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HOME OFFICE

HM INSPECTORATE
OF PROBATION

Evidence Based Practice

A Guide to Effective Practice

by Tim Chapman and Michael Hough
on behalf of HM Inspectorate of
Probation
and edited by M Jane Furniss

FOREWORD

Early in 1998 HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) published one of the most important reports it has ever produced, "Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision". The report summarised the findings of the HMIP "What Works" Project, which drew together the available evidence about the impact of the work of probation services with offenders. It demonstrated that community penalties provide the courts with an effective and cost-effective response to a wide range of offenders.

"Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision" set out the principles which underpin effective practice. This Effective Practice Guide distils some of the thinking behind the report into practical guidance and addresses issues of:

- professional practice

- operational management

- best practice in monitoring and evaluating probation work.

The Guide is one of a number of important initiatives which HMIP, the Home Office Probation Unit and Association of Chief Officers of Probation (ACOP) are taking to support probation services in their pursuit of greater effectiveness in offender supervision. It is vital that managers and practitioners make good use of the sound advice and practical assistance this Guide provides.

GRAHAM SMITH CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Guide could not have been produced by us without the help of a great many people. It draws extensively on the experience of those who worked with HMIP on the "What Works" project during 1996 and 1997. Staff in the Home Office – Research and Statistics Directorate, Probation Unit and HMIP made significant contributions to the drafting of the Guide. More than 50 probation service practitioners and managers made time in their already busy lives to help us improve the Guide. We are grateful to them all and hope that the quality of the product is itself a public acknowledgement of their efforts.

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USING THE GUIDE

The aim of the Effective Practice Guide is to provide advice about effective practice to probation managers and practitioners. The Guide falls somewhere between a resource pack and a reference book. All practitioners and managers will find something of value in it but we do not envisage that readers will work through it from cover to cover.

We are aware that some probation professionals are still to be persuaded of the whole "What Works" movement. Probation staff are rightly sceptical about new fashions – "the flavour of the month". But equally they want to be effective in their work with offenders. This Guide aims to help them:

- **effectiveness – so what can it offer?**

The "What Works" research does not profess to be a cast-iron recipe for success. What it can offer is guidance on what appear to be the most promising ways forward. The best of probation practice can substantially reduce reconviction. Effectiveness will bring with it confidence about the way the service works but also increase the public's confidence in the supervision of offenders.

- **effectiveness – but is it all new?**

Applying the findings of research does not mean discarding everything that is familiar. It is about building on current practice. Much of the contents of this Guide will therefore be known to practitioners and managers. Its value is in bringing it together in an accessible form.

- **effectiveness – what's in it for me?**

Evaluating the impact of work with offenders is at the heart of effective practice. For practitioners it can bring confirmation of the impact of their work with individuals, moving away from gut feelings to hard evidence. For managers, it can provide the evidence to inform the allocation of scarce resources and the most appropriate targeting of supervision intensity. For the service as a whole, it promotes confidence in the role it plays within the wider criminal justice system.

- **effectiveness – isn't it all extra work?**

Effectiveness-led practice helps practitioners and managers target their energies, time and scarce resources on the right people and on those things that work. It will mean not doing the things that don't work. Greater job satisfaction will be derived from seeing the results of the efforts made.

The Effective Practice Guide has been prepared as part of HMIP's "What Works" Project.

In January 1998 HMIP published its report, "Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision"[1], based on a study of international research findings and examination of work with offenders in UK probation services. It was recognised that service managers and practitioners needed to take forward the lessons and as a result this Guide was commissioned.

The publication of the report was followed by a major national conference, organised by HMIP and attended by chief officers for 54 probation services and other interested individuals and agencies.

In the early part of 1998, HMIP, Home Office Probation Unit and ACOP committed themselves to

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[1] HM Inspectorate of Probation *Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision* by Andrew Underdown (1998).

implementing nationally across probation services, the findings of the HMIP report[2], and the lessons learned from effective local initiatives. A national implementation strategy was devised and issued in Probation Circular 35/98.[3] Key elements of the strategy now known as the Effective Practice Initiative include:

a) issuing the Effective Practice Guide;

b) staff training and development to assist services;

c) identification and development of path-finder programmes;

d) developing a system of accreditation for offender supervision programmes;

e) assessing the costs of effective practice, ensuring that adequate resources are available and that probation services are achieving value for money.

The Guide provides help and advice to probation managers and practitioners about evidence-based practice. It has been written by a senior probation manager and a professional researcher, commented on and improved by probation professionals, finally being edited by HMIP. We hope that this combination of skills has resulted in a Guide which is both useful and well grounded in research. It draws heavily on the HMIP report,[4] aiming to distil the thinking into practical guidance.

It makes no claims to be comprehensive but focuses on the supervision of offenders on probation, community service and combination orders. The approach it recommends is readily transferable to some aspects of probation work – pre and post-release supervision, for example. In other areas of probation work, such as pre-sentence report writing, Family Court Welfare work and crime prevention, the general principles will apply, but the specific examples will be of little relevance.

At the end of chapters 1, 2 and 4 on tinted pages there are summary sections of relevant research.

Chapter 1 introduces the Guide. It sets out the principles and policy context within which effectiveness has become a key issue, discusses what is meant by effective probation work, and defines terms used throughout the report.

Chapters 2-5 contain the core of the Guide and are aimed at both practitioners and their managers. They describe the key processes in supervision practice and ways of ensuring that practice is effective. In particular guidance is provided on:

- assessment

- case management

- programme delivery

- community reintegration.

Although the Guide refers to *risk* meaning risk of harm and dangerousness, its focus is mainly on reducing the risk or likelihood of reoffending. Detailed guidance has already been issued to services on managing the risk of harm and dangerousness.[5]

Chapters 6-9 are concerned with issues about monitoring, evaluation and the consolidation of the

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[2] ibid, footnote 1.

[3] PC 35/98 (June 1998).

[4] ibid, footnote 1.

[5] Home Office M*anagement and Risk Assessment in the Probation Service* (June 1997).

knowledge base on which probation work depends. They are directed primarily at senior managers and seek to explain the value of a commitment to monitoring, evaluation and research. The chapters recognise that not all probation services employ staff with research skills. They are not intended to teach R&I staff how to do their job; it is recognised that further guidance may need to be developed to bring together best practice for such staff.

Chapter 6 discusses concepts, and what is involved in developing a strategy for monitoring and evaluation

Chapter 7 focuses on monitoring, suggesting what sort of things should be monitored, why and how, and by whom. It examines the important relationship between professional tools – for assessing risk and need – and management information systems

Chapter 8 discusses evaluation. It discusses the scope for, and limits to, proper evaluation. It offers some thoughts about the development of probation areas' evaluation strategies, and the criteria which might apply when opting for formal evaluation. It offers some suggestions about the mechanics of commissioning evaluation

Chapter 9 discusses the organisation and commissioning of research, and ways of ensuring that research is actually used.

This is not a Guide to **designing** effective programmes of supervision. The Home Office is working with probation services, programme designers and researchers through the identification of path-finder programmes to ensure that in due course a range of well-designed programmes which meet effectiveness criteria are available nationally. It is intended that as each pathfinder programme is developed a manual will be made available which will assist services to implement the programme in their area.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces the Guide and in particular makes clear:

- the principles of effective probation practice

- the policy context and political and public pressures to be effective

- how effectiveness is defined and the criteria used in the Guide

- the models and terms used in the Guide.

At the end of the chapter on tinted paper is a summary of the research evidence for the principles of effectiveness.

Effective probation practice: principles

Research has shown that the best of probation practice can substantially reduce reconviction rates but currently the average probation intervention yields no better results than custodial sentences. The challenge facing probation services is to close the gap between the average and best practice. Figure 1.1 indicates the inconsistencies in probation practice which need to be tackled to make probation practice more effective. This Guide is intended to help probation managers and staff overcome those inconsistencies and realise the full potential of community supervision.

Our knowledge about effectiveness can be developed only through designing and delivering supervision plans which can be evaluated and replicated. To this end the Guide describes the specific action necessary to improve consistent, measurable practice. It is based upon the premise that effectiveness can be achieved only through practice being directed and supported by effective management and information systems. The Guide therefore provides advice aimed at practitioners, operational and senior managers to assist each of them to contribute to an evidence-based approach to their work.

Figure 0.1

> **Inconsistencies in practice related to effectiveness reported in various studies and inspections:** [6]
>
> - supervision programmes for offenders vary depending upon the supervising officer rather than the risk of reoffending and criminogenic needs of the offender
>
> - differing views about the purpose of including additional requirements in orders
>
> - variable patterns of referral resulting in inequality of opportunity afforded to offenders and inefficient use of programmes
>
> - unsatisfactory levels of attendance and completion of programmes
>
> - inadequate enforcement
>
> - content of programmes not based upon research into effectiveness
>
> - staff too often fail either to record or respond to indicators of potential dangerousness in the offenders they supervise
>
> - weaknesses in the referral process to partnerships
>
> - poor access to and level of attendance at partnership programmes
>
> - lack of rigour in targeting and criteria of eligibility for programmes resulting in wide variations in practice between services. No examples of fully structured assessment
>
> - undermining programme integrity by altering manual material in ways that did not seem consistent with the design concept
>
> - over-rigid adherence to manual scripts
>
> - more work needed on building motivation and sustaining attendance
>
> - inadequate integration between programme delivery and case management both before and after programmes
>
> - most evaluation not comprehensive, timely and sustained.

Pressures for effectiveness: the policy context

The pressures on probation services over the last few years both to *improve* effectiveness and to *demonstrate* effectiveness have been intense. A number of features in the development of recent probation policy have created these pressures.

Probation services nationally have seen a significant rate of change over the last three decades. From the beginning of this century until the early 1970s, the aims of the services were unequivocally rehabilitative, and their work was focused consistently on less serious offenders. The first major upheaval arose from the "Nothing Works" pessimism about the scope for effective interventions – of any sort – within the criminal justice system. The "Nothing Works" philosophy began to establish itself within central government and academic

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[6] HM Inspectorate of Probation *Probation Orders with Additional Requirements* Report of a Thematic Inspection (1995); *Probation Services Working in Partnership: Increasing Impact and Value for Money* Report of a Thematic Inspection (1996); *Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision* Report of the "What Works" Project (1998). Burnett, R *Fitting Supervision to Offenders: Assessment and Allocation Decisions in the Probation Service* Home Office Research Study 153 (1996).

thinking in the mid 1970s, and thereafter began to spread to the service. Arguably, it substantially undermined the professional self-confidence of the service, and redirected effort to less ambitious goals of providing practical help. However, it occurred at a time when there was little pressure on resources, and the central government approach was to allow a high degree of local autonomy. Consequently, there were no immediate pressures on probation services to manage their way out of the pessimism about the scope for changing offenders' behaviour.

Paradoxically the second major change can also be traced to the belief that *any* sentencing intervention had marginal impact on reoffending. If prison had no greater deterrent or rehabilitative impact than other penalties, there was an obvious case based on cost for rationing its use. Throughout the 1980s, government policy placed growing emphasis on diversion from custody, and this rekindled Home Office interest in, and expectations of, probation services. Towards the end of the 1980s, the central mission of the service was to provide alternatives to custody and divert offenders from prison. The new demands on the service were funded largely through budgetary expansion. Probation growth outstripped that of all other criminal justice agencies over the 1980s. Demands for "efficiency gains" were as yet unheard of, though the 1984 Statement of National Objectives and Priorities can be regarded as a precursor to probation exposure to the new public sector managerialism.

The third significant change was the downward pressure on public expenditure. For several years the criminal justice system in general and probation services in particular had in contrast with other parts of the public sector not been affected by the 'value for money initiatives' and 'efficiency gains' associated with the 'Financial Management Initiative'. However, the period of budgetary expansion came to an abrupt end in the early 1990s with the introduction to probation services of cash limits. At the same time over the last decade the probation service's caseload has risen by almost 40 per cent.

Finally, these pressures coincided with a reverse of the pendulum from "Nothing Works" which decreed that everything was ineffective, to a much more balanced view that organisations could do some things under some circumstances to change some offenders' behaviour. This was partly research-led, in that new studies and re-interpretation of old studies substantially undermined the "Nothing Works" thesis. At the same time however, the pressure for *credible* non-custodial sanctions meant that policy readily listened to research when it started to sing a more cheerful song.

This "potted history" of post-war probation policy is important in demonstrating why *improving effectiveness* and *demonstrating effectiveness* is now so central to probation work. The demands for greater public sector *accountability* have combined with the

imperatives within the criminal justice system for *effective* and thus *credible* alternatives to imprisonment. To protect the public and gain their support and confidence, probation services have to do several things:

- ensure that the existing knowledge base about effective practice is comprehensively applied

- extend this knowledge base

- develop management systems for maximising effectiveness.
  If probation services do not perform effectively, they will be unable to justify their public funding and ultimately their existence.

Definition of effective practice

Effective practice produces the intended results **. The outcome that the public expects the service to deliver is a person who does not offend and who is contributing positively to the community. It is on the basis of this expectation that the courts entrust the supervision of a convicted offender to probation services. The pursuit of effectiveness lies at the heart of the contract that probation services enter into with the community and those who offend against it. It is through this contract and its enforcement that probation services build and maintain credibility and trust with the public, the courts, the government and, indeed, offenders.**

It is recognised that the public's expectations are demanding and at times unrealistic. Offenders are not a homogenous group, each is an individual with unique needs. Many of the offenders supervised by probation services have chaotic and disorganised lifestyles which make planned and sustained intervention challenging. The task of tackling and reducing long established patterns of offending is complex and difficult. By identifying the principles and methods which research has shown to be most effective, this Guide attempts to help probation managers and practitioners achieve the task. (Figure 1.2 provides a summary of the principles and methods).

Figure 0.2

Effectiveness research indicates that

- the higher the risk of reoffending the more intensive and extended the supervision programme (**the risk principle)**

- programmes which target needs related to offending (criminogenic needs) are likely to be more effective (**the need principle**)

- programmes which match staff and offenders' learning styles and engage the active participation of offenders are likely to be more effective (**the responsivity principle**).

Research indicates that the most effective programmes are

- multi-modal (a variety of methods addressing a range of criminogenic needs)

- skills-oriented (cognitive-behavioural, vocational, literacy and numeracy)

- able to model prosocial behaviour

- structured and have a high degree of programme integrity

- community based

- employment related

- monitored and evaluated.

Definition of a programme

In this Guide the term programme is used to define the whole process of probation supervision of an offender, not simply a group work programme. A programme is therefore a planned series of interventions over a specified and bounded time period which can be demonstrated to positively change attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and social circumstances. Usually it will be characterised by a sequence of activities, designed to achieve clearly defined objectives based on an identifiable theoretical model or empirical evidence. It can be replicated with different offenders to achieve the same results.

Criteria for effectiveness

Effectiveness should be expressed in terms of what the offender does as a result of community supervision. **It is necessary to set clear objectives for what people under supervision are expected to achieve, plan supervision to enable them to achieve these objectives, define the targets to be reached at each stage of the process and deliver the programme as planned. The principles of "what works" research need to be integrated into every aspect of the supervision of offenders.**

As far as possible supervision should be based upon practices which research has found to increase the likelihood of effectiveness. Research had validated certain aspects of practice as being

effective and it is those characteristics which must be replicated and used to assess performance. Some other aspects of practice are not yet validated by research and will be described in this Guide in ways which enable them to be tested against the achievement of planned or desired goals.

Effective practice is not simply about group work. It is about systematic interventions and planned programmes of work of various kinds which can be delivered one to one. Equally both group work programmes and one-to-one work can be simply a waste of time and scarce resources, or even positively harmful, if they are not based on effective practice principles. Existing evidence points clearly in certain directions, but continuing to collect and use evidence about all forms of effective practice will provide further indicators. Effective practice is about ensuring that every aspect of supervision contributes to the achievement of the desired outcomes.

Ultimately the outcome expected of community supervision is in relation to reoffending:

- the commission of less offences or less serious offences than could be expected from the offender's previous history, attitudes and situation.

More immediate outputs include:

- completion of the supervision programme as specified by the court

- the adoption of prosocial attitudes, beliefs and behaviour

- improvement in social circumstances and community ties associated with the reduction in risk of reoffending.

These criteria should be supported by objectives and standards related to the inputs and processes of community supervision which include:

- value for money

- the quality and integrity of delivery of the supervision programme.

Defining effective probation practice

At this stage it is probably helpful if we set out the assumptions about effective probation work which underpin this Guide. Defining terms is sometimes a matter of convention – simply ensuring that everyone uses the same terms in the same way. Sometimes, it raises substantive issues about the sort of world we want to achieve. Defining effective probation practice is clearly an example of the latter. It involves political judgements about the way in which society should respond to crime.

Probation services have had to change from being somewhat inward looking organisations which regarded their own professional standards as the criteria for judging the quality and effectiveness of their work. These standards were seen by many to be weighted too heavily towards the interests of the offender, and too little towards the interests of the broader community. Set out in Figure 1.3 are definitions of effective probation services which focus on their service to the wider community, including offenders.

Figure 0.3: Effective Probation Services

An effective probation service is responsive to the public

The probation service's essential role is to provide a public service. Government has made it clear that the probation services' priority is protecting the public.

An effective probation service focuses on the harm crime causes

While probation services can contribute to community safety strategies, their primary duty to the public is to protect it from the harm those it supervises can cause both immediately and in the future. The public expects probation practice to be based upon:

- recognition that harm has been done

- assumption of responsibility by the offender for the harm

- amends being made

- efforts being taken to reduce the risk of future harm.

An effective probation service is accountable for its performance

The public judges probation services by results they can understand and support. The outcome which counts is what offenders do and stop doing as a result of supervision.

An effective probation service values its staff as its main resource

An effective service will promote ownership, commitment and increased competence amongst its staff and create a culture of curiosity, innovation and trust which promotes effective practice.

An effective probation service values knowledge and the ability to use knowledge

Effective organisations are based upon the intelligence to transform information into ideas. (Handy 1989). The research into "what works" offers probation services the opportunity to use information to improve effectiveness. This requires evaluation, research and a commitment to evidence based practice.

An effective probation service depends upon partnership

Effectiveness depends upon the delivery of high quality programmed work. Effective practitioners and managers acknowledge the limits of their knowledge and skills and the loss of potential if they work alone. They seek to solve problems through whomever or whatever is appropriate. They are aware that delivering effective community supervision requires building productive working relationships within probation services (teamwork) and partnership outside the services that endure and add value.

Defining organisational terms

There is no single right way to describe organisations and their management. There is a burgeoning management literature, which employs bewildering terminology and groups of interchangeable terms, including:

- aims, objectives, purposes and goals

- costs and inputs

- processes, functions and activities

- outputs, outcomes and impact

- targets, performance indicators and outcome measures

- research, evaluation, validation and monitoring.

Our own choice of terms and their definitions, set out in Figure 1.4 is arbitrary to an extent. However, we have tried to be consistent with the way such terms are used elsewhere within probation and within the criminal justice system[7]. It is hoped that simply bringing some consistency of terminology may be of value to probation services.

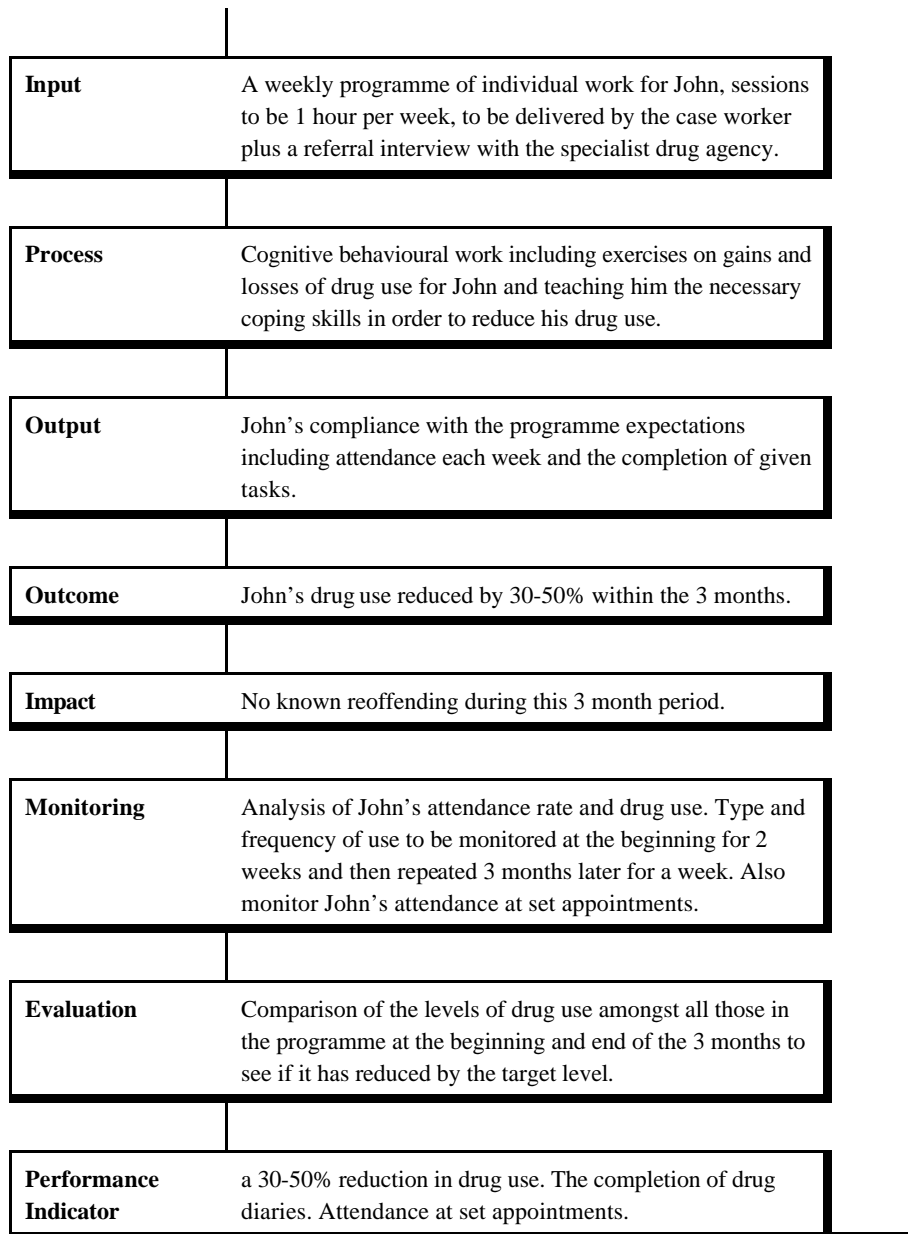**Figure 0.4: Organisational terms**

Objectives	the results that you want to achieve through a programme (Goals and objectives are synonyms; aims restate objectives in more general terms.)
Inputs	the resources, defined in terms of cash or staff or skills, invested in a programme.
Processes	the way in which production is organised – the activities performed by the organisation to transform inputs into outputs.
Outputs	the products of the programme, narrowly defined in terms of what the organisation has done.
Impact	the broader consequences of the programme's outputs
Outcomes	the outcome of a programme, as measured against its objectives.
Monitoring	keeping track of inputs and outputs – a rudimentary form of evaluation.
Evaluation	finding out whether the programme is achieving its objectives.
Performance Indicators	statistics used to measure outputs and outcomes.
Output measures	the performance indicators used to measure outputs
Outcome measures	the performance indicators used to measure outcomes
Targets	planned inputs, outputs and outcomes for a programme, expressed as input, output and outcome measures.

