

## **Give them money. An illustrative history of forms of reimagined rehabilitation in probation practice in England and Wales**

Sitting in his Soledad State Prison cell in the 1960s George Jackson<sup>1</sup> wrote, '[b]lack men born in the U.S. and fortunate to live past the age of eighteen are conditioned to accept the inevitability of prison' (Jackson 1971: 27). Alongside this unadorned statement of fact, he set out, on the one hand the duty that the wealthy have towards the less privileged, and on the other, the inalienable birth-right of all Americans to those assets necessary for survival, that is to say 'meaningful social roles, education, medical care, food, shelter and understanding' (215). No apologist for his early criminal behaviour,<sup>2</sup> he reiterated the idea of a social contract in which individuals cede control to politicians in exchange for the resources necessary for them to support themselves and contribute to the community. Although he did not mention rehabilitation specifically he mirrors both its moral justification, based as it is on the recognition that the choice to offend or not is 'bound – often tightly – by the circumstances into which offenders are born' (Cullen 2007: 722), and the rights-based rationale in which rehabilitation is accepted as an integral 'part of government planning and social policy' (Rotman 1986: 1036). Six centuries earlier, the French philosopher Nicholas of Oresme (1956), in his treatise on money, pinpointed the direct connection between the exploitation and monopolisation of wealth by the powerful and the Impoverishment and social exclusion of others. In more recent times, and in harmony with both Jackson and Oresme, proponents of desistance theory in America, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have demonstrated that to achieve crime free lives people need concrete ways of achieving their basic needs, such as employment, sound relationships and money (Farrall 2002; Maruna 2001; Ward and Brown 2004). These observations, by disparate people across time, serve to remind us that the association of social and economic privation with the aetiologies of crime and social exclusion has a long history, and that manifestly, it is pertinent to questions about the rehabilitation of people who have personal histories of offending.

In an important, recent treatise about the future of rehabilitative work, Burke and his co-authors (Burke et al: 2019) flesh out the four forms of rehabilitation originally expounded by McNeill (2012) in his argument for an interdisciplinary understanding of the concept. Alongside the personal, concerned with change, improvement and resolution of individual problems, they place judicial or legal, concerned with restoration of full citizenship; moral, that encompasses victims and the community; and social, predicated on a civil society defined by social equality, proportionate punishment, active citizenship and the genuine empowerment of the communities in which people subject to probation live. In the latter, emphasis is placed on collaborative relationships between supervisors and supervised, humanistic values and a focus on the social and economic factors, or in desistance terminology, limited social capital that hinder efforts to lead offence free lives. Given the current political climate in which populist policies and the commercialisation of public service mitigate against such achievements, this is a timely clarion call for what they call reimagined rehabilitation that is, as Raynor (1997: 295) puts it, compatible 'with social justice and communal solidarity'. Both managers and practitioners involved in the renationalised probation service should heed that call, but they might also benefit from some reflection on earlier reimaginings of numerous people both within, and close to, the probation service. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore some aspects of what is a neglected history,

---

<sup>1</sup> At the age of 18 he was sentenced from one year to life for theft and in 1970 was charged with the murder of a prison officer in Soledad Prison. In 1971, after being transferred to San Quentin, he was killed during a prison riot. An avid reader, while in Soledad he wrote numerous letters to his family that formed the basis of the posthumously published book.

<sup>2</sup> He admits that when an altar boy he conned the nuns and priests and served mass so that he 'could be in a position to steal altar wine'.

and how it might inform future thinking, by looking at probation's historical contribution to six ways in which social context impacts on offending, namely employment, accommodation, health, poverty, sentencing and discrimination. The principal criterion for their inclusion is that they represent an approach to practice in which probationers are not simply a target of change but participants in efforts to change their social, cultural and economic environment, and in which the Probation Service is not only an agent of change but also a potential target of change itself (Pincus and Minahan 1979).

A long time before the emergence of desistance theory, probation officers and their progenitors demonstrated an awareness of material deprivation as a relevant factor in offending (Vanstone 2004). Several reports of the London Diocesan Branch of the Church of England Temperance Society and early practitioner accounts indicate that work by Police Court Missionaries was focused not only on saving souls but on practical and material help such as placing people in employment and accommodation, providing clothes, food and work tools, and paying rent, a focus sustained by the newly created probation service (see for example, Church of England Temperance Society 1905; Holmes 1902). Despite early calls for professionalisation and glimmers of a more scientific model of practice (Leeson 1914; McWilliams 1985, 1986), religiosity and underlying Christian tenets remained pervasive, and it seems likely the attention given to practical and material help owed more to the latter than the former. In truth, that early work was carried out by an assortment of individuals with a varying level of expertise and motivation, a situation that Leeson (1914), the first commentator on probation in the United Kingdom, determined to put right by promoting the American Model of probation and the fledgling science of psychology. But even he put great store on the idea of probation officers as a resource for assisting probationers with the kind of practical problems exemplified in this early example of a considered approach to practice. Rankin (1921) describes a case involving a sixteen year old boy, involved in an offence of attempted burglary, whose mother is a lone parent. The family live in abject poverty and teeter on the edge of admission to a workhouse. Appropriately, therefore, psychological enquiry is eclipsed by practical help in the form of provision of money, food, clothes, the seeking of employment and attempts to find a father, who had deserted the family, in order to procure his financial contribution to the its welfare. During the same period the London Service introduced ideas of community integration, mutual help and self government in the form of the East End Boy's Hostel and Club (National Association of Probation Officers 1925) and, in what seems to be the first resort to specialisation, appointed an Employment Officer (Page 1992).

