



World Congress on Probation - Summary Report

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Introduction

The first-ever World Congress on Probation brought together practitioners and those with an interest in probation and community justice to share their knowledge and experience. The Congress was truly international, with over 300 delegates travelling from over 50 different countries across Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Australasia, and a diverse programme which featured speakers from all continents.

The Congress was held in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in the heart of Westminster, London on the 9-10 October 2013. Those delegates who arrived a day earlier were invited to a study day and on-site visit to London Probation Trust, which provided an excellent insight into how probation work is implemented across the capital city.

Delegates were warmly welcomed at the Congress opening plenary and receptions by Marc Ceron, President of CEP, Michael Spurr, Chief Executive of NOMS and Sue Hall, Chief Executive of West Yorkshire Probation Trust.

Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for England and Wales welcomed delegates on behalf of the Government in the opening address and set out detail of the Government's plans for Transforming Rehabilitation. The international welcome was later extended by Jeremy Wright, Minister for Prisons and Rehabilitation, who emphasised the central contribution to justice of work in the field of probation.

Key themes explored throughout the two days included:

- The developing probation profession, and learning from emerging services and practices across the globe
- Underpinning practice and policy with sound evidence on 'what works' in probation
- Importance of one-to-one supervision and building effective relationships between the probation officer and the probationer
- Growing understanding of the desistance process, and how probation practice could best influence this
- Engaging in effective partnership work between probation and other service providers (e.g. health and homelessness services), to work together in tackling shared social justice problems
- Learning from the 'restorative justice' movement, and facilitating communication between the offender, victim and wider community
- Involving probation service users to better design probation and community rehabilitation services

Plenary Sessions

Community Justice services in the Age of Austerity

Dr. Frank Porporino, T3 Associates Training & Consulting, Canada, and Board member of the International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA)

Criminal justice systems across the globe are facing austerity, as public finances are squeezed and with a growing realisation that the rate of incarceration and prison places has reached an unsustainable 'tipping point.' This is causing a pragmatic shift towards strategies for reducing imprisonment, presenting opportunities for expanded probation and community supervision.

Quoting Rob Allen in '[Reducing Use of Imprisonment](#)' *Criminal Justice Alliance, 2012*, the plenary considered what strategies for decarceration could be deployed:

- Greater quasi-judicial prosecutorial discretion to dismiss charges and divert offenders, including wider application of Restorative Justice options and use of Community Service
- Greater reliance on suspended sentences
- Purposeful replacement and use of alternatives for short prison sentences
- A more widely available provision of treatment options for individuals with drug dependency and mental health issues
- A rise in the use of early conditional release
- A higher threshold for invoking breaches or recalls to prison
- Greater government acceptance of, and respect for, the views and expertise of non-governmental organisations, scholars, and practitioners in formulating crime policy.

'Community incarceration' can be considered most effective when rehabilitation occurs, reoffending rates go down and public money is saved. Simply chasing the cheapest option for probation and community supervision however will not necessarily be optimal at making long-term savings through reduced reoffending. Probation and rehabilitation is complex work, involving coordinated efforts to tackle inter-connected risk factors to offending behaviour. Frank encouraged any short-term savings from early success at reducing reoffending rates to be reinvested back into more effective rehabilitative processes, to create a virtuous cycle.

It is increasingly understood that 'what we do' in probation really matters as to how effective we are at reducing reoffending. There is a growing collection of evidence on effective practice, a focus on relationships between the offender and supervisor, and effective partnerships with other agencies to tackle common social problems.

Frank made the following observations over what a 'post dream' probation service could look like:

- *Purposefully integrating validated principles of practice within an overall framework for engendering pro-social influence* –The [H.O.P.E \(Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement\)](#) framework was used as a good practice example of integrating authority alongside an engendering relationship with the probationer, emphasising personal responsibility, hope & goodwill, pro-social and family values and the offer of problem

solving support. This added structure, and facilitated a perception of fairness and legitimacy.

- *Comprehensive services and partnerships* - a 'community of efforts' should work together to tackle common social challenges. For example social housing options are needed to resettle ex-offenders. Increasingly there are opportunities for probation services to work with the voluntary sector to provide local support services. Frank argued that an over-emphasis on competition and the market could be a force for division, when what is really needed are effective partnership arrangements and the sharing of information.
- *Eliminating social-structural barriers that undermine and counteract probation's possible influence* – divided and unequal communities, such as through the persistence of racial/ethnicity barriers and stereotypes, can create negative stigmas and limit reintegration opportunities which damages the effectiveness of probation.
- *Probation practices should be informed by evidence and learning from experience*—structured intervention programmes should be informed and adjusted by evidence, and also ensure that they are engaging, motivational and easy to understand for the service user. There should be room for innovations and building upon promising practice, for example increasingly we are seeing the establishment of mentoring schemes and reformed probation service users working as community justice professionals. It is also important for practice to be informed by what is demonstrated not to work; for example we know that supervision periods which are too short in length, a lack of professional training, and poor coordination around individual offender needs have negative repercussions for effective probation practice.
- *Building public confidence and mobilisation for community based justice* –a more consistent flow of information to the media on the success stories of community supervision and rehabilitation would help build confidence in probation and shape public attitude. Frank used the [Singapore yellow ribbon project](#) as a good practice example for mobilising and engaging communities

When understanding and evaluating 'what works' and 'what matters' in probation, Frank concluded that it is the probation practitioners themselves who are best placed to take a lead.

Restorative Justice

Professor Ivo Aertsen, Leuven Institute of Criminology, Belgium

The 'Restorative Justice movement' has been built upon the philosophy that harm caused by crime can in part be repaired through communication between the participants, i.e. the victim, the offender and the wider community affected. This has led to the development and experimentation of different restorative approaches, and the emergence of restorative values and principles which aim to inform and orientate the work of criminal justice practitioners, mediators and agencies.

Ivo outlined three general Restorative Justice models which have emerged:

(i) Mediation – an independent mediator facilitates dialogue between the person who has committed the offence and the victim of the offence.

(ii) Conferencing – a structured conference involving a wider group of participants, for example the offender, victim, family members, public service professionals and members of the wider community.