Figure 1.5 illustrates the terms through a case example. The objectives for an individual case are set against the background of an overall programme aim of reducing offending behaviour.

Figure 0.5: Case Example – John is an offender with a drug problem which has been assessed as being directly related to his offending

Objective	To reduce John's drug use by 30-50% within the next 3 months.

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[7] For example, Talbot's (1996) workbook, "Realising Probation Service Objectives", and the guide for police managers, "Getting the Grease to the Squeak" by Hough and Tilley (1998).

Input	A weekly programme of individual work for John, sessions to be 1 hour per week, to be delivered by the case worker plus a referral interview with the specialist drug agency.
Process	Cognitive behavioural work including exercises on gains and losses of drug use for John and teaching him the necessary coping skills in order to reduce his drug use.
Output	John's compliance with the programme expectations including attendance each week and the completion of given tasks.
Outcome	John's drug use reduced by 30-50% within the 3 months.
Impact	No known reoffending during this 3 month period.
Monitoring	Analysis of John's attendance rate and drug use. Type and frequency of use to be monitored at the beginning for 2 weeks and then repeated 3 months later for a week. Also monitor John's attendance at set appointments.
Evaluation	Comparison of the levels of drug use amongst all those in the programme at the beginning and end of the 3 months to see if it has reduced by the target level.
Performance Indicator	a 30-50% reduction in drug use. The completion of drug diaries. Attendance at set appointments.

It is helpful to analyse organisational action as a cyclical process which starts with objective-setting and ends with the assessment of outcomes. (Figure 1.6 displays the process graphically). While objectives may remain the same, resource levels or processes may be changed in ways which affect outputs and outcomes. We make an important distinction between outputs and outcomes, upon which we base the distinction between monitoring and evaluation in Chapter 6.
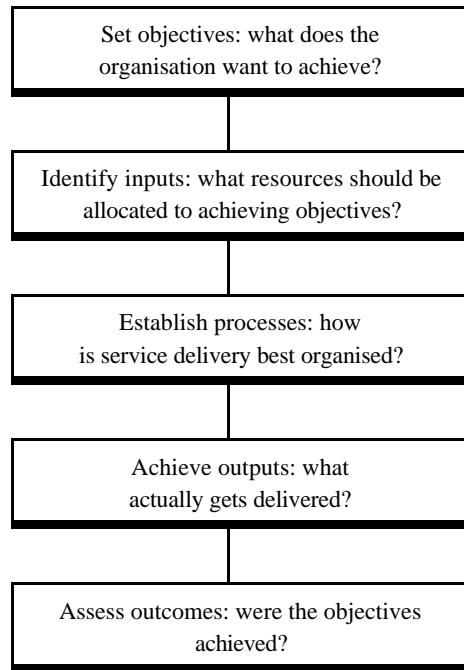
Figure 0.6: Getting things done

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Set objectives: what does the   │
│ organisation want to achieve?   │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Identify inputs: what resources should be │
│ allocated to achieving objectives? │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Establish processes: how        │
│ is service delivery best organised? │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Achieve outputs: what           │
│ actually gets delivered?        │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Assess outcomes: were the objectives │
│ achieved?                       │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 1.7 explains what distinguishes outputs and outcomes. It is important to emphasise that the objectives of the supervision programme will determine the inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. (For a fuller discussion of this model see Realising Probation Service Objectives by Colin Talbot, Home Office 1996.)

Figure 0.7: Outputs and outcomes – direct and indirect action

The distinction between **outputs** and **outcomes** is an important one for the evaluation of public sector services. Commercial organisations usually have simple objectives, such as survival or profit-making. Assessing whether they are achieving these objectives is correspondingly straightforward. For example, when a supermarket chain establishes an out-of-town hypermarket, its performance is evaluated in terms of profitability. Broader outcomes – such as the impact on other businesses and on urban life – are considered peripherally or not at all.

Public sector services tend by contrast to have complex objectives, and they often achieve these in indirect ways. Take the example of probation work with drug offenders. The aim of probation supervision with problem drug users is often to remove the pressure to commit crime by addressing the problem of dependency. It is fairly straightforward to measure the **output** of probation supervision – whether the offender attended and completed the drug programme that was arranged, for example. It is rather more complex to assess precisely what **outcome** the programme had. The first thing to establish is whether drug use has been affected. Even where the offender manages to stay drug-free, other factors may have been at play. Then one needs to assess whether the final **outcome** has been reduced offending, as intended.

In other words, probation programmes can involve a complex means-end chain. The further one moves down the chain, the less certain are the links between the different elements. Public sector organisations should *always* monitor **outputs**, checking that these meet project targets. They often have to be *selective* in evaluating whether projects are achieving **outcome** targets.

The role of managers

Effective practice depends upon effective managers:

- providing clear leadership and strategic direction, motivating their teams and lifting morale

- modelling and supporting in their own management style the characteristics of effective practice

- supporting and enabling an evaluative culture which encourages monitoring, feedback and organisational learning

- negotiating effective partnerships with other agencies and organisations

- introducing new working practices and forms of organisation which are flexible enough to respond to change

- managing effectively the assessment and management of risk in order to minimise potential for harm

- finding better ways to utilise the skills and potential of their staff, and helping their people develop new skills and knowledge

- managing performance actively, setting measurable and achievable objectives and appraising the ability of staff to achieve these

- dealing effectively with performance which is not up to standard

- reviewing and continuously developing their own competence as managers so that new challenges can be met head on

- organising their own work effectively, and coping with the personal stress which comes with new demands and ways of working

- using information and data effectively.

The Home Office Management Standards (1997)[8] define key roles for managers and these have been used in the Guide to assist managers in these tasks.

Manage activities; managing the operation to meet customers' requirements and continuously improve its performance.

Manage resources; planning and using physical resources effectively and efficiently.

Manage people; getting the most from their teams, themselves and relations with others at work.

Manage information; obtaining, analysing and using information effectively to take decisions.

Manage quality; total quality management, quality assurance and quality control.

Manage projects; planning, controlling and completing projects to the sponsor's satisfaction.

Chapter 10 of the HMIP report[9] considers the key issues in meeting the organisational challenges posed by a commitment to develop effective offender supervision.

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[8] Home Office *Management Standards Developing Performance in Probation Services* (1997).

[9] Ibid, footnote 1.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE FOR PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVENESS

There are different levels of evidence of effectiveness. There are programmes which have been tested (usually in North America) and found to reduce recidivism. From meta-analyses of these evaluations principles of effective programme design and delivery have been isolated but have yet to be tested fully in Britain or Ireland. These principles include;

- the **risk** principle; intensity of intervention should be appropriate to the level of risk

- the **need** principle; the content of intervention should be designed to effectively address criminogenic needs (those factors which have a direct link to offending)

- the **responsivity** principle; interventions should be delivered in ways which match the offenders' learning style and engage their active participation

- the principle of programme **integrity**; interventions should be rigorously managed and delivered as designed.

Risk and criminogenic needs are discussed in Chapter 2 on assessment and responsivity in Chapter 4 on programme delivery.

Effective methods

In addition meta-analysis identified other critical success factors:

- effective programmes were **multi-modal** (employing a variety of methods to address a range of criminogenic needs)

- effective programmes were **skill** oriented

- effective programmes drew upon the theories and methods of **cognitive-behavioural** psychology

- effective programmes were generally but not solely **community based**

- effective programmes were delivered by staff who were adept at **pro-social modelling**

- **monitoring** and **evaluation** were built in from the outset.

Multi-modal work

It is often assumed that effective programmes are based upon group work. However, this is not specified in the research. Individual and family work can be as effective when used appropriately and delivered to high standards of integrity.

It is important to select the most effective method to achieve each objective set and address the specific issue or need. In doing so a clear and testable rationale should be recorded. In this way the effectiveness of each component of a programme can be measured.

Groupwork is appropriate for:

- role play and rehearsal of appropriate behaviour

- peer education

- peer challenge and support

- cognitive and interpersonal skills training

- reflection on common difficulties.

Individual work is appropriate for:

- offenders requiring high levels of intervention and surveillance to protect others from the risk of serious harm

- reflection on some personal disclosure

- self-monitoring and self-instructional training

- tutoring or applying learning outcomes from group work to personal circumstances

- managing personal obstacles to programme participation.

Family work is appropriate when criminogenic needs originate in the family or when the family is or could be a key protective factor.

Experiential learning can enhance outcomes if used appropriately. Care should be taken to ensure that activities are closely aligned to objectives of change and address criminogenic needs. If they are offered as a simple diversion unconnected to any change programme, they are no more effective than surveillance or punishment similarly detached from an effective programme.

Drama, art therapy, outdoor pursuits and sport projects, if purposefully and carefully designed and delivered, can address a range of criminogenic needs including:

- anti-social attitudes, beliefs and values

- anti-social associates

- lack of pro-social role models

- cognitive and interpersonal skills

- dependence upon alcohol and drugs

- a sense of achievement and community integration

- employment

- social isolation

- mental health.

These activities should be carefully marketed and evaluated to convince the public that they are effective in reducing offending.

Skills

The acquisition of skill empowers people with a sense of control, achievement and potential whether it is relation to employment, relationships or recreation. Such skills might include:

- cognitive skills such as consequential thinking, problem solving and critical reasoning

- interpersonal skills such as self control, conflict resolution, empathy and communication

- literacy and numeracy skills

- vocational skills e.g. computer skills

- creative or physical skills.

Cognitive and behavioural psychology

This refers to a range of personality and social psychology theories including social learning theory. It addresses the complex relationships between thoughts, feelings and behaviour. An individual learns to manage these relationships from experience and from the example of significant others. This process of socialisation can result in deficits which reinforce anti-social behaviour. Such deficits can be corrected through training which reinforces positive behaviour rather than negative in a consistent way. The training is essentially:

- cognitive, i.e. learning thinking skills

- emotional, i.e. learning self awareness, self expression and self control

- behavioural, i.e. learning pro-social ways of acting to achieve goals.

Community-based projects

A programme based in the community facilitates the application of learning to real, current difficulties, the opportunity to practice what has been learnt and access to resources, activities and relationships which can support positive change. It is clear from research into institutional treatment that anti-social influences can subvert much of the positive effects of programmes. This is not to say that it is not

worth delivering programmes in custodial institutions. Such programmes should be part of a sentence plan which connects with resources and programmes available on release.

Pro-social modelling

According to Trotter (1993) pro-social modelling "involves the practice of offering praise and reward for clients' pro-social expressions and actions .... the probation officer becomes a positive role model acting to reinforce pro-social or non-criminal behaviour." Research indicates that pro-social modelling results in higher levels of compliance with supervision programmes as well as lower reoffending rates. It is important that the probation officer explicitly identifies with the offender the pieces of behaviour to be learned and practised. The approach emphasises the importance of demonstrating respect for individuals, by being punctual, reliable, courteous, friendly, honest and open. These are characteristics which offenders value in their supervising officers and which may encourage them to undertake a threatening process of change.

Other critical success factors

Duration and intensity. Duration and intensity, increasingly referred to as "dosage" should match risk of offending and be sufficient to fully cover all required outputs. Research (Lipsey 1995) indicates that the most effective treatments for high risk offenders last at least six months in which there is at least 100 hours of programmed intervention. Further research is needed to set firm standards for effective practice.

Choice. The research into principles of effectiveness strongly suggests that Services should develop a portfolio of accredited programmes of differing duration, intensity and content in order to address different levels of risk and criminogenic need.

At the most intensive level there should be cognitive and behavioural skills courses linked to programmes for the most persistent offenders i.e. sex offenders, domestic violence, other forms of violence, and habitual property or car offenders. These programmes may need to be further divided according to gender, race and age.

A middle range could contain shorter programmes addressing specific criminogenic needs. These could be delivered as modules tailored to the needs of individual offenders. They could address victim awareness, alcohol/drug use, relationships, oppressive behaviour or beliefs linked to offending etc.

The basic level of intervention should address issues obstructing community reintegration e.g. accommodation, employment, education, family, health, leisure etc.

Effective practice generates knowledge

Knowledge about what works can only be tested and developed by clearly defining what one is striving to change, by specifying in concrete terms how one is setting about the change process and then rigorously measuring achievement against the original objectives. A learning organisation not only delivers superior practice now but holds out the prospect of even better quality and effectiveness in the future.

The Principle of Integrity

Effective practice is not ideological or purist. It is not one theory or method which seeks to dominate and extinguish all others. It is responsive to ever-changing needs and requirements. It requires of staff a commitment to the programme and yet also a readiness to improve and innovate. It develops through cross-pollination, partnership and, above all, accountable performance. What prevents this approach disintegrating into anarchy and chaos is integrity.

Integrity is the organising concept of this Guide.

Programme integrity has been defined as the delivery of a programme as intended in theory and design (Hollin 1995)

"Treatment integrity refers to what is actually delivered and is evaluated against a treatment plan that specifies what is intended." (Lipsey 1988)

Research findings indicate that the level of integrity is a significant variable in determining outcome. This is not surprising as it is very difficult to measure the effects of a programme whose content and delivery is arbitrary and subject to unanticipated change.

This deceptively simple concept has been identified as an essential element of effective practice. Yet the word, integrity, carries with it connotations of quality, morality and connectedness. These meanings help to integrate effective practice.

Integrity as quality

HM Inspectorate of Probation has adopted the following definition of quality,
The search for quality is a process of sustained and persistent improvement to ensure that the totality of features and characteristics of services provided continue to satisfy the needs and requirements of users.

If it is accepted that the protection of the public and the reduction of reoffending are the core purposes of community supervision, this concept of quality is very close in definition to the concept of programme integrity.

Other writers have already commented on the link between "what works" and total quality management (Thomas 1996 and Kemshall 1996). Hollin (1995) provides a useful discussion of programme integrity which links the demands of programme delivery, empirical research and management. Integrity enables the supervision practice to be observed, measured against theory and design and evaluated, improved and replicated.

Integrity is served

- by clear procedures and practice manuals which are designed to meet specific targets and objectives (quality as science)

- by the knowledge, skills and commitment of staff (quality as human resource management)

- by responsiveness to the public's concerns about risk, the courts' requirements and offenders' criminogenic needs and learning styles (quality as consumerism).

The programme must serve the public, the court and the participant. The practitioner must, first and foremost serve the programme. This requires a redefinition of professional discretion and autonomy. The temptation is to confuse subjectivity with creativity, and personal satisfaction with professionalism. The reality is that the pursuit of a structured, effective programme increases both creativity and professional satisfaction.

Integrity as honesty

Before credibility and trust are established and an authentic working relationship can begin, the community, courts and offenders need to know what probation services stand for and for what they can rely on their staff. The values which underpin effective practice must be accepted and understood by different stakeholders whose interests do not necessarily always coincide.

Figure 0.8

Effective practice depends upon the following values

- an uncompromising stance against the harm caused by crime
- a strong belief in the capacity of people to change
- the importance of taking personal responsibility for behaviour
- the necessity of learning from experience
- the value of partnership
- social inclusion
- public accountability.

(See also p.131 of Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision for Features of Staff Culture which Support Effective Practice.)

Research (Trotter 1993, Rex 1995) has confirmed the importance of practitioners modelling appropriate values and behaviour in enabling people to change. Staff who lack integration between their values and their actions lose credibility with the people with whom they are working.

Integrity enables practitioners to persist in the face of offenders' resistance. Nothing is more important in the process of change than the determination to follow the programme when it is tempting to give into resignation in the face of resistance. Moral integrity can be defined as doing the right thing in the absence of surveillance or

coercion. This is, of course, the aim of all rehabilitative work. It is essential that practitioners model this integrity to offenders.

The relationship between offenders and staff in the supervision process is not one of equals. This imbalance of power can be perceived as oppressive and demotivating. Clear values honestly expressed and legitimately implemented and enforced can counter this perception and increase active participation in the process of change.

Integrity as the integration of the whole

The concept of integrity reinforces to managers and practitioners that every component of the supervision process, no matter how apparently trivial, should be directed by a commitment to the principles of effectiveness. The pursuit of this concept in practice integrates the various tasks of assessors, case managers, programme deliverers, partners, administrators, and managers into a holistic and seamless process.

Such a process is much more difficult to deliver than the work of a single supervisor. Yet, there is no doubt if we get it right, effectiveness will increase. This Guide is offered as an aid to this process.

Checklist for programme integrity

- A manual or detailed guidelines for supervision procedures specifying:

  ∗ testable theoretical premises or hypotheses

  ∗ targets for change

  ∗ objectives of change

  ∗ specific tasks or sessions to be undertaken each with specific objectives or learning outputs

  ∗ methods to be used.

- Appropriate staff:

  ∗ competent in the knowledge and skills necessary

  ∗ committed to the programme's integrity.

- Appropriate management:

  ∗ understands and committed to the programme's integrity and values

  ∗ able to support, prepare, coach and debrief staff

  ∗ monitors programme integrity through records and observation.

- Appropriate information systems:

  ∗ checklists for criteria of programme integrity to be completed by staff and independent observers

∗   participant feedback forms.

Chapters 6 to 9 in the Guide reinforce the importance of monitoring, evaluation and research. Further useful information can be found in "Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision" (Home Office 1998) p.11 Figure B and Appendix 2. Gendreau and Andrews have also devised a **Correctional Programme Assessment Inventory** which examines programmes on the basis of the principles of effectiveness including programme integrity. Contact the Paul Gendreau at the Department of Psychology, University of New Brunswick, Saint John, New Brunswick. The **STOP** programme delivered by Mid Glamorgan Probation Service has devised a Programme Integrity Checklist. See also their evaluations of the programme.

EFFECTIVE PROBATION PRACTICE: ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

This chapter will help practitioners:

- undertake assessments

- produce written assessments

- prepare supervision plans

which are based on research into effectiveness and meet the national standard. It is important that the Guide is read alongside the National Standards for the Supervision of Offenders (1995) which are likely to be revised during 1999 in the light of legislative changes and the Effective Practice Initiative.

It will help managers:

- support and assist practitioners in the production of effective assessments and supervision plans.

The chapter:

- describes a step by step process to achieve clear results

- summarises research findings and theories relevant to assessment, i.e. risk and criminogenic need (See tinted pages at the end of the chapter).
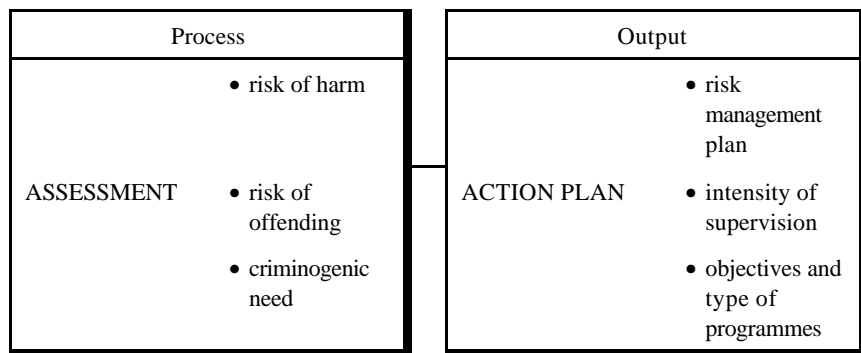
Effectiveness research provides powerful evidence of the crucial role played by assessment in work with offenders. Figure 1.2 in Chapter One sets out the centrality of the:

- risk principle

- need principle

- responsivity principle.

Assessment is an continuous, dynamic process which involves gathering and analysing information in order to ascertain the level and type of risk posed by, and the criminogenic needs of, an individual offender. It is begun at the PSR stage and will be added to and revised post-sentence. In most cases a supervision plan will result, indicating the intensity and type of supervision programme required. The

protection of the public from harm should always take precedence over the needs of the individual in any planned intervention. The processes of delivering programmes, managing cases and reintegrating offenders into the community will generate more information on risk of dangerousness and reoffending, needs and motivation. Supervision and risk management plans should be subject to review and change whenever appropriate. The assessment process and the preparation of the supervision plan is also the beginning of the process of engaging the offender in changing attitude and behaviour.