As these examples reveal, a form of reimagined rehabilitation permeates early accounts of probation practice, but over the next few decades professionalisation of the probation service, an attraction to psychology and a dalliance with a number of different individual-focused pathologies, including Eugenics and Mental Hygiene, diverted attention away from the social environment (McWilliams 1985; Rose 1985). Admittedly, that does not tell the whole story, for probation officers who undertook training at, for example, the University of London Diploma in Social Science in the 1940s, would have listened to lectures by Herbert Mannheim on the relevance to crime of social factors and by a B. C. Adams on Social Structure and Social Conditions (Vanstone 2004). Nevertheless, that content would have been outweighed by lectures on the Psychology of Delinquency and Social Psychology and this remained true of training for at least the next two decades as an analysis of the twelve week residential component of the Home Office course at Rainer House of 1969 confirms. Excluding lectures and seminars on matrimonial work, 65 percent of lectures focussed on the individual and crime, 12 percent on Law, 9 percent on Criminology, 6.5 percent on Cultural Influences on Behaviour, and 7.5 percent on miscellaneous subjects. Of the 38 visiting lecturers, 17 came from the fields of psychiatry and psychology, six from sociology and social administration, two

from research, and 13 from specialist organisations such as prisons, the courts and the probation officer union.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that two years later a description of a reimagined approach to rehabilitation by London probation officer, Geoffrey Parkinson, should have been deemed controversial and even heretical (Parkinson 1970).<sup>4</sup>

Not averse to a dabble in casework himself – some of his writings focussed on casework and the persistent offender and passivity and delinquency (Parkinson 1965; 1966) – he tells the story of Ronald White whom he supervised on after-care and who was interviewed by a colleague when he was unavailable. In an explanatory note, the colleague explained that Ronald had asked for money but it had become apparent that he had ‘more fundamental worries’ and had ‘quite deep feelings about his marriage’ (Parkinson 1970: 120). In a subsequent interview with Parkinson, Ronald explained that he was short of money and needed a loan but when the colleague asked him personal questions he offered him some thoughts on his marriage which stirred the colleague’s curiosity. Not wanting to seem ungrateful for the kind attention he had received, Ronald was reluctant to insist that he had actually come about his need for money so ‘pushed off’ to get the money elsewhere. Parkinson uses this case to demonstrate that within the confines of the treatment model lack of money is seen as a symptom of disease. In contrast, he gave them money because among other things they needed it and readily accepted it; it demonstrated real concern; enhanced their self worth and broke down their sense of isolation; increased confidence in the officer and encouraged their cooperation; and, perhaps most importantly, reduced the risk of further offending. Evidently, he put great store on the importance of collaborative relationships within which the probationer is listened to. Probationers, he stresses, ‘try to talk about the gas bill, workers try to talk about the client’s mother’ and when they talk about marital problems, the focus should be on their possible impact on ‘further delinquent breakdowns rather than on the marriage itself’ (121). His approach to helping, which seems to anticipate the future concept of criminogenic need, was by no means universal at the time, but it can be seen as the flickering of a reimagined rehabilitative light that would survive as a small but not insignificant symbol of probation practice over the remaining decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In essence, it would involve probation officers in the role of broker helping the probationer access ‘licit social capital’ (Burke et al 2019: 152).

Any exploration of this history must be tempered by the realisation that much of actual practice is hidden from view and therefore inaccessible, so a *sceptical intelligence*<sup>5</sup> has to be applied to readings of accounts and studies. Two studies, a decade apart, and a reading of the 1978 NAPO Probation Directory put together identify what might be a change in the nature of practice. In his analysis of officer’s recordings of work with 507 young male probationers, Davies (1974) highlights the superficiality of face to face work and the lack of attention to their material needs. Of course, the Probation Directory might not cover informal practice efforts, but officially recorded projects are few and far between. Seven Services include specialist projects related to employment, accommodation and community development as part of their organisation; for example, the Inner London *Vera Support Work Scheme*, the West Yorkshire *Homeless Offenders Unit* with eight staff, and the Greater Manchester *Neighbourhood Centre* with ten staff. Apparently exceptional, they might represent the beginning of a drift in the direction of Bottoms and McWilliams’ (1979) *Non Treatment Paradigm* first hinted at by Willis’ (1983) finding that officers were participating in collaborative efforts to resolve practical problems such as unemployment. However, if it was a drift, it was only partial because unlike the proposed paradigm, the help identified by Willis

---

<sup>3</sup> Taken from my own Rainer House training programme documents.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, he was suspended from duty for several weeks.

<sup>5</sup> From de Botton’s (2000: 7) reflection that ‘In Socrates’ life and death lay an invitation to intelligent scepticism’.

seemed totally unrelated to offending which 'was often seen as a rather unimportant and inconsequential topic of conversation' (341). This was not true of the South Yorkshire's Special Projects Team that was not only an unequivocal response to the paradigm (Hill 1987) but also to McGuire and Priestley's (1985) then recent re-discovery of the offence. Ultimately, the team failed to reduce the particular crime of vandalism that it had targeted through community and neighbourhood involvement, but it succeeded in identifying the need for a longer term strategy of structural change at community level through, for example, employment schemes, housing allocation and community schools and colleges.

