

REFLECTION: PROBATION OFFICER TRAINING IN THE 21ST CENTURY - THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

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Abstract

This paper reflects on current probation officer training within the context of both the changing nature of probation practice and the imminent review of the national training programme. It is based on the perspective of two recently qualified probation officers; both graduates of Cohort 7. With Cohorts 8 and 9 currently underway and only ten planned, it is timely to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the current training approach, as well as the threats and opportunities posed by the impending review. To this end, the authors provide a brief, contextualising description of probation training and practice. Working assumptions are made about the likely direction of probation practice and its relevance to future training programmes. Based on these assumptions, the authors analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the existing training and discuss possible threats and opportunities that the impending training review may deliver. It is suggested that the current trajectory of probation practice is ostensibly that of information management with the Offender Manager role fundamentally that of knowledge worker; and that this needs to be reflected in the revised training programme if the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) model is to be successful.

Keywords: probation officer training, offender manager, knowledge worker

Introduction

Probation training currently consists of a two year programme of combined academic and work-based training leading to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)¹. Trainees spend approximately half their time in the office and the other half studying and attending lectures (physically and/or virtually)². This training programme is under review which makes it timely to analyse its fitness for purpose, especially as the review occurs when Probation is undergoing unprecedented cultural and organisational change³.

The introduction of the current training qualification coincided with political efforts to make criminal justice policy decidedly more authoritarian; as such, it had a tumultuous birth. The politicisation of criminal justice with a 'tough on crime' mantra was at odds with Probation's traditional rehabilitative foundations and social work values (Downes and Morgan, 1997). Consequently probation officer training was deliberately divorced from social work training (Dunbar and Langdon, 1998; James and Raine, 1998; Jordan, 2006). However, in the mid-nineties, in the absence of any suitable alternative, the Home Office withdrew funding for probation training thus stemming the flow of qualified officers. This period, known as the Howard Gap, ended when New Labour swept to power in 1997, and probation officer training was reinstated in its current form.

However, the current operating milieu is one of rapid change. For example, the authors' cohort experienced the introduction of a new Criminal Justice Act (2003) and the NOMS model, three Home Secretaries, impending contestability and, as a consequence, three local re-organisations. More broadly, the profession is perpetually responding to the demands of a managerialist corporate culture and a risk-averse society (Boswell, 2002).

It is within this maelstrom of change-within-change that probation officer training is being reviewed. Presumably, such a review would respond to the fundamental question of whether the current training is producing graduates suitably qualified for the job. However, as training does not exist in a vacuum, central to this is consideration of how the job is expected to evolve and this is something that cannot be separated from the organisational context. Therefore, this paper addresses these issues from the perspective of recently graduated trainees who are uniquely positioned to reveal fresh memories of the training coupled with a relatively fresh view of the job. It is based on assumptions about the operating context of Probation work and the consequent desired and required skills of probation officers and thus probation officer training beyond Cohort 10. In other words, these assumptions anticipate what will remain constant⁴:

- The current trajectory of NOMS imposed change will continue, resulting in the core task of Offender Managers (nee Probation Officers) being the protection of the public. Rehabilitative and retributive aspects of the role being managed rather than delivered by Offender Managers. (For consistency, Probation Officers will be referred to as Offender Managers throughout the remainder of this paper)
- Risk assessment and public protection will remain the central theme of probation work
- Managerialism as a corporate culture will endure

Drawing on these assumptions, an analysis of the major strengths and weaknesses of the current training is offered, followed by a discussion of the threats and opportunities that the current review of Offender Manager training may deliver.

Strengths

The major strength of the current training programme is its combination of theory and practice and the emphasis on reflective learning. A corollary of this is the contribution made by the Practice Development Assessor (PDA) towards guiding the reflective process. As it is impossible for an academic or NVQ syllabus to match the pace of change the service is undergoing, this strength enables trainees to develop the ability and desire to continue learning and adapting their practice. Finally, the demands of the training ensure trainees graduate with well honed organisational and time management skills.

The integration of theory and practice is so well woven throughout the training syllabus, its structure and delivery mode that it is difficult to imagine that prior to the current training arrangement students struggled to accommodate or were even fearful of theory (Abdullah and Eadie, 1994). It is such an integral part of the experience of becoming qualified that it risks being undervalued and overlooked. It is therefore instructive to imagine what practice might be like without the successful integration of theory and practice: Since the assessment and management of risk is assumed here to be a continuing core function of Probation, we unpack our learning of risk to demonstrate the strength of combining theory, practice and reflective learning.