Figure 0.1

Process		Output	
ASSESSMENT	• risk of harm • risk of offending • criminogenic need	ACTION PLAN	• risk management plan • intensity of supervision • objectives and type of programmes

Use of a structured assessment tool has a number of advantages including consistent assessment of offending related needs, positive confirmation that needs targeted by programmes are present and development of more specific eligibility criteria. They have the added value of reviewing offender progress and contributing to outcome evaluation. The Home Office has been working with the prison and probation services to determine the most effective tool to assist in the process of assessing offender risk and criminogenic needs. During 1998/99 work will be undertaken based on the findings of the use of LSI-R and ACE, to procure a single risk/needs tool to be used in all prison and probation services. In the meantime, services are advised to use either LSI-R or ACE as they are the only tools in current usage being evaluated nationally. HMIP's report on its national thematic inspection of supervision plans will inform the development of the risk/needs assessment tool and will help services to learn from current practice and make the necessary improvements. It is intended that the report will be available by the end of 1998.

Figure 0.2: Structured assessment tools

> **Management and Assessment of Risk in the Probation Service Home Office 1997**
>
> A comprehensive pack combining an overview of methods of risk assessment, training materials and guidance on the management of potentially dangerous offenders.
>
> **Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R)**
>
> LSI-R is a combined risk and needs assessment tool developed in Canada by Andrews and Bonta. Its measurements have been validated in North America. Raynor (1997) recently reviewed its effectiveness favourably. The Cognitive Centre Foundation offer training in this instrument.

Assessment, Case Management and Evaluation (ACE)

ACE is an assessment and evaluation tool developed in partnership between the Probation Studies Unit at the University of Oxford and Warwickshire Probation Service. It is user friendly and offers an ongoing assessment and review of practice effectiveness.

What the staff are required to produce

The supervision plan should follow logically from the assessment made at PSR and/or post-sentence stage and should specify in writing and in some detail:

- the level of monitoring and surveillance necessary, (where, when, and for how long each contact with the offender should be)

- the intensity of the intervention (with what regularity and over what period of time contact with the offender is required)

- the criminogenic needs the programme will address

- the objectives for change of the programme

- the learning style of the offender

- the structure of the programme and the methods to be employed

- the sequence of the different elements of the programme.

The supervision plan must meet the criteria set out in the relevant national standard. Assessment should also result in an offender who is clear about what is expected and has had the opportunity to raise concerns and to have received answers to questions. The process of assessment is likely to be many offenders' first encounter with the probation service. It is therefore important that the process is perceived by the offender as participative and motivating.

What the offender is expected to produce

The offender is expected to show at least a basic understanding of:

- the purpose and benefits of supervision

- what will be required in terms of participation to gain those benefits

- how participation in the programme will be enforced.

At best the offender will begin to feel motivated to participate actively and believe that the staff will provide a safe environment for learning and change.

Figure 0.3

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┌─────────────────────┐
│       OUTPUT        │
│   Supervision Plan  │
│  Clear Expectations │
│      Motivation     │
└─────────────────────┘
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Necessary Inputs

The necessary input for assessment can be summarised as staff who can:

- use the appropriate knowledge grounded in empirical research and criminological theory

- practice the skills necessary to obtain relevant information, to analyse that information, to produce supervision plans, to engage the offender fully in this process and to motivate and prepare the offender for supervision

- work collaboratively with others, particularly those with special expertise, e.g. psychologists or addiction specialists

- use an approved structured assessment tool

- understand and implement the service's targeting strategy for each programme, including meeting individual and team performance targets.

Assessment: key tasks for practitioners

The assessor will take care to ensure that the location of the assessment and the style of interaction reinforces:

- the seriousness of the process of addressing risk of reoffending and protecting the public

- the personal responsibility of the offenders for their behaviour and its consequences

- an inclusive approach which respects difference, avoids labels, encourages the active participation of the individual in all processes, is based upon the belief in the capacity of the individual to make changes in behaviour and offers equal and appropriate access to services and programmes.

The assessor will consistently use the approved structured tool(s) which:

- assess the harm that an offender might cause to the public, family, staff, partner organisations and themselves

- measure risk of reoffending

- identify criminogenic needs (see Figure 2.4)

- help to assess the capability of offenders and their learning styles, and identify potential obstacles (addiction, literacy, domestic responsibilities, homelessness, transport etc.) to participation in supervision

- build and develop motivation

- result in a supervision plan which manages any risk of serious harm identified, matches the individual to programmes and resources which will address risk of reoffending and criminogenic needs and builds upon existing protective factors (see Chapter 5).

Figure 0.4 Targeting need and circumstances for change

Individual Offending-related Needs

Anti-social attitudes and feelings

Ties to anti-social models (Anti-social associates)

Lack of ties/identification with pro-social models

Poor decision-making; poor problem-solving skills

Lack of pro-social interpersonal skills; lack of self-control and self-management skills; lack of rehearsed plan to deal with risk situations

Dependence on alcohol/drugs

Lack of contingencies/rewards that favour pro-social behaviour

Lack of belief in legitimacy of relevant areas of law or criminal justice

Relevant Social Circumstances

Unemployment

Accommodation if relevant to persistence of offending, e.g. homelessness

No income

Social isolation

Relevant Social Circumstances

Family factors (poor communication, relationships, supervision) where linked to offending and amenable to change

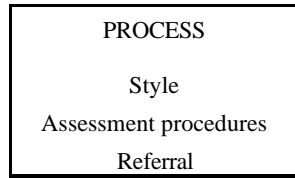**Mental health problems which require community support**

The assessor will ensure that:

- all practical steps to verify information are taken

- the offender is referred to the appropriate programmes in line with the service's targeting strategy

- those posing risk of serious harm to others are subject to an intensive and

highly controlled programme of significant duration tailored to their individual circumstances. Individual work should be just as tightly designed and structured as group work programmes

- those with a relatively low risk of reoffending are supervised and assisted to access the resources in the community necessary to maintain a law-abiding lifestyle.

Figure 0.5

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  PROCESS                    │
│                             │
│  Style                      │
│  Assessment procedures      │
│  Referral                   │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```

Making and recording good quality assessments are vital if the probation service is to evaluate the effectiveness of its work. Staff share a responsibility for, and an interest in, information about the effectiveness of their work with offenders. Effective professionals in any field should evaluate their own practice. Although managers and specialist staff may have the formal responsibility for evaluation and research, practitioners need to assist in the process of information collection, interpretation and monitoring and will be interested in the outcomes of evaluation to assist them to improve their performance.

Assessment: key tasks for managers

Management tasks include the management of activities, resources, people and quality.

Managing *activities* involves:

- implementing the service's management and assessment of risk (including risk of serious harm to the public) policy

- maintaining the effective use of approved structured assessment tools

- ensuring the availability of a core curriculum of programmes around levels or thresholds of risk, intensity of contact and demands made and criminogenic need; developing a targeting strategy defining the eligibility criteria for each programme, service or resource and ensuring that these criteria are aligned with the assessment tool (see Figure 2.6)

- setting targets for referrals to each programme and regularly monitoring performance

- intervening proactively if targets are not being met and continuously improving performance

- communicating the benefits, eligibility criteria and structure of the programmes to stakeholders, particularly courts.

Figure 0.6

> HMIP's report suggests that clearer eligibility criteria could improve referral and allocation to programmes by consistently:
>
> - identifying the normal threshold for case seriousness, linked usually to general service guidance
>
> - identifying a risk threshold or bank for the programme, using either general reconviction scales or appropriate offence and criminal history indicators
>
> - summarising the offending-related needs and circumstances which indicate suitability for the programme.
>
> Such criteria would be subject to the "principle of professional override" allowing discretion in individual cases with the consent of the line manager.

It is stating the obvious that in order to be cost effective community supervision programmes require sufficient referrals. Managers should set clear targets for appropriate referrals and monitor staff performance intervening proactively if targets are not met. Managers need to use good information to ensure that programmes are used to full capacity, that there are sufficient places to meet the courts' demands and that the costs of running such programmes are affordable. This is a demanding expectation of managers who will find that courts may wish to use programmes inappropriately for low risk offenders and that some probation practitioners are resistant to referring offenders in the target groups.

Managing *resources* involves:

- making arrangements for the necessary equipment and accommodation to be available and maintained

- planning and supporting the efficient use of financial and physical resources to achieve service goals

- deploying resources appropriately in the light of accurate assessments of need and in line with evidence of effectiveness

- monitoring the use of all resources to provide a cost-benefit analysis of activities and to inform resource planning decisions.

Managing *people* involves:

- developing the competence of the appropriate staff in the assessment tools

- deploying appropriate staff to the assessment process and determining what assessment procedures in addition to the PSR/post-sentence process are required from specialist/programme staff

- offering sound advice and supporting individual's decisions

- procuring and developing productive relationships with partner organisations to support the assessment process. These may include psychologists, psychiatrists, specialists in addiction, sex offending etc

- regularly appraising the competence of staff in the process through inspecting written records and observing practice.

Managing *information* involves:

- using the case management information system to collate overall levels of risk and needs so as to inform strategic decisions on terminating and developing programmes and resources

- using monitoring information to ensure that the curriculum reflects the profiles of offenders' problems.

Managing *quality* involves:

- implementing quality assurance procedures to ensure consistency, timeliness and the reliability of the professional discretion in the assessment process

- ensuring that the integrity of the process is not being undermined by personal prejudices and preferences.

A conceptual framework for assessment

The framework described below combines what research tells us about effective practice, with the demands made upon modern probation services and attempts to integrate this into daily mainstream practice. It is essentially pragmatic and takes into account the real world in which the probation services are required to deliver effective supervision programmes. The current demands upon services include protecting the public, reducing reoffending and reintegrating offenders into the community.

The assessment framework is:

- inclusive of a wide range of risks of reoffending, of criminogenic needs and of methods of supervision

- dynamic, allowing for both positive and negative change.

Its primary dimensions are *risk* and *community integration*.

Risk relates to the actual and perceived threat that the offender poses to the safety and property of potential victims. The continuum runs from too dangerous to be supervised with a reasonable degree of safety in the community to of no real risk to the public. Assessment on this continuum will determine the level of restriction of liberty and

surveillance required. Assessment will be based upon the accurate identification and measurement of risk factors.

When an offender is marginalised within the community the risk factors are likely to increase. To reduce risk, work needs to be undertaken on a range of factors including increasing the positive relationships that exist in the community. However, it needs to be recognised that on occasions removing the offender from their community for a period will be necessary to reduce the immediate risk, for example to victims, and provide the opportunity for work to be undertaken to enable the individual to form more positive, pro-social relationships.

Community integration relates to the extent to which the offender is involved in pro-social relationships and participates in pro-social activities. This continuum ranges from someone who is highly supported by and is contributing positively to the community to an offender who is deeply alienated from the community and has been ostracised by it. Assessment will be based upon the identification of protective factors. The key premise in this model is the direct and dynamic correlation between risk and community integration.

The secondary dimension of this framework is the structured programmes delivered by probation services, in partnership with others, which aim to reduce offending and make reparation. They provide the catalyst of change for offenders to move from risk to reintegration. Their intensity and content should be appropriate to assessment of risk and criminogenic need. Such structured programmes are not necessary for those whose level of risk is low and whose community links are positive. In such cases basic supportive contact, advice and access to resources should be adequate. Such supervision should be delivered efficiently so as to avoid dependence and diversion of resources from offenders requiring intensive intervention.

Kemshall has developed a model based upon extensive assessments of risk of harm, offender motivation and the targeting of effectiveness-based work. The approach uses the risk/responsivity principle to establish levels of risk and to match programme interventions with the learning styles of offenders. It is then combined with motivational interviewing. Following this, offenders can be categorised for both the level and type of intervention (see Figure 2.7).[10].

Figure 0.7: Prioritising and allocating risk (Kemshall)

BOX 1 High risk, Low motivation Low responsivity	BOX 2 High risk, High motivation, High responsivity
Surveillance and control of	Effectiveness-based work

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[10] Kemshall, H *Risk in Probation Practice* Aldershot, Ashgate (1998).

"Intransigents" or "Career Criminals"	Motivational interviewing to establish propensity for change
Extreme dangerousness as per Walker's model	Matching programmes to learning styles and personal/social circumstances of the offender
Those who are actively grooming victims	Pre-disposition to dangerousness or beginning to groom
BOX 3 **Low risk, High motivation** **High responsivity**	**BOX 4** **Low risk, Low motivation,** **Low responsivity**
Monitor for signs of escalation	**Enforcement of national standards**
Maintenance and reinforcement	Monitor for signs of escalation
Diversion where appropriate	Walker's "Chance One-Off"
Some pre-disposition to dangerous behaviour	
Note: Motivation refers to an offender's attitude to changing their behaviour. Responsivity refers to an offender's ability to engage with structured cognitive-behavioural programmes.	

Implications for effective practice

Application of this assessment framework has several implications for effective practice:

- assessment must take into consideration stages of a criminal career and intervention should vary according to which stage the individual has reached

- static risk factors (age, criminal record and offence) alone cannot gauge, on an individual case basis, what stage of a criminal career an offender has reached nor their likelihood of reoffending. In addition, it is necessary to identify and measure the extent of dynamic risk factors (and whether they are becoming more or less critical) and assess motivation to change. It is also necessary to balance these with protective factors which measure level of community integration

- many low risk offenders are likely to demonstrate criminogenic needs such as:

  * limited family relationships and/or support

  * education or employment problems

  * lack of constructive leisure activities

but are not likely to have assumed anti-social identities or attitudes and are less likely to associate with predominantly anti-social peers

- persistent or high risk offenders are likely to demonstrate criminogenic

needs such as those listed above, plus:

* anti-social motivation, definitions of situations and distorted thinking which support and maintain offending

* anti-social associates

* marginalisation from pro-social relationships, resources and activities

* deficits in cognitive skills such as problem-solving and critical reasoning

* deficits in interpersonal skills such as empathy, self-control and conflict resolution

* dependence upon alcohol/drugs

* unemployment and low income

* homelessness

* mental health problems

- persistent offenders who wish to desist from offending are likely to demonstrate

  * an appreciation of the problematic nature of their behaviour

  * a growing sense of personal responsibility for their behaviour

  * motivation to develop the self-awareness and skills necessary for a law-abiding lifestyle

  * valuing pro-social relationships and activities.

The process of changing behaviour must be designed as precisely as possible:

- supervision programmes for low risk offenders should be designed to

  * provide advice and counselling

  * support families/partners and other significant relationships

  * gain access to resources in the community

- supervision programmes for persistent offenders should be designed to:

  * increase motivation to change

  * reduce participants' dependence upon anti-social associates

  * challenge and change values, beliefs and attitudes which produce anti-social motives, definitions of situations and rationalisations

         * develop the cognitive skills and interpersonal skills necessary to sustain pro-social personal and working relationships

         * enable participants to widen their awareness of and put into practice more pro-social roles

         * be perceived by participants as empowering

- supervision programmes for persistent offenders wishing to desist from offending should be designed to:

         * enable participation in pro-social relationships and activities

         * enable access to education or employment

         * develop the confidence and skills to benefit from above resources.

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE FOR ASSESSMENT

The link between research and assessment: starting and stopping offending

Effective practice must be based on what research shows to be associated with committing offences and what is associated with desisting. Drawing on reliable research evidence from North America and the UK it is possible to come up with the following key facts about offending which are especially relevant to assessment:

- exactly which acts are defined as criminal varies from one society to another and across time;

- not all crimes are reported and recorded. Thus only a very small minority of crimes committed result in conviction and punishment, with less than 1% attracting community penalties;

- the overwhelming majority of the crimes dealt with by our criminal justice system are committed by males. Self-report studies suggest that the male/female ratio may be less than 2:1, in terms of offences prosecuted it is around 6 males to 1 female;

- we know far less about women's offending than we know about men's;

- most offenders are young. According to official statistics, the peak age of offending for males is 18 and 15 for females. Self report studies suggest that the peak ages are closer to 21 for males and 16 for females;

- offending is associated with poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, an unstable family background, having friends and/ or relatives who also offend;

- poor critical reasoning and consequential thinking, limited self-control, inability to empathise and a lack of interpersonal problem-solving skills are also associated with offending;

- a previous history of offending is the best predictor of future offending;

- research evidence conflicts about how race and crime are linked, but it is reasonable to assume that it is neither a biologically-inspired difference, nor simply due to the criminal justice system overreacting. A more likely cause is that minority groups suffer more from the adverse social conditions described above, however, this remains to be adequately tested;

- serious drug misuse is associated with high levels of acquisitive forms of offending (eg theft/burglary), the link to violence is less clear;

- the role alcohol plays in offending is unclear, but it has been shown to act as a situational trigger;

- most offenders stop offending as they grow older. The emerging evidence suggests this is associated with disengaging from anti-social friends, learning from mistakes and finding some direction and meaning in life. The main reasons offenders gave to Shover (1985) in his research into desistance were the increasing costs of crime, the importance of intimate relationships, employment, an increasing sense of maturity, responsibility and being settled.

It is obvious from this list that in assessing an offender, attention must be paid to his or her attitudes, social background and current circumstances *and* past actions. Comparing the list with the factors covered in the two main assessment tools which are currently being adopted or considered by so many services shows that both do this to a greater or lesser degree. This is because both ACE and LSI-R were designed in the light of existing research evidence. Work is in hand to assess the value of these scales, to develop a standard approach to assessment across the prison and probation services and to discover what additional scales might be required (eg for sex offenders).

It is also worth noting that as our knowledge base develops, any assessment tool or procedure will need to be revised and developed to incorporate that new knowledge. For example, because we know so little about women's offending we do not know exactly how far either scale works for them (although there has been some work on this in the US in relation to LSI-R). Similar questions arise in relation to offenders from ethnic minorities and single-offence offenders (eg paedophiles).

Relevant theoretical perspectives

Probably the only consensus about the causes of crime is that offending is the product of many inter-related factors, and that no single explanation will be adequate. In varying degrees crimes can by explained by:

- the certainty of detection and the risk and severity of punishment

- the ease of opportunity for offending

- psychological characteristics of offenders (such as personality or social skills)

- socio-economic status (eg income, employment and class);

- other social factors (such as offenders' networks and subcultures)

While criminologists generally agree that all such factors can play a part in explaining *some* crimes, there is considerable disagreement about the relative weight to be attached to different sorts of explanation.

Most of those involved in working to reduce reoffending in North America, for example, are heavily influenced by psychological explanations of behaviour which dominate criminological and penal thinking there. Here, historically, probation training and practice has been more heavily influenced by sociological explanations of crime. Because most of the current work on effective practice is North American (and thus, psychological) some practitioners here feel ill-equipped to make use of techniques such as cognitive behaviourism, whereas others may feel uneasy about using psychologically-derived techniques which seem to imply that the crime is a consequence of individual pathology.

While it is certainly true that training in cognitive-behaviouralism needs to be more widespread and of a better standard (Hedderman and Sugg, 1997), it is also important to realise that North American research on the causes of crime and effective treatment does not ignore an offender's environment; and using psychological techniques is compatible with a belief that offending may also reflect social inequalities.

The following brief discussion covers some relevant material under the following headings:

- biology and genetics

- subcultural theories

- differential association and social control

- drift and neutralisation

- labelling and symbolic interactionism

- rational choice

- cognitive and behavioural approaches; and

- integrative theories.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive review or a critique. It draws out only those aspects of some theories which seem particularly relevant to better assessment. Its purpose is to remind some practitioners of this work and to introduce it to others. A list of references and additional reading is included so that interested readers may follow-up some of this material in greater depth.

Biology and genetics

From time to time biological theories of offending enjoy a vogue, despite the lack of evidence to support them. The earliest studies of convicted offenders claimed they differed physically from non-offenders and concluded that biological factors played a causal role in offending (eg Lombroso 1911, Glueck and Glueck, 1968). Further studies

which studied offenders' families found that they too had histories of offending and concluded that criminality was inherited (eg Goring, 1919). Recently, new studies have explored the relationship between biology and behaviour. In most cases this research has so far failed to show causal links only associations, although there is some evidence to suggest that hyperactivity may be a behavioural consequence of low level physiological arousal such as significantly lower heart rates or blood pressure (Farrington, 1996).

Of course sex is the most obvious biological difference in offending. Even self report studies show that males commit more offences than women. These differences have not been shown to have a biological cause, but it is worth bearing in mind that biologists have at least examined this possibility. Generally, the other theories described below either ignore the existence of female offending (on the grounds that it is rare) or assume that a theory based on an analysis of male crime will explain female offending too. This leaves practitioners in the unhappy position of not knowing whether explanations of offending by males are applicable to female offending or not.

Subcultural theories

Subcultural theorists see delinquent behaviour as being sanctioned by a subculture and influenced by its status requirements. However, they do not agree on why certain norms exist in the subculture.

In *Social Structure and Social Theory* (1957), Merton argues that (American) society is characterised by an obsession with material success, but without an equal emphasis on how this may be achieved legitimately. According to Cohen (1955) coming from a working class background prevents juveniles from legitimately attaining this or other idealised (middle class) goals. They join gangs in reaction to the frustration this creates. For Cohen juvenile delinquency is quite different to adult offending, because it is non-utilitarian so, for example, theft is committed on impulse, prompted by a desire for excitement, not by need.

For Cloward and Ohlin (1960) juvenile delinquency is a more rational and purposeful activity. They theorised that delinquency occurs when legitimate means for achieving a goal are blocked and illegitimate opportunities exist and are supported by criminal subcultures which offer alternative aspirations and alternative ways of achieving them (for example, becoming part of a criminal network). Another key ingredient is the belief that underachievement is a consequence of the social order not a result of one's own actions, as to believe otherwise would create pressures to improve oneself. The value of this theory lies in its recognition of social inequalities and the fact that different people face very different life opportunities. However, it also indicates that acknowledging that fact will not, in itself, assist the individual to abandon a delinquent lifestyle. That requires the

individual to understand and take control of their lives and commit themselves to making the most of new opportunities (educational programmes, employment schemes etc).