Perhaps a stronger indication of change is to be found in an analysis of the 1982-83 Index of Probation Projects (Walton 1987) that identified 640 probation projects, 400 of which were related to accommodation and the rest to employment and education.<sup>6</sup> For him, this represented 'an impressive testimony to the enterprise of the Probation Service in its attempt to develop and exploit new or different methods of working with offenders' (132). Further confirmation of this aspect of probation service activity comes from Carlen and Worrall's (2004) reference to the fact that in the 1980s a third of Services had provisions designed specifically for women. Entries in the 1995 Probation Directory also attest to the durability of similar activity: 30 probation areas had at least one specialist accommodation unit or worker, 26 had special provision in Bail Information, 18 in employment and a smaller number in subjects such as welfare benefits, race, partnership and community development and liaison. Nor was that investment inconsiderable: for instance, Birmingham had a *Homeless Offenders Unit* consisting of fifteen staff, Greater Manchester a similar unit with ten staff, and North East London had a *Housing and Welfare Rights Unit* with six staff. The point here is not that there was a seismic change in probation practice – focus on the individual remained the dominant modus operandi of most probation officers – rather it is that in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as those figures and the following illustrations indicate, rehabilitation was being reimagined in the minds of a significant number of practitioners and managers.

### *Employment*

Because of its importance as a factor in rehabilitation it would be easy to assume that the employment status of probationers has always been of concern to probation officers: the story, however, is more nuanced than that. Nearly ninety years ago, Sander (1933: 258) asserted that the Service must not allow 'the unemployed to become a group of devitalised and incapacitated people', yet sixty years later research undertaken on behalf of the Lincolnshire Service concluded that, despite the existence of a specialist employment worker, probation staff had limited involvement with the issue (Gregory 1996). There was room for improvement at the broader strategic level too (Broad 1991), but there were some notable exceptions. The appointment by South Glamorgan Probation service of a specialist employment worker (in the same year as Broad's paper), which led to a multi-agency forum focused on employer partnerships and advice for probationers, is one example. Another is the Merseyside Probation Service's Moving Forward Programme with its emphasis on partnerships with other organisations in order to respond effectively to the particular problems of women supervised by the probation service (Hirst 1996). Concerned with a range of needs it invested heavily in an assertiveness course run by a local college designed to increase women's potential to maximise training and employment opportunities. At around the same time, no doubt inspired by the feminist critique of Buckley and Wilson (1989), the Nottingham Service established the Women Offender's Outreach Project (WOOPS) that strove to increase appropriate resources, widen opportunities and provide employment guidance and counselling. Similarly, the probation-linked Handsworth Alternative Scheme, although hampered by the reluctance of some probation officers to make referrals, was

---

<sup>6</sup> Some of the employment and education schemes included day centres so were specialist projects in the widest sense of the term.

established to address the socio-economic problems of people drawn from minority ethnic communities through a strategy of liaison with training and employment projects staffed and managed by Black workers (Green 1987). One of the most innovative projects, New Careers (Priestley 1975), drew its inspiration from American federal government efforts to tackle poverty directly by supporting community projects that improved training and employment opportunities for people with erstwhile offending careers. In its United Kingdom incarnation it provided training for a career in social work backed by probation supervision and hostel accommodation. In the early 1970s, graduates of New Careers played important roles in such innovations as the Barbican Centre in Gloucester.

### *Accommodation*

Association and cooperation with voluntary organisations is a significant part of probation history (Smith et al 1993), but following the Home Office 35/1988 circular Services were obliged to form Local Offender Accommodation Forums. In response to that and their own survey, which showed that almost a quarter of their cases had accommodation problems, Berkshire Probation Service established the Berkshire Offender Accommodation Strategy. The work was hindered by delays in the local authority administration of housing benefit and changes in Home Office grants to voluntary sector projects, but the strategy remains a positive example of a Service trying to resolve problems judged to be linked closely to offending (Berkshire Probation Service 1993) In Cumbria probation representation made up half of the local Housing Association Management Committee that included others from the Department of Social Security, Planning Department and local landlords; and in Devon the Service set up a Community Development Resource Unit which encompassed a coordinated housing service for probationers (Smith et al 1993).

Amid these initiatives are some that might be described as more organic, emanating as they did from team initiatives as in the BEAR team in Nottinghamshire, and individual officer creativity as in the development of the Llamau Housing Society in South Glamorgan. In the latter, three South Glamorgan officers having discussed how the lack of secure accommodation increased the vulnerability and disadvantage of young people and reduced their capacity to lead offence-free lives, decided to set up a steering group with other interested parties (Drakeford and Vanstone 1996). The group set the objective of providing supported accommodation for young people in the 16 - 21 year old age range and at risk of re-offending because of accommodation problems. With initial funding from Tai Cymru a property was converted into five independent bed-sitter units and with referrals from probation and other agencies it opened in 1991. Nearly thirty years later, Llamau is a well established Cardiff Charity which has helped nearly 70,000 young people, women and children who have been homeless or have been facing homelessness. Circular 35/1988 seems to have stimulated improvements quite widely, but Services were restricted by problems 'relating to resources, communication and planning' that were outside their control (James and Bottomley 1994: 162). This had a detrimental effect on well established projects like the Nottinghamshire Probation Service where for several years the Housing Team had been able to use the probation lodging scheme to place people, until in 1988 its work was diminished following several changes to the benefits system and owners of accommodation selling their houses amidst a property value boom. Sadly, this left the team questioning the viability of its existence (Nottinghamshire Housing Team 1989).

