and experience of working with performance targets. Each workshop was held twice with the intention of including as many delegates to the conference as possible, and discussion drew on their wide-ranging experiences to develop a critique of the aims and value of performance targets within the criminal justice system.

It was clear from the presentations that different agencies held some similar but also some radically dissimilar views. Interpretations of the concept of 'performance' differed not only between the agencies but also across time within a single agency. This is not new: as early as 1992 the Institute of Personnel Managements research analysis indicated that 'one organisation's appraisal system was another's performance management system' (p.137). Often the concepts behind different approaches are implicit. As a result, it can be assumed that other agencies that use the same terms are essentially doing and focusing on the same things when the whole picture is more diverse. Such assumptions of uniformity and

synchronicity can create difficulties, the most obvious being in the field of inter-agency working which, in itself, can be one of the performance targets set within each agency. Problems arise when each of the agencies involved takes a different approach to performance management. Nash (1998) makes this point when comparing the police and prison services: both work to an ethos of managing risk and protecting the public, but both approach the day-to-day exercise or implementation of that ethos differently. While commentators have argued that management of agency performance through the use of targets and appraisal is now a fact of life (Loveday: 1999, Flynn: 1997, Carter: 1995, Napo: 1989) the extent to which they have been embraced and understood on both an organisational and a personal level varies. Nor is it simply a difference in terms of practice; debate and dispute arises over the value of target setting even before the arguments about how it should be done.

However, performance targets are a familiar part of the landscape of the criminal justice system. The intention of the conference was twofold: to explore implications of performance targeting in the field of diversity, and to explore similarities and differences between different agencies in their performance culture. It could be expected that these three services would share some experiences, even if Loveday's (1999:353) picture of the criminal justice system as a 'fractious, often mutually contradictory melange of competing interests' is accepted. The workshop leaders, representing both their own experience and their agencies' approach to an issue of practice and diversity, have contributed their own analysis. The aim of this paper is to elucidate the differences as well as the similarities in approach and practice between the three represented agencies as they emerged during the conference workshops, and to locate the arguments identified in a wider theoretical arena. As author I begin by presenting the leaders' own accounts of the material presented. The next section synthesizes and develops the discussions that took place, incorporating the contributions and ideas put forward by the Trainee Probation Officers, academics and criminal justice practitioners who attended the workshops. The conclusion represents my own analysis of the arguments as presented 'on the day'.

Workshop Leaders' Accounts

The first workshop account reflects the position of the police services, which has been in the forefront of change around diversity since the murder of Stephen Lawrence in April 1993. The publication of the Macpherson report (1999) into the killing can be seen as a defining moment in race relations within the police force, offering a critical view of policing and introducing the concept of institutional racism. Arguably, this compelled police forces to change quickly. The second account is from the prison service, and reflects reaction to specific targets following a racist murder. The third account is from the probation service, who are perhaps in privileged position because they have not, or have not yet, been required to react to a specific incident.

Managing Diversity in the South Yorkshire Police Force²

The Organisational Context

South Yorkshire Police is an organisation of almost six thousand people, with responsibility for policing the conurbations of Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley. Together, these communities amount to a population of a million and a quarter people. The workforce is divided into police officers (office holders) and employed contracted workers, or police staff, who in various ways support and augment the activities of the police officers, for example as administrators, call handlers or detention officers. In recent decades the proportion of police staff in all forces including South Yorkshire has increased, reflecting an ongoing trend towards 'civilianisation' of roles traditionally carried out by police officers, but not necessarily requiring the powers or presence of warranted and expensive constables.

The stated legislative purpose of a police force is to protect the lives and property of the population it serves, to prevent and detect crime and preserve the peace. The effectiveness of the police service and how it should be measured is something about which commentators continue to disagree, partly because, despite the stated purpose of the service, its performance is of interest to observers from a vast range of disciplines.

Police services generally tend to use 'diversity' as an umbrella term to capture all associated issues, such as equality of opportunity, community relations, human rights and the inclusion agenda. It is important to recognise that services address diversity as functions of both service provision and workforce management, with a force's own workforce among the populations to be served. Police forces are public authorities, and so are subject to the requirements of the three statutory equality duties, race, disability and gender. There is a significant body of legislation by which police forces must abide in carrying out their purpose, including that governing the exercise of police powers, codes of conduct and demanding that forces work in partnership with other agencies towards shared goals.