Differential Association and Social Control

For Sutherland and Cressey (1947) "A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favourable to violation of law over definitions unfavourable to law." (p75). This approach assumes that offending, like other forms of behaviour, is learnt. The child becomes delinquent as a result of being surrounded by significant others (parents and peers) who subscribe to antisocial values. While this may be taken to mean that offenders tend to come from criminal families and have delinquent friends, the fact that we are all exposed to a mixture of pro and anti-social definitions is also acknowledged (eg observing otherwise law-abiding parents ignore speed limits and justifying it on the grounds that the posted limit is unreasonably low).

Like differential association, social control theory assumes that offending is a function of social processes. However, while differential association assumes that deviance occurs because of negative environmental influences, control theorists see deviance as automatic. Thus, in *Causes of Delinquency* (Hirschi 1969) seeks to explain why the vast majority of people do *not* regularly commit criminal offences in spite of economic pressures and the opportunity to do so. The key concept is social bonding. Essentially the more attached, committed and involved people are in positive relationships the more likely they are to accept and obey the law. Any disintegration in these social bonds will increase the risk of the onset of delinquency. It is argued that those most likely to commit offences are those with weakest attachments to family, local community and wider society.

Drift and Neutralisation

Matza (1964) takes issue with the idea of delinquent subcultures which shape the behaviour of their members. Instead he portrays the delinquent as someone who is largely committed to the dominant values in society, but who drifts into delinquency when social controls are weakened. The mechanism for this are *techniques of neutralisation* which are said to account for people violating norms because they view them as conditional (Sykes and Matza, 1957). These techniques include denial of personal responsibility (in which perpetrators see themselves as helplessly propelled into offending by factors beyond their control) and denial of the victim (for example, when perpetrators argue that the victim "was asking for it").

Matza argues that argues that teenage males are particularly prone to drifting into delinquency because of their anxieties over masculinity, status and peer acceptance. While some will then become fully

committed to a deviant lifestyle, others will assume new roles and affiliations, with the result that they mature out of offending. An important aspect of this approach is that it recognises that the individual has some degree of choice and is not simply shaped by his or her environment.

Labelling and symbolic interactionism

For Lemert (1951), the search for original causes of crime was futile, arguing that all that 'deviants' (a less specific term than offenders or criminals) have in common is that they have been so labelled. In the same tradition Becker (1963) focuses on the reactions of the social audience, and the interactional processes leading to the application of the 'deviant' label, rather than the intrinsic qualities of the law breaker. A useful concept from this theory is the idea that some labels such as 'drug addict' or 'rapist' are so powerful that they determine how others respond to that individual regardless of the other qualities he or she possesses. Such labels also tend to be taken on by the individual as a 'primary identifier'.

Braithwaite (1989) develops these ideas to suggest that if the offence is handled in such a way that social bonds are reinforced – *reintegrative shaming* – the offender is unlikely to take on an anti-social orientation. However, if the offender is stigmatised and rejected, the result is likely to be further offending and association with other offenders with whom they feel more comfortable and who share a common view of the world.

Rational choice

As we know from research that most offenders do not specialise in one type of offending, some would argue that there is no need to develop a different theory for each type of offender, but to have different explanations for different types of offending events (Farrington, 1996). Rational choice theory suggests that the most appropriate explanations for many offences are ones which focus on opportunities and the balance of costs and benefits. One of the best known examples of work from this perspective is Cornish and Clarke's (1986) study of residential burglary which found that offenders made careful choices in targeting a house which minimised their risks (eg avoiding houses with a burglar alarm or a dog).

Cognitive and behavioural approaches

Cognitive behaviourism describes a technique (or range of techniques) designed to assist someone to modify their thinking and actions. It was not developed nor is it used solely to deal with offending. Cognitive behaviourism is not a unified, distinct psychological theory, it draws on:

- behaviourism which stresses the role of external factors in shaping and

reinforcing an individual's actions;

- cognitive theory in which the importance of an individual's thought processes such as reasoning and problems solving are stressed;

- social learning theory, which is derived from behaviourism but holds that while the environment is a key factor, learning may also occur indirectly, through observation of outcomes of the behaviour of others.

From this it is obvious that to be effective this approach must follow a comprehensive assessment which covers an offender's environment, thoughts and attitudes and, in formulating an appropriate response takes account of his or her learning styles.

Integrative theories

A number of modern theorists have attempted to integrate ideas from several earlier schools to increase their explanatory power. One British proponent of such an approach is David Farrington (1996: 108-9) who argues that his theory:

"distinguishes explicitly between the long-term development of antisocial tendency and the immediate occurrence of offences and other antisocial acts."

Antisocial tendencies can be *energised* by the desire for good or status, boredom, frustration, anger and alcohol consumption; *directed* if socially disapproved methods are habitually chosen to satisfy them; or *inhibited* by the internalisation of beliefs and attitudes.

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EFFECTIVE PROBATION PRACTICE: CASE MANAGEMENT
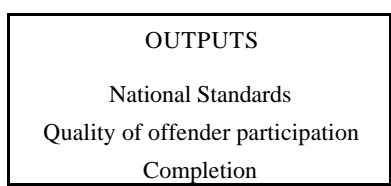
OVERVIEW

This chapter explains the importance of the case management role in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of community supervision. It should be read in conjunction with Chapter 8 of the HMIP report[11]. Other key references include the relevant national standard, the Management and Assessment of Risk[12] pack and areas' own local policies and guidelines.

The full potential for effectiveness of assessment, programme delivery and community reintegration can only be achieved if these elements are integrated seamlessly into an effectively managed supervision plan. The case manager is responsible for the integrity of the whole supervision process. The case manager role is crucial to the input-output-input model of integrating effective supervision. Figure 3.1 helps to illustrate the role.

Figure 0.1 to be inserted

Case managers form the key relationship with the supervised offender. In this way they come to represent the probation service to the individual. They must embody the values, the authority and integrity of the supervision process. Pro-social modelling and the legitimate exercise of authority have been found to be critical success factors in engaging offenders and influencing their behaviour. The case manager role is therefore critical to effective practice. NAPO has recently formulated a policy statement on the role which broadly supports the approach taken in this Guide.[13]

Figure 0.2

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│           OUTPUTS               │
│                                 │
│       National Standards        │
│  Quality of offender participation │
│          Completion             │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
```

What are the staff required to produce? Staff are required to produce recorded evidence of the supervision process conforming to the plan contracted between the court and the offender.

What is the offender required to produce? Offenders are required to produce attendance, positive participation and completion of all order conditions required by the court.

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[11] Ibid, footnote 1.
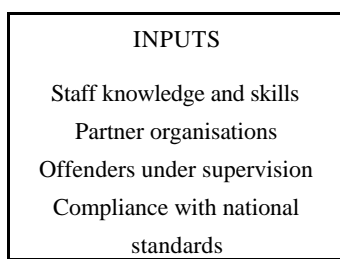
[12] Ibid, footnote 5.

[13] National Association of Probation Officers *Probation Officer as Case Manager* (Policy Document, PD3-1998).

Necessary Inputs

The necessary inputs for effective case management are:

- staff who are competent in the skills of:

  * risk assessment and management

  * supervision planning and review

  * managing contact, attendance and enforcement

  * understanding and communicating the demands and benefits of appropriate programmes and services

  * referral and allocation of resources used in supervision

  * co-ordination and sequencing of work through the order

  * motivating, pro-social modelling and reinforcing progress in learning and change

  * working in partnership within and outside their own organisation

  * prioritising within their caseload

  * using data to assess and adapt practice

- appropriate partner organisations

- offenders subject to enforceable contracts

- compliance with the relevant national standard.

Figure 0.3

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│         INPUTS              │
│                             │
│  Staff knowledge and skills │
│    Partner organisations    │
│  Offenders under supervision│
│   Compliance with national  │
│          standards          │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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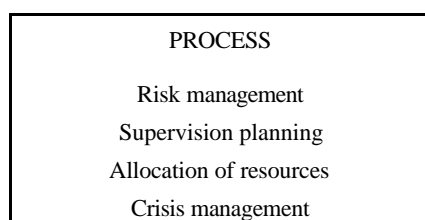
Case management: key tasks for practitioners

The key tasks and responsibilities of the case manager include:

- implementing, monitoring and reviewing the risk management plan and ensuring it is recorded

- ensuring the offender understands the legal requirements of the order and is

enabled to meet them

- defining contact levels and keeping a record of appointments with reasons for non-attendance

- ensuring timely commencement, as defined by the national standard, of supervision and within three months for structured, intensive programmes

- enforcing the order and taking breach action as appropriate

- overall implementation and regular review of the supervision plan developed through the assessment process. This involves the prioritising, timing and sequencing of the different elements of supervision

- involving parents and other significant family members in systematic practice and rehearsal of new behaviour

- making appropriate resources and specific interventions accessible to the individual within required deadlines. This involves preparing the individual to get the best out of the resource or intervention and dealing with any anxieties the individual might have. The case manager is responsible for transferring appropriate information between staff or partner organisations and will normally have a key role to play in community reintegration

- ensuring any obstacles to the achievement of the supervision plan, e.g. personal distress, crises or literacy skills, are dealt with

- reinforcing motivation to participate, change and learn from programmes and experience. This may involve coaching, rehearsal or practical opportunities to use skills or knowledge acquired. It requires the case manager to provide a safe, consistent, reliable and firm working relationship

- modelling pro-social behaviour and not contradicting lessons learned from the programme

- identifying others who can provide a positive social model

- providing offender choice particularly in identifying and selecting community opportunities to reinforce and demonstrate changed behaviour

- signifying the end of the supervision process in a way that reflects what has and has not been achieved by the individual and what remains to be done

- monitoring and evaluating their own work and contributing to the team's evaluation.

Figure 0.4

PROCESS

Risk management
Supervision planning
Allocation of resources
Crisis management

Reinforcing motivation and learning
Enforcement

Case management: key tasks for managers

The principal management tasks are to:

- manage people

    * deploy and develop the competence of appropriate staff including deciding on the appropriate grade of staff to undertake the variety of tasks

    * ensure staff understand the importance of pro-social modelling

    * procure necessary expertise and facilities not available within the service from partnership organisations to respond to crises and non criminogenic needs

    * appraise staff competence through inspecting records and direct observation of practice

    * identify and/or provide relevant training for case managers and service providers alike

- manage activities

    * monitor case records according to National Standards, particularly in relation to supervision plans, use of resources and programmes and enforcement

    * provide comprehensive case and risk management guidelines with supporting inter-agency protocols with, for example, police and health

    * define levels of intervention related to risk categorisation

    * ensure that programmes are structured to maximise the opportunities for pro-social modelling over significant periods of time

- manage information

    * analyse case management information systems to assess the fit between identified need and availability and use of resources and programmes. On the basis of this information influence policy on distribution and delivery of resources and programmes

    * develop information systems and make use of CRAMS to assist with case management

    * ensure information is used to evaluate case managers' practice

- manage quality

  * model effective practice

  * share and disseminate good practice.

Risk management

This brief discussion of risk management does not attempt to be comprehensive but is intended to demonstrate the interdependence of risk management and effective practice. It should be read in conjunction with other more authoritative accounts including the Home Office pack on risk[14] and HMIP's thematic reports.[15]

In addition to their work on reducing reoffending, probation services are responsible for the effective risk management of those assessed as posing a serious risk to the public. While many of the offender factors listed in Chapter 2 on assessment are relevant, risk management also involves an assessment of factors which increase the vulnerability of victims including situational variables.

Risk assessment is essentially about making calculations about potential harm or loss based upon a rational appraisal of what has been learnt from past events. It balances the risk of potential harm with the ability to control the risk. These dimensions of the risk equation can only be estimated. It is not an exact science. The value of risk assessment is that it makes decision-making explicit and accountable.

To protect the public from the harm that crime causes it is necessary to estimate the likelihood of harm occurring and its severity. Containment, control or elimination strategies will need to be developed according to the level of dangerousness, the seriousness of the harm, its immediacy, its potential victims, what level of toleration there is for the harm and whether the costs of elimination outweigh the benefits. Any risk management strategy is likely to require the help and co-operation of other key agencies – police, local authorities, forensic psychiatry and psychology etc.

Public safety will take precedence over any other considerations in the delivery of effective supervision and reintegration into the community. It is necessary to make a risk assessment to establish whether supervision in the community can safely take place and, if so, what precautions must be taken.

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[14] Ibid, footnote 5.

[15] HM Inspectorate of Probation *Dealing with Dangerous People: The Probation Service and Public Protection* Report of a Thematic Inspection (1995) and *Exercising constant vigilance: The Role of the Probation Service in Protecting the Public from Sex Offenders* Report of a Thematic Inspection (1998).

Risk management is a necessary precondition of effective practice. The lifestyle of the persistent offender is likely to be chaotic, lacking in boundaries and potentially dangerous. The process of change is a difficult and threatening one both for worker and offender. Consequently it requires a sense of safety and stability. One function of effective risk management is to reduce behaviour which threatens safety and stability and distracts from the learning process. Effective supervision programmes cannot thrive without effective risk management.

The development of knowledge and technology represents, in part, an attempt to manage risk. In this way risk assessment should be a catalyst to effective practice as resources are managed more rationally, processes are standardised and weaknesses in practice can be located and corrected. There is now a growing acceptance of electronic monitoring of offenders in appropriate circumstances and with clear safeguards. The curfew can be set to suit the nature of the risk of harm to others. There is too little research evidence available in the UK at this time to know whether electronic monitoring is likely to produce a sustained change of behaviour unless it is linked to programmes addressing criminogenic needs based on effectiveness principles.

DRAFT – 31 July 1998

EFFECTIVE PROBATION PRACTICE: PROGRAMME DELIVERY

OVERVIEW

This chapter provides help to those staff responsible for delivering structured and defined individual and group programmes of intervention aimed at making a measurable contribution to the reduction of reoffending. It should be read in conjunction with Chapters 5 and 7 of the HMIP report.[16] At the end of the chapter on tinted pages there is a summary of research evidence on responsivity and change.

HMIP, Home Office Probation Unit and ACOP working with probation and prison service colleagues are developing a range of programmes for the effective supervision of offenders. During 1998/ 1999 and beyond a number of pathfinder programmes will be developed (see PC 35/98) and a system of accrediting the design and delivery of such programmes will be established.

Figure 0.1

Research indicates that the most effective programmes are:

- multi-modal (a variety of methods addressing a range of criminogenic needs)

- skills-oriented (cognitive behavioural, vocational, literacy and numeracy)

- able to model pro-social behaviour

- structured and have a high degree of programme integrity

- community based

- employment related

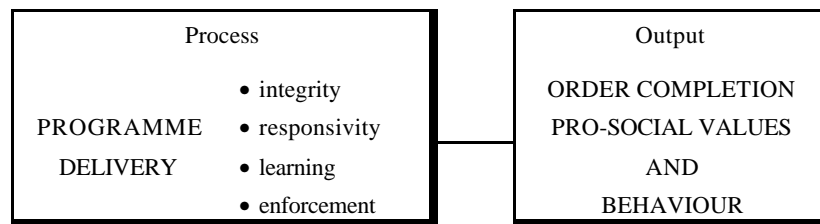- monitored and evaluated

and make use of:

- cognitive skills training

- role play, modelling and opportunities to practice skills

- prosocial modelling (the quality of relationship with staff and its use to reinforce pro-social behaviour)

- family-focused behavioural processes.

Effective supervision plans will lead to the allocation of offenders to appropriate programmes, designed to address risk factors and the criminogenic needs identified in the assessment. While fully structured programmes tend to be designed for group work, plans

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[16] Ibid, footnote 1.

should include structured, individualised work, eg employment programmes where appropriate or where group work is not practicable.

Figure 0.2

Process	Output
PROGRAMME DELIVERY • integrity • responsivity • learning • enforcement	ORDER COMPLETION PRO-SOCIAL VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR

What the staff are expected to produce

The staff are expected to ensure:

- the delivery of the required programme

- adherence to programme integrity

- evidence of measurable change in the behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of the participants of the programme

- evidence of the acquisition or development of new skills by programme participants

- that motivation is built and sustained

- prompt action on non-compliance

- satisfactory completion rates

- positive participant feedback on the quality of the programme

- improved social circumstances.
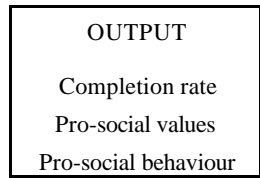
What the offender is expected to produce

The offender is expected to produce:

- motivation to change

- evidence of a sense of personal responsibility for anti-social behaviour and enhanced empathy for victims

- evidence of improved cognitive and interpersonal skills

- evidence of active efforts to reduce behaviour related to offending (e.g.

dependence on alcohol/drugs, unemployment)

- evidence of the acquisition or development of new skills or qualifications, eg NVQ or similar

- the ability to gain access to resources necessary for community reintegration

- reduction in reconvictions and reoffending.

Figure 0.3

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│      OUTPUT             │
│                         │
│   Completion rate       │
│   Pro-social values     │
│   Pro-social behaviour  │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

Necessary Inputs

Necessary inputs for effective delivery are:

- staff who

  * contribute to monitoring and evaluating their programmes

  * use the research into effective programme delivery

  * are committed to the values of the programme, particularly to the value of programme integrity

  * adapt their approach to a range of learning styles, understand the process of change and sustain the motivation of participants in the programme

  * demonstrate pro-social modelling

  * are competent in the methods employed (e.g. individual or group work, adult learning techniques, role play)

  * are effective in engaging in productive working relationships

  * are confident in challenging attitudes and behaviour and enforcing rules and contracts

- partner agencies which can provide expertise or facilities not available in the organisation

- offenders who

  * are appropriate to the programme

∗ are aware of what is expected of them,

∗ have some motivation to participate

- well designed programmes based upon written guidelines or manuals, including individual programmes.

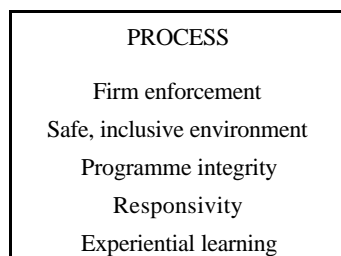- sufficient resources i.e. equipment, accommodation etc.

Figure 0.4

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INPUTS

Staff knowledge and skills
Partners
Appropriate offenders
Designed, structured
programmes
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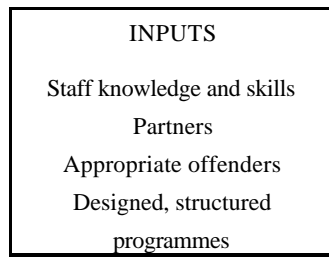
Programme Delivery: key tasks for practitioners

The key tasks for staff of programme delivery include:

- delivery of the programme as specified to the court in the PSR

  ∗ timely start of programme

  ∗ rigorous and timely enforcement practice

- maintenance of a working environment which

  ∗ has clear rules of attendance, conduct, language and participation which are enforced firmly, consistently and equitably

  ∗ is inclusive and accessible in terms of timing, location, accommodation, child-care facilities, and transport for all targeted offenders including those who are employed

  ∗ challenges anti-social behaviour and attitudes including racism and sexism

- the achievement of programme integrity

  ∗ compliance with the programme concepts and values and manual design

  ∗ avoiding both programme drift and an over-rigid adherence

  ∗ session records which clearly identify exercises and materials used and which are monitored for indicators of integrity (process checklists, video, independent observer)

  ∗ time for planning, preparation, debriefing and review built in

- a teaching style which matches the participants' learning styles

  * resulting in active participation by most individuals

  * individual attention to sustain motivation and enhance learning

  * reinforcement or reward for attendance and participation

- use of workbooks which

  * provide a record of individual sessions for the service

  * enable the offender to undertake assignments and homework

  * provide further evidence of programme integrity

  * assist in monitoring and evaluation

- opportunities for practising pro-social behaviour

  * task assignments or homework between sessions

  * supervised or supported opportunities to practise (e.g. reparation or community service)

- monitoring and evaluation of the programme and its delivery.

Figure 0.5

