

Justice Committee

Oral evidence: [Transforming Rehabilitation](#), HC 482

Tuesday 20 March 2018

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 20 March 2018.

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Members present: Robert Neill (Chair); Mrs Kemi Badenoch; Ruth Cadbury; Alex Chalk; Bambos Charalambous; David Hanson; Victoria Prentis; Ellie Reeves; Ms Marie Rimmer.

Questions 193 - 278

Witnesses

[I](#): Trevor Shortt, Director of Operations (Community), Sodexo; Ed Roberts, Finance Director, CRC business, Sodexo; John Baumbach, Managing Director, Seetec; and Suki Binning, CEO, Kent, Surrey and Sussex CRC.

[II](#): Sonia Crozier, Executive Director, Probation & Women, National Probation Service; Kilvinder Vigurs, Probation Divisional Director London, National Probation Service; Lynda Marginson, Probation Divisional Director North East, National Probation Service; and Ian Barrow, Probation Divisional Director Wales, National Probation Service.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Trevor Shortt, Ed Roberts, John Baumback and Suki Binning.

Chair: Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much to our witnesses for coming to help us with our inquiry this morning. We will deal with the formal part of the business where we have to declare interests. I am a non-practising barrister and a consultant to a law firm.

Victoria Prentis: I am a non-practising barrister.

Alex Chalk: I am a barrister.

Ellie Reeves: I am a non-practising barrister.

Bambos Charalambous: I am a non-practising solicitor.

Q193 **Chair:** I do not think any of it particularly impinges on the work the CRCs are doing; it is just for the record. If we go along the panel, would you like to introduce yourselves and your organisation, and then we will move straight into the questions?

Ed Roberts: I am Ed Roberts, the finance director for Sodexo in their justice community business.

Trevor Shortt: I am Trevor Shortt, director of operations for probation at Sodexo. We manage six of the 21 CRCs, which are BeNCH, Norfolk & Suffolk and Essex. We manage those regionally. Then there is Cumbria and Lancs, South Yorkshire and Northumbria, again with a regional overlay. We are part of a joint venture with Nacro.

John Baumback: I am John Baumback, managing director of Seetec.

Suki Binning: I am Suki Binning, chief executive officer for Kent, Surrey and Sussex CRC.

Q194 **Chair:** We are interested in the situation with the CRCs. The National Audit Office published a report back in December about the way contracts have gone. It was pretty grim reading. We know that there were adjustments made to the contracts in July 2017, which affected all your organisations to varying extents. What has been the effect of those adjustments? What has changed as a consequence of those adjustments? Have the Government paid you more money? What has happened?

Ed Roberts: The adjustments provided some stability and certainty for us, where we had some instability with the payment mechanism that we signed up to in the contract. The adjustments were a marginal increase on our interim arrangements, albeit still significantly below what we were paid when the contracts were let.

That addressed the issue around cost flexibility in the contract mechanism. The contracts are volumetric on a weighted average volume basis, with high degrees of cost flexibility, which resulted in some unforeseen changes in terms of the level of volume that was coming



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through. What it did was correct the cost flexibility to make it far more in line with our cost base.

Q195 **Chair:** Was that because you had underbid?

Ed Roberts: Not because we had underbid. There were definitely issues with the mechanism around the volumetric measures. They are a weighted basket of measures for activities, and those were set at a time prior to the system separation and prior to new services and legislation coming on. Some of the things that were foreseen did not turn out to be the case.

Q196 **Chair:** Was it perhaps all done too quickly, in retrospect?

John Baumback: The payment mechanism might have some flaws. For us, the sensitivities are very acute. In terms of the funding bands, it actually equates to three service users per office that we have; and we have 14 offices. With that degree of flexibility, it is very difficult to make financial decisions when something as small as that, in terms of fluctuation, can affect our funding.

Suki Binning: From an operational delivery perspective, the adjustments have brought about an element of stability for us. As John alluded to, because of the banding and the sensitivity, if you have three offenders fewer per office, it is very difficult to plan; you are not going to reduce your FTE by one just because you have three fewer offenders. It has provided us with some stability.

Q197 **Chair:** It has given some stability, but it sounds as if, in retrospect, you would not have started the contracts from where you began.

Ed Roberts: We would have done them differently if we had known what we know today about how the volumes have turned out.

Q198 **Chair:** I understand that. The upshot is that, so far, about £64 million more has been paid by the Government than was initially required by the contracts. Those are the National Audit Office figures.