There are forty-three police forces in England and Wales, and no single model of how to manage diversity or measure performance. This is reflected in differences in placing their diversity practitioners. Many forces place their diversity practitioners either within the Human Resources department, and thus emphasise the inward-looking aspects of the field, or in the Community Affairs department, in which case police relations with the population is the main focus. A smaller number of forces seek to balance their attention across the whole field of diversity by placing practitioners in departments with responsibilities for corporate development, business change or performance management.

South Yorkshire Police is unusual in that it places its diversity practitioners in its Professional Standards department. This department, as the name suggests, has responsibility for promoting standards of behaviour, recording and investigating police complaints and internal grievances, vetting staff and protecting the integrity of police information. To those who note the link with misbehaviour this may seem a strange marriage, and indeed the

accusation could be made that this tends to present diversity in a negative light. The argument offered by critics is that diversity should be associated with the highest standards of police conduct, and not with complaints and misconduct. The same argument actually helps to justify this setting of the diversity function once it becomes clear that, in 1999, police forces were driven by new regulations to dispense with the old 'Complaints and Discipline' departments, seen as reactive and mistrusted by the workforce, in favour of a move to departments that would take a more positive, proactive stance, encouraging 'Professional Standards' of behaviour.

Performance

The dilemma of whose priorities to reflect in managing police performance is resolved to some degree by the Home Office approach, which is to set, annually, a raft of 'strategic policing priorities' following public consultation. In 2008, the Home Office delivered, among its requirements of the police service, an overarching requirement to improve public confidence and trust. Further areas of focus include reducing crime and improving effectiveness through working in partnership with other agencies.

A number of regulatory bodies exist to inspect, guide or otherwise hold police forces to account for their performance in fulfilling these requirements. These bodies include a Police Authority for each force, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, the Independent Police Complaints Commission, the National Police Improvement Agency and the Association of Chief Police Officers; each body has different areas of responsibility for the oversight and regulation of the police. It could be argued that the police are one of the most regulated and controlled agencies we have in this country. The implications of all these 'overseers' for performance and targets is that it is conceivable that occasionally the requirements and expectations of the police will be confusing if not contradictory, such that individual police officers will not always be clear what targets they are or should be aiming for.

Service Reactions

The opening approach taken with workshops was to draw a timeline of some of the critical events that have affected the relationship of police performance with diversity and community relations:

- 1981 – The public unrest in Brixton, Handsworth, Toxteth and other inner city areas, giving rise to the Scarman Report of the same year and the critical decision of Lord Scarman not to accuse the police of service-wide racism.
- 1993 – The murder of Stephen Lawrence and the inquiry, led by Sir William Macpherson, into the police investigation that followed.
- 1999 – The publication of the Macpherson report, and the effect of popular focus on its finding that the Metropolitan Police Service was 'institutionally racist'.
- 2000-2002 – The general and specific duties of the Race Equality Duty upon public authorities, as created by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

- 2003 – The screening of the BBC documentary, ‘The Secret Policeman’ in which a journalist, posing as a police recruit at a northern police training establishment, uncovered racial hatred among recruits, allowed to flourish covertly and going seemingly unchallenged by trainers and police managers.
- 2003 – The investigation of the police service by the Commission for Racial Equality, and its findings that diversity remained either remarkably absent from the considerations of the police service in many of its functions, or where it was encountered officers regarded it as a cause for fear and regarded themselves as ill-prepared to address it.
- 2005-2007 – The expansion of equality duties into the dimensions of disability and gender, as created by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006.
- 2008 – The launch of a national performance framework entitled, ‘Assessments of Policing and Community Safety’. The framework is comprised of scores of numerical performance targets, including just two that are specific to the management of diversity, one addressing the proportion of women among police officers, the other the proportion of black and minority officers among police recruits.
- Once provided with introductory information about the context, delegates were able to compare the police experience with their own, and to make observations. A number of areas of commonality were exposed. Perceptions associated with the maxim that ‘what gets measured gets done’ were offered in both workshops, along with misgivings about the exclusively quantitative nature of many performance measures. This argument was illustrated by the problematic nature of police stop and search powers, especially with regard to the consequences of using the number of stops carried out by each officer as a performance measure. There was wide agreement that this could exacerbate the problem of disproportionate stops of young black males.