(iii) Community Justice Panels – a panel of community volunteers to suggest restorative solutions to local level disputes and crime.

The plenary heard that the first restorative justice practices began on a small and localised scale in the early 1980s in the Nordic European countries. Sustained interest by the research community and the endorsement of international organisations such as the Council of Europe, EU and the UN, helped to increase the profile of restorative justice practices over the past three decades, and we are now seeing interest in restorative justice in Asia, Africa and South America and a new wave of restorative justice legislation across Europe. Despite the growing interest, Restorative Justice in most jurisdictions is still regarded as a marginal practice, and usually has only limited accessibility.

Over the last 20 years, probation has been supportive to the restorative justice movement and some probation services at a local level have started their own restorative justice models. However, Ivo outlined some of the difficulties experienced by probation when incorporating restorative justice principles and practices into their work. Probation as an institution ingrains professional neutrality when working with the probationer, and bringing in restorative considerations focusing on the victim could complicate this perception of neutrality. Furthermore, policy makers increasingly are measuring the effectiveness of probation practice against reducing reoffending rates, whilst the impact of restorative justice is usually less clear and judged against repairing harm to the victim or community.

Ivo argued that whilst probation has proved an important collaborator to restorative justice practices, the movement needs to build wider multi-agency support to increase accessibility and move into the mainstream.

A key component in the restorative justice literature is the involvement of the wider community in restorative practices. However, the plenary noted that restorative projects to date have found it difficult to engage the community, and there is still a lack of clarity as to what restorative dynamics would constitute the 'community interest' and who should define this.

In conclusion, Ivo advocated that the restorative justice movement can be a helpful partner to probation, criminal justice participants and the community. Restorative justice can assist probation with being more inclusive of victims and the community, and may lead to new ways of improving service effectiveness. For the criminal justice system, restorative justice presents an opportunity to increase credibility and confidence among its participants. Restorative Justice can be seen as a bottom up movement, developing new models of social justice through building stronger relationships between offenders, victims and their communities.

Desistance research and 'evidence-based' probation

Prof. Stephen Farrall, University of Sheffield, Prof. Fergus McNeill, University of Glasgow, and Prof. Shadd Maruna, Queens University, Belfast

Desistance is the process through which people cease and refrain from offending. The desistance literature hypothesises that probation supervision and interventions may have an 'unfolding' effect on the individual over very many years, and that probation's impact upon the desistance process may accumulate over time.

The plenary noted that many evaluations of probation interventions and programmes end with downbeat assessments over their effectiveness. Yet if we are measuring the impact of interventions upon an individual's journey to desistance, these evaluations arguably have weaknesses and limitations. Desistance is theorised to be a long-term and complex process, yet often such evaluative studies into interventions use short follow-up periods of less than 2 years, rely on simple recorded data, and count any reconviction as equalling failure.

Literature on desistance alternatively has favoured research designs with a longer-term follow-up period, aiming to capture the full effects on the individual many years after probation supervision may have ended. Rather than assessing the impact of specific treatments in the present, desistance research has looked retrospectively to changes in the way former probationers think, learning from success stories.

Professor Stephen Farrall talked through a flagship piece of research on desistance which began in 1997-8 up to this present day. The first round of the field work took place in 1997-8 across 6 regions in England & Wales, interviewing 199 probationers aged 17-35 and their probation officers at (i) the start of their probation period, (ii) 6 months later and (iii) at the end of their order. Five years later in 2003-4 a quarter of this sample was interviewed again, and a fifth sweep of interviews using this sample later in 2010-12. From the earlier interviews during and immediately after the probationers' supervision periods, the evidence suggested that they thought little of the impact that probation was having on their lives and perceived any progress to desistance down to their own individual efforts. Yet by the fifth sweep of interviews, 10-12 years after their probation period ended, there was evidence that many of the same interviewees reflected upon their probation period as 'sowing the early seeds' and a starting point for longer-term desistance.

In particular, the interviews identified the '***talking process***' with their probation officer as useful, along with any practical help to reintegrate. When the interviewees looked back, engaging and discussing complex problems and behaviour with their old probation officer was seen as an important first step on their journey away from crime. Advice given during probation, even if it is not used at the time of delivery, may in the long term resonate as circumstances change. This suggests that the social model of 'befriend, advise, assist' could be the most effective intervention which probation makes when assisting desistance.

The implications of this research suggest that the level of impact which probation has can increase over time, whilst in the short-term the impact of interventions may be low. Social and personal factors play a mediating role, which can increase the resonance of messages taken from past probation experience. A more stable family circumstance in particular, has been identified as a

crucial mediating factor, which can emphasise taking greater personal responsibility as a path leading to desistance.

Conclusions have also been drawn over what circumstances do not help with the desistance process. The plenary argued that incarceration and prison can cause instability through erecting barriers across family life and employment, and discourages the taking of personal responsibility for others, whilst reinforcing the mixing with similar peers. Stigmatisation from being classified as an 'offender' or 'ex-offender' and a product from the criminal justice system can cause significant long-term barriers to reintegration.

Many probation organisations are considering how to introduce a greater desistance focus into their work, although our knowledge on what probation interventions/practice could be effective at speeding up the desistance process is still very limited. The plenary acknowledged that much of what probation currently does is focused on treating rehabilitation and compliance in the immediate to short-term, but desistance-focused probation practice would have to be more forward looking and prospective.

A focus on building the strength, social capital and supportive nexus around the individual, so that they are in a good position to overcome future life obstacles, could form the basis for designing desistance-minded probation practice. The individual's own discovery of self-efficacy is a core desistance principle, and therefore desistance-focused probation practice may help with building new narratives and changing motivations for the individual. The language of desistance-focused probation practice could more clearly recognise positive potential and development, and avoid identifying people with the offending behaviours they are being encouraged to leave behind.

It is also important for us to ask what comes after desistance? There is a risk that greater self-efficacy and self-regulation could result in a desisted individual becoming withdrawn from society rather than re-integrated as intended. The plenary heard that the next step for the desistance literature could be to conceptualise how reintegration can be achieved alongside desistance, for example through breaking down stigmas and redeveloping societal identity.