Ed Roberts: As I said earlier, our funding levels are actually less than at the point when the contracts were let. It really just adjusted for the fact that there are some inherent weaknesses in the volumetric measure in different areas.

Q199 **Chair:** That is the sense I get across the piece; there are inherent weaknesses in that measure. It has given stability but, as of now, are the contracts sustainable?

Trevor Shortt: We need a period of stability to be able to demonstrate the way that the contracts were originally intended to operate. The relationship between payment mechanism, caseload and workload is not a straightforward one. The way the adjustments have been made has now given us an opportunity to demonstrate that we very much have an



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operating model that has some flexibility on the one hand but is sustainable on the other.

Q200 **Chair:** Over a period you hope it will be.

Trevor Shortt: I believe so.

John Baumback: I agree with Trevor. We now need a period when we do not make too many changes.

Q201 **Chair:** They are sustainable provided you have a period of stability. Is that what you are saying?

John Baumback: Absolutely; yes.

Q202 **Chair:** Do you agree with that, Ms Binning?

Suki Binning: Yes. In hindsight, the speed of change did not help. If we had paced ourselves in terms of the change, the narrative would have been one of learning rather than of failure. In Kent, Surrey and Sussex, we have a very good story to tell on how we implemented the changes. We would be absolutely happy to share the areas that we think have worked well for us.

Q203 **Chair:** Mr Shortt, you have a number of CRCs. From your point of view, does sustainability vary from one CRC to another within your group? Are some more sustainable than others or are some more under pressure than others?

Trevor Shortt: Largely, the changes made to date have been reasonably consistent across all six of our CRCs. Operationally, it would be wrong to assume that every CRC started in the same place. We have some that were performing much better than others. We have introduced an operating model consistently across all six, and we believe that there is viability across the spectrum for us at this stage.

Ed Roberts: There are still inherent risks around the payment by results measure, looking at it in terms of the reoffending rates. From an operational point of view, as Trevor said, we are on stable ground and operations are now performing well.

Q204 **Chair:** Going from what is in the NAO's report, the projected losses, before the changes, came to about £443 million across all the CRCs. I grant that that has changed, but, as I understand it, at the moment 14 of the 21 CRCs are still projected to make losses.

John Baumback: Yes, we are, across the life of the contract.

Q205 **Chair:** You will make losses across the life of the contract. How are those contracts sustainable? Is the parent company bearing the loss?

John Baumback: Longer term, we are having commercial in confidence discussions with the MOJ. It is fair to say that, in some areas of the



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contract, we have made losses to make sure that we stood the contract up properly and delivered the service we contracted to deliver.

Ed Roberts: Sodexo will always support the businesses. We are continuing to invest to improve the outcomes, very much in line with the aims we set out to achieve. On payment by results, because we have only had two final sets of results from two quarters, it is a little early to tell, but that is going to be a key dependency in the longer term, in terms of the financial sustainability of those contracts at the back end of the contract life.

Suki Binning: Again from an operational perspective, we are having to look at our operating model. At this moment in time, we are in a very good position, but when you look forward into the contract in terms of how the payment mechanism works, the picture is quite gloomy.

Q206 **Chair:** Am I right in thinking that each of the parent companies of your operations gave guarantees to the Ministry?

Ed Roberts: That is correct, yes.

Q207 **Chair:** I do not think they have been called upon.

Ed Roberts: No, not at this point.

Q208 **Bambos Charalambous:** On performance and reoffending, the Minister with responsibility for probation recently explained that he wanted to “ensure that 40 years of stubborn rates of reoffending begin to be addressed.” Statistics on reoffending show a mixed picture, with very few CRCs being in the payment region for the 2015-16 annual payment by results cohort. How do you intend to meet the Minister’s aspirations to reduce reoffending?

Trevor Shortt: Certainly for Sodexo, five of six of our CRCs are in a positive place on the binary rates of reoffending, which we hope and intend to sustain. On frequency, it is a different story, but that is a system-wide issue. Frequency is measured for the first time in this set of contracts, and there is some work to do on understanding that. We are in dialogue, as I have said. That particular measure is being discussed already with the MOJ as a system. Going back to core operations, we are now very much in a place where our changes and our transformation programme are complete. In the last 12 to 18 months, we have very much focused on how we make that work in an integrated way with the rest of the system—the National Probation Service and local economies.

Ed Roberts: In terms of the frequency measure, what we have seen from the evidence in the CRCs we are working in is the consequence of having more prolific offenders and a small group of entrenched offenders who are effectively skewing the measure. It is something that really requires a multiagency approach for us to tackle.