Developing Key Performance Target for Race Equality in Service Delivery in the Prison Service³

The Organisational Context

The recognition of the racist nature of the murder of Zahid Mubarek in Feltham Young Offender Institution in March 2000 was a catalyst for a sustained effort to tackle racism within the Prison Service. The murder, together with negative reports on a number of prisons and a successful tribunal case brought by a Black prison officer, prompted the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to launch an investigation into race relations in the Prison Service. The outcome was a report (CRE 2003), which concluded that the Prison Service was in breach of its legal obligations and found failure in fourteen areas, ranging as broadly as ‘the general atmosphere in prisons’ and ‘the treatment of prisoners’, as well as focusing on specific areas such as the operation of incentive and earned privilege schemes and the handling of race complaints from prisoners. Criticism centred not on policies but on practices within prison establishments and in particular on the use of discretion by

prison staff, which was found frequently to impact negatively on black and minority ethnic prisoners.

More recently HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) has published a thematic report on race relations in prisons. The title – ‘Parallel Worlds’ – neatly summarises its central finding that “there is no shared understanding of race issues within prisons: instead, there are a series of parallel worlds inhabited by different groups of staff and prisoners, with widely divergent views and experiences” (HMIP 2005, p2). The report finds that governors and white race relations liaison officers have the most positive ‘management’ view, believing that whilst there may be more that can be done, regimes operate in a broadly fair way. By contrast, minority ethnic staff have less positive views of what is being achieved, and visible minority prisoners have the most negative views of all, reporting poorer experiences across each of the four dimensions of prison life measured by the Inspectorate’s test of a healthy prison.

In 2003 the Prison Service and CRE published ‘Implementing Race Equality in Prisons: a shared agenda for change’ (HMPS & CRE 2003), setting out the five year action plan that they had agreed to address the failures that had been identified. During those five years this plan has grown as actions on the areas for development identified in the HMIP thematic report and the relevant recommendations of the Zahid Mubarek Inquiry have been added. By 2008 there were over 100 high level ‘actions’ required by the plan. Its importance is shown by the fact that it was managed by a programme board chaired by the Director of Finance, reporting quarterly to the Prison Service Management Board and three times a year to a Scrutiny Panel co-chaired by the Prisons Minister and a CRE commissioner.

Amongst the actions in the plan was the development and implementation of a key performance target (KPT) on race equality.

Performance

Like the rest of the public sector, the Prison Service has become increasingly focused on performance management. Liebling and Arnold (2004:57-70) trace in detail the early development of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Prison Service from the eight identified in their first year, 1994-5 to the sixteen set in 2002-3.

During this period KPIs have been supplemented by the introduction of Key Performance Targets (KPTs), which are applied to individual prisons. These have also proliferated, and there are now more than fifty such targets for each prison. Since 2001 they have been used as part of a ‘weighted scorecard’ system to compare the performance of different prisons. The KPTs are weighted for different types of prison, and results combined to give an overall rating for the prison. These can then be directly compared and used as management information, facilitating what Liebling and Arnold call “senior management control from a distance” (2004: 65).

Sinclair reports that this has been seen as a positive development by managers and staff in prisons. He argues that KPIs “for the first time gave staff confidence that they knew what they were being asked to deliver” (2002: 4), and quotes staff as saying that they “care about how my prison is doing on those charts” (2002: 57). However, they have not been universally welcomed. Criticism from practitioners has been articulated by Wagstaffe (2002) who notes the low reliability of many performance indicators, together with the fact that many of them do not measure the ‘health’ of the institution. He points to the extent of game-playing, or managing for the target, the perverse incentives that targets can bring, and the emphasis that they place on quantity rather than quality. This view is shared by the Chief Inspector of Prisons who has condemned them for having created “a virtual prison system” (New Statesman 2002), and a similarly critical position has long been evident in the academic literature, for example Garland argues that performance indicators tend to focus on “what the organisation does, rather than what it achieves” (Garland 1996:458). In this sense, there is a very real danger that effort shifts from improving performance to what Clarke (2004) calls ‘the performance of performance’ or putting on a show by manipulating the figures rather than achieving a real change in outcomes.