```
PROCESS

Firm enforcement
Safe, inclusive environment
Programme integrity
Responsivity
Experiential learning
```

Programme delivery : key tasks for managers

The main management tasks are:

- to manage activities

  * organise the delivery of a range of approved programmes to meet local needs. (See Figure 4.7 and the explanatory note at the end of this chapter which are taken from HMIP's report)

  * make clear whether programmes are suitable for both genders and all races, the policy on balance in group composition and the need for material to be suitable for all those likely to attend, avoiding unintentional racism/sexism

∗ understand all the programmes fully and promote them enthusiastically to stakeholders

∗ monitor delivery including

timeliness of commencement of the programmes

attendance

enforcement practice

health and safety

programme integrity

participant feedback

performance of partnership organisations

∗ evaluate and improve performance

∗ develop an effective change control mechanism to ensure programmes evolve in a way consistent with the findings of effectiveness research and stated aims and objectives; keep a log of changes as they occur

∗ take steps to improve completion rates (see Figure 4.6)

Figure 0.6: Strategies for improving completion rates (from HMIP's report para 7.33)

• Systematic and immediate programme provision for offenders moving into employment **Some Areas provided their general offending programmes only in weekday daytime hours; other Areas offered alternative timings, either with fairly immediate access or sometimes with access after significant delay**
• Timely arrangements for programme start **On programmes visited, this varied from immediate to very lengthy delay; a reasonable minimum standard would be one month (three months if structured pre-programme work is provided)**
• Routine arrangements to deal without difficulty with strictly limited amounts of acceptable absence **Some programmes made no provision and, for others, lengthy catch-up sessions were a burden on staff. For widely used programmes, workbooks and information technology based interactive programmes could be developed**
• Careful assessment and motivational work prior to commencing the programme

- More timely and improved enforcement practice

  One Area was considering the use of follow-up officers to quickly investigate absence; such an initiative would be worth careful evaluation

- Ensuring that offenders, who have attended or participated less fully, receive a high level of staff attention to sustain motivation

  Requires conscious attention by the group workers; the natural tendency will be for the most participative members to enjoy the most attention. Continued use of motivational techniques will be relevant

- Work by programme staff to support attendance

  Following the inspector's visit, one programme introduced short sessions with key workers focusing on problem resolution relevant to attendance

- to manage resources

  * procure and manage appropriate funds, equipment and accommodation

  * manage logistical demands e.g. child-care, transport, schedule, staff rota, catering

- to manage people

  * deploy and develop the competence of appropriate staff including building in the opportunity for specialist consultancy

  * procure necessary expertise or facilities not available in the Service from partnership organisations and maintain productive working relationships

  * ensure staff are ready and prepared to deal with issues of racism and sexism

  * regularly appraise staff competence in the necessary tasks of programme delivery through monitoring systems, records and observing practice

- to manage information

  * manage systems which monitor attendance, compliance, enforcement and completions

- to manage quality

  * ensure that programmes are soundly designed conforming to the findings of effectiveness research and have an internal integrity

  * to ensure that all programmes meet the national accreditation criteria when available

  ∗ implement quality assurance procedures and monitoring systems to assure the integrity of programmes.

Service design: a model

Figure 0.7:to be inserted

The model describes services and programmes in five "layers", ranging from a focus on the individual offender at the top to a community focus at the bottom. Introduction is needed especially to the first three "layers":

- **cognitive-behaviour training and personal development** – work on the underlying processes of cognition, patterns of behaviour or process of individual development which are relevant to some offending behaviour. Much of this work fits within a personal and social education approach, although some would fit more helpfully in a therapeutic framework. The evidence base for cognitive-behavioural interventions has been well documented. Personal development approaches are not for generalised application, bearing in mind negative research findings for non-directive approaches but may have relevance when carefully targeted.

- **challenging offending choices, identifying responsible opportunities** – work which encourages offenders to critically review past and present offending choices and identify opportunities to meet their legitimate needs, fulfil themselves and behave responsibly. Such work is built into many structured programmes – which often analyse and review past choices and seek to build commitments for future behaviour. This work needs also to be pursued throughout the period of assessment and supervision; it is close to the core role of the probation officer in contracting, supervision planning and risk management.

- **social and moral education** – work which seeks to educate and inform on relevant social and moral issues and responsibilities, including victims, relationships, substance use, road use, citizenship and discrimination. This work is a familiar and substantial part of structured programmes. The heading used may be less familiar but draws attention to the common ground with such work through the school years and in adult education. "Social and moral education is a process of development ... from a state where social and moral values of one's society are imposed from without ... to a state where the individual ... adopts by free choice social and moral values ... appropriate for life in society. The "social" purpose of such education is inherent in the purpose of probation supervision in promoting "greater sense of personal responsibility" and "reintegration as a law-abiding member of the community"; its moral dimension is particularly evident in topics such as the morality of conduct with children, self-harm, respect for persons and for property. Probation programmes contribute to this area, while focusing on targeted and relevant learning outcomes. Such work needs to be clear as to the moral principles asserted and the range of

learning outcomes in moral thinking they acknowledge.

The lower two "layers" cover:

- **resolving problems/meeting needs in family and community**

- **community opportunities/reintegration.**

They cover some work provided in specialist programmes for offenders (usually by partner organisations) but much provision is by accessing community-based services. This work meets relevant offender needs, but can also provide opportunities for practice and application of new skills or changed attitudes developed by work in the higher "layers".

To make this a comprehensive model, it also includes:

- **community service by offenders**

This is shown as spanning the lower two "layers" – for it has potential, in some placements, to provide opportunities to apply and reinforce changes initiated in the upper "layers" of the model. It can also provide impressive opportunities for community reintegration.

Most structured programmes do some combination of the work described in the top three "layers". The balance of work rightly depends on offender type targeted but also varies substantially between different programme designs. A model of this kind:

- clarifies differences between programmes

- distinguishes what can be covered by a structured programme and what else needs including in a wider supervision plan

- emphasises the wide range of possible service provision

- points up, therefore, the need to select the more effective elements of intervention for particular types of offender.

This model (Figure 4.7) of effective programmes and services needs to take account of some more general points from effectiveness research – set out, for example, in the guidelines for more effective programmes presented by McGuire and Priestly. The right-hand tabs show the supporting features required for effective practice:

- effective assessment will ensure that offenders are allocated to programmes which are appropriate in relation to risk, needs and responsivity

- case management will need to achieve the planning and integration of services

- programme integrity will require delivery in line with concept and design set out in a treatment manual and attention to issues such as staff ownership and commitment and the achievement of pro-social attitudes predominating.

"Application Placements" could involve a variety of work but would be distinguished by the relevant staff understanding how to support the practice, for example, of problem solving or self-control skills.

"Citizenship Placements" would provide opportunities to model positive social behaviour, demonstrate community responsibility and provide options to carry on with such work beyond the statutory period. They may provide opportunities to form new relationships with people who hold positive social attitudes. Offenders' experience of community service could be used in probation supervision as a vehicle for examining attitudes and behaviour and encouraging change.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE ON RESPONSIVITY AND CHANGE

The Principle of Responsivity

Effective change requires active participation. Risk and need assessment determine the intensity and duration of intervention, the targets and objectives of change and the content of the supervision programme. The court gives probation services the legal authority to deliver the programme and this coercion is necessary and should not be an obstacle to change. (In at least some cases the offender may have formally consented to attend.) However, on its own, it results, at best, in compliance and, at worst, defiance.

The importance of the individual's perspective

The empirical evidence upon which much of this Guide relies is a product of what has been termed "administrative criminology" i.e. research commissioned to identify individual risk factors or deficits which can be change or contained so as to solve social and political problems. While such data can help probation services target their resources appropriately, design effective programmes and manage risk in order to protect the public, it is of limited value when it comes to engaging offenders in a process of change.

There is the potential for a serious gap in understanding and communication which will obstruct positive outcomes. To probation services crime is a serious problem for society; to many offenders society or their social circumstances cause crime. To the service the offender is a deviant in need of adjustment, while offenders may see themselves as having the same egotistical and consumerist values they see positively modelled every day. They may also perceive the criminal justice process as part of an oppressive system which denies them the legitimate opportunities to realise these values.

What the theory refers to as risk, the offender may experience as loss or oppression. Often crime is perceived by the offender as an attempt to restore a power imbalance (Tittle 1995). In this way anti-discriminatory principles can make a real contribution to the individual's level of responsivity.

While well designed and executed programmes are an essential prerequisite to effective supervision, ultimately effectiveness depends upon the individual's active participation in a process of change. In the final analysis offenders must be prepared to involve themselves sufficiently to benefit from the programme. It is the failure to gain this participation which often accounts for disappointing outcomes and rates of attendance and completion.

Partly this active engagement can be achieved through the potential benefits of change which the programme promises. However, this is likely to be perceived as too abstract and long-term to appeal to the interests of most persistent offenders. Most research and theory into

motivation, change and learning emphasise similar principles, concepts and methods.

The worker's style

The worker's style of intervention and quality of relationship with the individual have been identified as critical to both change and resistance. This suggests that care should be taken to maximise these factors through staff development, purposeful deployment of staff and research into matching worker to offender or programme.

Legitimacy

There is evidence (Rex 1997) that probationers are motivated by the probation officers' legitimate moral authority. Those who act legitimately towards individuals are likely to inspire more compliant behaviour. Reasonableness, fairness and encouragement appear to engender in some probationers a sense of loyalty towards their supervising officers. This positive relationship can motivate an individual to enter into an alliance with the officer and participate in a process even if not convinced of its effectiveness.

The principles which appear to promote the perception of legitimacy include;

- the opportunity for the offender to participate in making important decisions

- consistency of approach

- impartiality

- competence

- the right to complain and appeal against decisions

- an ethical base which assures respect and dignity.

The method known as pro-social modelling is linked to the concept of legitimacy. This entails being clear of one's values and objectives and reinforcing them with offenders through praise, reward and sanction.

Legitimacy and pro-social modelling is based upon the reinforcement of clear values. However, this reinforcement must be practiced with sensitivity and skill. One objective of supervision programmes is to confront offenders with their responsibility for their behaviour and its consequences. The purpose of confrontation is to enable the individual to become aware of this reality, to see it as problematic and to want to change it. It is the offender's awareness which is critical not the worker's. Research into "short, sharp, shocks" and "Boot camps" (Thornton et al 1984, Lipsey 1995) found they did not reduce reconvictions and may have increased recidivism.

Change is a process

Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) have researched why and how people change in the field of addiction. They developed a "wheel of change" model of six stages. They later altered this model to a "spiral of change" (Prochaska et al 1992) recognising that most people go round the wheel several times before giving up their addiction.

In this model gains are being made on each cycle, but setbacks and relapses are to be expected and managed. This is not to say that the negative consequences of relapse are avoided, but that neither worker nor individual receiving treatment should become demotivated as the emphasis is on gradual gains in competence and progress towards the intended outcome, rather than immediate desistance.

While this model is based upon research into the treatment of addictions, its explanation of the difficulties and frustrations of change will have a resonance for anyone with experience of working with persistent offenders. Furthermore, there is an emerging body of research and theory identifying the common antecedents of addiction and crime, similar patterns of persistence and escalation and the same evidence of effective treatment (Hodge et al 1997).

The stages of change are:

- **precontemplation**; in which the offender does not consider offending to be a problem and sees no need to change,

- **contemplation**; in which the offender can see problems in offending but is ambivalent about change,

- **determination** or **preparation**; a window of opportunity in which there is sufficient motivation to decide to change,

- **action**; in which the individual actively attempts to change,

- **maintenance**; in which the individual maintains the changes made but is still at risk of relapse,

- **relapse**; in which the individual reoffends. This may be a temporary setback or result in a return to the beginning of the cycle.

Each stage requires different tactics and skills. Often resistance to change is due to the application of a programme at an inappropriate stage.

Figure 0.8: The spiral of change model

STAGE	STRATEGY AND SKILLS
Precontemplation	Raise the doubt and reinforce cognitive dissonance between the benefits and costs of offending. Assessment and programmes aimed at raising awareness of the costs of offending.

Contemplation	**Tip the balance of ambivalence over the risks of offending and strengthen the individual's self-efficacy for change. Skills based programmes which increase competence and confidence.**
Determination	**Help the individual determine an action plan for change. Action planning.**
Action	**Help the individual to take steps toward change. Community reintegration.**
Maintenance	Help the individual to identify and use strategies to prevent relapse. Community reintegration
Relapse	**Help the individual manage relapse without becoming demoralised. Reassessment and revision of appropriate programmes.**

Motivational interviewing

"Motivational interviewing is an approach designed to help clients build commitment and reach a decision to change" (Miller and Rollnick 1991 p.x). It has been developed in the field of addictive and compulsive behaviour and has not been specifically validated in the treatment of offenders. However, there are sufficient similarities and overlaps between the two target groups for it to be a technique worth testing for effectiveness. "A defining characteristic of addictive behaviours is that they involve the pursuit of short-term gratification at the expense of long-term harm." (Miller and Rollnick 1991 p.ix). This describes one of the cognitive deficits identified in persistent offenders.

Motivational interviewing avoids the authoritarian, confrontational style. It involves listening and acknowledging (though not colluding with) the validity of the individual's experiences and perspectives. The method stresses the importance of the worker's style in obtaining positive outcomes.

Key factors in a successful style include;

- the ability to express empathy (through skilful reflective listening, the worker seeks to understand the individual's feelings and perspectives)

- the ability to develop discrepancy (through assessments and feedback develop awareness of consequences; a discrepancy between present behaviour and important goals will motivate change)

- the ability to avoid arguments over labelling the individual as having problems and needing to change. The offender should provide the arguments for change

- the ability to "roll" with resistance (reframe resistance with empathy, assume the individual is capable, avoid always having the "answer" or solution)

- the ability to support efficacy (emphasise personal responsibility, offer role models of effective change, believe in the possibility of change).

Avoidance of labelling

Negative labelling reduces the possibility of change and demotivates the individual. There is a danger that an actuarial approach to assessment, i.e. a list of risk factors which are ticked off and added up, reinforces difference and objectifies the individual. It is important that we conceive of risk as a matter of degree, a continuum on which we can all locate ourselves ("there but for fortune....") This allows for the recognition of both difference and common humanity permitting mutuality and engagement in a way that sympathy or condemnation does not.

Emphasise the concrete and the practical

Research into what offenders want from supervision emphasises the need for practical and emotional support, and understanding offending through awareness of the individual's needs and perspectives. (Barry 1997, Rex 1995, Beaumont and Mistry 1996) Responding in a practical manner to a non-criminogenic need can increase responsivity depending upon in what circumstances and how it is done. If there is a concrete obstacle to participation in a programme e.g. child care, it makes sense to overcome it so that effective practice can take place. The way the problem is resolved should empower rather than create dependency and reinforce a sense of helplessness. The process of change is more likely to be a series of small concrete, practical steps towards a goal rather than a sudden flash of insight.
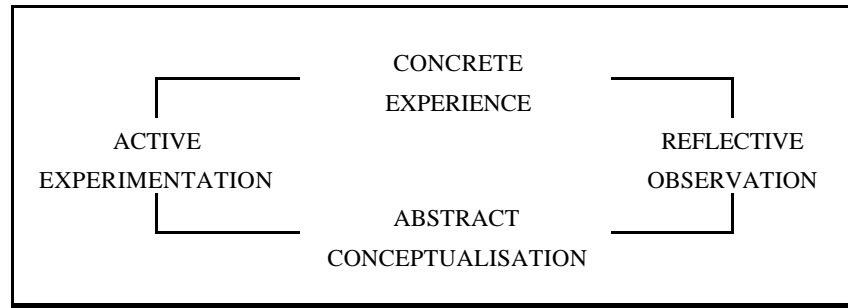
Set positive objectives

The concept of protective factors discussed in the chapter on community reintegration helps practitioners frame goals in a positive, non-stigmatising way. It is important to maintain a belief in each individual's innate resilience in the face of pressures, their ability to participate in the programme and their capacity to learn, to solve problems and change their behaviour.

Learning style

Much of effective practice is directed at enabling offenders to learn cognitive and other skills. It is influenced by the theories and

methods of adult learning and is similar to competence based training underpinning many vocational courses and occupational standards. Kolb (1984) has offered a model for experiential learning in the form of a cycle.

Figure 0.9

CONCRETE
EXPERIENCE

ACTIVE   REFLECTIVE
EXPERIMENTATION   OBSERVATION

ABSTRACT
CONCEPTUALISATION

Research into the cognitive skills of offenders has found that they tend to think in a concrete rather than an abstract way. Most offenders are essentially "activists". Their ability to think things through, to reflect upon situations and to solve problems and learn from mistakes is underdeveloped. On the other hand, they can be very practical, intuitive and open to new experiences. Thus we can assume that they are more likely to respond to a learning strategy which begins with concrete experience, a variety of experiences and methods of learning and an opportunity to participate. However, the objective is to help them learn fairly abstract thinking skills and to adopt pro-social values. So we need a process which connects the concrete with the abstract and then transforms these new skills and values into pro-social behaviour.

Each session with an offender should focus on a real or typical situation or problem, allow the individual to reflect upon and, if in a group, share reflections, move towards the examination of principles, concepts or values which enable the individual generalise from the specific and then seek an application in the real world. All offenders are individuals and consequently will vary according to learning styles, ability to listen, to read and to write, intelligence and verbal ability. Some will respond to role play, symbols or metaphors. Others will learn through participating in activities. Honey and Mumford (1986) have devised a Learning Styles Questionnaire which helps to assess individual's preferred learning style.

Safety

Offenders are aware of their potential to harm others and to be harmed. Many also find the processes of accountability and learning very threatening especially in a group. They need to feel safe and creating a safe place for them to change must be a conscious and active part of effective practice. For further discussion of this see Risk Management in chapter 3 on case management.

EFFECTIVE PROBATION PRACTICE: COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION

OVERVIEW

This chapter will help practitioners enable offenders to apply what they have gained from participation in programmes to the process of them finding a place in the community where they can lead a law-abiding life, be accepted and make a positive contribution.

Research indicates that:

- effective practice should be community based

- behaviour change achieved by effective programme delivery must be actively maintained for some time after the completion of the programme

- effective plans must be in place to prevent relapses from undermining progress already made

- desistance from offending is essentially caused by maturity and pro-social activities and relationships.

Figure 0.1 Complex Model of Causal Theory – Outputs to Outcomes to be inserted

The programmes and services which probation services can deliver can only have a partial effect on future behaviour. Other agencies such as housing, social security, training, employers etc. and general social factors in the community will also influence reoffending. Effective supervision must take into account these factors and strive to co-ordinate and organise other agencies, community organisations and families so as to reduce the risk of reoffending.

Community reintegration is the most critical process for achieving long-term change. It should be an essential element of any supervision plan. The outputs of any programme should include motivation, preparation and skills enhancement to achieve successful participation in community life. Community service work through community service orders, combination orders or a reparative element in a programme should be seen as an opportunity to practice skills learnt on programmes and gain acceptance in local communities.

What the staff are required to produce

In achieving effective community reintegration, staff are required to produce evidence of the implementation of a community reintegration plan which identifies:
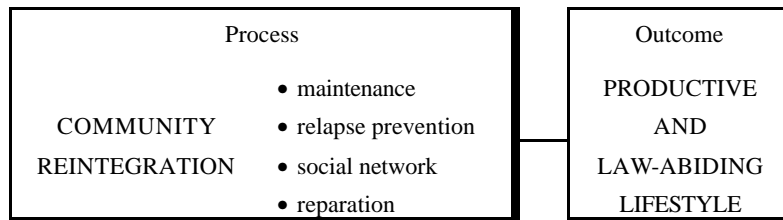
- progress made against objectives for change

- what relationships, activities and resources need to be developed to maintain change and prevent relapse.

What the offender is expected to produce

The offender is expected to produce evidence of

- a settled lifestyle

- involvement in pro-social relationships and activities, particularly employment.

Figure 0.2

Process	Outcome
COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION	- maintenance - relapse prevention - social network - reparation	PRODUCTIVE AND LAW-ABIDING LIFESTYLE

Necessary Inputs

The necessary inputs for community integration include:

- staff who can use the research into desistance of offending and protective factors

- staff with knowledge of the culture and resources of local communities

- staff who can practice skills in engaging families, employers, partnership organisations and other community resources in the reintegration of offenders

- a range of partnership organisations which can aid the process of reintegration

- offenders who have been well prepared for the community reintegration process

- registers of appropriate local resources.

Figure 0.3

INPUTS

Staff knowledge and skills

Partners
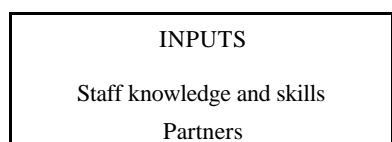
> Offenders' motivation and skills
> Local resources

Community Reintegration: key tasks for practitioners

If the individual has participated in programmes designed to address risk of reoffending and criminogenic needs, a reassessment should gauge:

- progress made against objectives for change

- what strengths the individual has developed through participation in the programmes offered

- how the individual can best use these strengths

- what the individual needs to maintain behaviour change

- what relationships, activities and resources need to be developed or accessed to implement the plan and produce a community reintegration plan which includes

- a relapse prevention plan

- a risk management plan if necessary.

If programmes were not considered necessary or feasible, a community reintegration plan should be based upon the original assessment and immediately implemented. This should include:
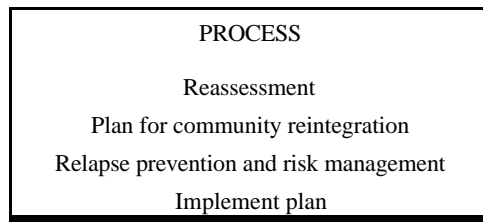
- objectives for change

- what strengths the individual has

- how the individual can best use these strengths

- what the individual needs to maintain behaviour change

- what relationships, activities and resources need to be developed or accessed to implement the plan

- a relapse prevention plan

- a risk management plan if necessary.

The supervising officer should implement this plan with the individual by:

- identifying manageable tasks

- assigning responsibility

- setting deadlines

- reviewing progress at regular intervals

- adjusting and correcting the plan as necessary.

Figure 0.4