### *Health*

It hardly needs repeating that people with mental health problems face the triple jeopardy of multiple health problems, poor access to appropriate health care, and disproportionate experience of imprisonment. In a direct attempt to ameliorate such problems and reduce the level of custodial sentences for mentally disordered people, Mid Glamorgan Probation Service placed a senior officer in the Caswell Clinic Forensic Unit and joined the police, clerks of the

courts, Social Services and the Crown Prosecution Service in a steering group. Jointly funded by the Home Office and a National Health Service, the programme involved the provision of information to the courts by a probation officer and community psychiatric nurse with the aim, either at the remand or sentencing stages, of diverting mentally disordered offenders from prosecution or custody. The Community Mental Health Team, Social Services and Probation provided support and if needed, a bed was available at the Caswell Clinic.<sup>7</sup> The Mid Glamorgan project fits within the pioneering model of broader public interest case assessment in Inner London in which officers increased their knowledge and adjusted their perspective and skills in order to broaden the scope of their work and work effectively alongside community psychiatric nurses and consultants (Hudson et al 1993). The same flexibility of approach contributed to other initiatives in the form of harm reduction and diversion from prison strategies in the context of the increased alcohol and drug abuse of the 1980s. Inner London set up a Harm Reduction Unit designed not only to help individuals but also to impact on the social environment (Boother 1991). It was this Service's sensitivity to the complexity of the problem, the chaotic lifestyles of alcohol and drug dependant people and the often unrealistic nature of drug-free ambitions, that informed a user-centred approach. In collaboration with community drug teams, the unit was designed to divert users from custody and promote the use of safer equipment via needle exchange facilities. In parallel, the South Sefton team in Merseyside adopted a similar policy involving a joint management committee overseeing a multi-agency team comprising three Probation practitioners, drug counsellors, a community psychiatric nurse, a consultant psychiatrist and social workers (Merseyside Probation Service, 1994). Focused on risk rather than harm reduction,<sup>8</sup> the project featured a needle and syringe exchange system, Hepatitis B vaccinations and a General Practitioner liaison scheme to which two probation officers were assigned.

### *Poverty*

Indisputably, most people with whom the service engages are likely to be poor, experience discrimination and long-term unemployment and be dependent on means-tested benefits (Hughes 1991; NAPO 1993). No surprise, therefore, that they value help such as that provided by the Inner London Anti-Poverty Strategy, founded as it was on a conviction that addressing poverty is indelibly linked to anti-discriminatory practice, whether it be related to race, sexual orientation, gender or disability (ILPS, 1991). Curiously, in the Service generally, there were indications of some hesitancy to act on poverty-related issues, and among some probation officers, a lack of belief in their ability to intervene. Some believed that 'social policy issues and especially benefits [had] been given low priority in the past by staff at all levels' (Chalmers 1989: 150); and even in a Service, which had an anti-poverty strategy and a specialist Debts and Benefits Adviser, evidence collated after the disturbances in Tyneside of 1991 suggested that it had distanced itself from the communities in which those it supervised lived (Northumbria Probation Service, 1992). Further insight into hesitancy is provided by the conclusion of a Policy Studies Institute study of informal benefit advisers that although probation officers viewed work on welfare rights as a core element of their work, the extent to which it actually happened depended too much on the commitment of individual officers and managers (Perkins et al 1992).

True though that might be, when the task was clear and practically attainable, as with facilitating claims to the iniquitous Social Fund, the efforts of probation officers were widespread and persistent (NAPO 1988; Stewart et al 1989). Stewart and her colleagues at Lancaster University, using a 25 percent sample of probation areas, received returns on their questionnaire from 119 officers on 1076 probationers and found that most officers viewed dealing with Social Fund problems as integral to their work. The study found 70 percent spending at least half an hour on

---

<sup>7</sup> In 1993, the Silent Twins were sent there from Broadmoor (Wallace 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Like harm reduction but in addition included encouraging users to switch from Temazepam to other illegal drugs such as Valium.

financial problems with each probationer, 45 percent over one hour and 17 percent over two hours. Moreover, when practice was devoted to poverty issues it was innovative and determined. In 1986, welfare rights specialists from the Lancashire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Merseyside Services met to identify and share problems, and produced guidelines for officers in relation to information sharing, coordination of services, empowerment of probationers, and monitoring. Two years later, drawing on this experience the South Yorkshire committed itself to a Social Issues Project briefed to inform and train staff, influence policy, liaise with relevant agencies and shape management decisions (Broadbent 1989). In the West Midlands, the Birmingham Homeless Offenders Unit paid attention to the additional problems encountered by minority ethnic people and, in particular, the negative impact of the 1988 Immigration Act on 'the link between immigration status and eligibility for welfare benefits' and the increased potential for racial discrimination via the Social Fund (Stephenson 1989). Similar concerns were raised by Buckley and Wilson (1989) about the financial and social vulnerability of women. It is evident that some of this work arose from specific service policies, but as indicated above, it also depended on the imagination and commitment of local champions. Some champions campaigned for a tax-free National Income to alleviate poverty (Lord 1974), but in terms of practice initiatives two examples stand out. First, the Wigan team's promotion, in 1985, of a community-based multi-agency Neighbourhood Project that led to the creation of a Credit Union to combat exploitation by loan sharks (Homewood (1989: 163).<sup>9</sup> Second, the Leeds team's pursuit, a decade earlier, of greater knowledge about fuel debt and welfare (driven by the enthusiasm and specialist interest in welfare rights of a senior probation officer) that resulted in the creation of a Steering Group of team members and a community worker (Ward 1979). The group made a successful application to the Manpower Services Commission for a fuel debts worker who in conjunction with the Steering Group created a network of contacts with advice centres and community workers, filtered information about the policies of Fuel Boards back to staff, provided expert advice to all teams in Leeds and created a wall chart for them displaying guidelines on how to deal with fuel debt.