Effectiveness of One-to-One supervision

Ioan Durnescu, Senior Lecture at the Faculty of Sociology & Social Work, University of Bucharest, Romania

This session presented analysis of the fundamental question "Is probation effective?" Published and unpublished papers were considered, covering young people and adults, including evaluations published in Europe after 1970.

In order to test effectiveness, the original objective of the intervention needs to be clearly understood. With probation, objectives can fall under a number of headings:

- The promotion of alternative (to custody) sanctions
- Assisting the judiciary, by providing information

- Protecting the public
- Providing punishment in the community, or enforcing court orders
- Reducing reoffending and longer term desistance from crime, and
- Advancing victims' interests (about which there is very little research).

Promotion of alternative sanctions

When probation is initiated as an alternative to custody, it can be assessed by its "market share".

The commonly identified risk is of "net-widening," where both those who were on the cusp of prison and those who would not have normally merited a community sentence (and would otherwise have been dealt with less intensively) are drawn into more severe penalties.

Additionally, through tough enforcement of the conditions of community sentences, some jurisdictions had witnessed "back end net widening", when offenders go into custody as a consequence of breaking the requirements attached to their community order.

Effectiveness was therefore more likely when alternatives were accompanied by smart policies for breach, the active promotion of compliance and a focus on higher risk offenders.

Assisting the judiciary and pre-sentence reports

Pre-sentence reports, providing vital information after conviction but before sentencing, is important to me sure the right offender is on the right sentence. Evaluation from Scotland emphasised that quality and realistic recommendations were vital to maintaining credibility with the judiciary. Problems were found to arise if the pre-sentence report's author attempts to second guess the court's thinking and create recommendations anticipating the court's decision in order to achieve a high level of "concordance".

Public Protection

There was mixed research comparing parolees and those released with no supervision having served their maximum sentence length. The success of multi-agency work (like multi-agency public protection arrangements – MAPPA) has been chiefly measured by the number of serious further offences committed.

Probation as a punishment

An inevitable consequence of using probation as a rigid restriction of liberty mean that the consequences of non-compliance have to be rigidly enforced. This has meant that in some jurisdictions enforcement has resulted in a sharp increase in the use of custody for breach and for recalls. In this case, there is a perceived lack of fairness as "formal compliance" and sticking to the letter of the conditions is valued above "substantive" compliance, where an offender learns and applies boundaries to their own behaviour. In performance terms, little is understood of what the ideal rate of breach and recall – high or low - should be.

Impact on reoffending

With the EU pushing for a stronger culture of evaluation there is a growing amount of research to add to that from the US, Canada, Australia and the UK. At a high level, lower reconviction rates can be seen for those on community orders and receiving post-release supervision, against those released from prison. There is also a decrease in the average number of offences and a longer "survival time", before the first re-offence is committed. Although the differences are often not

large, they do signify that probation is valid. Clues to increasing the likelihood of success were found in adherence to the three principles of risk-needs-responsivity (RNR), practical assistance- for instance with accommodation or employment – and, enabling access to “social capital”. More recent research has identified the significance of the skills applied by probation staff working with offenders, concluding that there was a measurable difference in success between less and more skilled probation workers.

Conclusion

Common elements to effective probation systems typically included the trinity of i) well trained and empathetic staff, ii) use of evidence-based interventions with some flexibility on breach and iii) flexible legislation.

Evidence based practices and probation in the United States

William D. Burrell, Editor of ‘Perspectives,’ the Journal of the American Probation & Parole Association, and Corrections Management Consultant, USA

Critical thinking about effectiveness has been evident for at least 25 years in the identification of Risk-Needs-Responsivity principles, 20 years in the concepts of “What Works” and the methodical exploration of evidence based practice in the last 10 years. The outcomes have been lots of activity and talk, but arguably a degree of fatigue, accompanied by low levels of adoption.

What have been the barriers causing this reluctance to embrace evidence-based practice?

- **Size and growth:** In the US, the system size may account for why it has been slow to adopt new ways of working. The probation population has grown even faster than the prison population and with five million adults, half a million juveniles, 80,000 parole officers and hundreds of agencies it is difficult for it to be responsive.
- **Structure:** In the US, probation structures are highly decentralised with agencies existing at regional, federal, state, county or municipal levels, or even tribal departments. To this you can add NGO activity and private companies operating at the misdemeanour level.
- **Governance:** Decision making and oversight for this fragmented geography was matched by governance being located in a number of different administrative settings; judicial, state and county. Influencing these bodies in a consistent direction was exceptionally difficult.
- **Philosophy and mission:** Probation has been pulled in two opposing directions of “get tough” and liberal pressures. Coercion into treatment was undermined and an enforcement approach dominated (frequently described as “Trail ‘em, nail ‘em and jail ‘em”). The extremes of philosophy halted pragmatic developments in the middle ground.
- **Resources:** While workload has risen, spending on probation has not, meaning that many offenders get very little supervision and there is insufficient treatment to go around. High violation and breach rates further inhibit public support.

- Evidence based practice itself: The creation of large models, involving the mastery of complex skills are mismatched with large caseloads and staff without the necessary fluency in the language of research. These models also required lots of work in their implementation. The good news is that developments in the UK and Canada demonstrate that staff can readily be taught new skills.
- Leadership: Research in effective programmes concludes that leadership is important in improving outcomes. This is well documented (with examples in Maryland and Travis County) but remains a limitation.

Looking into the future, the fiscal crisis means there is an attraction in investing away from prison and, at a time when crime rates are dropping, there is waning support for mass-incarceration. There are growing signs of conservative support for rehabilitation and the interest in drugs courts are an indication that wider community treatment can be supported. Corrections may benefit from the greater understanding of “technology transfer” as a discipline that has been seen in recent, rapid scientific advances.

Probation – The service user perspective

Gary Moran, former service user of Bedfordshire Probation Trust, facilitated by Mike Seal, Revolving Doors Agency

The asset probation service users represent in the shaping and design of services was examined in this short session on Peer Research.

Gary Moran explained his previous criminal history and his initial cynicism at being invited to actively participate in the peer research that asked offenders what they wanted from the service they were receiving from probation.

As his experience grew, the six week project that extended to six months changed his view. He discovered that genuine involvement, shifting power to users, created considered responses from people about their probation supervision and broke down the entrenched attitude of “them and us”.