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              PROCESS                     │
│                                          │
│            Reassessment                  │
│    Plan for community reintegration      │
│   Relapse prevention and risk management │
│            Implement plan                │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Community reintegration: key tasks for managers

The key management tasks in community reintegration are:

- managing activities

  * know and understand the local community, its concerns over crime, its culture, politics, economy and resources

  * set targets for the use of partnership resources. Monitor and deal with shortfalls or other problems

- managing people

  * deploy and develop the competence of appropriate staff

  * develop productive working relationships with appropriate partnership organisations based upon an appreciation of their culture, objectives, benefits and limitations

  * appraise staff competence through monitoring performance and direct observation

- managing quality

  * model effective practice.

Protective Factors

Most criminological research focuses on the problem of crime and seeks to identify its causes. Consequently supervision strategies to reduce offending tend to address negatives, the risk factors and the criminogenic needs (Goldstein 1991). The danger in this is that it can create dependence and can demotivate both the offender and the practitioner. Effective practice can be based upon building on

strengths as well as eliminating deficits. (Refer also to the section on Research Evidence for Assessment in Chapter 2.)

While risk factors increase the likelihood of offending, protective factors enhance the individual's resilience in the face of risk factors (Werner and Smith 1992). Protective factors include:

- personal factors:

    * a resilient temperament

    * positive social orientation

    * emotional and cognitive skills

    * pro-social gender definitions

- family cohesion and warmth

- relationships which reinforce individual competence and commitments and provide a pro-social belief system

- authority figures who lead by example, have high expectations of achievement and offer recognition and praise

- healthy lifestyles

- opportunities for involvement and participation in pro-social activities and relationships

- employment.

It is likely, however, that offenders will have to develop the necessary values and skills before being able to benefit from external protective factors such as relationships and employment. The emotional and cognitive skills identified as developing resilience as a protective factor against delinquency include (Benard 1991):

- social competence (empathy, flexibility, communication skills and a sense of humour)

- problem-solving skills (planning, critical thinking and resourcefulness)

- autonomy (sense of identity, self-efficacy, achievement, self-awareness and independence)

- a sense of purpose and a bright future (goals, motivation to achieve, persistence, optimism, and meaning).

These should form the substance of any cognitive and interpersonal skills programme.

Implications for practice

These factors suggest the following implications for practice:

- assessments should strive to identify existing or potential protective factors in an offender's personality and lifestyle

- supervision plans should set positive objectives for change i.e. "to enhance/to develop a protective factor" as well as "to reduce/to prevent a risk factor"

- partnership organisations can offer opportunities and resources which are less stigmatising than those within the criminal justice system.

INTRODUCTION TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

OVERVIEW

Chapters 6 to 9 are aimed primarily at senior probation managers. They are not designed to give detailed guidance on "how to do" monitoring and evaluation. Rather, they are intended to set out general principles, and suggest how these principles should inform a strategic approach to monitoring and evaluation.

This chapter:

- introduces the concepts of monitoring and evaluation

- emphasises the value and importance of monitoring outputs and evaluating outcomes

- emphasises the need to link monitoring and evaluation to clearly established organisational objectives

- recognises the limitations to evaluation in measuring complex social behaviour such as crime, in particular because of the problem of interpreting cause and effect

- provides advice about developing a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

As Chapter 1 of this Guide emphasises, to protect the public and gain their support and confidence, probation services have to do several things:

- ensure that the existing knowledge base about effective practice is comprehensively applied

- extend this knowledge base

- develop management systems for maximising effectiveness.

If probation services do not perform effectively, they will be unable to justify their public funding and ultimately their existence.

Concepts and strategy

Monitoring and evaluation are fundamental to the development of effective probation practice. The probation service has to develop its knowledge-base of best practice, on the one hand. On the other, it has to ensure that best practice is actually being pursued in its day-to-day work. The last two decades have seen a substantial increase in the quantity and quality of probation research. We now have a much better and more balanced view about what works – and what doesn't – in tackling offending behaviour. However, the knowledge-base remains limited in many respects.

Research has established that some approaches are more effective than others. Some general principles are emerging about effective practice, concerning the value of, for example:

- focusing on offenders with high probabilities of reoffending

- specificity and focus on those offender needs and problems which are directly related to their offending

- tailoring styles of supervision to the learning style of offenders.

There remain many unknowns. Evaluation effort has tended to focus on those programmes which have their roots in social and cognitive-behavioural psychology – reflecting the discipline's research tradition. Many other forms of intervention remain unevaluated or under-evaluated. There is also very little learning either about the individual styles and personality profiles of effective probation officers or about the interaction between personal styles and supervision strategies. Similarly, there is little research-based knowledge about the most productive ways of matching offenders to supervisors.

Plugging the gaps in the knowledge-base will be achieved only at a cost. It will require more investment in monitoring and evaluation, and in some probation areas at least, a change in professional culture. At working level, some officers regard monitoring and evaluation as a threat to their professional autonomy and an implicit criticism of their practice. It is neither of these. It should support the development of professionalism both of individuals and of the service as a whole.

Monitoring and evaluation defined

Monitoring and evaluation form the final parts of that cyclical management process described earlier in Chapter 1, Figure 1.6. The process begins with problem definition and objective setting. Then strategies are devised, and resources allocated to the task in hand. Processes are designed to transform these inputs into outputs. The outputs are then transformed into outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation represent the final stages of the process. Monitoring involves checking whether an organisation is managing its inputs, processes and outputs as intended. Evaluation involves assessing whether the outputs are achieving the desired outcomes.

There are no hard-and-fast boundaries between monitoring and evaluation; the distinction is to a certain degree arbitrary, and there is little point in spending a great deal of effort pinning it down. In general, monitoring is a *routine* management process, focusing on easy-to-measure *inputs, processes and outputs* . Evaluation is *non-routine,*

focusing on the relationship between outputs and harder-to-measure *outcomes*. The definitions can get blurred, however, because some outcomes are – or will become – quite readily monitored on a routine basis, and some processes and outputs need careful, non-routine evaluation. In other words, there is a middle ground between monitoring and evaluation.

Where inputs, processes and outputs cannot be adequately monitored through the routine collection of management information, special data collection exercises may be needed. Methodologists usually label this sort of activity as *process evaluation*, in contrast to outcome evaluations[17].

Outcome evaluation is clearly of central importance in developing best practice. The service *has* to know whether different supervision strategies achieve their intended outcomes. Process evaluation is also needed, however. It is important to establish not simply whether a programme "works" but what the mechanism is that brings about this success. If the mechanism is understood, it is then that much easier to adapt the method and to apply it successfully in a range of varying contexts. Process evaluation can provide this understanding.

Just as process evaluation can help establish the mechanism behind effective programmes, it can also show whether a particular programme is being implemented in a way which ensures that the mechanism is able to operate. In other words, it can establish whether there is programme integrity. For further explanation of this concept see the research summary at the end of Chapter 1. There is programme integrity when supervision is delivered as intended in theory and design.

Outputs and outcomes in probation services

Chapter 1 discussed the difference between outputs and outcomes. Outputs are the products of the organisation, narrowly defined. Outcomes are the consequences of the outputs; the desired outcomes which reflect the organisation's objectives. As with monitoring and evaluation, the boundaries between outputs and outcomes are not always hard and fast[18].

Defining objectives, and thus desired outcomes, is a political rather than technical process, and can be contentious. Chapter 1 formulated probation objectives largely in terms of reducing crime. According to this perspective, we would regard successful completion of orders as outputs, or staging posts on the way to the outcome of reduced

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[17] Management experts also refer to plan evaluation – a form of policy appraisal.

[18] The reasons are explained more fully in Talbot (1996).

offending. **If one adopted a narrower definition of probation objectives, one might regard successful completion as an *outcome* rather than output. Equally, reductions in offence-related problems such as drug misuse or unemployment can quite properly regarded as outcomes rather than outputs.**

In general, outputs tend to be easier to measure than outcomes. This is because they reflect the immediate product of the organisation, and involve measurement of actions and processes which are closer to the boundaries of the organisation. Whether something should be regarded as an output or an outcome is not, however, simply a function of ease of measurement. Take the example of reconviction rates. These can properly be regarded as providing a measure – albeit a somewhat limited one – of outcome. They provide a not entirely adequate performance indicator of reoffending rates. For the time being, no probation services are routinely evaluating their reconvictions outcomes. However, as information technology improves, it should become possible to monitor routinely this important outcome measure.

The limits to outcome evaluation

The knowledge base about effective probation work is developing, but as discussed above, there are still large areas where we don't know with any certainty what things "work" and what things don't. The reasons are worth exploring. Probation aims to affect social behaviour at its most complex. There are many competing theories about the best ways of rehabilitating offenders. Assessing what has actually happened is complicated by problems of *measurement,* on the one hand, and by those of *attributing cause and effect,* on the other.

It is hard to get good measures of reoffending. In the first place, large amounts of offending go undetected; the usual solution is to use information on arrests[19] and/or convictions as a proxy. Secondly, even when re-arrest or reconviction data are used, it is technically complex to assemble and analyse a comprehensive data-base covering all reconvictions.

There are three levels of problem common to evaluation and monitoring of all aspects of work: data collection, data analysis and interpretation of results. Their consideration in the context of the use of reconviction information as a measure of outcome illuminates the issues. At the end of this chapter there is a short section which describes the issues in some detail.

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[19] Arrest data have been used more in North America than in this country. As police information systems improve, arrest statistics may turn out to be more useful measures of offending. The advantage they offer over reconviction statistics is that they usually reflect the date of the offence more accurately.

Cause and effect

Measurement problems aside, accurately attributing cause and effect is also hard. People change their behaviour for all sorts of reason. Most offenders give up – or substantially reduce – offending at some stage. A reduction in offending may have been prompted by probation supervision, or simply by the experience of arrest and sentence. Equally, an apparent lack of change in offending may look like a failure but actually be a success – if probation supervision has contained levels of offending which would otherwise have accelerated. The usual way to get round these problems of assigning cause and effect is to adopt experimental or quasi-experimental research designs in which the performance of the relevant group of probationers is compared to that of a similar group who were not subject to the programme or activity under examination. *Comparison* is intrinsic to the idea of outcome evaluation.

Chapter 8 will return to these issues. At this stage, the key point to bear in mind is that proper evaluation of the outcomes of probation work is complex, time-consuming and thus expensive. It is unrealistic to envisage a completely "evidence based" style of probation management, in which every function is subjected to full outcome evaluation. It is more realistic to think in terms of a process in which outcomes are evaluated *selectively,* in order to develop probation *principles* or *theories*; the aim should be that all probation activities should be underpinned by well-tested principles, not that all should be subject to evaluation. Monitoring, by contrast, should be *universal*. Over time, and as information technology develops, the scope for routinely measuring outcomes should increase, and the balance between evaluation and monitoring should shift.

Monitoring and evaluation strategy

The HMIP report included a survey of evaluation practice in probation services (described in Chapters 2 and 9 of that report). The first phase of this Evaluation Survey identified 210 evaluated probation programmes, of which 33 were judged to have been subjected to adequate outcome evaluation. In other words, only 16% of evaluations were yielding fruit, in the sense of clarifying links between processes, outputs and outcomes. We recognise that some of the 210 evaluations did not set out to provide conclusive or in-depth results; nevertheless, the survey implies unacceptably high levels of wasted research resources. It points to a need for review of decisions about the use of resources on outcome evaluation both at local and national level; the aim should be to target available resources more sharply on a smaller number of programmes or functions whose evaluation will contribute most to establishing principles of probation practice. This implies a much greater degree of co-ordination and collaboration than currently occurs.

Whilst few probation services have articulated their monitoring and evaluation strategy, all have one, embedded in the way in which they resource the processes. Probation areas commit resources to monitoring and evaluation in the following ways:

- getting probation staff to generate management or research data (where this information is not already collected for operational purposes)

- deploying management or R&I effort to process and analyse these data for Home Office information requirements (e.g. KPIs, RMIS, Race and Ethnic Monitoring returns)

- deploying management or R&I effort to process and analyse data for local requirements

- getting R&I staff to collect and analyse data

- getting R&I staff to train operational staff in the use of IT and auditing quality

- getting R&I staff to carry out research and evaluation

- commissioning independent evaluation and/or consultancy, and managing this

- supporting independent external research (e.g. collecting, analysing and/or supplying data).

The key decisions in developing a monitoring and evaluation strategy are thus about:

- reviewing and adjusting the *overall level* of resources committed to these processes

- reviewing and adjusting the *balance* of resources between the various functions

- getting *better value* from current levels of investment in each function.

The Home Office-led Probation Research Forum will have an important future role in developing a national strategy for probation related research which will need to identify the relative contributions of the Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate, the Probation Studies Unit and individual probation services to its achievement

There is no received wisdom about the proportion of its resources which a "people changing" organisation should devote to monitoring and evaluation. For the present, it would represent a considerable advance if probation areas were in a position to identify how much they actually spend, using some form of standardised counting rules. Nor is there any obvious yardstick against which to measure the balance of effort between monitoring and evaluation. For reasons considered further in Chapter 9, the first priority should probably lie

in improving the return from existing investment in monitoring and evaluation, rather than in locating extra resources.

SUMMARY OF THE LIMITATIONS TO OUTCOME EVALUATION

(a) Data Collection

Obtaining the data

The first difficulty encountered is where to obtain the required information. Most probation services currently have difficulty in getting hold of reconviction information which is both timely and accurate. However, reconviction information is rapidly becoming more accessible. Many probation areas have now received reconviction data for research purposes from the Home Office Offenders Index (contact telephone 0171-273 4122) and information is becoming more readily available from Phoenix (the Police National Computer). See Probation Circular 6/98. Use of the PNC raises particular issues and so areas are advised to seek advice/information from staff in the Offender Index section before doing so.

The next difficulty is in what format to obtain the required information. Sometimes data may be available in electronic format, sometimes only in paper; there are advantages and disadvantages to each for subsequent processing. Local probation services have some control of the format of the data which they extract from their systems, but this luxury is not always available from local police records. That data is generally much more detailed and available in limited format, such as a complete list of every court appearance between specified dates for an individual. Different formats would need negotiation at local level, if indeed it were possible to obtain them. Similarly, the information available from the Offender Index is available in just one very detailed format. The format of the data provided will constrain the sorts of analysis which can be undertaken.

Reliability of the data

The next question to consider is "How trustworthy is the data which is provided; is it accurate and up to date"? Unfortunately there are problems with all sources of data for reconviction. Probation service systems record just those court appearances which the probation officer knows about, which may be comprehensive for someone during the period of their supervision by the service, but is unlikely to be so after supervision ends. Both local police systems and the Offender Index are more comprehensive, being based on police and court information, but even here there is a margin of error.

Validity of the data

The final question to address about the data being used is "Does the data we are using really tell us about what we want to measure"? Reconviction data is used as a proxy measure for reoffending, quite simply because there is no way of finding out what offences an offender has committed (even self-report studies have been found to be unreliable). It is well known that different types of offences have different detection and conviction rates, as do different parts of the country, and these factors make the interpretation of the data more difficult.

The time to reconviction can also be problematic when wanting to assess reoffending during a specific time period. This has led to the concept of pseudo-convictions which makes allowance for reconviction occurring inside the time period but the offence having been committed outside, and also for offences having been committed inside the period of interest but the conviction occurring outside.

(b) Data analysis

Most reconviction analysis which has been undertaken so far is based on a simple yes/no to reconviction. Home Office analysis which compares actual reconviction with predicted reconviction is more sophisticated in that it counts as "yes" just standard list offences which are the basis of the OGRS. It is acknowledged however that some impact on the offender may be more subtle than yes/no, for instance by delaying a further offence or by turning the offender to less serious types of offending. Analysis of this sort requires considerable work to prepare the data for analysis, and very sophisticated analysis of the data, both of which require time and expertise.

The depth and nature of the analysis which can be undertaken will be influenced by the skills and systems available to do it, as well as the nature of the data. It is technically complex to assemble and analyse a comprehensive database covering all reconvictions.

(c) Interpretation of results

The final problematic area in analysis is the attribution of effect. Comparison is important in this context, either to another group of offenders or to the expected reconviction of the same group. The use of statistical tests is important here in determining whether any change which has occurred is real, or may actually have occurred by chance. When confident that real change has occurred, it will then be necessary to demonstrate that this change can be attributed to the impact of supervision by the probation service rather than to the range of other factors which may have influenced the offender. This cannot be done statistically and requires strong theoretical argument, which can more easily be achieved if the work undertaken is grounded in the evidence of "What Works" and specifically targeted to criminogenic need.

MONITORING

OVERVIEW

This chapter describes monitoring as a process of assembling *non-conclusive* information about the operation of a programme or function – focusing on its inputs and outputs. It breaks down the monitoring process into its constituent stages:

- identify programmes or functions to be monitored

- formalise programme/function objectives

- summarise planned inputs, and target outputs and outcomes

- monitor inputs, outputs and those outcomes which can be routinely measured

- recording the results.

Stage 1: Identify programmes/functions

This is less a statement of the obvious than it may seem. What counts as a programme? To what level of detail should probation functions be disaggregated? There is a tendency for attention to focus on the novel or experimental, ignoring mainstream work such as the production of reports and one-to-one supervision. The more that the probation role moves away from one-to-one generalist supervision and towards case management, the more complex the monitoring task becomes.

However monitoring is to be organised, it is clear that the work of a probation area will need to be separated out on two key dimensions:

- geographical area (e.g. borough / district / office / team)

- task area (e.g. court reports / supervision / pre and post-release supervision/community service / Family Court Welfare work.

How fine-grained these distinctions are likely to be depends on the level within the organisation for which the information is needed, which is likely to turn on many factors, including the extent to which budgetary decisions are delegated.

Figure 7.1 suggests a "basic set" of functions for which all probation areas should be able to provide key monitoring statistics on workload, national standards compliance, KPIs and SMINs. For most of these functions probation areas can produce at least some statistics (not

least because they are required by the Home Office). However, even for this basic set, many probation areas would find it difficult to provide good information about the *constituent components* of offender supervision; the same is often true of programmes or services which are contracted out.

Figure 0.1: Functions to be monitored

Providing information to courts

       Preparing pre-sentence report

       Bail Information reports

       Family Court welfare work

Supervising offenders on orders

       Probation orders

       Probation orders with conditions

       C&YP Act 1969

       Community service orders

       Combination orders

       MPSOs

Pre- and post-release supervision

       Throughcare

       Voluntary aftercare

       Automatic conditional release

       Discretionary conditional release

       Life license supervision

Structured programmes *within* supervision

       Groupwork programmes

       Drug projects

       Motor projects etc.

       Contracted-out programmes

Hostels

       Occupancy levels

Stage 2: Formalising objectives

The second stage in monitoring a programme/function of any sort is to formulate a clear and accurate statement of objectives. Objectives are statements of desired outcomes. They should be as specific as possible, be quantified wherever possible but should avoid *describing the means by which the outcomes will be achieved.* It is good practice to record the objectives set for a programme well before any monitoring starts. The temptation to tailor objectives to match achievements is overwhelming.

Figure 0.2: Some examples of programme objectives

A Drug Programme in Probation Centre

- to achieve reconviction rates 10% below those for comparable groups
- to ensure effective referral to appropriate treatment agencies
- to achieve a completion rate for the programme of 75%.

A Probation Office's CSO Programme

- to achieve a completion rate of orders of 85%
- to ensure that work placements offer the right balance in being demanding, constructive and reparative.

Local employment project

- to ensure that 90% of unemployed probationers are seen by employment workers
- to ensure that 75% of appointments with employment workers are kept
- to ensure that 50% of those who are assessed get job interviews
- to ensure that 25% of those assessed get job offers
- to achieve reductions of 10% over predicted reconviction rates over a two year period.

Stage 3: Summarising planned inputs, and target outputs and outcomes

Objectives will often have been expressed in a way which implies or states a target (as in Figure 7.2). The next step is to refine these targets, and summarise those which apply to inputs and outputs. Identifying planned inputs, and target outputs and outcomes are steps which must precede decisions about the appropriate level of evaluation. If inputs and outputs are small, elaborate evaluation of outcomes is not usually cost effective, monitoring of inputs and outputs is quite sufficient. The same applies if desired outcomes are likely to accrue in the long term.

Planned inputs can be defined in various currencies:

- cash sums (e.g. total or staff cost of programme)

- unit costs (e.g. cost per PSR)

- staff hours per year

- full-time equivalent staffing levels.
  As for specifying target outputs and outcomes, the usual advice is adopt SMART output and outcome targets – that is, where the targets are:

- **S**pecific

- **M**easurable

- **A**chievable

- **R**ealistic

- **T**ime scale attached.

In the probation context, this advice is certainly appropriate for *outputs* **. If the aim of the programme is to improve thinking ability, for example, or emotional control, a pre-requisite for any impact is that the probationer should turn up, take part in the programme, and finish it. These pre-requisites can be translated into a series of highly concrete output targets – that the programme should have an attendance rate of 85%, for example, or that 85% of those referred to the programme should complete it.**

For some functions or programmes, minimum output targets will be set in the form of national standards or KPIs. For example, when an offender is on a probation order:

- a supervision plan should be drawn up within 10 working days of the order being made

- the offender should attend at least 12 appointments in the first three months of the order

- the offender should attend at least 6 appointments within the next three months

Setting *outcome* **targets is likely to be harder, because the knowledge base about what can be achieved is still developing. Setting a precise target for reconviction rates, for example, could be an exercise in spurious precision. The uncertainties which surround supervision programmes should not be used as an excuse for avoiding the setting of outcome targets altogether. Those designing a programme must have some expectations about possible outcomes. It is preferable to specify expected outcomes imprecisely than not at all – "a 5-15% improvement in reconviction rates, relative to predicted rates", for example.**

Figure 0.3: Examples of target outputs and outcomes

Programme	Target Output	Target Outcome
Drug programme in Probation Centre	75% completion rate. 50% of participants referred to specialist agency 30% of participants take up referral.	**Achieve a 10-20% improvement over predicted reconviction rates.** **20% of participants drug free after 6 months.** **50% of participants showing reduction in drug use during the life of the order.**
Local Community	**90% of placements**	Reconviction rates no higher

Service Order Programme	**to start within 10 days of order.** 90% attendance rate. **85% completing their orders.** CSO maintains its 'market share' of local court sentences.	than predicted.
Local Employment Scheme	**90% of probationers referred to employment staff.** Probationers to keep 75% of appointments with employment staff. 50% of referrals to secure job interviews	25% to secure jobs. 20% to access further training during the life of the order.

It is not always necessary or desirable to set targets for all performance indicators. One may well want to know the direction of a trend, for example, without necessarily having any pre-set ideas on whether this trend should be upward or downward. For example, the service needs to move towards tougher enforcement of standards of compliance with national standards and other requirements made of offenders. This should result in the short term in higher breach rates, but lower ones in the longer term. It is obviously important to monitor trends in completion rates and breach rates, even if trends require interpretation.

Stage 4: Monitoring inputs and outputs

Stages 1 to 3 form an integral part of the planning or management process. With a new programme, they will need to be done from scratch; in the main, however, setting objectives, planning inputs and setting targets will involve *reviewing* previous decisions, and amending them as necessary. By contrast, monitoring inputs and outputs can involve the commitment of significant resources – both in data collection and analysis. Of course many areas already have well-developed information systems which can produce the bulk of data needed for monitoring. The Resource Management Information System (RMIS) includes – with greater or lesser accuracy – each area's inputs. As for outputs, CRAMS will in future be able to yield a significant amount of the necessary data, although there are some significant gaps, especially in relation to structured programmes and to work which is contracted out to partners. (There are plans, however, to develop these functions).

(a)   *monitoring inputs*

As noted early, inputs can be specified in various currencies – cash sums, unit costs (e.g. cost per PSR), staff numbers, hours or days. Staffing inputs can be fairly readily identified when the staff involved have a single function. CSO staff provide the obvious example. In general, staff who supervise offenders serving CSOs are specialists with no other duties.

Unlike CSO staff, most probation officers and PSAs discharge a variety of functions. Nor do they routinely record how much time they spend on each task. It can thus be quite difficult to say what level of resources has actually been committed to any function. Figure 7.4 suggests various approaches to time recording.

Translating staff numbers or costs into money is straightforward – and protocols for doing so are built into RMIS. Certainly there are issues about apportioning non-staff costs, such as travel, accommodation and central support services. The RMIS distinction between direct staff costs (salaries and on-costs) indirect staff-related costs (travel, subsistence, support staff and accommodation) and overhead costs (central support services) is as useful a convention as any.

(b)   *monitoring outputs*

Measuring outputs is one of the crucial elements of monitoring. Measures are needed to assess the extent to which processes occurred as planned. In relation to the supervision of offenders on orders, this means that:

- they turn up when required *(attendance)*

- they do what they are asked to do by their supervising officer *(compliance)*

- they complete their order *(completion)*

- they do things to address offence-related problems and attitudes *(social circumstances)*

HMIP's report identified the lack of any common standard for recording such outputs. There is obviously a need to establish common definitions and conventions for measuring attendance, compliance and completion rates both for structured programmes and, more generally, for supervision. There is need for standardisation of recording within and between areas. Some measures will in due course be available on a standardised basis through CRAMS

Figure 0.4: Estimating how staff divide their time between activities

When staff divide their time between a variety of functions, it is important to identify how much effort each function absorbs. One (or more) of three main approaches can be used:

Routine time recording

Near-contemporaneous recording of time spent is the only method which can yield a

comprehensive picture of how staff spend their time. It is an integral part of working life for those professionals – such as solicitors – who charge out their time to clients by the hour or day. In the probation setting routine time recording though continuous activity surveys would be rather more complex and time-consuming. A probation officer could well divide a working day between many different functions – report writing, supervising probationers, providing aftercare supervision and so on. Nor is there any *immediate* organisational purpose served in collecting recording changes in function. These factors probably rule out continuous routine time recording. Without vigorous "policing" the accuracy of the system would decline over time. The effort which would have to be invested in policing would rule out the benefits of comprehensive coverage. Continuous recording would also impose a significant burden in terms of analysis.

Intermittent time recording

One solution to the problems of running continuous activity surveys is to mount intermittent sample surveys – where all staff, or a sub-set of staff, complete surveys for a week or fortnight. If mounted properly, surveys of this sort can probably yield better data than continuous ones. Staff are prepared to invest the necessary effort in recording properly for a finite period of time. This is the approach used by the Home Office in the activity sampling exercises conducted in 1997 and 1998. The approach probably yields robust enough results for the monitoring a mainstream activities; but there are limits to the generalizability of the results to experimental programmes.

Notional time recording

This approach, which is sometimes used for the Resource Management Information System (RMIS), involves extrapolating from national estimates (e.g. the National Activity Recording Survey) and/or adjusting survey data in the light of professional judgement. The advantage of this approach is its simplicity. The main drawback is that the estimates are notional – i.e. they have been made up. In particular, the assumption which lies behind using national figures – that one's own probation area falls in line with the national average in the time taken to achieve tasks will be wrong more often than right.

Translating estimates of time spent into costs and unit costs

Estimates on time spent on different functions can be combined with workload statistics and staff costs to yield costs and unit costs. Thus if a probation team completes 150 PSRs over a year, and takes 6 hours on average per report, it devotes 900 hours a year to PSRs – equivalent to 70% of a full time probation officer's post. Salary and related costs would thus be around £14,000, and the salary costs involved in preparing one report would be about £90; the full unit cost – including all indirect costs – might be £200.

(c)   Monitoring outcomes

Chapter 6 discussed the possibility that outcomes, as opposed to outputs, might increasingly be routinely monitored. Some outcomes – or at least "intermediate outcomes" are already monitored. For example, one could sensibly regard improvements in employment rates or reductions in homelessness – which are routinely recorded – as desirable outcomes. For the time being no probation areas are in a position where they routinely monitor reconviction rates. With improvements in information technology, however, it should shortly be possible – and desirable – for all probation areas to mount reconviction follow-ups for all those under their supervision. For the time being however, such work is carried out only on a non-routine basis, in the shape of outcome evaluations. This is discussed in the next chapter.

(d)   Assessment and monitoring – integrating professional tools and management information

Formal assessment of offenders' needs and of the risks they present is becoming a central part of probation practice. The planned development by the Home Office of a common risk/needs assessment tool for use by prison and probation services will assist. There is a close relationship between the demands on professionals to monitor changes in those whom they supervise and the demands on managers to monitor collective shifts in the offending and related behaviour. Use of one common tool will generate monitoring information as it is used. The more that management information is produced as a *by-product* of everyday work processes, the more accurate and reliable it will be. If data collection systems are 'bolted on' to probation work processes rather than integrated into them, the quality of the resultant data will be patchy without constant management intervention. In the language of quality management, therefore, one needs to achieve quality assurance by getting the processes right, rather impose quality controls on processes which are poorly suited to generate management information. When a standardised assessment tool becomes the norm, it should be possible to capture a wide range of information on offenders as they pass through the process of supervision; the distinction between routine monitoring and non-routine evaluation in depth will then become blurred.

Recording the results of monitoring

Monitoring forms part of the process by which organisations and staff within them are held accountable. Anyone with any organisational skills will be able to construct *after the event* a respectable account of their achievements. The first ploy is to assess the achievement of programme objectives against a variety of indicators, and to present only the most flattering. If this strategy fails to demonstrate success, it is time to rewrite programme objectives, to ensure that these are achievable. As this is a tempting process, monitoring systems have to take account of the inevitable pressures on staff and managers to present themselves in a good light.

It may be worth developing a monitoring protocol if only to ensure that programme objectives, targets and related performance indicators are specified in advance, and not with the benefit of hindsight. This should not prove a significant burden in areas which already operate a form of structured appraisal system.

EVALUATION

OVERVIEW

This chapter will assist managers to consider when to use evaluation rather than routine monitoring. Chapter 7 emphasised the distinction between the *routine monitoring* of inputs, processes and outputs and *non-routine evaluation*. It is helpful to distinguish between outcome evaluations, which are designed to see if outputs have the desired effect, and process evaluations, which involve the non-routine study of inputs, processes and outputs. Process evaluations are descriptive accounts of what happened in the process of transforming inputs into outputs.

Evaluations are carried out on a non-routine basis for the simple reason that they are costly. The operation of the criminal justice system, and of probation services in particular, is of a level of complexity whereby outcomes in particular cannot be readily or routinely measured. This means that evaluation, as distinct from monitoring, has to be selective, with specific studies planned on a "one-off" basis. Evaluation is also more demanding of technical skills than monitoring.

Some barriers to effective evaluation

On the basis of its Evaluation Survey, HMIP's report commented on the value of comprehensive data collection plans, information technology-based data collection which makes analysis of data more accessible and the use of experienced external evaluators. The report acknowledges the need for easy access to reliable reconviction data and for staff roles to be defined and expertise developed in collecting, analysing and interpreting information for evaluation purposes. Although this Guide comments on these issues, further work may be necessary to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach by probation services.

Two generalisations can be made about the value derived from current arrangements, however. First, the time spent by in-house R&I staff on outcome evaluation tends – with notable exceptions – to yield poor returns. Secondly, the scope for independent evaluation, and for partnership between independent evaluators and R&I staff tends to be under-exploited. The reasons for both deserve some attention.

Several factors have inhibited the development of a skills base and of a probation-based research culture:

- a lack of any nationally coordinated probation research strategy

- maintaining and analysing information systems generally takes priority over ad hoc research

- the time available for evaluation is thus both limited and fragmented

- some services have no R&I posts and others have been lost recently due to budget cuts

- R&I staff generally work in isolation from other researchers, and their work is rarely subject to professional supervision or peer review

- prospects are limited for those who wish to develop a research career in the service.

Nor – with some notable exceptions – have probation areas established robust links with professional researchers in universities or elsewhere. Until recently, there were few potential partners. Criminology was a small sub-discipline[20], and in any case, there were few incentives for academics to mount work of immediate practical relevance. The position is rapidly changing and probation areas should find it increasingly easy to find and exploit research skills outside their own organisation:

- criminology is expanding

- the university funding system places academics under increasing pressure to research

- the research funding system is placing increasing emphasis on applied research.

The second plank in an evaluation strategy involves selecting the programmes/functions which warrant formal evaluation. Few probation areas currently articulate their reasons for evaluating some but not other programmes. Any area strategy should take as its starting point that full outcome evaluation of all probation work is an impossible – indeed undesirable – ambition. If every probation area were to aim for this, the duplication of effort across the country would be massive. Many programmes warrant only limited outcome evaluation, for a variety of reasons:

- only small (and hard-to-detect) reductions in offending will make the initiative cost-effective

- the cost of full outcome evaluation would be disproportionate to the cost of the initiative

- similar programmes have been (or are being) evaluated elsewhere.

The final point raises the question "how similar?" On the one hand, highly diverse programmes tend to acquire currently fashionable labels; and apparently diverse programmes may all share a single

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[20] Criminologists do not – and should not - have a monopoly on probation research. Management and organisational theorists, for example, also have an obvious contribution to make. In so far as evaluation is concerned with the impact of probation on offending, however, criminology is an obvious discipline from which to select evaluators.

ingredient which makes for their success. The point to stress here is that evaluation within probation is less about identifying successful *technologies* and more about *identifying principles* from which practitioners can generalise.

If probation areas aim to evaluate selectively, in a way which minimises duplication whilst maximising the scope of identifying principles of effectiveness, they will have to co-ordinate their efforts more effectively than at present.

Process and outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluations *by themselves* can be an expensive waste of money. Good ideas often fail through poor implementation; equally (but less often) bad ideas can result in good outcomes. Outcome evaluations simply identify whether those subjected to a programme perform better or worse than a comparison group. They do not identify factors contributing to success – the mechanisms which make supervision effective. And in programmes which fail, they cannot distinguish between *theory* failure and *implementation* failure.

Process evaluations – which document what actually occurred in the course of a programme – provide the raw material to answer such questions. A process evaluation would not attempt to chart relationships between outputs and outcomes; but it would describe the processes by which inputs were translated into outputs, establishing whether programme integrity was being maintained (cf. Chapter 7 of the HMIP report[21]).

That report also noted (paragraph 9.7.8) the limited value of offender feedback questionnaires in terms of outcome evaluation. Such questionnaires can be of value in process evaluation, ie assessing the quality of service and offenders' perceptions of staff practice and performance. To make a contribution to outcome evaluation offender feedback would need to focus on the impact of the programme on the individual. Development work will be necessary to test and validate the use of some recognised instruments.

Process evaluations can be of value in their own right, as well as supporting outcome evaluations. For example, a probation area may not feel any need to test out the *theory* underlying a given programme (e.g. that better accommodation or training reduces re-offending), but it may be important to find out whether programme integrity is being maintained – that is, that inputs are being transformed into outputs as envisaged. Routine monitoring may be unable to provide the answers in sufficient detail. In such circumstances, a free-standing

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[21] Ibid, footnote 1.

process evaluation might be both justified and sufficient to meet management needs.

Designing outcome evaluations

Comparison is central to outcome evaluation. Most people's criminal careers draw to a close at some stage in their twenties; outcome evaluation aims to find out if a programme prompts earlier retirement (or semi-retirement) than would have happened otherwise. The "gold standard" of outcome evaluations is the randomised controlled trial (RCT), borrowed from medical research. In RCTs, people are assigned at random to an experimental group, which receives a "treatment" and a control group, which is untreated; both groups are then subject to follow-up assessment. In contrast to medical evaluation, it is often hard within a probation setting to arrange for random allocation to experimental and control groups (see below). More often than not, therefore, a compromise is reached in the form of a quasi-experimental design, in which the experimental group is compared with other probationers by means other than the RCT procedure.

The three key decisions in designing an outcome evaluation are:

- deciding how to compare the experimental group with others

- sample sizes and statistical significance

- choosing outcome measures.

Comparing the experimental group with others

In-house probation evaluations will rarely have the luxury of a RCT design. There are obvious ethical problems in withholding either punishment or benefits from one group of offenders whilst imposing or conferring these on another similar group. Even if agreement is forthcoming from sentencers and others with an interest, there are other practical considerations: maintaining adequate referral rates for experimental programmes can rule out the practicability of an RCT, for example.

A recommended approach is to assemble a comparison group which resembles the experimental group as closely as possible on key variables, known to be correlated with risk of reoffending, such as:

- age

- number of previous convictions

- experience of youth custody

- current offence

- employment status.

It is unlikely that a probation area will be able to assemble a comparison group which matches the experimental group well on all such variables. However, multivariate statistical modelling techniques can be used to take account of a degree of mismatch[22] – in effect, inferring what the comparison group's performance would have been, if it had resembled the experimental group precisely on all the key variables. This provides a more rigorous form of statistical control than a straight comparison between the two groups.

A variant of this option which is recommended is to compare observed reconviction rates with predicted rates, as estimated by the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (see Probation Circular 63/96). The rationale for this is considered below in the section on outcome measures.
Sample sizes and statistical significance

Local probation evaluations are beset by problems associated with small numbers. Most programmes deal with small numbers of offenders over the course of a year. The difficulty that this creates for evaluation is associated with the natural variability in people's behaviour. For example, 38 out of 75 people (50%) on an experimental programme may be reconvicted over a two-year period, compared with 60% of a comparison group. Is this simply a statistical fluke, or does it say something about the programme's impact? Sampling theory can help answer this question, as Figure 8.1 explains.

Figure 8.1 is intended to convey the principles of sampling and probability theory which are relevant to decisions about sample sizes. In practice researchers would generally use different tests of statistical significance[23]. Significance tests can assess the probability of a difference between two groups arising by chance. A well-established convention within the research community is that differences should be regarded as statistically significant only if the probability is less than 5% that it has arisen by chance. Contrasting our experimental group of 75 with a comparison group of 1,000, the difference of ten percentage points is not statistically significant at either the 5% or 10% level. That is, the chances are more than one in ten that the difference could have arisen simply through chance.

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[22] For example, logistic regression could be used to assess whether membership of the experimental group was a statistically significant predictor of reconviction rates when matching variables are included as independent variables.

[23] Chi-squared tests could be used to see whether differences between two groups in reconviction rates were statistically significant. For assessing difference between two means, a t-test could be used.

Figure 0.1: Natural variation within small groups

Evaluations of probation programmes typically work with small numbers of offenders. Obviously offenders vary in their predisposition to re-offend. Sometimes a programme will strike lucky, and have a group of probationers who are motivated or tractable. Sometimes the group will be particularly difficult. How does one take this natural variation into account?

Sampling theory provides a method. There is a formula to calculate the precision of sample survey estimates. Take, for example, a sample of 100 people randomly selected from the general public; assume that 30% were found to have criminal convictions. The formula allows us to say that with 95% certainty, the true value of the figure will lie within 9 percentage points of 30%. In other words, the true figure could fall anywhere between 21% and 39%. A larger sample would give greater precision: for example, if one drew a sample of 1,000, again showing 30% to have criminal convictions, the true figure would fall within 3 percentage points of this estimate.

Strictly speaking, the 75 offenders passing through the experimental programme do not constitute a sample. If 38 of the 75 were found to be reconvicted within two years, this is not an estimate, but a *fact* – assuming that the reconviction data are reliable. However, sampling theory can giving some idea of the natural variability of small groups, if one makes the artificial assumption that the group *is* a sample drawn at random from all those who could have been selected. (This makes sense when one considers that the underlying purpose of evaluations is to see if the scheme should be replicated in similar settings elsewhere.)

The chart below shows the 'sampling error' which one would expect to see in samples of different sizes. It shows the range within which estimates would fall 95% of the time if one kept on drawing different samples. It shows that one can calculate the extent to which the 50% reconviction rate reflects natural (or random) variation.

sample size	sample estimate	sampling error (95%)	range
20	50% reconvicted in 2 years	± 22 %	28-72%
75		± 12 %	38-62%
300		± 6%	44-56%
1,200		± 3 %	47-53%

Taking a sample of 75, and assuming that half of the population from which the sample is drawn are reconvicted, then the vast majority of samples would yield reconviction estimates of between 38% and 62%. Returning to the 75 offenders in the experimental programme, it would be unwise to assume that the difference of ten percentage points between the experimental and control group was statistically significant. (A chi-squared test yields broadly the same result.)

Significance tests can also be used at the planning stage, to assess in advance how sensitive the evaluation design is in detecting significant differences. For example, one might assume that one has a comparison group of 1,000 offenders, and that there will be a difference of ten percentage points in reconviction rates. For this result to be statistically significant[24], there would need to be at least 100 in the experimental group.

It is simply a convention to accept a finding only if there is a 5% or less probability that this has arisen by chance. This threshold may make sense in a fairly exact science, but probation managers might well argue that a 10% threshold is acceptable.