### *Sentencing*

Perhaps, the oldest system intervention approach is the pre-sentence report or what used to be called social inquiry report. Endeavouring to influence the sentencing process has been a core element of the probation officer's role within the courts, but it manifested itself most clearly as strategic systems intervention in the shape of the diversion from custody policy associated with alternatives to custody during the 1970s and 1980s (Raynor 1980). The fact that diversion was meant to pave the way for future offence-free life styles justifies its inclusion within the definition of a reimagined rehabilitation inspired particularly by the pioneering pre-court diversion and cautioning schemes in Youth Justice. Inner London Probation Service operated a scheme for several years in which people facing a first court appearance for non-serious offences (not burglary or violence) were offered an interview with a probation officer from which information would be conveyed to the Crown Prosecution Service. Recommendations were made to discontinue prosecution in the public interest if it was deemed detrimental because of vulnerability through mental health, youth or infirmity, with the result that over a three year period discontinuation was decided appropriate in between a quarter and one third of cases (Brown et al 1992). Bail information and bail support services constitute another example of this kind of systems intervention. Initiated by the Association of Chief Probation Officers, in 1987, eight pilots schemes were set up and evaluated, their purpose being to 'balance the picture by providing the positive factors in favour of bail' (Fiddes 1989: 76). In that year four hundred people who otherwise would have been remanded in custody were bailed.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Perversely, the Greater Manchester Service allowed officers to carry out this work in office hours but 'in their own right' thus absolving the service of any responsibility for negative outcomes.

<sup>10</sup> A comprehensive history of these kind of schemes can be found in Octigan (2002).

### *Discrimination*

Although some reference has been made to efforts to counter discrimination against women and minority ethnic women and men earlier in this paper, they warrant attention in their own right because, as a result of changes emanating from increased governance of the Service in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, projects designed specifically for them had all but disappeared from the probation curriculum (Williams and Durrance 2018). This is all the more remarkable given the earlier imagination, commitment and attention devoted to the problem as in Bristol in the early 1980s following civil unrest in the St Paul's area of the city. Notable not just for the role played by a local champion, John Carver, but also because it is an example of a team examining the need for its own rehabilitation and identifying itself as a *Target System* (Pincus and Minahan 1979). With commendable honesty, Lawson (1984: 94) explains, the team began to ask itself questions and acknowledged that it had been institutionally racist and 'smug in our thinking that we were alright and providing a 'fair and professional' service' and had no strategy for change'. Guided by John Carver who had been closely involved with the Afro-Caribbean community, it embarked on a community-based, detached approach in which the 'vast majority of the work [was] undertaken on the streets, in cafes and in pursuit of recreational activities' (94).

Of course, such work had an individual focus but it was driven by a desire to engage with the context of discrimination and maximise the potential of resources to mitigate against its impact. So, in Greater Manchester, the Black Offender Groupwork Programme involved tutors and mentors from minority ethnic groups, enlightened staff about racism and its historical and social context and with collaborative effort endeavoured to develop effective strategies to counter its effect (Williams 2006). Inner London too, focussed on that kind of empowerment (Jenkins and Lawrence 1993), and after the 1981 disturbances in Moss Side the Merseyside Service worked closely with the Moss Side and Hume Community Forum and created a probation specialism in order to increase understanding of policing issues for black probationers (Briggs 1995). Following the Manningham disturbances in Bradford workers in the UMMID Project provided supervision on behalf of the probation service in addition to partnership development, drama work, crime prevention initiatives and provision of information specifically for members of the Asian community (Butt 2001). Partnerships were a key part of this work as can be seen in Cross' (1997) account of how two Services set up accommodation, drug and alcohol counselling services and employment training, some specifically for people from minority ethnic communities.

It is self evident that the principle of empowerment, which permeated practice initiatives designed specifically for women, requires women to be seen rather than made invisible 'by the unquestioning application to women of principles derived entirely or predominantly from studies of men' (Rumgay 2004: 101), and to be listened to as they were in the formation of the Women's Project in West Mercia (formerly Herefordshire and Worcestershire) (Roberts 2002).<sup>11</sup> It was in part the result of the response of women to the original group that the West Mercia Service evolved a theory of offending by women that emphasised the importance of 'external resources and legitimate opportunities available to them' (114). Nurtured by the leadership of the late Jenny Roberts, the multi-modal programme was designed by looking through the eyes of women she and others referred to as normal and capable women rather than offenders. It adopted a strengths-based, non-treatment approach which assumed that 'women should wherever possible access community resources' and that gender placed constraints on their ability to do this (117). It was exactly that kind of impediment that Wright and Kemshall (1994) illuminated in their examination of women-centred practice in interviews with 12 officers and 10 female probationers in two teams from one probation service. To its credit, the Service

---

<sup>11</sup> Many years before, one of the five women interviewed by Tony Parker (1965: 103) gave an account the efforts of probation to help with employment and accommodation when clearly they had not listened to her. After she left prison they arranged for her to live and work on a farm in the Channel Islands, an arrangement that lasted only a week. She left because 'I just wasn't used to that sort of life I suppose'.



responded to what that examination had revealed by setting up a specialist provision for women staffed by female officers in order to put gender issues centre stage. Likewise, the Women Offender Outreach Project (WOOPS) run by the Nottinghamshire Probation Service, Inner London's Women's Probation Centre, Mid Glamorgan's Miskin Project, and the Merseyside Women's Group, which provided particular support for the families of prisoners, all attempted to empower women through education, training, information giving and paid specific attention to positive exploitation of relevant resources and opportunities (Durrance and Ablitt 2001; Hirst 1996; Jones et al 1993). The fact that these projects also focused on individual change might suggest that they lie outside the definition of reimagined rehabilitation; but their inclusion is justified in this paper because, like the work in St Paul's, they fit within the systems model formulated four decades ago by Pincus and Minahan (1979).