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John Baumback: Our solution was predicated on a new IT system to manage offenders and their journey. It was an integrated and holistic approach to offender management, replacing the systems that we inherited. Our delivery model is integrated into that system for monitoring and rehabilitation.

Suki Binning: I echo what my colleagues have said. I would add that, from a probation practice perspective, the frequency measure is quite complicated. One of the things we need to understand is that the probation service, both the NPS and the CRCs, is a source of intelligence to the police. As we are sitting here today, there will be hundreds of probation officers across England and Wales, either in MAPPA meetings or in IOM meetings, providing intelligence to the police that will result in recalls or new convictions. The probation service should be acknowledged for the work it does on public protection and not penalised for it. The relationship we have with the police in terms of sharing information is crucial. It is a testament to both parties working together. That will contribute to increasing reconviction rates for the people we work with.

Q209 **Bambos Charalambous:** To clarify that point, because there is more information being passed between yourselves and other agencies, it results in more recalls on more breaches.

Suki Binning: It can, because we work in a multiagency way across both organisations. That relationship has taken years. I have been in probation for 22 years, and it was not like that at the beginning. It has been a really positive move for us, as probation and police, working together to protect our local communities. Inevitably, it will result in more convictions from our current cohorts.

Trevor Shortt: It is worthy of note that the new cohort of under 12 months' offenders coming into probation and being supervised for the first time is another factor that needs to be considered. They are often the most prolific offenders and drive the frequency, in addition to the cohort that Mr Roberts has already discussed.

Q210 **Bambos Charalambous:** On that point, the Scottish Government no longer imprison anybody with a less than 12-month sentence. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Suki Binning: In Kent, Surrey and Sussex, we are certainly working on increasing confidence around community sentences. We think that is the way forward. We absolutely acknowledge that since TR there has been a loss of confidence in community sentences. We are working closely on that. We have a couple of events set up with our NPS colleagues to look at how we can improve confidence in community sentences. This week, I have sent out data to all my magistrates courts and Crown courts demonstrating how we are delivering the sentence of the court. It is bespoke to each court. That is about ensuring we have confidence in community sentences.



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Going forward, I would like to see more emphasis on community sentences and investment in that. I am not necessarily talking about financial investment. I am talking about a commitment to reducing our prison population and increasing our community sentences, which we believe are effective in reducing reoffending.

Q211 Alex Chalk: I would like to pick up that very interesting point. You have hit on something about confidence. You talk about the courts having confidence in community sentences. They want to ensure that there is condign punishment and that the defendant, if they are not going to be sent inside, is going to do something worth while.

My constituents down in the Dog and Duck in Cheltenham want to know that someone is truly being punished. Do you think that we have the suite of community penalties that truly delivers what my constituents want to see, which is proper punishment, no doubt with some rehabilitation as well, that they feel truly means offenders have repaid their debt to society?

Suki Binning: The obvious one, and the one everybody is very familiar with, is community payback. If you speak to our service users, our offenders, they will say that a community order is tougher than prison. They are on that order for two years. They are addressing the issues that contribute to their offending. When I was a practitioner I had many a client, as they were called in those days, who would come in and say, "Do you know what? I would rather go and do four weeks in custody than two years on probation."

There is work to be done on getting a balance between the public understanding the punitive side and—

Q212 Alex Chalk: Is there a PR issue—because my constituents do not get that?

Suki Binning: Absolutely.

Q213 Alex Chalk: How do we solve it?

Suki Binning: We are currently working towards addressing it through a number of initiatives. We are getting our communities involved in community punishment, so that they can vote for a project. That is one of the other things we are doing. Most recently in Kent, Surrey and Sussex, we have appointed two researchers who will take up post. Their role will be to explore best practice, both nationally and internationally. Mr Charambalous referred to Scotland. We are going to be exploring those options, and how other jurisdictions have addressed the issue of gaining confidence in community orders.

Q214 Ruth Cadbury: This has been a good discussion of the positive side of community orders instead of short-term prison sentences. For the record, you started off by implying that there is a shift towards more community sentencing—I forget your exact words—when unfortunately I think we are



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seeing the opposite. At the moment, magistrates do not have confidence in community sentences and they have halved.

Alex Chalk: They impose suspended sentence orders instead.

Ruth Cadbury: They are replacing them with suspended sentence orders, which are not really a sentence. Would I be right in saying that what you meant to say is that there should be more community sentencing, and how can we get more confidence in them?

Suki Binning: Yes.