Gary reflected that openness, honesty and straight-talking were vital in successfully engaging probation with offenders, allied with a focus on needs and an understanding that everyone is different. Gary has now been crime free for two years.

Parallel Workshop Sessions – Short Summaries

Please note that all PowerPoint presentations from the World Congress can be found on the following link: <http://www.worldcongressonprobation.org/page/555/presentations>

Courts and the Judiciary

“Beyond probation staff – role of judges and attorneys in France”, Professor Martine Herzog-Evans, University of Reims, France

The workshop theorised the role which the judiciary could play in probation related work, drawing upon the example of the French [juge de l’application des peines](#), where specialised judges continue post sentence to monitor compliance and implementation both inside and outside of prison. Martine concluded that the work of the judiciary should find ways to complement probation work, and engage in effective partnerships to reduce reoffending and improve sentence compliance, rather than compete over turf and existence.

“A Community Court in Vancouver” – Adam Dalrymple, Crown Counsel, Downtown Community Court, Vancouver, Canada

The [Downtown Community Court in Vancouver](#) uses an integrated and multi-disciplined model to link community and government agencies directly to the court’s work, with the objective that this will better address the socio-economic factors behind criminal behaviour as well as improve efficiencies and local community engagement. The court has developed an integrated mental health programme, an aboriginal programme, a chronic offender programme, and has four case management teams. Probation is the cornerstone of the community court, working closely in partnerships with the court, prosecution and defence and collaborating with other partner agencies.

Restorative Justice

“Effects of European International Cooperation on Regional Developments in the field of Restorative Justice” - Jo Tein, Managing Director of the Schleswig-Holstein Association for Social Responsibility in Criminal Justice, Germany

Currently there is no common approach to ‘restorative justice’ practices across jurisdictions, with differences in responsibilities, providers, legal bases, methods and accessibility. However there are international agreements on restorative justice by the UN, Council of Europe and EU and funding to develop international projects. The [European Forum for Restorative Justice](#) has been set up to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and research on restorative methods and training across borders. Jo then gave the [Schleswig-Holstein Association’s](#) restorative justice work in Germany as a case study of the impact of EU funding locally, and their promising partnership work with developing restorative justice post-sentence.

“The Engagement of long term prisoners in preparing for resettlement in Northern Ireland” – Hugh Campbell and Tim Chapman, Restorative Practices programme, University of Ulster

The workshop heard how restorative justice approaches were used to engage and prepare resettlement for prisoners in a loyalist wing of a prison in Northern Ireland, who had been detained during the political troubles of the 1970s. Restorative practices were used on the prisoners to look

pathologically on their lives and beliefs, challenging how their political ideology underpinning past criminal actions in reality led to violence which harmed the local community they claimed to represent. The process tackled moral issues such as accepting remorse, but the audience heard the importance for facilitators of appearing non-biased and respectful to others' political beliefs. Those on the restorative justice programme were invited to undertake university study, completing modules on restorative practices and the history of Northern Irish politics.

Values and Principles

“Social work values in the Belgian Houses of Justice” – Annie Devos, Director General, Ministry of Justice, Belgium

Probation work within the Belgian Houses of Justice emphasises the importance of ‘social work under judicial mandate’ and building the relationship between the practitioner and probationer to help prevent recidivism. Social work values underpin the work of Belgian probation, and the workshop heard the importance of encouraging probationers to take personal responsibility for their actions and behaviour, and empowering them to take necessary steps to get their lives back on track.

“Working alliance in one-to-one supervision” – Andrea Donker and Anneke Menger, HU University of Applied Science, Utrecht, Netherlands

Andrea and Anneke presented their recent research analysing the characteristics of what constitutes an effective working alliance between probation officers and their probationers. Data was collected over 275 sets of probation officers and probationers at four points during two years of their supervision, and measurements were taken on motivation, non-compliance, drop out and recidivism to produce a score on the effectiveness of their working alliance.

Tackling the health needs of offenders in the community

“Mapping the health needs of offenders on probation: implications for service delivery” – Prof. Charlie Brooker, Nottingham University, Prof. David Denny, Royal Holloway; University of London

Whilst most research in this field has focused upon the health needs of the prison population, emerging studies have shown there to be a similarly high prevalence of mental illness and other health problems such as personality disorder and substance abuse among those serving community sentences under probation. The scale of health needs of those on probation has implications for service delivery, yet often health and criminal justice are treated as separate silos. Charlie and David called for a more integrated and joined up approach, recognising the interlink between tackling health problems and effective rehabilitation.

“The Merseyside Resettle Project; Intensive services for high risk offenders released from prison suffering mental and personality disorder” – Dr Vikki Baker, consultant clinical psychologist and Associate Director, and Sandra Oluonye, Associate Director, Merseyside Probation Trust

The Merseyside Resettle Project works with high risk male offenders in the community, who suffer from personality disorder and other mental health issues. ‘Resettle’ offers an intensive risk management and rehabilitative service which includes psychologically informed and individualised packages of interventions and integrated therapeutic work. This includes face to face contact for up

to 6 days per week and a 24 hour crisis line. A multi-disciplinary setting mixes criminal justice and health specialists to deliver integrated services around individual needs. The learning from this pilot project is now informing the UK offender Personality Disorder Strategy.

Public Protection and Managing Risk

Penny Barker, Deputy Chief Executive of Lancashire Probation Trust, and Nigel Byford, Assistant Chief Executive of Staffordshire & West Midlands Probation Trust

The workshop considered how risk assessment and public protection are approached in probation practice across England & Wales. All probation cases are put through the Offender Assessment System (OASys), which assesses both the likelihood that the probationer will reoffend and their risk of causing serious harm, as well as identifying related needs which may impact on offending behaviour such as substance misuse, emotional wellbeing, and accommodation/employment situation. This helps structure clinical judgement in the formulation of a risk management plan, laying out responsibilities and actions to manage risk. The workshop also heard about multi-agency public protection forums set up in England & Wales, such as [Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements \(MAPPA\)](#) and [Integrated Offender Management schemes](#) dealing with the most high risk cases.