Liebling and Arnold found that “it seemed possible for a prison to practise violence and abuse of prisoners and yet be meeting its performance targets” (2004:144), and are concerned that “the search for ‘what matters’ in prison has been overshadowed by a narrow focus on what can be easily measured” (2004:132). Against this background it was very important for the organisation to think hard about what the race equality KPT should be: what does it mean to be performing well on race equality, and how can it be measured?

It was quickly apparent that no single measure could capture performance adequately, and that a combination of a number of elements would be required. In particular because the CRE criticism focused on practice rather than policy, it would be important to move beyond process measures to look at outcomes for prisoners, and in the light of the findings of ‘Parallel Worlds’ described above, to build in a measure of prisoner perceptions.

The basket of measures that was devised therefore included:

Outputs – does the prison have processes in place to manage race issues? – This is an audit measure to check that processes are in place and organisational risk is effectively managed. The Output score contributes 40% to the final score.

Outcomes – are prisoners from different racial groups treated fairly? This resulted in an ethnic monitoring measure of key functions and policies, particularly those identified by the CRE as failure areas. This is scored using specially-developed range-setting software tool, known as SMART, which contributes 15% to the final measure.

Perceptions – do people from different racial groups believe that they receive fair treatment? This is answered through a survey measuring the quality of life in prison (30%) and visitor

survey measures (15%). These measures are scored to reflect the difference between results for different racial groups, as well as overall scores.

The final KPT for each prison produces a percentage score by aggregating these measures.

Service Reactions

The KPT was implemented nationally in 2006-07 and results during the first two years of operation have been very pleasing. The target was initially set at 70%. In April 2006, 61 (out of 127) prisons achieved the target. By March 2008, 92 prisons achieved the target. The average score improved from 65.4% in April 2006 to 74.6% in March 2008. Improvement was achieved on all elements. The biggest change was in the audit score, but improvements were also seen in outcomes and perceptions measures.

From these results it is clear that the KPT has caused local management to focus on race equality issues to a degree that was not always achieved in the past. In addition to this, prisoners and visitors have been made more aware that their perceptions are important to the Service. Target setting has generated useful management information that is being used to ensure that attention is focused where it is needed.

However, it has also been found in practice that the complexity of the measure means that it is not well understood across the Service. Moreover, some of the issues of game-playing and perverse incentives identified above have not been avoided. For instance there was initially excessive focus on the audit measure, with some prisons conducting repeated self-audits simply to improve scores. This has since been eliminated by improving the audit measure and centralising responsibility for conducting audits. The outcome measure initially created some perverse incentives, with manipulation to ensure high scoring ethnic monitoring results being possible, and sometimes leading managers to take action that is not in accordance with equal opportunities principles (for instance operating quotas to ensure that the population on a particular wing remained in the scoring range). The measure has been refined to eradicate these problems.

There are also issues with the perception measures. One centres on the frequency of measurement: resources do not allow surveys to be conducted more frequently than annually, and in the case of the large survey measuring the quality of life in prison every two years, and this makes this part of the measure rather static and the incentive for managers to seek to improve less immediate. Another problem lies with the surveys themselves. Whilst the instrument is generally held in high regard, there are parts of the prison estate (for instance high security prisons) where the usefulness of the results is being questioned. At Wakefield, for example, more detailed research on the effectiveness of the establishment diversity strategy is under way, using an appreciative inquiry method⁴. Moreover in some smaller prisons it can be difficult to find sufficient numbers of minority ethnic respondents to produce a valid result. Also, the questionnaire initially used for the visitor survey was very limited in scope. This is being addressed, but a problem remains in administering it as

many visitors are reluctant to complete the survey. There are particular problems at prisons (e.g. open prisons) where visits are less frequent.

The KPT is widely seen to be a success, and has been praised by the Minister and the CRE Commissioner at the Scrutiny Panel described above. It has produced some real improvement in performance across all measures. However, alongside real improvement, it has not always avoided some of the risks described, and it has been responsible also in some cases for the performance of performance improvement. More recently it has been refined to encourage further real improvement and to eliminate the more obvious opportunities for manipulation.

On a broader level the Race Review report (REAG 2008) finds that the actions taken since the CRE investigation, including the implementation of the KPT, have brought real improvement. However whilst this series of procedural changes has been very positive, the experiences of BME prisoners are unlikely to have been transformed. Further work will therefore be necessary to build on these foundations, with a renewed focus on cultural change being required to achieve this.

