

Training and Professional Development

1. Impact of Transforming Rehabilitation on Training, Learning and Professional Development

The training and development of staff is essential to an effective justice system. At all levels and in all roles personnel must be able to understand and perform their role in a professional manner, keep up to date, improve their skills with increasing knowledge and experience, and support the practice of others. As a society we expect those who exercise positions of authority to demonstrate formal, recognisable and consistent competence and progression.



Picture by Mark Harvey - www.socialissuesphotography.co.uk

The recent changes to the probation structures have also brought changes to the training, learning and professional development environment. For the 50% of former probation staff moving into Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) effectively “deregulates” the previously stable and funded qualification requirements, hitherto applicable across all Probation Trusts in England and Wales. Contracts under TR require the new owners of the CRCs to ensure that their staff are trained and competent but do not stipulate in detail either what this means nor how it should be achieved.

In seeking to offer support to the probation environment in addressing training and professional development going forward, the Probation Institute is keen to open up debate and make recommendations recognising the impact of change, engaging a wider set of organisations, and seeking robust measures both to prevent loss of skills and knowledge and to enhance continuing professional development. The Probation Institute also sees an important opportunity to make stronger and more inclusive arrangements for training, learning and professional development across a wider range of probation, rehabilitation and resettlement organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Qualifications for Probation Officers and Probation Services Officers were previously defined through the Probation Qualifying Framework (PQF) set down by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the Probation Officer Qualification was funded centrally by the NOMS. These arrangements no longer apply in the CRCs, for whom it is an option not a requirement to use the defined qualifications and there is no central funding available to them. For new roles in CRCs, for example in new posts delivering Through the Gate Services, and in services subcontracted to Tier Two providers there are no training or professional development requirements, a situation made more concerning by the increasing number of employers, job titles and recruitment processes.

Concerns expressed to the Probation Institute about the impact on staff arising from these changes include:

- Higher workloads and greater responsibility for less well paid and less well trained/qualified roles
- Staff feel deskilled and demotivated
- Trainees in both NPS and the CRCs have limited access to the necessary breadth of experiences to learn and demonstrate competence

Recommendations

- A** Consideration should be given to providing access to central funding for the training and qualification of Probation Officers in the CRCs.
- B** There is a compelling case for the establishment of an independent process to set and coordinate training and qualification requirements for priority roles in Probation, Rehabilitation and Resettlement organisations.
- C** The Probation Officer role, for any post in England and Wales designated as a Probation Officer, should be clearly defined and the qualification requirement should be set down as a Statutory Instrument as it was prior to 1998.
- D** There is a strong case for the introduction of a minimum Recruitment Standards across NPS, CRCs and the Tier 2 Providers contracted to deliver the services for the NPS and CRCs. The Recruitment Standards might be based on the Probation Institute Code of Ethics and the Generic Professional Competences introduced in the Probation Institute Professional Development Framework.

2. PQF Review/ Community Justice Learning

NOMS have reviewed the PQF and launched a new set of arrangements in April 2016, known as Community Justice Learning, including the Probation Qualifying Programme (PQiP), which will be a requirement in NPS and a permissive option in the CRCs.

The new arrangements continue to locate the Probation Officer Qualification in higher education at Level 6 on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), incorporating a vocational qualification (VQ) at RQF Level 5, but also open up access by offering a range of routes to achieve the Level 6 qualification. The new Community Justice Learning Framework seeks to build ladders and bridges from prior learning and qualifications, aiming to facilitate recognition and progression, particularly for those in Probation Officer and Probation Services Officer roles.

The Probation Institute supports the new arrangements but recognises that these are not yet implemented and are untested and do not include progression beyond the probation officer level. A concern is that the number of probation officers required by the National Probation Service going forward may not be sufficient to make the new Level 6 Qualification viable, particularly as some CRCs will limit the training of probation officers to small numbers because of cost.

Recommendation

- E** Measures are required to ensure that the numbers required for viability in higher education are achieved and sustainable.

3. Probation Institute Professional Development Framework

In November 2015, as one of its early commitments, the Probation Institute launched the Probation Institute Professional Development Framework, a comprehensive framework encompassing roles, at four levels aligned to the Probation Register, across all organisations in probation, rehabilitation and resettlement. The Framework offers to practitioners, managers, leaders and advanced practitioners:

- Job descriptions
- Generic activities and competences
- Role specific activities and competences
- Learning and qualifications
- Endorsed Learning Providers



The Probation Institute intends the Professional Development Framework to be relevant to staff in the public, private and voluntary sector, and seeks to encourage a culture in which learning and development are actively supported in all roles. The framework is a tool for self-development, improving performance and sharing information. We will maintain this Framework online, accessible to all; and we are keen to receive feedback from right across the sector on the value of the framework, also omissions, challenges and improvements. To achieve this the Probation Institute is keen to recruit learning and development professionals in the field into membership, and to develop our Professional Development Network.