Q215 **Ruth Cadbury:** Are you funded to do that marketing, shall we say, and provide that confidence in community sentencing? How can we get that shift?

Trevor Shortt: Often, it does not require a great deal of funding. It is about getting access to the media and having a co-ordinated strategy. We have been doing some of that locally. My director in BeNCH CRC was on local radio just a couple of weeks ago, involved in a midday debate on how punishment works in general across the system. He was advocating community payback as part of that. I think you are right and there is something around us, as a system, doing more to inform the public in general about just how difficult some of the orders handed down by the courts are for those who are party to them.

Q216 **Ruth Cadbury:** There is the hardness, and whether they are more successful in reducing reoffending, and whether they have other benefits.

Trevor Shortt: There is certainly some evidence that short-term periods in prison are incredibly disruptive. The Scottish experience is interesting. For some, it is appropriate that short sentences are handed out by the courts, but there are many for whom alternatives to custody would be a better route.

Q217 **Bambos Charalambous:** The CRCs have had mixed reports from the inspectorate. The Minister talked recently about the CRCs getting on with "the very basics of their task." What are the two or three key things that would improve CRC performance?

Trevor Shortt: We have been inspected a number of times under the old inspection framework. As you know, there is a new one starting from April. I have been largely pleased with the last two inspections in South Yorkshire and in Cumbria, which were broadly positive. It is a sign that the focus has been on business as usual for the last period of time.

There are a couple of things that would improve the situation. The first is happening already, which is a drive towards a consistent set of standards for the delivery of quality services. We put those in place some time ago across the six Sodexo CRCs. We have already touched on the other thing, which is about ensuring that our relationship with the courts is improved. Again, there is work taking place system-wide on that, which the MOJ is leading.



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John Baumback: We had a relatively good report when the inspector came out. One of the things we have invested in is an excellence and effectiveness division. We drive our quality through that division. As Suki has already said, we are employing two researchers in that area to look at best practice nationally and internationally. The division is staffed with ex-practitioners, so our quality of provision is monitored and we have continual improvement happening in the field. That is the way, organisationally, that we look at improving quality. Part of our business is Ofsted, so we try to bring that type of quality and audit into the probation services we run.

Suki Binning: Nationally, certainly in the last six to eight months, there has been significant movement in addressing some of the strategic issues. We now have a national probation leaders forum, which consists of chief execs from the CRCs and the National Probation Service, where we address issues such as confidence in sentencing and some other touchpoints that needed addressing. There is a national professionalisation board, where both the CRCs and the NPS are represented, so a lot of work is being done strategically.

Locally, for me, it goes back to the issue of stability. For me and my 500 staff, the concern is what will happen in three or four years' time. Will we have a new owner with another new model that might be significantly different from the one we think has been reasonably successful? Those are some of the concerns about stability in delivering probation services.

Q218 **Mrs Badenoch:** I have a few questions around innovation and continuous improvement activities. My first question is to Mr Shortt. There has been criticism of Sodexo's use of supervision by telephone. Can you tell the Committee what the evidence base was for telephone supervision?

Trevor Shortt: It is important, first of all, to say that telephone supervision forms part of our model, but it is never used in isolation. We always see our service users. The concept came from a number of international studies, which indicated that, for those who were at the back end of an order and who had been compliant throughout, telephone contact was appropriate and less disruptive for them in managing the rest of their life.

We have CRCs in quite rural communities, for example, and someone physically attending a centre from where they live can take upwards of half a day. A structured telephone call, if they have been compliant with their order for a period of time, is more appropriate if they are managing family life and work life alongside. It is part of the model, but not the only part.

Q219 **Mrs Badenoch:** It is not something from which you are moving away or reducing, despite the criticisms.



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Trevor Shortt: It has a part to play. The inspectorate has a view about the number of face-to-face contacts and their frequency, which we will of course take into account as we evolve. My view is that telephone contact can still be appropriate.

Q220 **Mrs Badenoch:** Do you think any changes are needed at the moment to improve performance, given the criticisms that were made? If you wanted to move away from it, what changes would be required?

Trevor Shortt: As I said, it is a mixed model. If the inspectorate's view is, as it appears to be, that face-to-face contact on a more regular basis for the duration of the order, certainly monthly, is something that it wishes us to do, we will look at that very closely. We intend to do that. It can still be supplemented with telephone contact. I do not think it is something that we would rule out entirely from our framework, for the reasons I have already stated.