Our practice-based training on risk was dominated by the trainer's opening exhortation to 'think back from the inquiry' and it is our observation that this attitude is inherent in the organisation's approach to risk. However, if this was our only understanding of managing risk then we would do so through a prism of professional self-interest rather than protection of the public. Practice dominated by such an attitude produces a conservative response to risk and, consequently, increasing false positive assessments of high risk. Since resource follows risk, such a restricted understanding of risk would skew our efforts unproductively⁵.

Similarly, relying exclusively on practice-based tools such as eOASys, would skew behaviour by misleading practitioners into believing that the process of producing a numerical value against risk is scientific. The fact that around 91% of serious further offences are committed by those assessed as low or medium risk (HMIP, 2005) would suggest that risk assessment is more of an art.

In contrast, theoretical learning broadens our understanding of risk by placing it within a social and political context, overlays it with issues of human rights and anti-discriminatory practice, and differing criminological and psychological explanations for criminal behaviour. However, if that theoretical understanding was delivered in isolation then we would be informed about the complexities of assessing and managing risk without possessing the capability of responding.

Similarly, reflection in isolation is equally futile. Risk assessment and management is a complex business and if trainees become paralysed by the reflective process they will endlessly ruminate at the expense of making decisions. Reflection without action and

action without reflection are both empty exercises (Freire, cited in Banks, 2001). However, properly applied, reflection is a tool for integrating theory and practice, it is an aid for reconciling the ubiquitous tensions and feelings of uncertainty aroused in practice, as well as being an empowering skill for adapting to change. Therefore, the insistence of reflection throughout the training, in both academic and NVQ tasks is critical to the efficacy of the learning (Thompson, 2000). It is our observation that although trainee's styles differ, and some appreciated the value of reflective learning more than others, all benefited by the requirement to demonstrate reflective learning.

However, while reflective practice is an accepted technique for bridging theory and practice, it remains a skill in its own right (Gould and Taylor, 1996; Schon, 1987; Thompson, 2000) which is why the role of the PDA is critical to the learning process. A skilled PDA asks open questions of a trainee that 'kick start' the reflective process; thus implicitly empowering a trainee to find their own answers rather than offering explicit direction. Through a series of 'light bulb moments' the trainees' skills and knowledge build and their reflective skills are refined. Since effective learning is the product of the way people reason about their own behaviour (Argyris, 1998), without the PDA role, learning risks remaining superficial. Whereas, a deeper analysis can be achieved using reflection directed by an experienced practitioner; importantly, one who is removed from the managerial agenda of the organisation.

Finally, a relevant by-product of the training process is that trainees develop their organisational and time management skills. The experience of being a trainee, and indeed a practitioner, involves managing competing priorities to achieve a desired outcome within deadline. Being able to concentrate on perfecting techniques with one eye on the overall timescales and process requirements permeates much of the academic and practice experience of trainees. Therefore, without this skill graduates would be less effective at prioritising risk management.

Training arrangements prior to 1997 allowed for a relatively cosseted experience for the first year of post-qualifying practice with a balanced but substantially reduced caseload (Raynor, Roberts, Thomas and Vanstone, 1994). In contrast, current trainees spend more time in the practice environment and do so more consistently; enabling them to hold relatively more cases, as well as managing multiple high risk cases during the second year of training. Even so, one of the authors asked every recently graduated trainee encountered what had been the greatest transitional challenge on qualification and, without exception, it was the sheer volume of cases they were immediately allocated.

If qualifying trainees are struggling to meet workload volume, this is despite rather than because of the current training arrangements. If managers are complaining that the current training fails to produce graduates who can handle the volume of cases necessary to meet organisational obligations regarding targets, then the failing is not one of training; on the contrary, it is a success of the training that graduates can manage as many cases as they do.

Weaknesses

Given our working assumptions regarding the emphasis on risk management and the Offender Manager role, we see crucial weaknesses in the current training; weaknesses concerning both content and structure. Two important areas of content are lacking in both theoretical knowledge and practice skills: knowledge management and multi-agency working (subjects that are not mutually exclusive). The structural weakness concerns the lack of organisational commitment to the training process.