Improving Performance in Recognising and Challenging Hate Crime in the Probation Service⁵

The Organisational Context

The work shop was run by a practitioner with responsibility to oversee the Hate Crime Module throughout the super-districts (Wakefield/Kirklees, Bradford/Calderdale Leeds).

West Yorkshire Probation (WYP) is one of 42 probation areas. Currently and over the last two years some of these areas have taken Trust Status. West Yorkshire is hoping to achieve trust status during 2009. Probation areas are part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and therefore part of the Ministry of Justice. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 introduced a new system of community orders. These allowed particular requirements to be attached to target specific types of offending. The more requirements, the more onerous the sentence became. The probation service role includes supervising offenders on release from custody, carrying out supervision of offenders subject to a Community Order with the various requirements attached, or working with victims of crimes. One of the requirements that could be attached to a community order was 'Specified Activity'. This enabled the WYP to look at existing work and to design and structure interventions that could be undertaken by offenders as specified activities.

Performance

Before the Criminal Justice Act 2003 WYP ran a programme intended for racially motivated offenders. The development and continued use of the programme was carried out by a small number of Probation Services Officers within the service. Courts or case managers could

suggest that an offender undertook this intervention but could not order it. The work was not placed in the programmes unit and it could be argued that the organisation took a lackadaisical approach to it. Even though offenders were committing racist attacks or abuse, the Racially Motivated Offending Programme was little utilised or apparently 'owned' by the organisation.

In 2005/6 the organisation asked a single staff member to look at the potential for developing the RMO programme to target hate crime. Initially a small group of staff became interested, but this group quickly dwindled due to other pressures including workloads and sickness. In the end two members of staff worked on the module. Workload relief was given to one staff member, and the work became one of her main tasks. The module was painstakingly written over 12 months, taken through a consultancy process with tutors and external agencies, and approved for delivery within the WYP area. It became available as a specified activity from June 2008. At the time of the conference it was a very new initiative.

The Hate Crime Module is based on the belief that people can change. It is designed to present offenders with alternative ways of understanding and responding to 'difference'. The module is developed using ideas and techniques from Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). Some of the sessions are CBT based and include looking at issues around where our beliefs come from, how we can recognise anger, and how to respond to anger. The module is designed to look at the seven areas of diversity identified in the Equality Act 2006 and to this end there is specific work focusing on each group. Each session is recorded by the tutor and then is retained for video monitoring purposes. This is a quality assurance process but also gives the treatment manager and the tutors the ability to address any issues and to reflect on the work that is taking place with the offender. The module is delivered as a specified activity and not an accredited programme, so this process had to be developed and included rather than being standard.

An offender could be sentenced by a court or given a licence condition that required completion of the Hate Crime module. The module was located in the newly created 'Interventions directorate', which meant that it had an organisational home and was an organisational responsibility. However, being given a place did not necessarily mean that the organisation took ownership of the module. Other programmes within interventions were accredited, and subject to performance targets set by NOMS and the Ministry of Justice. Achieving completion targets in these programmes attracted revenue. Specified activities were not accredited or the subject of external targets. They did not generate income. As 'in house' initiatives they were included in the service business plan, but achieving completions did not carry the same weight as completions in accredited programmes. This in its turn affected the enthusiasm for hate crime provision among those overseeing interventions. In a performance culture that prioritises targets and uses cash rewards, this inevitably led to less resources being placed in the area. The reality was that offenders could be waiting for and benefit from the provision, but tutors might be required elsewhere.

Service Reactions

In a performance culture the emphasis can be on income generation. Where income generation is prioritised, non income bearing targets often become sidelined. The focus becomes 'what can we not do?' At the current time, the probation service has not been implicated in a major hate motivated crime, unlike the police and the prison service. Although around the country and in West Yorkshire Hate Crime and the Hate Crime agenda is a centre for local and community activity, probation service provision is not foregrounded. I would argue that this is primarily because it is not a targeted and therefore lucrative initiative. This could lead to the conclusion that resources are not following risk.