Ed Roberts: It is not right for all. We go through an intensive assessment early in our engagement with service users, and we have more intensive activities at the front end of the supervision period. It is not something we would employ directly early on, because it would not promote engagement.

Q221 **Mrs Badenoch:** I was going to ask about the benefits you achieve from telephone supervision. You have mentioned the benefits in remote and rural areas. Are there any other benefits that you want to tell the Committee about?

Trevor Shortt: We are working with an organisation called Get the Data. They are doing some evaluation for us. It is not just in our CRCs, but looking at where telephone contact is employed in other parts of the system, as well as internationally. There is some evidence that it is helpful and has a positive benefit as you start to release people from face-to-face intensive supervision and place more trust in them as they reach the end of an order. As Mr Roberts said, it is something that is supplementary. It is not the primary aspect of our model.

Q222 **Mrs Badenoch:** Moving on from that, both Sodexo and Seetec have pushed for more flexible contracts to encourage innovation. What sort of flexibility are you referring to? Could you give us more detail?

Trevor Shortt: One of the areas where we would like more flexibility is the ISPA: the industry standard partnership agreement that governs our arrangements with the voluntary sector. Its intent was good and laudable, but it has created some fairly cumbersome arrangements, particularly for small voluntary sector organisations. The documents are fairly weighty. They take quite a lot of legal time to wade through. I do not think they are appropriate for some very small organisations, where we would otherwise be contracting on much more flexible arrangements and much more locally, particularly in women's services. Small organisations often have incredibly good sets of arrangements in a



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particular town. In one CRC, we might want four or five different sets of arrangements in that context.

John Baumback: I concur with what Trevor said. What the IPSA was trying to achieve is very noble, but it brings a degree of inflexibility, for the reasons that Trevor stated, when using small and niche voluntary sector organisations that really understand a very small cohort. It is very difficult to engage with them from an innovative angle, to pump-prime them, get them to do something specific and measure it when you have some of those constraints around the contract.

The other area for us, which I alluded to earlier, is IT. We would like to see a much more integrated IT approach, where we can have practitioners in the field with data on a tablet or a device.

Q223 **Mrs Badenoch:** Are you unable to do that at the moment because of the contract?

John Baumback: Yes, because of the security constraints. Children's services have that facility. There are enough technical solutions whereby I think we could safeguard data. It would mean that we could work much more peripatetically, much more in the field, with individuals, rather than having offices in certain locations that give us less flexibility. If we are talking about moving more into community programmes, where they are not based in offices, our staff need up-to-date information. It just links through everything, including integrated offender management. You get the data and information in a much more real-time manner, rather than on a Post-it note, which is what we are doing at the moment.

Q224 **Mrs Badenoch:** You have touched on the next question I was going to ask, which was about what sort of innovations you deliver. Is there anything else that you have not mentioned but that you would like to, in terms of the sorts of things you would like to do but have been unable to do because of the rigidity of the contracts?

Trevor Shortt: It may not be quite answering your question, but I would like to say that it is not all doom and gloom. The innovation funds we have for our CRCs have been devolved to CRC directors. There are close to 100 innovation projects running across our six CRCs. Some of them are quite small scale and some of them are larger. An example is the departure lounge at HMP Northumberland, which is coterminous with Northumbria CRC. Those who are coming out of custody have somewhere to go outside the prison gate while family are coming to pick them up, and where other issues are able to be resolved that have not been resolved prior to them getting there—practicalities around transport, clothing, and so on. That has been a joint venture between the prison and the CRC. There are many of those, with voluntary sector organisations, running across our CRCs. The innovation funds give us a level of flexibility, and we want to use them as a model for extending that flexibility slightly further than the current arrangements seem to permit.



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Q225 Ruth Cadbury: We have had quite a lot of evidence on preparation for release, which you have just touched on, and how the current system does not make it easy to adjust post-release. There are also some examples of good-quality intensive projects, which might not even be through CRC contracts at all, particularly post release.

One of the things we have heard so far is that the 12-week intervention point can be too late, and that there is a case to be made for pre-release preparation going on practically almost throughout a sentence. We have heard that there is a lack of role for governors in post-release solutions; and about the importance of smooth transition through the gate. What do you think about that 12-week period? Is it too rigid? What else do you think could be improved, or what are the major problems with the through-the-gate system at the moment?

Suki Binning: The 12-week period can be rigid. For some prisoners, 12 weeks will be fine, but others need a longer lead-in time and we are only contracted to work at that point.