Writing in 1988, Peter Drucker spoke of information-based organisations of the future and observed that as a result of information technology, twenty years on 'work will be done by specialists brought together in task forces that cut across traditional departments ...' (1998: 1). Drucker successfully predicted multi-agency working and the need for organisations to manage information responsibly. Yet, while both of these functions are core to our work, our organisation has so far failed to identify the learning required to do this effectively.

If our working assumptions about the role of Offender Manager are correct then it is fair to conclude that Probation is an information-based organisation and therefore that Offender Managers are, essentially, responsible for knowledge management. Knowledge management concerns the gathering and organising of information, its dissemination to those who need it, and the constant refining of information through analysis and collaboration (Gates, 1999). It seems little understood that Offender Managers are knowledge workers; with offending behaviour their specialist subject, and risk assessment and management their core business. However, key responsibilities such as preparing presentence and parole reports or attending multi-agency meetings involves all of these tasks. Furthermore, a failure to perform these tasks well is evident in reviews of serious further offences which consistently reveal failings associated with poor information management (Bridges, 2006a; 2006b; HMIP, 2006; Morgan, 2003).

In our experience, even the most basic aspects of information management were lacking in the organisation. For example, trainees in our learning set⁶ quickly identified a collective skills deficit concerning record keeping. Assuming the deficit was our own we tasked ourselves with addressing it and each pursued a particular line of enquiry ahead of reporting back to the group. However, we learned that the skills deficit was organisation-wide; colleagues admitted to a lack of training, with many even confessing a lack of understanding about how best to record information. Similarly, although we were provided with training on how to complete an initial OASys⁷ document, no subsequent training was provided on the electronic version (eOASys) or on how to review the original document. Again, this lack of training was widespread and frequently requested by qualified staff at meetings attended by management.

It is an unfortunate irony that the same organisation that delivers the Think First accredited programme which teaches participants to differentiate between facts, opinions and guesses, neglects to place the required emphasis on the quality of its own information

management. This is especially so given the importance the organisation places on eOASys as a tool for risk assessment. This lack of respect for the quality of information underpinning probation practice is evidence of the fact that the organisation fails to appreciate that it is in the knowledge management business.

The organisation must understand this fundamental premise if it is to train its staff and direct its resources appropriately. Given the public sector's penchant for importing private sector modus operandi, it is useful to compare the experience of McDonald's versus Burger King. McDonald's is renowned for possessing a good business model and a clear understanding of its business. By comparison, Burger King made a series of errors and wasted energy and resources because it lacked the same clarity. Working on the assumption that it was in the hamburger business it developed a better burger than McDonald's (flame-broiled) but failed to increase its market performance (Beckwith, 1997). Similarly, working on the assumption that it was in the fast-food business it tried projecting a 'faster' image than McDonald's; equally unsuccessfully (Ries and Trout, 1994). What it failed to realise was that McDonald's customers were not buying fast-food or hamburgers, they were buying an experience (Beckwith, 1997). Had Burger King recognised this then they could have also successfully sold the experience and improved their market share by targeting an older audience (Ries and Trout, 1994). Instead, they repeatedly wasted energy and resources by not understanding what business they were in.

Unfortunately for Probation, as the current training on knowledge management is negligible to the point of non-existent, it can only be assumed that our organisation is unaware of what business it is in. With the age of contestability upon us, we must quickly come to understand that Probation is in the knowledge management business; one focused on assessing and managing risk. Also, this must be incorporated into both the academic and practice-based training.

If knowledge management is what we do, multi-agency working is a key part of how we do it and yet it is another area in which trainees receive no theoretical or practical training. Consequently it was identified by our learning set as another skills deficit: We were all experiencing problems in our ability to function effectively in multi-agency environments. On this occasion our response was to select it as the topic of our poster presentation (the group-based academic assignment designed to integrate theory and practice).

However, as we subsequently learned, multi-agency working arose from increased media and public concern over sex offenders in the 1990's and is aimed at managing the risk posed by offenders by enabling different agencies to work together in various forums (Bryan and Doyle, 2003; Coble, 2003; Nash, 2005). Therefore, it is a key component of managing risk well and yet one for which there is no specific training. Understanding the history and purpose of multi-agency working and different agency approaches via academic learning could then be applied to the NVQ units which require multi-agency liaison. This would better equip trainees, to effectively and confidently manage high risk cases as qualified officers (HMIP, 2006).