### *Conclusion*

While not a dominant feature of probation practice, the reimagined rehabilitation recalled in this paper might best be described as an innovative, imaginative subsidiary preoccupation of probation officers and the organisation itself. This is not to say it was inconsequential: for example, in their analysis of 'What Works' for women, Worrall and Gelsthorpe (2002: 342) concluded that probation officers had 'reflected and influenced research about women offenders for at least the past 30 years'. What is more, the work described herewith is part of a vision of rehabilitation that, even since the introduction of *Transforming Rehabilitation (TR)* in 2013, has included 'more informal and local approaches' to partnership work (Dominey 2019: 297). Indeed, in that year entries in the Probation Directory confirm the survival of that vision, for instance, in the form of Training and Employment Units (in 16 Trusts) and accommodation provision (in six Trusts); but it lives on amid the detached, bureaucratic terminology of *Chief Executives, Directors of Operations, Treatment Managers, Integrated Offender Management and Local Delivery*.

Despite these positive signs, it is difficult to ignore Bottoms' (2008: 160) assertion that in recent years probation has become 'invisible in high crime, high deprivation areas'. Combined with the hollowing out of the Service generally, the de-professionalisation of the Community Rehabilitation Companies and the ideologically driven process of fragmentation and privatisation, its invisibility has created structural impediments to the fulfilment of that vision (Deering and Feitzer 2017; Tidmarsh 2020; Williams and Durrance 2018). The government's strategy for women that followed the Corston report illustrates the point. As Player (2014: 291) explains, the Women's Offending Reduction Programme (WORP) and its accredited correctional programmes did not fit well with women's identified needs. In essence, this was because the purpose and content of rehabilitation is constricted when policies fail to recognise the negative impact of 'non-distributive issues of inequality [and] oppression' on both women's ability to take rehabilitative opportunities and the perception 'they have of their own capacity for change'. Admittedly, a review of provision for women at this time found that all Probation Trusts had some specific services for women (NOMS 2013), but even this needs to be viewed cautiously. Two years earlier a joint inspection of alternatives to custody for women by Probation, Crime Prosecution and Prisons found 'a certain 'disjointedness' between the strategic plans within Probation Trusts for their work with women offenders and operational practice [that was] a consequence of the scale of the cultural shift needed amongst many practitioners in order for women's issues to be taken seriously and treated differently' (Calderbank et al 2011: 28).

Realistically, whatever direction the probation service takes, the focus on the individual as a target of change is likely to remain and justifiably effective practice with individuals remains a cornerstone of probation work. How, and in what organisational and theoretical context this work is undertaken is the issue. Experience drawn from the illustrations in this paper suggests

that over and above everything else the probationer has to be a collaborator in the process of change. Of course, individuals may need help to change their thinking and develop useful skills, but the overall attempt to initiate change has to be mutual and strategic. The energy and determination of local champions remain important and their voices should be heard but heard within a reflective, dynamic and self-critical organisation capable, when it is appropriate, of change itself. The required approach to rehabilitation is more achievable if, at the organisational level, there is a move away from marketisation and towards Bottom's (2008) notions of civil renewal and community engagement fused with Raynor's (1997) social justice and communal solidarity; and, at ground level, a move towards Dominey's (2019) concept of *thick supervision*. The former is premised on the ability of the Service to harness the commitment of local communities both to crime reduction and the redeemability of people who have offended; and the latter is dependant on 'probation practice that is genuinely local, present in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and in respectful partnerships with community groups and small voluntary organisations' (297). Both are additionally reliant on an organisational structure and culture conducive to such an approach, and this demands critical self-reflection in addition to a change in its language. Language needs to be inclusive and convey, on the one hand a sense of collaboration with the people probation officers supervise and on the other, a commitment to involvement with the communities within which they live. Currently, the business and commerce oriented terminology used to describe roles and the work of the Service has the opposite effect and needs to be replaced by terminology embedded in notions of public service, pragmatic idealism, non-treatment, vocation and a professionalism premised on a desire to be effective.

As well as retaining its role in crime and harm reduction, the Service may need to reaffirm its role as a public service, revive its function as broker and identify itself as the champion of reimagined rehabilitation within the Criminal Justice System. At the same time it needs to exude confidence in what Raynor and Robinson (2009: 8) describe as the strong claim of rehabilitation, namely, that 'it contributes to the general good'. Of course, that will entail the kind of risk-taking evident in some of the pioneering work described above, but in addition it will have to be grounded in both moral and evidence-based justifications. If the renationalised Service decides to move in this direction, and is allowed to, perhaps it has a richer body of relevant experience to draw on than it might realise.

## *References*

Berkshire Probation Service. (1993) Berkshire Offender Accommodation Strategy 1993 – 96. Berkshire Probation Service.

Boother, M. (1991) 'Drug Misuse: developing a harm reduction policy', *Probation Journal* 38, 2, 75 - 80.

Bottoms, A. E. (2008) 'The Community Dimension of Community Penalties', *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 47, 2, 146-169.

Bottoms, A. E. and McWilliams, W. (1979) 'A Non-Treatment Paradigm for Probation Practice', *British Journal of Social Work* 9, 2, 159-202.

Briggs, C. (1995) 'Policing Moss Side: A Probation Response', *Probation Journal* 42, 2, 62-66.

Broad, B. (1991) *Punishment Under Pressure: The Probation Service in the Inner City*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Broadbent, A. (1989) 'Poor clients: what can I do?', *Probation Journal* 36, 4, 151-154.

Brown, A., Scarabrook, J. and Matthews, H. (1992) 'Discontinuance of Criminal Proceedings in the Public Interest', *Probation Journal* 39, 1, 24-27.