Our core model in Kent, Surrey and Sussex is quite established. We have been working with local governors. We go into the prison and provide interventions, or we use release on temporary licence, where the prisoner will come out to the CRC under supervision to access programmes. We are doing pre-release work in that way as well. There are a number of prisons in Kent, Surrey and Sussex where either we are going in and delivering programmes or the individuals are coming out to us to address some of those needs.

Trevor Shortt: Similarly, I think the 12-week window is probably overly rigid. My career prior to this was in governing prisons, and it has always been my view that we need to start the resettlement process from the moment somebody arrives in custody. Putting in well-intentioned arrangements is not always the most appropriate way of delivering it. It is not always the case that someone needs a resettlement plan within a short period of time of landing in prison, if they are sentenced to a lengthy period of time in custody. For others, it should start immediately and the momentum should be kept going all the way through.

Yes, the answer is that the rigidity around that period needs to be more flexible and more individualised. That is fine to say, but the practicalities are more difficult. We need flexibility and better joining-up between CRCs and the rest of the system. We need a greater degree of thinking around how the offender management and custody arrangements that are currently being rolled out dovetail with the work that the CRCs and NPS are doing, so that we are all heading in the same direction and trying to achieve the same thing.

Q226 Ruth Cadbury: Should all prisoners receive through-the-gate support? If not, which prisoners should, or which prisoners do not need it?

Trevor Shortt: There is a need for all, but the extent of that need will vary between individuals. Again, it is difficult to categorise and say that



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particular types of prisoners need it and others do not. It is an individualised approach.

Q227 **Ruth Cadbury:** It is a variety of level of need.

Suki Binning: Absolutely, yes. It should be needs based.

Q228 **Victoria Prentis:** It is blindingly obvious that a multiagency approach helps when prisoners are released. Your organisations have written about that. Sadly, we do not have all day to take evidence from you, but could you come up with a couple of quick wins that we could recommend to the MOJ, concentrating on education, the continuation of healthcare, when benefits could be provided and housing provision organisation?

John Baumback: I would like to start with education. The prison education framework is out at the moment. In our caseload, only 30% of our offenders have been in prison; so what about the 70%? For me, there is far too much focus on the individuals who have been in prison and leave prison. As an organisation, we are there to stop individuals going to prison, and the ones who reach prison go to the NPS, so if you look at reoffending rates we have failed. Surely, the answer lies in giving us, or organisations such as us, the funding to stop that happening.

Education is the key point. In the last statistics I looked at, over 40% of individuals incarcerated were below level 1 in English and maths. It is great that we are putting in processes to educate them in prison, but we should start those interventions much earlier. That would be one of the things I would really focus on.

Suki Binning: With regard to housing, we have services that we subcontract to local authorities, but it always comes down to basic bricks and mortar, which we, as CRCs, do not have. It is the same issue for the NPS. We would like to see a drive across Government Departments to address the housing issue for offenders. We are limited in what we can do in that arena.

Trevor Shortt: Very briefly, the level of expectation around through the gate and the level of capacity are at odds with one another as things currently stand, although there is a review going on, which we believe will help to address that across the system.

I absolutely agree that community sentences are one of the answers. If we can drive those up, some of the issues will begin to ease. Intermediate outcomes are part of the review that I mentioned, where housing, ETE and health—particularly around addictions and mental health—need to be combined as targets or goals for each constituent part of the sector.

Finally, there has been largely a move away, across the system, from integrated offender management arrangements focusing on prolific and priority offenders to focusing on other things, quite understandably around community cohesion, serious and organised crime, and so on.



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There is a role for us in reigniting interest in highly prolific offenders across the system. We are certainly doing that in a number of our CRCs, and have some good traction on it across different parts of the system with PCCs and others.

We have a project about to get started in BeNCH CRC with Peterborough Prison, around having some accommodation as part of our joint venture with Nacro. I think that will help to bridge the gap between prison and the community when housing is in short supply. If we can make that work, we hope to scale it up across the sector.

Q229 **Victoria Prentis:** How many people are you hoping to house?

Trevor Shortt: Currently, we are aiming for around 10 as a pilot. From that we will be able to scale it up, assuming that we can fund it.

Q230 **Victoria Prentis:** Has there been specific funding for that?

Trevor Shortt: No. It is part of the innovation project funding from the CRC, and the prison has also contributed.

Victoria Prentis: We would be really interested to see how that goes.

Q231 **Alex Chalk:** Can accountability and scrutiny be improved and rationalised? If so, what role should specified individuals play, such as PCCs?