A crucial structural weakness of the training concerns a lack of commitment to the training by the employing organisation. Our networking tells us that in Probation areas across the country this lack of commitment manifests as trainees being used as a resource which impairs their ability to address their learning needs. More locally, our experience was one of two halves: In the first year the internal structures nurtured our learning and resisted organisational pressure to use trainees as a resource. However, as our Probation area did not employ any Cohort 8 trainees, in our second year the Area Co-ordinator role was removed and our PDA's role was split so that he was then required to concurrently undertake a management role. He would agree with our assessment that these two half-time roles were incompatible and had the potential to negatively impact on our training as his contribution towards the reflective process became overwhelmed by the more pressing managerial imperatives; such as hitting targets.

With the removal of the Area Co-ordinator role, our line management changed and the replacement arrangements were comparatively much further removed from our practice experience. As a result, functionally, the organisational structure became indifferent to the trainee experience and the perceived organisational response was not only that we were to be used as a resource but also that we were a drain on much needed resources. As trainees it was extremely unsettling to experience the management structure of the training being disassembled around us; much like trying to finish a meal in a restaurant with the waiters clearing the tables.

Fortunately, the quality of our first year learning, specifically concerning the strengths identified above, enabled the trainees in our office to proactively manage this change. For example, by co-ordinating amongst ourselves our respective demands upon the diminishing contribution of our PDA. Nonetheless, the experience provided powerful, contrasting examples of the organisation's role in developing professionals. In the second year, the organisation placed greater currency on trainees supporting the team than the organisation supporting the trainees, thus exposing the training's vulnerability to organisational imperatives.

Threats

The greatest threat to the training is the timing of the review, coming as it does when the organisation is struggling to accommodate both an increased workload and the NOMS model. As mentioned, it is assumed that Probation work will predominantly be that of Offender Managers with the rehabilitative and retributive aspects of the role being managed rather than delivered by Offender Managers; also, that managerialism will endure which, in our experience, produces a 'management by numbers' culture. These organisational issues combine to produce enormous pressure on managers and practitioners; pressures that potentially mitigate against the weaknesses of the training being resolved or even undermine its strengths. Whilst this is not the place to debate the merits or otherwise of managerialism, as a paradigm it exhibits the potential to inadvertently sabotage its own efforts, and it is this potential that is relevant to the review of Offender Manager training (Raynor and Maguire, 2006).

Managerialism has been described as neo-Taylorism (Pollitt, cited in Morgan and Allington, undated) and there are certainly parallels: both pursue efficiency, predictability of job performance and control through hierarchical authority (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004). Oldfield's prescient article on managerialism and Probation held up McDonald's as the model enterprise which Probation was seeking to emulate, suggesting it epitomised the ideal of its type: 'hierarchical management with central concerns of efficiency, predictability and control' (1994: 187). In fact, the term 'McDonaldisation' has passed into the lexicon to describe: '... an approach to work organisation based on efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, using sophisticated technology to enhance these objectives by limiting employee discretion and creativity' (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004: 446).

Oldfield argued that McDonaldisation would prove deskilling, and his concern remains valid. What were key aspects of the 'probation officer' role when we commenced our training are now already being shed, with the role morphing into one of generic Offender Manager. The fear is that too much of the skills-based training will be jettisoned despite these skills being a necessary precursor to the successful delivery of the NOMS model (Home Office, 2005).

For example, it is noticeable that despite the title Offender Manager, the function of the role is to manage sentences. Therefore, it is not surprising that the requirement for trainees to deliver an accredited programme has already been removed as Offender Managers are tasked with managing rather than delivering rehabilitative aspects of a sentence. Additionally, their focus is predominately on high risk offenders; ergo, not those who attend the programmes that trainees, until recently, delivered.

However, trainees who qualify without the experience of delivering a programme will then go on to supervise participants in the Sex Offender Treatment Programme, Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme, and others catering to high risk offenders. They will do so lacking an understanding of group work skills and group dynamics, they will be less effective in communicating with tutors and supporting the intended rehabilitative changes, and their practice will fall short of the NOMS model (Chapman and Hough, 1998; Home Office, 2005).