Buckley, K. and Wilson, C. (1989) 'Empowering Women', *Probation Journal* 36, 4, 165-170.

Burke, L., Collett, S. and McNeill, F. (2019) *Reimagining rehabilitation. Beyond the individual*. London: Routledge.

Butt, T. (2001) *UMMID PROJECT (1995-2001)*. Wakefield: West Yorkshire Probation Service.

Calderbank, L., Fuller, M. and Hardwick, N. (2011) *Equal but different? An inspection of the use of alternatives to custody for women offenders*. London: Criminal Justice Joint Inspection.

Carlen, P. and Worrall, A. (2004) *Analysing Women's Imprisonment*. Cullompton: Willan.

Chalmers, J. (1989) 'The Politics of Poverty', *Probation Journal* 36, 4, 146-150.

Church of England Temperance Society (1905) *Report of the London Diocesan Branch*. London: Church of England Temperance Society.

Cross, B. (1997) 'Partnerships in Practice: The Experience of Two Probation Services', *Probation Journal* 36, 1, 67-79.

Cullen, F. T. (2007) 'Make Rehabilitation Corrections' Guiding Paradigm', *Criminology and Public Policy* 6, 4, 717-728.

Davies, M. (1974) *Social Work in the Environment*. London. Home Office Research Studies No. 21. London: HMSO.

de Botton, A. (2000) *The Consolation of Philosophy*. London: Penguin Books.

Deering, J. and Feilzer, M. Y. (2017) 'Questions of legitimacy in probation practice after Transforming Rehabilitation' *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 56, 2, 158-175

Drakeford, M. and Vanstone, M. (Eds) (1996) *Beyond Offending Behaviour*. Aldershot: Arena.

Dominey, J. (2019) 'Probation Supervision as a Network of Relationships: aiming to be thick, not thin', *Probation Journal* 66, 3, 283-302.

Durrance, P. and Ablitt, F. (2001) ' "Creative Solutions" to Women's Offending: An Evaluation of the Women's Probation Centre', *Probation Journal* 48, 4, 247-259.

Farrall, S. (2002) *Rethinking What Works with Offenders*. Cullompton: Willan.

Fiddes, C. (1989) 'Bail Information Schemes', *Probation Journal* 36, 2, 74-77.

- Green, R. (1987) 'Racism and the offender: a probation response', in J. Harding (Ed) *Probation and the Community Response. A Practice and Policy Reader*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Gregory, P. (1996) 'Employment and the Probation Service: The Client Perspective', *Probation Journal* 43, 2, 84-89.
- Hill, J. (1987) 'Evaluating Effectiveness', in J. Harding (Ed) *Probation and the Community Response. A Practice and Policy Reader*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Hirst, G. (1996) ' "Moving Forward": How do we do that?', *Probation Journal* 43, 2, 58-63.
- Holmes, T. (1902) *Pictures and Problems from London Police Courts*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Homewood, R. (1989) 'Must The Poor Pay More? Wigan's Community Credit Union', *Probation Journal* 36, 4, 159-164.
- Hudson, B., Roberts, C. And Cullen, R. (1993) *Training for Work with Mentally Disordered Offenders: Report of a Study of Training Needs of Probation Officers and Social Workers*. London: CCETSW.
- Hughes, J. (1991) *Poverty and Offending in Somerset: An Analysis of Data Collected from Social Enquiry Reports*, Somerset Probation Service.
- ILPS (1991) *Report of the Poverty Task Group*. London: Inner London Probation Service
- Jackson, G. (1970) *Soledad Brother. The Prison Letters of George Jackson*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.
- James, A. and Bottomley, A. K. (1994) 'Probation Partnerships Revisited'. *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 33, 2, 158 - 168.
- Jenkins, J. and Lawrence, D. (1992) *Black Groups Initiative Review*. Unpublished Paper. Inner London Probation Service.
- Jones, M., Mordecai, M., Rutter, F. and Thomas, L. (1993) 'A Miskin model of groupwork with women offenders', in Brown, A. and Caddick, B. (eds) *Groupwork with Offenders*. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Lawson, J. (1984) 'Probation in St. Pauls. Teamwork in a multi-racial, inner city area', *Probation Journal* 31, 3, 93-95.
- Leeson, C. (1914) *The Probation System*. London: P.S. King and Son.
- Lord, C. R. (1974) 'The Socially Disadvantaged and the Resources Crisis', *Probation Journal* 21, 3, 68-71.
- Maruna, S. (2001) *Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives*. Washington. DC: American Psychological Association.

McGuire, J. and Priestley, P. (1985) *Offending Behaviour. Skills and Stratagems for Going Straight*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational.

McNeill, F. (2012) 'Four forms of 'offender' rehabilitation: Towards an interdisciplinary perspective', *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 17, 1, 18-36.

McWilliams, W. (1985) 'The Mission Transformed: Professionalism of Probation Between the Wars,' *Howard Journal Of Criminal Justice* 24, 257-74.

McWilliams, W. (1986) 'The English Probation System and the Diagnostic Ideal,' *Howard Journal Of Criminal Justice* 25, 241-60.

Merseyside Probation Service (1994) *A Report on the South Section Drugs Team*. Liverpool: Merseyside Probation Service.

NAPO (1925) 'East End Boys' Hostel. Problem of Adolescents', *National Association of Probation Officers*, 23, 547-8.

NAPO (1988) *Dealing with the Social Fund. Professional Practice Committee*. London: National Association of Probation Officers.