Service User Engagement

“Engaging offenders to reduce re-offending: a model for effective practice skills” – Martin Cosey, Commissioning & Competitions, Rehabilitation Programme, Ministry of Justice, and Sue Rex, National Offender Management Service

The workshop considered the importance of professional probation practice which effectively engages offenders to desist from crime. The Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision (SEEDs) model was developed by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in collaboration with Probation Trusts in England & Wales to promote effective engagement practices throughout an organisation. The findings of the pilots have suggested that SEEDs in particular benefitted probation staff, who found themselves more engaged and motivated, and performing professionally.

“Engaging with Service Users to support the desistance journey” – Neil Moloney, Head of Leeds Probation, West Yorkshire Probation Trust

This workshop session explored the links between service user engagement and desistance models, particularly in respect of approaching service users as people with capabilities, rather than simply assessing their needs. West Yorkshire Probation Trust’s ‘service user involvement and engagement policy’ was used as a good practice example, where the design and operation of probation services has been influenced by principles of ‘co-production’ through direct input from groups of service users.

Working with offenders in the community

“What works with women offenders?” – Professor Lorraine Gelsthorpe, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, UK

The needs and risks of women offenders are specific and different from men, yet the workshop heard most probation programmes are still designed around the criminogenic needs of a predominately male offending cohort. Consistent messages from the research literature show that women offenders often leave probation periods with unmet needs over sexual and violent victimisation, physical and mental health, housing and training. There is however a growing effort to develop gender specific and more effective rehabilitative interventions for women. Lorraine identified the growing number of women community centres in England & Wales as a particularly promising development, providing integrated tailored support for women and families, mixing those on probation with women service users from the wider community.

“Implementing what works in the community: the challenge of research on probation policy and practice” – Professor Paul Senior, Sheffield Hallam University, UK

The workshop heard how the early ‘what works’ movement, evidencing the effectiveness of probation interventions, was led by researchers and practitioners from the bottom-up. Yet increasingly ‘what works’ has become more institutionalised, as policy makers implemented accredited probation programmes. The workshop considered the challenges for ‘evidence based policy’ in probation, with changing political environments and a crowded justice policy arena, causing a mismatch in direction between evidence of ‘what works’ and the short-term political considerations of policy making.

Sex Offender Supervision

“Overview of developments in sex offender supervision,” – Elizabeth Hayes, Chair of CEP Sex Offender Special Interest Group

The results of a Europe-wide inquiry by the CEP Sex Offender Special Interest Group into different countries’ approaches taken to manage risk and provide community interventions to sex offenders were presented to the workshop. A common issue identified was over the lack of linkage between prisons and community provision for the sex offender cohort. A wide spread of sex offender probation arrangements were found, with little sharing of information and tools between jurisdictions. The CEP Sex Offender Special Interest Group aims to improve the coordination and cooperation of stakeholders with EU initiatives in this field and to facilitate the exchange of research and good practice information across countries.

“Circles4EU : Expanding circles of support and accountability in Europe” – Bas Vogelvang, Avans University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

The workshop considered the difficulties sex offenders face when re-integrating into the community, leading to isolation and increased risks to the public and recidivism. Sex offenders on probation require a high intensity of control and rehabilitative support. The Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) model sees professionals and volunteers work together to form a circle around high-risk sex offenders released from prison, offering joined up support and clear lines of accountability for control. The COSA model was first developed in Canada in the mid 1990s, and has since been piloted in the [UK](#), Belgium and the Netherlands. The Circles4EU project has been established to further disseminate research and developments on COSA across jurisdictions.

Community Justice and Civil Participation

“Civil participation in probation; a Japanese perspective” - Professor Hiroshi Shojima, Fukushima University, Professor Kayo Konagai, Rikkyo University, Ayoko Sakonji, Deputy Chief Probation Officer, Wakayama, Japan

The Japanese Rehabilitation System is based on close cooperation between professional and volunteer probation officers. There are over 50,000 volunteer probation officers across Japan. The workshop heard about the current status, qualifications and training given to volunteers, and their involvement in providing social support to those under probation to reduce recidivism rates. Particular focus was given to how volunteer probation officers in Japan are helping to rehabilitate young offenders with developmental disabilities.

“Community justice in Thailand and implementing the Bangkok Rules to women offenders in the community” – Ruenvadee Suwanmongkol, Director General of the Thailand Department of Probation, Nathee Chitsawang, Deputy Director of Thailand Institute of Justice

Thailand’s Department of Probation has looked to incorporate ‘community justice’ principles and wider community involvement in offender rehabilitation and crime prevention. A programme of volunteer probation officers has been established, and over 700 community justice centres have been created which links to a wider network of over 80,000 members . The community justice network proactively engages in judicial activities such as serving as a crime watch unit, supporting offender rehabilitation, victim support, providing a legal consulting service and promoting social justice. The workshop session went on to consider how the [‘UN Bangkok rules on women offenders’](#) (2010) are being implemented in the community in Thailand.

Alternatives to prison in Africa; trends and challenges

‘Community involvement in the administration of justice: community service in Uganda’ - Paul Kintu, Commissioner of Community Services, Ministry of Internal Affairs

The legacy of the colonial era left Uganda with a criminal justice system focused on prison, but over the last 12 years Uganda has made significant steps to developing a community justice service. The workshop heard the early challenges faced, such as lack of resources, high abscondment rates and low numbers of community service projects.

A key lesson has been the importance of benchmarking and involving the community at all levels, for example by encouraging communities to start their own rehabilitation projects, regular consultation and considering local cultural factors when designing interventions. Public participation leads to a more positive perception of community services; a vital building block when developing probation.

“Probation legacy in Africa: an overview of the probation service in Kenya” – Clement Okech, Assistant Director of Probation, Probation and Aftercare Service, Kenya

Kenya has one of the more advanced probation systems in Africa; since 1999 a national probation service has been a distinct body within the Kenyan criminal justice system. Every offender serving a community sentence or released on license is attached to a probation officer. The ‘befriend, advise, assist’ social worker model for probation, focused on building relationships between the probation officer and the offender, provides the underlying value and training basis for Kenyan probation

officers. The workshop heard a continuing challenge for the Kenyan probation service has been the limited resources, and the service is now looking at new ways of expanding such as engaging through volunteers.