The module is a valuable and currently under-utilised piece of work that can be used with offenders who are convicted of Hate Crime. While it will not change the behaviour of every offender it can and has worked with offenders who have committed racist and homophobic crimes. Responsibility for under utilisation lies in the lack of political will to prioritise this programme even though it is not cash linked. In an era of rising far right politics and increasing hate crime, this is short sighted.

Discussion

These three accounts represent different 'moments' in a performance culture. In the police, the imposition of targets from above is accepted, if unwillingly. The discussion interrogates the usefulness of those targets and the implications of targeting but does not question the presence of a performance culture. The prison service describes a real attempt to create a method that avoids the quantitative pitfall of so much targeting. The probation service account highlights potential consequences of not having a performance target in a performance culture. Although all three agencies work in the same field, with offenders and in the criminal justice arena, they do not use the same performance targets and the performance targets used are not transparent between agencies. There is commonality between the accounts, however. Common themes include implications for professionalism, management, resources, and equal treatment for service users.

There is a clear statement of difficulty in standardising understanding and approach throughout all the personnel in any one agency. Historically, this issue might have been described as one of ensuring professional standards from all personnel, now it is more likely to be couched in the language of compliance and successful target meeting. This is a cultural shift resulting from the political and ideological changes in the wider context brought about by increasing privatisation and individualisation of public services charted by many commentators. (Particularly relevant here is the account of change in the probation service given by May: (1991a+b), and by May and Buck (1998) in relation to social services.) It is not the intention of this article to comment on political change, but it cannot be ignored. The boundaries of professionalism have shifted so that the understanding necessary to occupy a professional role is related to completion of specific performance targets rather than to a set of general attributes. Newman and Nuttley (2003) describe changes in the professional boundaries that must result from a 'what works' agenda: their argument is specifically relevant here, where professional judgement is overshadowed by organisational

practice. Of course, professionals have never been and arguably should never be unquestionably autonomous: (Illich et al, 1997; Malign, 2000) and there will be space for judgement inside and outside a performance culture. However, Loveday's (1999:352) argument, that a performance culture will and is intended to curb professional autonomy and 'reduce professional discretion while increasing managerial power' is reflected in the experiences described. In particular, comments in the prison service workshop see 'managing at a distance' as a way of explaining the power and control introduced by a performance culture.

Another example of the implications of a culture that shifts responsibility for target setting from the individual to the agency is reflected throughout the workshop reports as 'what gets measured gets done'. The problem with setting a target that can be measured, even one as carefully calibrated as the prison target reflected here, is that measurement is quantitative. The more elusive parts of a professional role are not open to counting. There is a well documented (Buchanan & Millar, 1997; Chui and Nellis, 2003; Lancaster, 2003 among others) history to this change from professional responsibility to organisational responsibility in the probation service, summed up as from 'advise, assist, befriend' to the current concentration on prevention of risk. The prison service and the police force do not show a similar trajectory, or at least not in these workshops, although it can be argued, as Senior, Crower-Dowey and Long (2007) do, that a similar change has been brought on in all criminal justice agencies through a modernisation agenda (Newman and Clarke: 2009 make a similar point). It is easy to link a quantitative measure that is based in organisational rather than personal values with a resource reward. The result is shown in this probation example where work that is in the public interest and on the community agenda does not attract support. Here, the problem seems to be more deep rooted than one of creating 'good' targets. In the prison example the experience of prisoners did not necessarily change despite careful targeting. In the probation example, participants felt that resources were following pre-set targets and not reflecting a changing 'risk' agenda. The police workshop raised an example of counting the numbers of staff appraisals completed, but not the quality or impact of those appraisals. The sum of these examples is an indictment of current performance practice, which can be seen as an indictment of performance targets per se.

There is a wider issue in a policy context that has foregrounded race followed by gender and disability provision. Race equality has been a priority because it has been the agenda that forced change on the prison and police services, and also actions taken to ensure racial equality are frequently visible and measurable. Equality for, for example, non-heterosexual people is not always visible. As Sedgwick (2007) argues, race is usually a characteristic that can be identified through external measures: recognition of non-heterosexual orientation relies on the action of the non-heterosexual individual. To some extent foregrounding race is an inevitable result of the events in the prison service and the police, and may not be an issue in the same way in the probation service. However, research in probation (Beckett, 2009) suggests that responses to sexuality, sexual orientation and potentially transgendered issues are not open to discussion in the same way that race has been. There are certainly targets in all services to counter discriminatory practice, but as Mellors argues elsewhere in this journal the ways in which police officers' reactions, values and understanding alter target