NAPO (1993), *Probation Caseload: Income and Employment. A Study of the Financial Circumstances of 331 Offenders on Probation Supervision*. London: National Association of Probation Officers.

NOMS (2013) *Stocktake of Women's Services for Offenders in the Community*. London: National Offender Management Service.

Northumbria Probation Service (1992) *The Dog that Finally Barked: The Tyneside Disturbances of 1991 a Probation Perspective*. Northumbria Probation Service

Nottingham Housing Team (1989) 'Poverty and Accommodation: Is Resettlement Feasible Anymore?', *Probation Journal* 36, 4, 171-176.

Nottinghamshire Probation Service (1990) *Young Offenders Alone: A Survey of the Personal Circumstances of Young Offenders Living Away From Home in Nottingham*. Nottinghamshire Probation Service.

Octigan, M. (2002) 'Pre-Trial Services: Someone Else's Agenda', *Probation Journal* 49, 1, 19-26.

Oresme, N. (1956) *The De Moneta of Nicholas Oresme and English Mint Documents*. Translated from the Latin with Introduction and Notes by Charles Johnson. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd.

Page, M. (1992) *Crime Fighters of London. A History of the Origins and Development of the London Probation Service 1876 – 1965*. London: Inner London Probation Service Development Trust.

Parker, T. (1965) *Five Women*. London: Hutchinson.

- Parkinson, G. (1965) 'Casework and the persistent offender', *Probation*, 11, 1, 11-17.
- Parkinson, G. (1966) 'Passivity and delinquency', *Probation*, 12, 2, 59-65.
- Parkinson, G. (1970) 'I give them money', *New Society* 5 February, 220-221.
- Perkins, E., Roberts, S. and Moore, N. (1992) *Helping clients claim their benefits: Information needs of informal policy advisers*. London: Policy Studies Unit..
- Pincus, A. and Minahan, A. (1973) *Social Work Practice: Model and Method*. Itasca: F.E. Peacock.
- Player, E. (2014) 'Women in the Criminal Justice System: The triumph of inertia', *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 14, 3, 276-297.
- Priestley, P. (1975) 'New Careers: Power Sharing in Social Work', in H. Jones (Ed) *Towards a New Social Work*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Rankin, C. (1921) 'The problem of the difficult case', *National Association of Probation Officers* 16, 321-3.
- Raynor, P. (1980) 'Is There Any Sense In Social Inquiry Reports?', *Probation Journal* 27, 3, 78-84.
- Raynor, P. (1997) 'Some Observations on Rehabilitation and Justice', *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 36, 3, 248-262.
- Raynor, P. and Robinson, G. (2009) 'Why Help Offenders? Arguments for Rehabilitation as a Penal Strategy', *European Journal of Probation* 1, 1, 3-20.
- Roberts, J. (2002) 'Women-centred: the West Mercia community-based programme for women offenders', in P. Carlen (Ed) *Women and Punishment. The Struggle for Justice*. Collumpton: Willan.
- Rose, N. (1985) *The Psychological Complex. Psychology, Politics and Society in England, 1869 – 1939*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rotman, E. (1986) 'Do Criminal Offenders Have a Constitutional Right to Rehabilitation?', *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 77, 4, 1023-1068.
- Rumgay, J. (2004) 'Living with Paradox. Community supervision of women offenders', in G. McIvor (Ed) *Women Who Offend*. Research Highlights in Social Work 44. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Sander, L. F. (1933) 'An aspect of unemployment', *Probation*, 1, 17, 258.

- Smith, D., Paylor, I. and Mitchell, P. (1993) 'Partnerships between the independent sector and the Probation Service', *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 32, 1, 25-39.
- Stephenson, D. (1989) 'Racism, Immigration and Welfare Benefits', *Probation Journal* 36, 4, 151-154.
- Stewart, G., Stewart, J., Prior, A. and Peelo, M. (1989) *Surviving Poverty: Probation Work and Benefits Policy*. Wakefield: Association of Chief Officers of Probation.
- Tidmarsh, M. (2020) 'If the cap fits?' Probation staff and the changing nature of supervision in a Community Rehabilitation Company', *Probation Journal* 67, 2, 98-117.
- Vanstone, M. (2004) *Supervising Offenders in the Community: A History of Probation Theory and Practice*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Wallace, M. (1986) *The Silent Twins*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Walton, D. (1987) 'The residential, employment and educational needs of offenders', in J. Harding (Ed) *Probation and the Community. A practice and policy reader*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Ward, K. (1979) 'Fuel Debts and the Probation Service', *Probation Journal* 26, 4, 110-14.
- Ward, T. and Brown, M. (2004) 'The Good Lives Model and Conceptual Issues in Offender Rehabilitation', *Psychology, Crime and Law* 10, 3, 243-257.
- Williams, P. (2006) 'Designing and delivering programmes for minority ethnic offenders', in S. Lewis, P. Raynor, D. Smith and A. Wardak (Eds) *Race and Probation*. Cullompton: Willan.
- Williams, P. and Durrance, P. (2018) 'Resisting effective approaches for BAME offenders in England and Wales: the triumph of inertia', in P. Ugwu-dike, P. Raynor and J. Annison (Eds) *Evidence-based skills in criminal justice: International research on supporting rehabilitation and desistance*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Willis, A. (1983) 'The balance between care and control in probation: a research note', *British Journal of Social Work* 13, 339-46.
- Worrall, A. And Gelsthorpe, L. (2002) 'What Works with women offenders: The past 30 years', *Probation Journal* 56, 4, 329-345.
- Wright, L. and Kemshall, H. (1994) 'Feminist Probation Practice: Making Supervision Meaningful', *Probation Journal* 41, 2, 73-80.