At the very least, the requirement to deliver an accredited programme should be substituted with group work training that allows trainees to consolidate their practice skills in communicating effectively with offenders. Skills of motivational interviewing and pro-social modelling are vital to ensuring the effectiveness of interventions and contribute to the delivery of the NOMS model; whereby the Offender Manager assesses and supports behaviour changes in order to reduce risk and protect the public (Home Office, 2005). Similarly, case manager training for programmes for high risk offenders would better prepare trainees for high risk caseloads when they qualify. One of the authors undertook such training prior to qualifying and can vouch for the subsequent improvement in case

management skills and, importantly, associated risk assessment skills (Dodds et al, 2003; Fleet and Anniston, 2003; Kennington et al, 2002; Leyland and Baim, 2004).

A reduction in practitioner skills will deliver a corresponding reduction in our collective ability to accurately assess and review risk; a situation compounded by the tiering system whereby Offender Managers at Probation Officer grade hold the riskier and more complex cases (i.e. those requiring a higher skill level). Such de-skilling reduces our capacity to respond proactively to risk or manage it in any meaningful way. Instead, risk assessment will be restricted to adding names to 'lists of people to worry about' and multi-agency working will consist of 'joined-up worrying' (Lieb, 2003).

The NOMS model requires consistency and continuity (Home Office, 2005), however breaking the role up into discrete responsibilities works against this ideal. Practitioners need to be able to take a holistic view of offender management, as per the NOMS ideal (Home Office, 2005). This inevitably requires them to be innovative and find alternative ways of working which are responsive to the individuals. According to Effective Practice this is the best way of working (Chapman and Hough, 1998). To create a sentence plan, not select one off the shelf. Breaking down a complex role into a series of stages, where no-one feels they achieve the desired outcome could lead to professional disenchantment, falling productivity, rising stress-related absences, where staff can not link the need to produce results in terms of reducing reoffending whilst demonstrating that they can meet targets.

This deskilling trajectory would further restrict the scope of the qualification. The previous training review narrowed the professional qualification by divorcing it from social work, and the current training review could reinforce further narrowing of the qualification by restricting it to Offender Manager learning needs. The temptation may be to bend to the managerial needs of the organisation; to learn how to demonstrate accountability rather than reduce reoffending and manage risk. Taking the long view, a deskilled profession at the raw of end of so much change would find it increasingly difficult to respond to future change initiatives (Robbins and Finley, 1998).

Opportunities

If the training review threatens to get it wrong, then it also provides an opportunity to get it right. The review has the potential to produce changes that can address the weaknesses identified here, satisfy the training needs of the emerging offender manager role and address broader organisational issues and learning needs that have developed as a result of managerialism and implementing the NOMS model. In short, the review could adopt a more holistic and far-sighted approach.

A general criticism of managerialism is that it has produced a growth in management (Lavalette and Pratt, 2001) and separated decision-making from practitioners (Matthews and Young, 2003). Senior practitioners are now managers; whereas previously they were enablers now they are regulators (Finkelstein, 2003). The problem with this functional

change is that the roles demand different skill sets. The result is that practitioners are attempting to manage without appropriate training (as our PDA did) or non-practitioners are employed to manage without appropriate understanding of practice. Increasingly, managers communicate in 'management speak' that is incomprehensible to practitioners and are also so far removed from practice that they fail to fully comprehend the workload demands being experienced by practitioners. This management/practitioner divide is reflected in the two groups' respective objectives: managers focus on numbers and aim to meet targets, practitioners want to focus on people and reduce reoffending. This divide represents a critical obstacle in the pursuit of enhanced organisational performance.

Management imperatives place increasingly greater focus on meeting targets to the exclusion of all else. Such a target driven approach promotes pseudo-accountability over effectiveness. Service provision to the public is vital however meeting targets and providing a service to the public are not the same and this situation will be compounded by the requirements of the NOMS model. For example, skills for competitive tendering, brokering services, negotiating with agencies, and so forth are likely to be bought in from outside the organisation and managers will become even further removed from practitioners.

Therefore, an opportunity exists for the training review to take a holistic perspective and embrace the organisation's learning needs and not just those of qualifying practitioners. In the process, the review can broaden the potential of the training by taking a whole career perspective and including the foundations of management training.

Whilst Oldfield's (1994) concerns about the McDonaldisation of Probation leading to the deskilling of the profession are not without merit, there is another side to the deskilling debate. 'Upskilling' proponents argue that the skills of knowledge-workers are enhanced rather than reduced (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004). However, it is relevant to note that the factors that determine knowledge-worker productivity are the exact opposite of what is needed to increase the productivity of the manual worker (Drucker, 2001). Therefore, whether probation practitioners will be deskilled or upskilled, will become apparent when the training review is complete as it will reveal whether Offender Managers are viewed as knowledge-workers or McDonaldised process-workers.