Suki Binning: In terms of governance and scrutiny, the way forward is by reviving the local criminal justice boards. They were set up with the purpose of local accountability, with national organisations around the table such as the CPS, the NPS and the Prison Service, and local organisations such as the CRC and the YOT. That is the forum for us to take forward local accountability.

Q232 **Alex Chalk:** I am just playing devil's advocate for a second. Does it really matter? As long as the centre understands whether you are succeeding or failing, and we know what the recidivism rates are, does it really matter whether there is that local link? If so, why?

Suki Binning: Both sides of probation deliver the sentence of the court. Our sentencing guidelines are national sentencing guidelines, so there is an absolute role for national, central consistency in the delivery of community sentences. We already have the mechanisms in place. The CRCs are robustly managed at the moment, so we can address scrutiny and governance in the structures we already have.

Trevor Shortt: I agree. There is an extensive level of scrutiny of CRCs, through the MOJ, the local contract management teams and indeed the inspectorate and other parts of the system. We feel quite heavily under the weight of all of that. Again, in our experience working in contracted prisons, it is something that is typical at the beginning of a contract. As issues mature, we tend to find that the weight lightens and we get into much broader discussion.



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Q233 Alex Chalk: Can I explore the issue of transparency? Some people say that they are not really sure what police and crime commissioners do; they get elected on a very thin turnout. Should we be saying, "Look, someone has burgled my house. I want to go and speak to the PCC to check that enough police officers came round, and now that that person has been arrested, convicted, punished and disgraced, I want to know what the penalty is going to be. Therefore, I should go to my PCC to check that that is all happening properly."? Would that make it more transparent, or do you think the current arrangement is better?

Trevor Shortt: Personally, I think the current arrangement is better. There is always room for greater transparency, and greater input and traction locally. Local solutions are often the best in helping to reduce reoffending, which is what we are all in business to do. There is an issue around us being the delivery arm of the court and being responsible for delivering the order of the court. Ultimately, I guess it is a policy decision.

Q234 Ellie Reeves: You mentioned in response to a previous question the role of the voluntary sector. I know that Sodexo's and Seetec's submissions to the inquiry have suggested a cautious approach to increasing involvement with the voluntary sector and local organisations. Can you explain why you would take a cautious approach and what role you would envisage in an ideal world?

Trevor Shortt: Our model is one where the voluntary sector has a significant role to play. From the outset, in our bid we put arrangements in place for quite a chunk of our frontline staff to be voluntary sector staff. Between 18% and 20% of our total cost base is sitting in the voluntary sector. They sit alongside us in our offices and have access to our systems. They are very much integrated in our core delivery. We refer to them as our operational partners rather than our supply chain.

Ed Roberts: In relation to the cautious approach, as we said earlier, our current contractual instruments do not make it easy for us to be more agile in making sure that we can use resources in particular discrete projects and CRCs outside some of our core providers. It makes growing the voluntary sector further even more challenging, but it is a key part of our model, and they are well integrated in our delivery.

Q235 Ellie Reeves: Basically, the inflexibility of the contracts means that you are not working with them as much as you would potentially like to.

Ed Roberts: Yes, for discrete projects and smaller organisations, it makes that very difficult to do.

John Baumbach: I completely agree with that. Our solution was based on predominantly direct delivery by us, but using specialist third-sector providers. There is inflexibility in the contracts around commissioning with the voluntary sector, or indeed any third party, that does not give us flexibility for innovation. From our point of view, I am afraid it came down to funding. I had some choices early on, which were either to subcontract



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or to keep loyal and dedicated staff who had worked in the probation office for a number of years. I chose the latter.

- Q236 **Ellie Reeves:** Following on from that, do you find that you can only work with the big voluntary sector organisations rather than some of the smaller, more niche organisations?

John Baumback: Yes. There is a significant number of commitments on us for subcontractors and for the voluntary sector. That makes it much more difficult to use niche intervention providers, who would probably have more impact, rather than using—not being disrespectful—larger organisations where we can do some of the work. The real niche ones that truly understand a very small cohort are the ones you want to include to get results.

- Q237 **Ellie Reeves:** I have a separate point in relation to staff. We have had submissions from unions that represent probation officers in CRCs. They have given evidence of staff being overstretched, with low morale, and finding it increasingly difficult to manage caseloads. How are you going to ensure that CRCs are adequately staffed and that staff workloads are manageable?

Trevor Shortt: From our perspective, as I said right at the beginning of the evidence session, the cost base for CRCs is less than we were anticipating. That has been stretching for us, and I make no bones about that.