Recommendation

- F** Practitioners and managers are encouraged to provide feedback on the Probation Institute Professional Development Framework.

4. Diversity Training

There are some indications that diversity training may be reduced under the new arrangements. This would be extremely unfortunate in an environment where equality, fairness and a demonstrated commitment to comply in full with the Equality Act of 2010 is critical to effectiveness. Moreover effective practice and professional development in the area of diversity particularly requires that practitioners need time and support in testing out their understanding and reflecting on their actual practice; beyond the basic requirements of legislation.

Recommendation

- G** Diversity Training must be an ongoing commitment for new staff and at refresher level

5. Workforce Capability and Planning Reviews

The introduction of new roles and responsibilities points to the need for some new skills and knowledge. In addition, although CRCs inherited a largely qualified practitioner workforce, the high levels of staff turnover, both optional and compulsory, since the start of TR has significantly altered the balance of both the location and the numbers of skilled practitioners. A comprehensive and open review of Workforce Capability and Capacity is required across NPS and the CRCs; seeking to identify what current and new skills are required, where, when, and in what numbers.

Recommendation

- H** Workforce Capability and Capacity Reviews should be commissioned by the NPS and Community Rehabilitation Companies and the findings shared across NPS and the 21 CRCs; this could be an initiative taken by MOJ.

6. Gaps in Professional Development

A number of gaps in professional development in probation, rehabilitation and resettlement have been recognised over time; these include:

- Foundation/Entry Level Learning and Qualifications
- CPD and Post Qualifying /Advanced Practice
- Management and Leadership Development
- Resources for Professional Development
- Evaluation and Review



Foundation, Entry Level Learning and Qualifications

Many professions offer preparatory learning opportunities for those seeking to work in the sector; including “Preparing for Work in Health and Social Care”, “Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care”. Initial training and qualifications in the probation and justice environment typically require the candidate to be already in a practitioner role and are more focussed on specific roles. The gap recognised by the Probation Institute is in the opportunity to learn about the roles, responsibilities, values and challenges of this occupational sector before application, or on appointment.

Recognising the importance of early preparation for work in this sector the Probation Institute has introduced Level A on the Probation Register to identify and encourage foundation and entry level learning and qualification opportunities, which could be used in conjunction with Recruitment Standards.

Recommendation

- I** Consideration should be given to the active encouragement of foundation and entry level qualifications for Probation, Rehabilitation and Resettlement roles

Continuous Professional Development, Post Qualifying and Advanced Practice

The Probation Service has been criticised for the lack of any formal continuous professional development beyond the Probation Officer qualification, which has been the formal skill ceiling for too many years. Post-qualifying practitioners and managers demonstrate high levels of skill and knowledge in very challenging areas, often carrying responsibility for managing risk of serious harm. Advanced practice requires tutoring, access to research and formal recognition. The Probation Institute also notes the high levels of responsibility held by practitioners in the voluntary sector and the lack of funding for professional development in this part of the sector.

In the absence of a formal approach to Continuous Professional Development the provision of learning opportunities is unplanned, leaving individuals to seek individual solutions and without access to funding. This is a complex area which requires careful planning and implementation.

Recommendation

- J** The Probation Institute will hold a series of consultations on the most appropriate approach to Continuous Professional Development across Probation, Rehabilitation and Resettlement organisations reporting back on a framework by the end of 2016.

Management and Leadership Development

There is little consistency to the training, development and qualifications for managers and leaders in Probation, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Roles. A number of vocational management qualifications have been developed at different levels. Higher Education offers a range of Masters Awards which are also taken up, though currently not in great numbers, across the sector. A review of the most appropriate training and learning opportunities and qualifications supporting both current and new management and leadership roles would offer an opportunity to set a strategy.

Recommendation

- K** A review of management training, learning and qualifications should be commissioned leading to a sector wide strategy and the Probation Institute would be willing to support and/or conduct such a review.

Resources for Professional Development

CRCs have indicated to the Probation Institute their firm commitment to the professional development of all staff, but acknowledge the lack of funding. Professional development is a clear cost to an organisation and should be planned through active consultation annually; lack of training and professional development raises the risk of incompetent or demotivated staff which carries an even higher cost to the organisation.

Recommendation

- L** The Probation Institute should work with employers to press for dedicated funding for professional development.