Therefore, an opportunity exists for NOMS to recognise that it is essentially an information-based organisation and elect to train its staff accordingly. To be effective in this endeavour, NOMS will need to structure itself to become a learning organisation (Argyris, 1998). For example, one possible learning organisation framework includes four key aspects: recruit the best, force intensive early development, constantly increase professional challenges, and evaluate and weed (Quinn, Anderson and Finkelstein, 1998).

Recruit the Best

Recruiting the best has previously been possible due to the appeal of the profession. Anecdotally, our consortium dispatched approximately 10,000 application forms for the

Cohort 7 intake of 100 trainees. This situation favours the organisation's ability to recruit the best however that advantage may be lost if the profession loses its appeal. This could happen if it becomes too narrowly focused or experiences a serious further offence with Victoria Climbié ramifications where the individual case worker is made a scapegoat for organisational failures. The enquiry and surrounding publicity of the death of Victoria Climbié widely blamed the Social Worker in charge of the case, causing untold personal and professional stress. This conclusion has since been identified as unfair by a high court judge and transcripts from the original enquiry demonstrate it was flawed procedures and the high workload of a newly qualified officer that were to blame (Guardian, 2007). If prospective applicants were to become aware of the current working conditions (including widespread dissatisfaction, heavy workloads and stress related absences), it may put them off applying. The continued ability to recruit the best relies on the organisation offering an appealing professional career path rather than the current cul-de-sac.

Force Intensive Development

The current training certainly forces intensive early development and it is likely that this situation will continue post review, either through design or default. However, the quality of that development will depend on whether the organisation uses trainees as a resource or invests in supporting their development.

Increase professional challenges

The requirement to constantly increase professional challenges expects those challenges to concern complexity of issues rather than volume of cases. The ability to offer such challenges will need to be designed into the whole career and organisational learning plan. An inability to constantly increase professional challenges will equate with an inability to retain the most highly motivated and creative individuals. According to the framework, without this stimulation the profession will become complacent and resistant to change.

Evaluate and weed

The final requirement in the framework is to 'evaluate and weed'. Evaluation means providing objective and credible feedback; both positive and negative. Post qualification, supervision feels very different to supervision with a PDA. The emphasis now is on the practitioner seeking guidance on workload priorities in a 'think back from the inquiry' fashion and the manager providing feedback against targets and monitoring. However, the level of personalised feedback is relatively limited with much of this reliant on the management style of individual line managers.

With no return on individual investment there is an inevitable temptation for newly qualified officers to rest on their laurels. Whereas a definitive further training structure would prevent this, support development and produce a healthier organisation where practitioners feel valued by management. The objective is to create a meritocracy where successful endeavour is rewarded with enhanced professional challenges and opportunities.

This is contrary to the current situation whereby there is only a stick; there is no carrot, only the cessation of the beating.

Conclusion

The outcome of the review of probation training will be prophetic. As an organisational building block it will say much about how the future of probation is being perceived. While change is inevitable, effectiveness is not. Even as we write it is being announced that the Home Office is to split and a new Ministry of Justice will run the criminal justice system (Travis, 2007). This reorganisation may force an interim decision about probation training. Perhaps in the short term we will experience another Howard Gap; a possible signal of impending radical change to the training programme. Alternatively, existing training arrangements may be extended; a promising indicator that the review is aiming for the best outcome rather than the fastest.

However, ultimately the training review must decide whether to improve the organisation's long term capacity to deliver the NOMS model or its short term capacity to meet its targets. It can provide effective leadership by creating a performance culture rather than a measurement culture; thus improving performance by narrowing the gap between management and practitioners. Finally, it can create a learning organisation that recognises its staff are knowledge-workers and therefore upskill rather than deskill future Offender Managers.

End Notes

¹ Trainee Probation Officers earn three qualifications: B.A. in Community Justice (Probation), NVQ Level 4 Community Justice (Working with Offending Behaviour) and Diploma in Probation Studies.

² For more detail of the current training see Whitehead and Thompson (2004).

³ For detail on the history and cultural changes of Probation see Stratham and Whitehead (2006).

⁴ The authors are making no comment on the desirability of these assumptions.

⁵ See Kemshall, (2002, 2003).

⁶ A learning set is a group of trainees who informally meet to address their learning needs.

⁷ Offender Assessment System.

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