

## **Keynote speech Probation 2004. Wednesday 28 January –**

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How nice it is to be able to start a speech with the word

Congratulations. In April 2001 we launched the National Probation Service for England and Wales with a set of very tough targets for the organisation to achieve. I am delighted to report that, 1000 days later, we have delivered on those targets overall.

That success is down to the efforts and hard work of staff at all levels of the organisation. So well done.

I would like to outline some of those achievements by probation staff in England and Wales and at the same time show how those advances are relevant to our partner agencies, many of whom have contributed to our achievements, and to our colleagues from overseas who are here today.

The great strides forward by the National Probation Service have made us an organisation that is highly regarded by criminal justice agencies around the world which seek to follow many of our practices. Many of you are already working with us, and it is heartening to note that in countries as geographically far apart as the USA, Australia, the Netherlands, Estonia, Britain and South Africa there is the same emphasis on keen risk assessment, interventions which work, protecting the public and raising public confidence in the service.

I also want to look forward to the new National Offender Management Service (NOMS), which will build on the firm foundation of our achievements, and to the critical transition phase which we are now embarking on.

Publication of A New Choreography in 2001 set out the three-year strategic plan for the national service. It involved an integrated approach to offender management and one which put the goal of a safer society, with fewer crimes and fewer victims, at the heart of our work. Brave words. But words are the easy part.

The challenge is to convert them into actions and results and then prove that the results are sound and sustainable.

It seems amazing now that in 1998 – barely six years ago – we didn't know whether the undoubted hard work of probation staff was being channelled in the right directions and was actually working in reducing re-offending. Since then we have invested heavily in research to confirm that what we do works effectively – to learn, and to change our practice with offenders and victims accordingly..

Our target for 2004 was to reduce re-offending by 5%. We are on course. The latest statistics – published in October 2002 – show that reconviction of those serving a community penalty had fallen by 3.1%. And two types of intervention – the community punishment order (formerly community service) and the community rehabilitation order (formerly a probation order) with a condition for an offender to undertake a specific activity - achieved a reduction of 4.9%

Those are overall figures and they are very pleasing. Within those figures I would like to highlight work done to address one specific group of offenders. Research suggests that half of all crime in this country is committed by 10% of all offenders – a group of about 100,000 persistent offenders. Many are class A drug users. Their offences are usually burglary, theft and car crime. They are a nuisance to their communities and create a lot of victims and repeat victims.

In partnership with local authorities, the police, the prison service, drug agencies and others we are tackling these persistent offenders. One scheme in Bristol has seen burglary drop by 43% and car crime by 29%. In a sample eight-month period 13 offenders released into the community were shown to have reduced their offending by an estimated 1,200 crimes. That meant a saving of around £2 million for the people of Bristol and potentially 1,200 fewer victims. Tomorrow you will hear of a similar partnership scheme in Blackpool which is one of our international community justice award finalists.

One of the cornerstones of the national service has been the proper enforcement of court orders and prison licences. We have to be honest and admit that this was one area of our work which did not stand up to scrutiny. We were not fast enough and tough enough in enforcing orders and it contributed to a drop in confidence in the service by sentencers and a public belief that probation was a soft option which allowed offenders to get away with crime.

I am very pleased to report that this is an area where we have made great strides forward – so much so that in a recent survey eight out of 10 magistrates agreed that we were effective in enforcing community sentences.

One of the jewels in our crown – and in the Prison Service crown as well – has been our joint development of the offender assessment system known as OASys. This comprehensive risk and needs assessment tool has now been rolled out across the country in paper form. And the roll-out of the newer electronic version – eOASys – is almost complete.

This system has excited an unprecedented amount of interest from overseas services, particularly in other parts of Europe, who are looking to adapt it to the specific criminogenic and cultural needs of their own offending population.

In all communities there is a group of offenders who are considered to be the most dangerous, whose offences leave their victims traumatised and in many cases scarred for life. They include sexual and violent offenders. It is mercifully a small group of offenders but one which consumes a large amount of police and probation resources and one which causes the most alarm to the public.

I believe that the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) which we have had in place since April 2001 are world-class in the way they manage these offenders. MAPPA placed a statutory responsibility on police and probation to work together to manage these critical few offenders. Early indications are that this work ensures much closer supervision of offenders and is having a positive impact on reducing re-offending among some of the highest risk offenders.

In eight areas we have piloted the involvement of lay people in the statutory review of the operation of the MAPPAs. This has had a two-way benefit. It has ensured better public understanding of our work and has also given a voice to communities' understandable concerns about the management of sexual and violent offenders in their midst. I am pleased also that the Prison Service will become a partner with police and probation colleagues and that the involvement of other agencies is to be placed on a statutory footing.

Many of the highest-risk offenders live in approved premises, formerly known as hostels, managed by the probation service or by the voluntary sector. These allow round-the-clock management of offenders with focused supervision and programmes. They are critical to the safe management of some of our highest risk offenders and it is a tribute to hostel staff and their partners in the police and other agencies that there are very few incidents.

Later this year we will have the results of a two-year pilot programme to establish what makes an effective hostel. This pilot is an international first. There has never been a research project of this size and scope on residential work with offenders undertaken in the criminal justice world. It has been the design of a whole environment and regime, a residential one at that, rather than a single programme or system.

At the heart of our work is concern for society and victims. Three years ago we were given the statutory duty to offer contact to victims of sexual and other violent crimes where the offender had been given a jail sentence of at least 12 months. The proportion of victims contacted within eight weeks of sentencing has risen from 30% in 2000 to 90% in the first quarter of 2003-04. I am proud of this achievement. This work provides essential support to people who have been deeply traumatised by crime. It builds their confidence in the criminal justice system. And they in turn provide valuable intelligence to the MAPPA and the Parole Board.