Evaluation and Review

Transforming Rehabilitation has increased the range and scope of learning and development in the sector, increasing potential to improve quality but also the risks of reducing quality, pointing to a greater need for evaluation and review of learning and development at all stages. Good evaluative approaches should be built into the development and design of learning enabling outcomes to be more readily identified. HMI Probation has an important part to play in ensuring that all providers of probation, rehabilitation and resettlement services have plans in place to evaluate training learning and development.

Recommendation

M Evaluation and Review of training, learning and professional development should be inspected by HMI Probation, a Regulatory Body would have a role to provide oversight and support.

7. New skills and roles

Some skills, not previously formally recognised as core to justice sector competence, have been identified and are being captured in job descriptions and potentially in new arrangements such as the Trailblazer Apprenticeship (see below).

These include:

- Skills and knowledge in supporting and enabling the education, training and employment of ex- offenders
- Skills and knowledge in the commissioning and procurement of services
- Skills and knowledge in performance management and outcomes monitoring



Recommendation

N A formal ongoing process for identifying forward looking skills gaps and skill needs across the sector is required.

8. Trailblazer Apprenticeship

A group of employers and owners, led by the CRCs are coming together to develop the first Trailblazer Apprenticeship in Probation, Rehabilitation and Resettlement. The first Trailblazer will be to achieve an agreed assessment standard for the PSO or equivalent role and will seek to include public, private and voluntary sector roles. There is also interest in a Higher Level Trailblazer Apprenticeship for the PO role.

From April 2017 employers with a payroll of over £3m will be required to pay an Apprenticeship Levy and submit monitoring returns on the take up of apprenticeships. This requirement is encouraging employers to work together to develop common standards with approved training delivery and assessment arrangements so that each employer can recoup their levy costs. The Probation Institute is coordinating the Trailblazer initiative supported by the Sector Skills Council Skills for Justice. Once the Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard is in place any employer wishing to access the funding will need to ensure that their training and assessment meets the standard.

Recommendation

O Employers are encouraged to join the Trailblazer Apprenticeship project to ensure the appropriate development of the common, funded, training and assessment standards for the PSO or equivalent role.

9. Role of providers in FE, HE and Independents Providers

There is little history of coordination or grouping of providers of learning and qualifications for probation, rehabilitation and resettlement and indeed, financial models do not favour collaboration. Nevertheless where the “unifying” influence of the single customer has been removed by the TR changes, there are strong arguments for encouraging a more collaborative and aligned approach by learning providers and stronger engagement by learning providers with the Professional Body, Trade Unions and Trade Associations.

Higher education has had a long history of support for probation training both for qualifying probation officers but also for probation service officers. We need to work constructively with higher education providers and NPS to build on their commitment across the training continuum. Higher Education should be more actively engaged with employers and practitioners in supporting research and advanced practice. The Probation Institute encourages the development of post qualifying initiatives.

Further Education could play a part in preparing the next generation of staff for work in probation, rehabilitation and resettlement and could enable employers to access more funding for training and learning at the foundation levels.

Where independent training companies work closely with employers in specific areas of development they too can help to meet ongoing CPD needs and may help to manage costs. A number of the new CRC owners own training companies who could lead in some appropriate areas of ongoing professional development of the workforce, provided that they are responsive to practitioner needs.

Recommendation



There is a case for better coordination and evaluation of the offer by learning providers to the needs of probation, rehabilitation and resettlement in terms of standards, content, access and continuous professional development.

10. Probation Institute Learning Provider Endorsement Scheme

Introduced in December 2015, the Probation Institute Learning Provider Endorsement Scheme offers a One Stop Shop to find learning providers who meet the quality standard set by the Probation Institute for endorsement. The breadth and number of providers endorsed by the scheme is expanding. Currently the panel for endorsements is made up of representatives from the Probation Institute and Skills for Justice.

Recommendation



The Probation Institute should attract a wider group of Endorsed Learning Providers and a more widely representative Endorsement Panel.

11. Vision

Taken together it is our view that the proposals and suggestions set out in this paper point to the need for a more consciously coordinated approach to training, learning and professional development to pre-empt and prevent the disaggregating impact of Transforming Rehabilitation. Whilst MOJ has held this role prior to the restructure, there is an argument to suggest that a new body should be independent and outside of government but with representation from MOJ/NOMS as well as the private and voluntary sector. We would describe this as a Regulatory Body in order to indicate towards its purposes many of which are indicated in this Position Paper. We regard the Probation Institute as being ideally placed to take on this role and align its own work on registration and the Professional Development Framework to this wider agenda. However we recognise that there will be other views and we would welcome a dialogue to move this forward in a coordinated and cooperative manner across the sector.

Recommendation

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The benefits of a more collaborative approach would be enabled and enhanced by the promotion of the recommendations in this position paper, including an independent, regulatory approach. The Probation Institute will convene an open meeting to discuss all the recommendations in this paper.

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