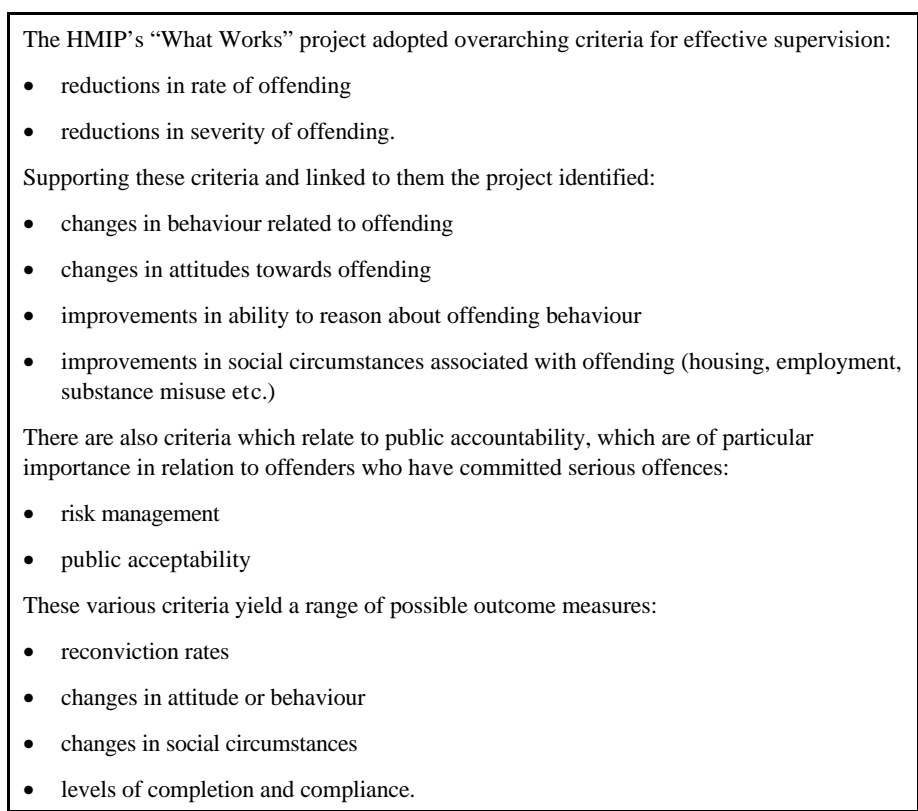
Criteria for effectiveness and outcome measures

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[24] At the 5% level, using a chi-squared test.

Outcome evaluations need to use outcome measures appropriate to the programme under evaluation. This section considers possible outcome measures for use in evaluating probation work in supervising offenders on orders[25]. It assumes that monitoring systems will be in place to yield the *output* measures discussed in Section 3.

Reduction in crime and contributing to public protection are now clearly stated as the aims of probation. This means that the ultimate success of probation supervision must be judged against the criterion of reduced reoffending. There are various other relevant criteria of effectiveness, set out in Figure 8.2.

Figure 0.2: Effectiveness criteria and outcome measures for probation supervision

The HMIP's "What Works" project adopted overarching criteria for effective supervision:

- reductions in rate of offending

- reductions in severity of offending.

Supporting these criteria and linked to them the project identified:

- changes in behaviour related to offending

- changes in attitudes towards offending

- improvements in ability to reason about offending behaviour

- improvements in social circumstances associated with offending (housing, employment, substance misuse etc.)

There are also criteria which relate to public accountability, which are of particular importance in relation to offenders who have committed serious offences:

- risk management

- public acceptability

These various criteria yield a range of possible outcome measures:

- reconviction rates

- changes in attitude or behaviour

- changes in social circumstances

- levels of completion and compliance.

Reoffending rates obviously cannot be measured directly. Various proxy measures have been used: reconviction rates over specified periods (e.g. 1 year, 2 year or 5 year periods), arrest rates, and self-reported re-offending. Reconviction rates are the main measure used in British evaluations, and the advantages and disadvantages are discussed in Figure 8.3. Despite the disadvantages they should be used as the main outcome measure. However, more consideration should be given to the use of arrest rates. They provide a more inclusive measure, covering not only the convicted but those who are cautioned and those whose prosecution is dropped

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[25] Pre and post-release supervision, family court work and other areas of probation work such as community crime prevention have been omitted, but the same principles apply.

or unsuccessful. Arrests are generally closer in time to the date of the offence, avoiding problems analogous to pseudo-reconvictions (see Figure 8.3). In principle, they are more quickly available than reconviction data. For the time being, however, procedures for data-sharing between police and probation tend to be primitive. There are technical data-matching problems to be resolved, as well as issues around data protection and resourcing.

Self-report measures of re-offending, where probationers are simply asked about their offending since the order started can also be of value. If interviewers are skilled enough to establish rapport and trust, self-report measures can provide useful indicators of re-offending.

Figure 0.3: Reconviction rates as outcome measures

Reconviction rates are widely used as measures of re-offending. The Home Office Offenders Index is a large database of all convictions for Standard List Offences (all indictable offences and some of the more serious summary offences. It covers England and Wales, holding data from 1963. The Phoenix System (The Police National Computer) is now superseding the microfiche records on offenders held at the National Identification Service at Scotland Yard. At present the Home Office database is more readily accessible, but access to Phoenix may over time become easier. Individual police forces also maintain local criminal record systems, which can also provide reconviction statistics.

The main advantage of reconviction rates is that they are the least unsatisfactory of available options. If they are to be used effectively, it is essential to appreciate their limitations, however:

- they exclude all undetected crimes

- the Offenders Index includes only Standard List Offences, and exclude cautions

- the Offenders Index records only the date of conviction, and not the date of offence

- reconviction rates vary over *place* and *time*, through variations in policing and prosecution practice

- there are delays (usually 1 or 2 years) to give the offenders an opportunity to re-offend

- there are further administrative delays in inputting data

- there are further administrative delays in extracting the data, leading to queues

- and analysis of reconviction data is very complicated.

Coverage of standard list offences significantly improved in 1996 with the addition of some offences (driving whilst disqualified/over the prescribed limits).

The problem associated with the dating of convictions needs explaining. The delay in bringing cases to court is variable, but tends to be longer for those more serious crimes which are committed to the Crown Court. A proportion of reconvictions are thus in connection with crimes committed *before* the crime which led to the order under evaluation. It is important to correct for these "pseudo-reconvictions". It is especially important to do so if comparisons are being made between probationers and those released from prison; when reconvictions are counted from the date of release from prison, very few are pseudo-reconvictions.

An appropriate adjustment for pseudo-reconvictions for a two year follow-up period is around two percentage points for average groups of prisoners and six percentage points for average groups of offenders on community penalties (reference page 43 HORS 136).

The Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS)

OGRS is a tool to estimate the *predicted reconviction rate* of any group of people, specified in terms of their age and criminal history – but not in terms of sentence. The current version is based on analysis of a large sample of people given probation or community service orders, or released from prison, in 1990. The estimate it yields is an average for people given these types of sentence. If the *actual* reconviction rates for any group are lower than the expected

ones, this can be taken as evidence of success.

OGRS provides a cheap and easy alternative to the tracking of a matched comparison group. A comparison group is intended to give an indication of the average reconviction rate that might have been expected without the experimental intervention. OGRS can do exactly this: it is easy to calculate expected rates for each probationer and the average expected rate for the whole group.

OGRS has to be used with care. The *expected rates* are those which can be inferred from the actual reconviction rates of a large national sample of people given probation or community service orders, or released from prison. Changes over time in detection and prosecution rates, or anomalous local practice, can mean that current local reconviction rates are higher or lower than the OGRS rates. One should "calibrate" OGRS, for example by drawing a random sample of local probationers and examining how their actual reconviction rates compare with the expected ones.

Analysis of reconviction rates can be technically demanding. Fuller information is available form "The Offenders Index: a user's guide", published by the Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate. Limited support with computer analysis can also be provided by RSD.

Other outcome measures

Though reconviction rates are likely to serve as primary outcome measures when evaluating any programme involving probation supervision or community service, there is likely to be a need to assemble supplementary outcome measures (or intermediate outcome measures). For example, the aim of a drug programme is likely to be to reduce reoffending by reducing illicit drug use; employment programmes aim to reduce reoffending by improving the probationer's position in the job market. An evaluation would need to establish not simply that there was a reduction in offending, but also that drug problems were actually reduced, or employment prospects increased.

Measures of cost-effectiveness

One common shortcoming of evaluations is the failure to examine issues of cost-effectiveness. It is desirable to know not simply whether a programme achieved its desired impact, but whether the costs are proportionate to the benefits. There is also scope for fuller costings. For example, the cost of breach proceedings, and those of subsequent penalties, tend to be excluded from costings of community penalties.

Evaluations need to put a value to *benefits* as well as costs. Let us say, for the sake of argument, that an intensive supervision programme has a unit cost of £2,000 per probationer, as compared to a normal unit cost of £1,200. Let us also assume that the reconviction rate is ten percentage points lower than the expected rate of 60%. It should be possible to cost the benefits, in terms of saving to victims and to the criminal justice system, and thus give an indication of what the extra £800 per probationer is actually buying. Cost benefit analysis of this sort is obviously of particular importance when comparing community penalties to imprisonment.

Bridging the gap between monitoring and evaluation

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the distinction between monitoring and evaluation is not a hard-and-fast one, and the distinction is likely to become more blurred over time, for two reasons.

Firstly, the role of process evaluation may become more rather than less important, as the knowledge base develops. As the service develops a clearer idea of what makes for success, it will become increasingly important to ensure that practice actually reflects this knowledge. It is over-optimistic to expect that this can be done simply through routine monitoring of inputs, processes and outputs. There is likely to be an expanding role for process evaluations carried out by independent researchers (either in R&I units or externally) to establish whether programme integrity is maintained.

Secondly, technology promises to make it easier to monitor *outcomes* routinely. In principle, the probation service could collect information on expected and actual reconviction rates for *all* offenders under its supervision. The main constraint is the limited access to databases which can provide reconviction rates, such as Phoenix and the Offenders Index. With increased ease of data-sharing, however, the problem should rapidly dissolve. When this happens, there will be an important interpretative function, probably best served by R&I staff, in helping practitioners and managers make sense of the information. Whilst technology will help reduce the measurement problems associated with probation outcomes, the difficulties of attributing cause and effect will remain, and research skills will still be needed to analyse the reconviction data.

In developing their evaluation strategies, therefore, probation areas will need to ensure not only that their need for outcome evaluation is met, but also that they have the capacity to fill the 'middle ground' between monitoring and evaluation.

GETTING EVALUATION DONE AND GETTING IT USED

OVERVIEW

This chapter considers strategies for ensuring that evaluation is efficiently organised, and that its findings feed effectively into practice. The chapter highlights the fact that, whilst there are certainly examples of high-quality research mounted by probation areas, the way in which evaluation resources are currently deployed creates several problems:

- little is being done to build up a cadre of skilled probation evaluators

- it costs money to recruit or develop skilled people

- there is duplication of effort and insufficient collaboration between areas

- resources are sometimes squandered on outcome evaluations which are small-scale and insufficiently rigorous

- the rare examples of really good evaluations are poorly disseminated

- the lack of a nationally coordinated approach which brings together Home Office and probation service research findings.

Using and developing in-house evaluation expertise

The first – and probably best – solution to these problems is to foster in-house skills for probation evaluation. In-house evaluations could be put on a more professional footing. When it is decided that a programme should be evaluated, and not simply monitored, the job needs to be done properly: adequately resourced and timetabled, with a clear product – usually a publication – in mind. Thought needs to be put to career progression for those who wish to develop and maintain evaluation skills. There may be potential in arrangements whereby R&I staff work in partnership with university researchers. On occasion, it may be possible to have joint-appointments – a post split between probation R&I work and university research.

The first plank in any probation area's evaluation strategy should thus be to find ways of getting better value out of available evaluation resources. The two main approaches are to *pool* resources with other areas (e.g. at a regional level) and to enter into mutually beneficial *partnerships* with local universities. To work, both approaches may involve *protecting* evaluation staff against redeployment to more pressing but less important tasks.

Collaboration between areas

A second – but not mutually exclusive – possibility is to collaborate with other probation areas. This could mean that either in-house or commissioned evaluations could be done on a scale which makes them worthwhile. One could envisage the evaluation of 'families' of programmes on a scale[26] which would be beyond the pocket of individual areas. Partnerships with universities also opens up possibilities of properly resourced evaluations, funded by central government, the Economic and Social Research Council and charitable trusts.

A few properly executed studies are worth more than a plethora of inadequate ones. There are two main areas in which collaboration needs to be fostered. First, the service needs to take a collective view on research priorities, to make best use of existing research resources and to avoid duplication. This implies assigning specific tasks to specific areas or groupings of areas, and discouraging areas to mount work which is already in hand or in planning elsewhere.

Commissioning independent contractors

The final option is to commission independent contractors. The case for doing so is first that their independence guarantees sufficient 'professional scepticism' to undertake a dispassionate evaluation, and secondly that they can provide specialist skills which are either not available in-house, or not needed on a full-time basis. There are several providers of evaluation services: a growing number of academic researchers; a dwindling number of non-profit research institutes; a growing number of research consultants and management consultants, usually working by themselves or in small teams; and commercial survey companies.

All have their advantages. Academics have a vested interest in carrying out high quality, published research, and the university funding system has the effect of providing a cash subsidy to successful research centres. As discussed earlier, this means that universities may be keen to enter into various forms of partnership – where they discount their costs in exchange for privileged research access, for example, or provide research facilities for R&I staff, or seek research funds together with the probation area. Even where academics are engaged under contract, rather than as partners, their services are relatively cheap (see Figure 9.1). Possible drawbacks are that academics are not always used to the disciplines of the market place; they may not single-mindedly pursue the

[26] It would enable larger scale studies in terms both of the number of offenders covered by the research, and of the resources allocated to the work.

agenda of their probation partner or paymaster; and they may be concerned more about the academic than the policy or management payoffs. In other words, academic independence may have its price. Universities also find it difficult to provide research services at short notice, and in small blocks of time. Most are geared up to employing researchers on contracts which last at least a year, and deploying these researchers on projects with a degree of continuity leading to some form of publication.

Research institutes and research consultants are likely to be more market-oriented, both in covering costs fully – or making a respectable profit (see Figure 9.1) – and in being more responsive to client needs and wishes. Research consultants will produce a report for publication if this is in the contract, but they are not exposed to overriding pressures to publish. As for quality, the distinctions between academic research and independent or commercial consultancy are becoming increasingly blurred, and it would wrong to generalise about relative technical skills. Commercial survey companies now offer a variety of quantitative and qualitative services; but probation evaluations will rarely be on a scale which justifies their use[27].

Figure 0.1: Some illustrative costs

When probation areas (or consortia of areas) buy research, they are likely to be buying it by the day; even if not, this provides a useful metric with which to compare costs. Independent researchers tend to quote a day rate which covers fees, and office and incidental costs, exclusive of travel, subsistence and other significant costs. Travel, subsistence and other significant costs will be charged separately (and will sometimes attract an overhead charge).

Type of researcher	Salary	Typical day rate
University research assistant	(£12,000-£15,000 p.a.)	£120-150
University research fellow	(£16,000-£26,000 p.a.)	£180-220
Senior research fellow/reader	(27,000-37,000 p.a.)	£270-350
Professor	(£36,000-50,000 p.a.)	£350-500
Research consultant's gopher	£150-200	
Junior research consultant	£250-350	
Research consultant	£300-£600	

A typical university research contract

In costing a typical – fairly small – research contract, we have assumed that the evaluation might involve data collection from existing records, coupled with follow-up interviews with 75 probationers. Initial planning could take 15 days, data collection from records a further 20 days. The interviews might take 35 working days. Data input and analysis could take 25 days, and report writing a further 25. This totals 120 days' work, excluding management time.

One research fellow, full time for 6 months

[27] Survey companies come into their own when working on studies with large amounts of uncomplicated fieldwork, which they are geared up to do cheaply and effectively. They will tend to prove expensive if the work involves extensive development, or complex analysis and report-writing requiring specialist subject-knowledge.

£18,000

One research assistant for 20 days

£2,300

10 days of professorial time

£3,500

10 days of secretarial/admin time

£1,000

Travel and subsistence

1,000

Payments to respondents (75 interviews at £10 a head)

£750

TOTAL

£26,550

When probation managers are purchasing research, they will obviously have to comply with their area's procedures for contracting and tendering, and will need to meet the requirements of legislation, such as the Local Government Act 1988. (The Probation Training Unit has produced a useful guide, "An Introduction to Contracting and Tendering in the Probation Service"). Whilst in most respects research can be bought like any other service, there are a few considerations worth bearing in mind:

- most research contracts are let through restricted competitive tendering or through single tender action, rather than through open tendering

- when restricted competitive tenders are invited, it is unusual to exceed three or four tenders

- reputable researchers would not normally expect to get involved in competitive tendering for small project (e.g. under £5,000).

When inviting tenders, there must be a clear specification of the work. It is worth checking that potential contractors are interested in tendering before sending an invitation to tender. Such an invitation, complete with specification, sent to potential contractors with no prior warning, will tend not to be taken seriously. The specification should include:

- the background to the work

- the objective of the study

- the outputs – i.e. what reports are expected, in what format

- the time-scales for the work

- the timescales for the tender (normally 3-4 weeks to submit proposal).

When buying research, it is advisable to indicate the sort of budget that is available. Research can always be done in greater or lesser depth; and it is impossible to write research specifications in such detail that a choice can be made on price alone. It is very frustrating to have to choose between an excellent but over-thorough and over-priced proposal and a poor one offering an affordable piece of quick and dirty work. (Procurement experts used to advise against indicating budgets, but central government thinking at least is changing on this score.)

In selecting a contractor, there are several obvious criteria: the quality of the proposal; the technical merits of the research design; track record; and value for money, for example. Experienced commissioners of research tend to place particular weight on a proven ability to produce reports which are readable and sensitive to the policy context: there is not much point in hiring someone with impressive statistical expertise if they cannot communicate the results of their work.

Once a contractor has been selected, a contract should be drawn up. Minimally, a contract should be established through a letter from the contractor offering to do the work described in the specification and the research proposal, and a letter from the client accepting the offer. Alternatively, the client can offer to pay for the research described in the specification and proposal, and the contractor can accept the offer. Where clients do not routinely buy research, it is probably sensible to underpin the contract with a set of 'standard terms and conditions' drawn up by the contractor, which will specify issues about copyright, how disputes are to be resolved etc. Where clients routinely buy research, it would be worthwhile drawing up their own standard conditions. The Home Office RSD set would provide a good starting point. Once the contract is in place, arrangements need to be put in place to oversee the work. A formal progress meeting on a quarterly basis is a good idea.

Where work is undertaken by an independent evaluator, it is important to agree in advance the ground-rules for publication. Is there to be a *right* to publish? What editorial changes can the client legitimately demand? Who holds the copyright? Research can prove embarrassing, and publication may sometimes create serious headaches. Problems are less likely to arise with independent researchers than with academics, upon whom there is growing pressure to publish. The consensus about good practice amongst commissioners of academic research is probably that:

- the client should hold copyright of the work

- the client should be entitled to comment on drafts, correcting errors of fact and identifying differences in judgement

- the client should have control over the timing of publication, and of attendant publicity

- there should be a presumption in favour of publication, to be overridden only when the quality of the work is demonstrably sub-standard

- the client can expect the contractor to show *some* sensitivity to the political brickbats which publication may create, and can expect the contractor to minimise the risks without compromising the integrity of the work.

A national approach

Individual service strategies for evaluation should not be developed in isolation from each other or the wider field of offender research. There is a need for a national approach to commissioning, undertaking and disseminating research on probation matters. The Probation Research Forum has had limited impact, not least because of its lack of budget to implement a strategic approach. The Effective Practice Initiative outlined in Probation Circular 35/98 will need to tackle this in order for a consistent, comprehensive and affordable research strategy for the probation service's work with offenders to emerge. In doing so the distinct roles which can be played by the Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate, the Probation Studies Unit, the National Probation Research and Information Exchange and individual services' research and information officers need to be considered.

Getting evaluation used

Finally, much more thought needs to be put to ways of exploiting the knowledge base more effectively. How can the knowledge that already exists be properly disseminated throughout the service, and what arrangements must be put in place for the future development of this knowledge base? It is crucial that monitoring and evaluation results find their way back into practice. Staff and managers will have greater commitment to collecting information and contributing to monitoring and evaluation, if they receive feedback on the effectiveness of their practice. HMIP's report comments on the key points in promoting the effective use of information by practice staff and managers:

- providing timely access to information at each stage

- emphasising the priority of tests and measures to give early indicators of

how the programme is working, offender feedback to improve practice quality and attendance data to highlight the need for motivational work

- emphasising the priority for managers of using attendance and completion information to monitor programme viability and act on issues raised.

It is also important that results are reported to probation committees.

All evaluations of any quality need to be published. There are three good reasons for doing so. Publication provides a form of quality assurance, in that the research is exposed to critical scrutiny; the process of peer review by other researchers should identify faults in the work. Secondly, assuming that the study withstands this critical scrutiny, publication ensures that others can benefit directly from the lessons it offers. Finally, publication helps the process of theory-building – of developing the body of professional knowledge. Research is rarely definitive; a new study may confirm or qualify conclusions drawn from previous work.

Where should material be published? There are several options:

- in-house reports

- Vista

- Home Office RSD outlets

- Probation Journal

- academic journals or book chapters

- web-site publication.

The first option is probably the most attractive for a probation area, both in terms of editorial control and in taking credit for the work. However, it may achieve a more limited circulation outside of the service than publication in a more formal – and thus catalogued and indexed – outlet.

The Internet is bound to become of increasing importance in disseminating information about best practice. Individual areas are starting to develop their own web sites. There may be scope for developing a shared web site for research. This could both carry summaries of reports, and allow the down-loading of full reports. Another option would be to encourage a university research centre to build and maintain such a site. Either possibility carries a price tag, but not a large one

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ANNEX A

Figure 3.1 The Role of the Case Manager

	Productive and Law-Abiding Lifestyle	**OUTCOME**
	Community Reintegration	**PROCESS**
	Pro-social Attitudes and Behaviour	**OUTPUTS**
	Programme Delivery	**PROCESS**
	Supervision Plan	**OUTPUT**
	Initial Assessment	**PROCESS**
	Offender Staff & Knowldge	**INPUTS**

CASE MANAGEMENT

- Continuous Assessment
- Risk Management
- Supervision Planning and Review
- Referral and allocation of resources
- Co-ordination and sequencing of work
- Managing contact, attendance and enforcement
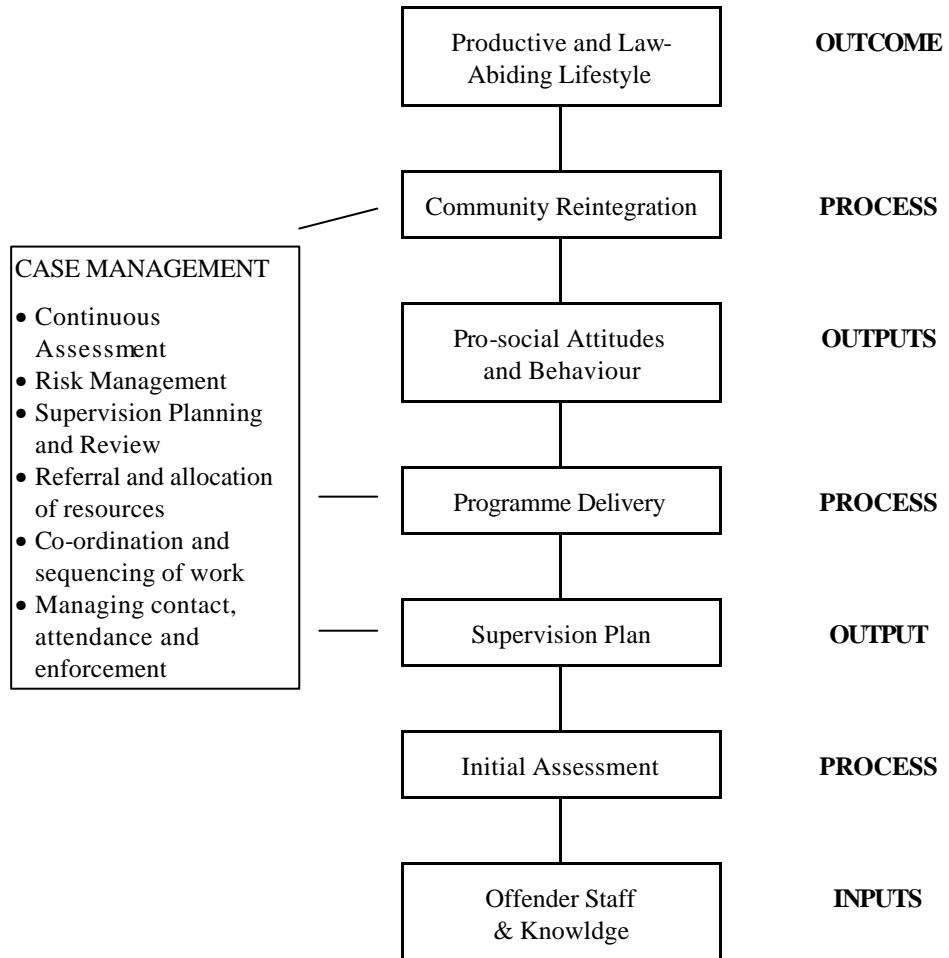
DRAFT – 31 July 1998

ANNEX B

Figure 5.1 Complex Model of Causal Theory - Outputs to Outcomes