Eastern Europe

“Alternatives to custody in Albania and the establishment of a National Probation Service” – Alba Jorgaxhi, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Albania

The workshop heard that prior to 2009, whilst alternative sentencing was always permitted by law in Albania, many judges lacked trust in the proper execution of such community based measures and rarely issued them. This was largely due to the fact that there was no specialised institution in charge of offenders on community supervision. The OSCE played a significant role in the establishment of the Albanian Probation Service in 2009, and continues to play a supporting role through capacity building for probation professionals and key partners. The workshop heard that the Albanian Probation service has changed sentencing practice by increasing the number of alternatives to custody, which have proved cheaper than imprisonment, and early indications show that the recidivism rate of those on probation is significantly lower.

“Probation in Moldova” – Vladimir Grosu, Vice Minister of Justice, and Vladimir Popa, Head of Central Probation Office, Moldova

The workshop heard the story of the creation of the Moldovan Probation Service, which was put into legislation in 2007 and went live in 2008. Since then the prison population has fallen significantly, from a high of 10,000 in 2005 to just 6000 in 2013, whilst the probation caseload has now reached approximately 8000 cases. Recent developments include pilot projects to implement electronic monitoring, and the introduction of trained psychologists within probation offices. The ongoing support of other countries with more established probation systems and international organisations such as Unicef and the CEP, helped to overcome the challenges of capacity building, The 2014 Probation Conference of countries from Central & Eastern Europe is being organised to be held in Chisinau, Moldova.

Emergent Probation Services

“Endeavour to develop probation as an alternative to custodial sanctions in a harsh penal climate in the Caribbean” - Leo Tigges, Liaison Officer to the Dutch Caribbean of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice

The Caribbean incarceration ratio is one of the highest in the World, and the workshop considered various factors why this may be. The high levels of poverty can cause social conditions which enhance the risk of a downwards spiral into crime, coupled with a penal climate where long prison sentences are the norm. On the other hand, probation service capacity and the numbers of professional social workers are relatively low across the Caribbean. The workshop considered what the probation service could do to increase the number of alternatives to custody, identifying the strengthening of social services, stimulating a public debate over detention rates, and pro-activity with starting pilots.

“Developing post care for released prisoners in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan” – Guy Schmit, Criminologist/Advisor in Criminal Justice Reform, Luxembourg

In an EU funded project, a 2012 study into prisoners’ needs produced recommendations over how to develop the post release system of care and supervision in Jordan. The study found high numbers of prisoners anticipated stigmatisation upon release, difficulties in finding a job and accommodation, and reported being affected by mental health problems. For women prisoners, the study showed they could be especially vulnerable post release. Jordan is now rolling out a ‘pre-release and post care programme’ which would provide for role playing group work prior to release and access to support from an NGO/social worker post release. A resource manual for prisoners, helping with reintegration, has also been produced.

The resettlement needs of foreign national prisoners

Nicolet Faber, Head of the International Office, Dutch Probation Service, Joanna Joyce, Coordinator of the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas, John Walters, Patron of Prisoners Abroad, UK

The resettlement needs of foreign national prisoners can be especially difficult, many of whom would have experienced long periods of isolation from their family members back home, difficulty in foreign language barriers, and challenging prison conditions. The workshop provided examples of the developing resettlement services for foreign national prisoners, such as the international office of the Dutch Probation Service, the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas and organisations such as Prisoners Abroad. These services offer information and resettlement support for the prisoner, both whilst they are in prison abroad and upon return to their home country, often through utilising the good will of volunteers.

Developing Community Justice: Probation and Resettlement

“To trust again: an experience of prisoner resettlement back into a vulnerable community in Chile” – Olga Espinoza, Fernando Martinez and Carolina Villagra, Centre for Studies on Public Security at the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Chile

The University of Chile in collaboration with different State and community agencies in 2008-09 developed the ‘Trust Again’ resettlement programme. The programme worked with 31 male and female inmates who were released from prison in Chile back into a vulnerable community in southern Santiago, promoting access to local support services. The workshop heard over the obstacles which the former inmates had to face, the role of families and work at engaging and mobilising the local community.

“Challenges for Probation in South Asia: putting legislation into practice” – Nikhil Roy, Programme Development Director, Penal Reform International, and Zakir Shuaib, Human Rights and Penal Reform Consultant

The workshop explored developments and challenges to probation in South Asia, specifically Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, which share similar legislative and policy frameworks. Overcrowding of prisons and high numbers of pre-trial detentions are common in South Asian countries, and the workshop heard that developing community probation capacity could improve

this situation. Tackling the entrenched retributive approaches to crime and punishment within the justice and political systems was identified as a necessary step to better implementing probation on the ground.

Transition Management and Re-entry of Prisoners into the Community

“Transition and discharge management between prison and aftercare in Germany” – Peter Reckling, National Manager of the DBH Association of Social Work, Germany

The workshop considered the problems experienced during transition from prison to probation/aftercare services, and how better cooperation and transition management could be achieved. [DBH Association of Social Work](#) outlined some of their work in improving transition management in Germany, facilitating the exchange of evidence on good practice and facilitating expert discussion.

“The mandatory aftercare system of the Singapore prison service” – Timothy Leo, Chief Psychologist and Director of the Psychological & Correctional Rehabilitation Service Division of the Singapore Prison Service

The Singapore Prison Service has recently developed a Mandatory Aftercare Scheme for repeat offenders with a high risk of reoffending. Phase 1 of the scheme takes place in pre-release centres, 10 months before the high risk prisoner leaves prison, where they are risk assessed, given generic interventions and put on an integrated criminogenic programme which is aligned with correctional research and looks at cognitive behaviour and the self-cycle. Phase 2 upon release in the community includes ongoing risk assessment and supervision.

Parallel Workshop Overview - Developing Probation

The presence of over 300 delegates from more than 50 countries and jurisdictions around the world provided a valuable opportunity to share and learn from each other through the medium of workshops. Several workshops focussed on the theme of developing probation, discussing challenges and strategies in creating successful new services or strengthening more recent services. Prompted by the number of sessions on this important topic, this overview captures some of the most frequently occurring themes for future utilization.