The accredited offending behaviour programmes we have introduced are well known. They have been designed to challenge offences such as domestic violence, sex offending, substance

misuse and drink-impaired driving. This year we introduced two new programmes. The Intensive Control and Change Programme is targeted at offenders aged between 18 and 20 who are at risk of custody. It aims to cut the use of jail sentences of less than 12 months.

Enhanced Community Punishment will provide 25,000 new offenders with a powerful package of punishment, reparation and training to boost their chances of finding employment and staying away from crime as a way of life.

The Drug Treatment and Testing Order introduced nationally in October 2000 is making inroads into drug misuse which is linked to as much as 55% of acquisitive crime. We are not there yet. Drugs have such an influence over people that completion rates are not as high as we would like. What research has shown so far is that of those offenders who drop out of the programme, 91% are reconvicted. For those who do complete the rate drops to 53%. The order does make a difference and will evolve in an area where once you could have said 'Nothing works.'

These are just some of the achievements of the last 1,000 days.

As I continue to speak in such glowing terms of our work I can sense many people thinking: “If it’s so good, why are we changing it?”

Three weeks ago the government published the Correctional Services Review. The Prisons and Probation Minister, Paul Goggins, will outline the outcome of the review and the government’s response to it later today. The major change for us is the integration of community and custodial services into one National Offender Management Service to provide end-to-end management of offenders.

Offender managers – largely probation officers – will manage offenders through from their entry into the criminal justice system to their exit, in a planned way, that is individually tailored to their criminogenic needs.

They will advise sentencers in individual cases and determine which programmes and interventions the offenders receive both in

custody and in the community, thus ensuring that no-one falls between the two halves of the system.

Because we have made such great strides forward as a national service the government believes we have the right skills and attitude for improvement if we integrate our practice further with custodial services. And I believe that the changes recommended in the Correctional Services Review genuinely contain this potential. I have asked probation staff to rise to the challenge and I know that they will do so.

The creation of the National Offender Management Service will provide many more opportunities for staff. The end-to-end, systematic management of the offender emphasises the important part communities play in that process. Crimes are committed in the community, it is the community which suffers from crime and which deserves reparation and it is to the community that the offender returns.

The offender manager will be in the community managing the offender from the community. The offender manager will specify what happens both in both in the custodial and community

elements of the sentence based on OASys assessments. It is a very substantial role and one which offers a great opportunity to probation staff, enhancing and stretching their skills further.

Yes, there will be changes in working practices and big challenges for us. There is an emphasis on contestability, the requirement that the service we deliver to offenders must be opened up to competition. This is probably one of the biggest changes for probation staff. But it builds, quite rightly, on the added value that the voluntary, not for profit and private sectors already bring in providing capacity, specialism, innovation and preparedness to take risks. All public sector organisations must demonstrate value for money and we can be no different.

I would now like to say a little about my own role. The Home Secretary has asked me to lead the team that takes the Correctional Services Review and turns it into a reality. In accepting the position, I have made a personal commitment to these changes and to making them work. We will take the National Probation Service, our prisons and the potential that is out there from many others and build a fine, effective service.

So this conference is my last duty as Director General of the National Probation Service. I take up my new role on Monday. I have already started to create a transition team and our work will begin immediately.

Five core values will underpin our work. There will be transparency and openness, with communication a critical function. We will consult with all stakeholder groups, but the process of change will be fast moving. We will be fair and even handed. We will take a problem solving approach. And we will celebrate the diversity which is such a strength of our current service.

In the meantime the job still goes on. Staff will continue to work with around 200,000 offenders and 50,000 victims every day. At times of change it is very easy to lose focus, to take our eyes off the ball. We cannot let that happen or we will sacrifice the great gains we have made. The National Probation Service plan for the next year, Bold Steps, anticipates some of the developments contained in the Correctional Services Review and the 2003 Criminal Justice Act.

For example, a national offender management model will become available during the year to complement our national offender assessment system. We will need to pay more attention to the procurement of services from a commissioning perspective.

Our relationship with sentencers will be at a premium as we change our engagement with lower risk offenders and court reporting arrangements.

It is envisaged that by 2007 we will be handling 240,000 offenders which will mean a major expansion in capacity. Risk assessment and an excellent range of interventions are in place. High quality offender management is now needed to bind those elements together effectively. As well as continuing to meet the targets on enforcement we need to turn our attention to compliance.

Research has shown that offenders who complete programmes and orders are much less likely to re-offend. And we want staff to spend more time on changing offenders' behaviour and less on pursuing breach actions.

In terms of programmes, the main focus will be on reviewing and refining our offending behaviour programmes and ensuring through the way they are delivered that they achieve the maximum impact and maximise the number of completions.

I note that three of the finalists for international community justice awards are involved in developing domestic violence programmes. This is a key area of work. The government has introduced a Domestic Violence Bill which will improve the delivery of services and support to those affected by domestic violence.

The Probation Service across the world has welcomed the opportunities offered by electronic monitoring. Since 1998 in this country over 135,000 offenders have been tagged and monitored. We are continuing to explore further avenues to improve public protection.

During the next year we will be piloting tracking using global positioning systems (GPS) and also mobile phone (GSM) and radio frequency (RF) systems. We are currently engaged in work to define the offenders to be tracked and the precise specification of the pilots.

I began this presentation by congratulating my staff in the National Probation Service for their achievements. You have much to be proud of. I would like to close by wishing you all well as we face the challenges, changes and opportunities ahead. I believe that NOMS will be a big hitter and you will play a key role in it.

There is a tendency to see change as a threat. I think the change we are about to implement is a wonderful opportunity for us all.

Thank you and enjoy the rest of the conference.