scores can be critical. Compliance from staff is likely to depend not only on their belief (or otherwise) in the usefulness of targets, but also on their understanding or practices in relation to 'diversity'. There is a wider problem indicated here. Unless a work force is convinced that a target and the steps to meet it are worthwhile, completion will always become a matter of presenting evidence rather than of creating change. As Bhui (2003) says working for equality is a 'hearts and minds' project: it requires openness to change in practice and attitude. It can be argued that targeting performance will always stand in the way of creating change because, by their nature, targets concentrate on the parts of an interaction, not on the whole and similarly concentrate on an evidenced diversity rather than a general anti-oppressive agenda.

'What gets measured gets done' has specific resonance where performance targets are linked to resources. In the prison example, the importance of a target was explicitly signalled through placement with the finance director. In the probation example lack of resource-giving targets was seen as creating low priority for a particular initiative. The comment that resources should follow risk could apply to all three services. The issue, though, is about who is measuring and therefore 'seeing' performance. The three services are subject to public scrutiny to varying degrees. Visible indicators allow public accountability, and therefore follow publicised issues. For example, the police force is explicitly committed to diversity in recruitment. Will this become a measured end in itself, and the quality and attitudes of police recruited alter? Does being part of a diverse group immediately fit an individual to work with diversity? And specifically in the police setting, how would the public perception alter if the police service was visibly more diverse? These questions still need to be addressed.

Conclusion

This conference was intended to offer practitioners a forum to explore performance issues, so perhaps the overall sense of frustration is not surprising. Identification of performance targets as a way of limiting professional autonomy is not new and nor are critical connections made between quantitative measures and qualitative practice, or concern over allocation of scant resources. More worrying is the sense that, in the field of diversity, current performance practice allows a hierarchy of equality action to develop. Actions driven by visible markers, like race and ethnicity, take priority. This may, of course, change with current governmental moves to introduce 'single equality' legislation and the evidence presented here dates from 2008, but nevertheless there is clear indication that counting actions leads to prioritising visibility.

Perhaps the question underlying the discussion is a more fundamental one. Are the criticisms of the current position a result of practice, or are they a fault of performance targeting per se? Should there be a total overhaul of targets, or an overhaul of target setting? Perhaps the most important question is what would happen without some form of targeting? The use of quantitative measures that follow resources rather than risk and concentrate on evidenced action rather than attitudinal change seems to bring a damning indictment. On the other hand, measures that lift the status of what is done (identified in the prison service workshop), provide management at a distance and raise the profile of minority groups cannot all be bad, surely. Professional autonomy is not always a holy grail of good practice,

and relies for success on an educated and thoughtful practitioner work force with good information and communication networks. This is an expensive commodity. Even then, service delivery requires some measure of accountability. It is unlikely, in the current increasingly right wing and individualised political climate of the United Kingdom and European Union, that this debate will be revisited in principle. Even so, target setters need to show professional accountability. It is absolutely clear that in the examples given, target setting and a performance culture is not resulting in attitudinal change in service delivery.

End Notes

1. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the work shop leaders from Police, prison and probation who both made this article possible, and contributed their own accounts and other helpful suggestions on previous drafts.
2. This workshop was delivered by Simon R. Mellors (T/Chief Inspector) Force Diversity Manager South Yorkshire Police, who also provided the written account.
3. This workshop was delivered by Chris Barnett-Page, Race and Equalities Action Group, National Offender Management Service HQ and Chris Robinson, HMP Wakefield, who also provided the written account.
4. This research is being undertaken by Malcolm Cowburn (Sheffield Hallam University) and Victoria Lavis (University of Bradford) and is funded by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC). Appreciative inquiry into the Diversity Strategy of HMP Wakefield. Award number RES-000-22-3441
5. This workshop was delivered by Elizabeth Wrighton, Former Practice Manager, West Yorkshire Probation, who also provided the written account.
6. (a) age,
(b) disability,
(c) gender,
(d) proposed, commenced or completed reassignment of gender (within the meaning given by section 82(1) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (c. 65)),
(e) race,
(f) religion or belief, and
(g) Sexual orientation.

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