Benefits of Probation: Several workshops described the motivation for and benefits of probation. Reducing the prison population and overcrowding is a key motivator in **South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan)**. The **Moldova** workshop reported a significant fall in prison population since the introduction of probation whilst in **Albania** alternatives to custody have been found to be less expensive than prison and to deliver lower recidivism.

Range of community-based development: Community-based sentences as alternatives to custody represent a core of existing and planned probation service responsibilities, as reported in the workshops on **South Asia, Albania, Moldova, Caribbean, Uganda and Kenya**. However workshops on **Jordan** and **Chile** focussed on the pre-release and reintegration of prisoners whilst in **Kenya** the emphasis is on both community sentences and prisoner reintegration. Both Community Service

Orders and Electronic Monitoring feature as early starting points for community sentences, whilst mediation and traditional forms of justice were discussed as valuable additional, or in some cases alternative, options.

Potential Obstacles to developing Probation: Workshops described a number of obstacles encountered along the road to implementation. Several themes were common. Outdated legislation and policy frameworks, on occasion a legacy of a colonial period or perhaps not well realized, and which may have contributed to a strong focus on imprisonment, were important considerations mentioned by workshops on **South Asia, Uganda and Albania**.

The importance of communication and getting people onside including the judiciary (but also media, politicians, public, families) was mentioned in several workshops including the **Caribbean**. This related to discussion of the penal climate, with entrenched retributive approaches to crime and punishment within justice and political systems, a harsh penal climate, or long prison sentences, cited in workshops on **South Asia and the Caribbean**.

A lack of confidence on the part of the judiciary in implementation (which may relate to an historic lack of infrastructure) was mentioned by **Albania**. Organisational capacity, numbers of trained staff, and resources more generally, were emphasised by presentations on work in **Kenya and Uganda**. The latter also referred to the problem of too few projects and early cases of absconding as community sentences were developed. Poverty and poor social conditions or social welfare infrastructure were factors noted in the **Caribbean** or **South Asia**.

Solutions supporting the development of Probation: Workshops described potential solutions to support the development of community sentences and prisoner reintegration.

Several presentations described the importance of partnerships and civil participation, in particular strategies to involve communities and local agencies. The **Chile** workshop described the role of families and work to engage and mobilise local communities. The **Kenya** workshop discussed the potential benefits of volunteers to help to overcome resource issues including a shortage of staff, whilst in **Uganda** communities are involved at all levels including starting local rehabilitation projects, building positive relations and opinions of probation through consultation, participation and consideration of local cultural factors in intervention design. On a similar theme, the **Caribbean** workshop discussed the potential benefits of a public debate on detention rates, whilst the **Chile, Caribbean** and the **Jordan** workshops referred to the importance of promoting access to local support services, inter-agency cooperation, or the strengthening of social services.

The **Kenya** workshop spoke of the underlying value base of probation, which together with contributions from Chile, Jordan and others on reintegration and community engagement, echoed the well-developed involvement of communities reported in the Japan and Thailand workshops (summarised elsewhere in this report) and the value attached to building “social capital” (linking therefore to the Congress theme of desistance also reported elsewhere).

Raising awareness was discussed in the **Jordan** workshop which described a survey of male and female prisoner needs. This produced recommendations on a post-release system of care and supervision to address employment, accommodation and mental health.

Several workshops described approaches to the management of resources and building capacity and infrastructure (in addition to the engagement of communities and volunteers reported above). The **Moldova** workshop described the value of assistance in capacity building from countries with more established services and from organisations such as UNICEF and the CEP. The **Moldova** workshop also described the introduction of Electronic Monitoring at a relatively early stage. The **Uganda** approach introduced Community Service work, whilst some other countries including **Chile** and **Jordan** have included an early focus on resettlement initiatives. The **Caribbean** workshop discussed the phased implementation of community based work through pilots and the **South Asia** workshop speculated on the potential benefits of working with more traditional justice structures.

Interviews with the Delegates

Below is a selection of short interviews with delegates, taken during the marketplace breakouts on the second day of the World Congress:

Interviewee: Darius Fagan, Department of Corrections, New Zealand

1) What motivated you to attend and why do you feel this is an important event?

“It was the first World Congress! We have had them in the Asia-Pacific region but not had one on a global level. I am always excited about where practice is heading and hearing from experts and practitioners from other parts of the World.”

2) Was there any session throughout the Congress which you found particularly interesting/useful?

“Yes lots – I’ve always be interested in the work of Fergus McNeill and the desistance issue. Frank Porporino was really good as was William Burrell. I found the US context very interesting – the pockets of innovation that the decentralized US system creates. It showed that some division and competition can drive new ideas. In New Zealand we follow UK practice.”

3) What key information have you taken from the World Congress which you will bring back with you and apply?

“I have got a lot of leads on research and desistance – quite a lot of new things to go and consider. Here you get a smorgasbord of ideas which you can look at. Some countries from developing countries are developing probation systems without constraints from central Government and it is interesting to see what they are creating and to reflect on what we could import. Singapore is doing some really interesting things.”

Interviewee: Edmund Siu, Tuen Mun, Probation & Community Service Orders Office, Hong Kong

- 1) What motivated you to attend and why do you feel this is an important event?

Information exchange and the international perspective. To learn from the experts. Probation is an important profession and it is important for us to gain professional knowledge – this is a great opportunity.

- 2) Was there any session throughout the Congress which you found particularly interesting/useful?

Evidence-based practice. This is becoming more important and is just beginning in Hong Kong. I have been asked to get more information to see if we can implement this further in Hong Kong.

- 3) What key information have you taken from the World Congress which you will bring back with you and apply?

I have to read more literature! There is obviously more work to do around Evidence Based Practice as it is quite new compared with other models, but it is the future. We need more evidence

Interviewee: Ignasi Pardo Pardo, Fundacio APIP, Spain

- 1) What motivated you to attend and why do you feel this is an important event?

We are a partner of CEP and we wanted to show what is happening in probation in Europe and share best practice. It is a good event at which to make contacts on some projects, particularly Restorative Justice.

- 2) Was there any session throughout the Congress which you found particularly interesting/useful?

The desistance session with the “three tenors” and the sex offender session very much, also. All the sessions were very interesting and very well-planned.

- 3) What key information have you taken from the World Congress which you will bring back with you and apply?

The importance of research; innovation; the offender’s point of view; the participation of volunteers. The Japanese view on volunteering was very interesting. We need more community awareness of the role of probation.

Interviewee: Ivo Aertsen, KU Leuven Institute of Criminology, Netherlands

- 1) What motivated you to attend and why do you feel this is an important event?

I was invited to give a plenary lecture. I am very interested in probation. I teach penology and probation is an important topic. This event is important for international co-operation. I have always paid attention to European co-operation in probation and it was a good idea to get a more global perspective. There are over 50 countries here – this is very good.

- 2) Was there any session throughout the Congress which you found particularly interesting/useful?

The plenary session on desistance was the most interesting. It provided very good information on desistance research and the main findings were not presented in opposition to the “What Works” approach. I suppose desistance approach is very attractive to probation practitioners because it starts from a more positive World view and puts the focus on quality of relationship and that is where the strength of probation officers lies.

- 3) What key information have you taken from the World Congress which you will bring back with you and apply?

I do research and applied research. To further our co-operation with the Houses of Justice (probation service) in Belgium. I have been inspired here to further our co-operation with universities on the one hand and the probation service on the other. I see our co-operation as an on-going and open-ended partnership.

Summary of other interviews:

A number of delegates responded to questions about their motivation to register and their opinion on the Congress: ‘Very informative,’ said Teresa Echenique from the Cayman Islands, ‘an opportunity to network,’ said Neven Ricijas from Croatia.

Motivation

The programme of the Congress was largely based on the submissions from the international array of the delegates, and was announced via the dedicated website [www.worldcongressonprobation.org]. Teresa Echenique, who is Director of Community Rehabilitation Department of the Cayman Islands: ‘I visited the website, which was very useful, and saw that the programme provided a good overview of various challenges that probation faces. This persuaded me to join the Congress. I enjoyed the visit with the London Probation Trust on the first day because they showed how they work with women, an aspect that is under-exposed in our probation service.’

As a researcher in Croatia, Neven Ricijas' aim was to network: 'My personal interest are western countries, and in particular examples of evidence based practices. I gained creative inspiration to continue my research. New ideas about my research on juvenile probation certainly 'clicked' in my head.'

Highly valued sessions

Ruenvadee Suwanmongkol is Director General of Probation, she and her colleagues from Thailand were particularly interested to see how European and American countries approach probation. 'To me, the session on Courts and the Judiciary, as well as the Public Safety and Risk Assessment sessions were of interest. I saw good examples of two way learning in these sessions.'

A popular part of the programme was the plenary session *Desistance Research and 'Evidence-based' Probation*, the majority of the respondents indicated that they found the presentation the most interesting part. Mimi Agnevald Haugen, Senior Advisor to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service: 'I liked the presentation by Farrall, Maruna and McNeill because it was research oriented and this approach helps me in my work.'

Clement Okech, Assistant Director of the Kenyan Probation Service, also learned from the session: 'The good thing is that the desistance research focuses on the positives, why people do *not* commit a crime. The literature on this topic is unknown and it was good to hear more about it.' The three speakers talked about the ritualisation of enforcement and compliance where a formal discharge by the courts contributes to a meaningful rehabilitation. Also from Kenya and coordinator of community services, Lawrence Mugambi found the desistance session 'very enlightening'. He hopes to bring back this understanding and discuss it with his colleagues.

Knowledge to bring back

Apart from inspiration and enthusiasm to bring back home, the delegates have learned new things that they intend to apply in their work. Ms. Agnevald Haugen mentioned one aspect: 'In Sweden we work together with NGO's and organisations for ex-convicts, but here at the Congress I learned more about service user engagement. It is a way of working that is new to us and I hope we can implement it in a more structured way.'

Goh Mui Leng attended the Congress with a delegation from Singapore. She is a psychologist as was hoping to become familiar with topics and people outside the sphere of psychology. 'The plenary session on desistance, as well as Ioan Durnescu's session *Effectiveness of One to One supervision* grabbed my attention. I hope to bring back the input and literature about desistance, but also the examples of practices within a secure setting for juveniles that I picked up in other sessions.'

International reach

The plenary and parallel sessions were grouped around long breaks, which provided the delegates the opportunity to meet in the central hall, the market place. Sponsors and partner organisations were present with information stands. One of the stands was run by APPA, the American Probation and Parole Association. The editor of APPA's journal *Perspectives*, William Burrell, characterized the Congress as an event that focuses on the topic of probation, and managed to go deep. 'The

Congress was attended by delegates from 'experienced' countries such as the US and the UK, and by countries like Jordan, who only very recently started with probation. The diversity is wonderful but they have one thing in common; they want to do it *right*. That is what binds all of us together.' The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre provided an environment with allure for the World Congress on Probation, because it was situated in the heart of London. The delegates provided feedback for future events, in particular the second World Congress to be held in the USA. The wish to have more time for breaks or questions is one that needs to be balanced by the conference planners. The committee with staff from CEP, the National Offender Management Service, the Probation Chiefs Association, London Probation Trust, and West Yorkshire Probation Trust looks back on a successful event with a world wide scope.

The Partners of the World Congress on Probation

CEP

CEP, the Confederation of European Probation, aims to promote the social inclusion of offenders through community sanctions and measures such as probation, community service, mediation and conciliation. The organisation is committed to enhancing the profile of probation and to improve professionalism in this field, on a national and a European level.



National Offender Management Service

The National Offender Management Service is responsible for commissioning and delivering adult offender management services, in custody and in the community, in England and Wales.



Probation Chiefs Association

The Probation Chiefs Association (PCA) is the independent professional voice that represents the Probation leadership in England and Wales. PCA promotes confidence in and increase understanding of the work that probation does to protect the public and reduce re-offending.



London Probation Trust

London Probation Trust is the largest of the 35 probation trusts across England and Wales, employing nearly 3,000 staff across London and supervising 40,000 offenders at any one time.



West Yorkshire Probation Trust

The West Yorkshire Probation Trust Board delivers probation services in West Yorkshire, UK. It is an enterprising and innovative organisation working to reduce reoffending and protect the public.



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