There is not a direct relationship between caseload and workload. In our model, quite a lot of the workload is at the beginning and very intensive, but it is less intensive towards the end of an order. It is important to make that distinction. We have invested in a workload monitoring tool, which is helping us to look at the workloads of individual probation officers and PSOs, and of our operational partners as well. In summary, we would like our workload to be lower, but I do not currently believe it to be unmanageable.

Suki Binning: In relation to staffing, the biggest challenge I have is recruitment. Since TR, probation staff are just not out there and, particularly in the south-east, we have recruitment issues. On numbers, prior to share sale, our FTE was 456; this week it is 438, but I have 32 FTE vacancies. Our numbers have not gone down; my issue is around recruitment.

- Q238 **Ellie Reeves:** What about retention of staff? We have heard that some CRCs are training staff only for them to go off and work for the NPS. What steps are you taking in relation to retention?

Suki Binning: That is being addressed nationally. Earlier, I mentioned a forum where both the National Probation Service and the CRCs are working together on workforce, planning a way forward. The reality is that we have lost staff, but in more recent months we have started to see



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staff moving from the NPS to the CRC. I have recruited two people in the last three or four weeks.

Trevor Shortt: Again, it depends on the area. Some of our CRCs are much more heavily hit by turnover than others. We have been investing in a new qualification for our staff, continuous professional development, working with Portsmouth University. We are ensuring that we have staff who are both invested in and equipped to do their job, but with an eye to that being a broader market. We do not want to be parochial about that either.

Q239 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** Some of the trade unions advocate introducing a licence to practise. What do you think the consequences of introducing that would be on your staff and on the services you deliver to users?

Suki Binning: There is a national professionalisation board addressing that very issue. All CRCs are required to comply with probation instructions. There is a probation instruction that gives us clear guidelines about suitably qualified staff. We all adhere to those.

Work has been done to develop an apprenticeship, which has now been approved. That has been led by Seetec and Interserve, and we have support from the NPS in relation to that. The Probation Institute has also been involved. That is our way forward to ensure professionalism across probation. That work is in place.

Q240 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** Would you support the introduction of a licence?

Suki Binning: We already have mechanisms in place; there is a benchmark in terms of being suitably qualified. A probation officer qualification is a probation officer qualification at the moment, whether you are working in the private sector or in the public sector, in the same way as if you are a nurse working in the NHS or in BUPA.

Q241 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** How are you responding to concerns raised by the inspectorate that some of your staff are dealing with cases for which they simply do not have the right training? There were quite damning comments in various inspection reports submitted to us, one of which said that "some staff managing cases that had the potential to cause significant harm did not have sufficient experience, training or managerial oversight." That is just one, but there are a number like it. How do you respond to that?

Suki Binning: Our inspection report talked about our learning and development strategy, which addresses those issues. Again, we are collaboratively doing more work across probation with regard to probation practice. When you have had such a turnover of staff, it takes a while to train people. Experience comes with time, and all of us are working towards that.

Q242 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** Is it right for staff who simply do not have the experience or the training to deal with particular cases?



Trevor Shortt: That is not something we would ever do intentionally or seek to do. I agree with what has already been said. We have a set of practice standards, which I have already alluded to this morning, and they are now consistent across our six CRCs. They include levels of supervision. We also have a learning development strategy, designed to equip people to do the jobs that they need to do in an adequate and professional way.

- Q243 **Bambos Charalambous:** I have a couple of questions about the relationship with other partners, particularly the NPS. You have been critical about the relationship that you have with the NPS. How can the CRC-NPS relationship be improved in the longer term, so that relations can withstand personnel changes?

Trevor Shortt: The relationship with NPS, certainly at senior level, has always been rather good. I do not have an issue at all with that. At local level, across our six CRCs it has been mixed, but there is an improving picture. I do not think it is something that started with share sale. The split between NPS and CRCs predated that, and created some issues between different parts of the system. When you have a system-wide change of the scale this has been, it is inevitable that it will take a period of time to settle. I do not see anything other than an improving picture, an improving set of relationships, with structures being put in place, or existing structures being adjusted, to address some of the issues that we are all concerned about. The relationship is one that we invest in, and I know that others do as well.

Suki Binning: I echo that.

- Q244 **Bambos Charalambous:** How can CRCs work better with the courts and provide advice to them in the short term, especially if you do not have direct access to the courts?

Trevor Shortt: Very briefly, my position would be that there needs to be direct access between CRCs and the courts in any reiteration of this. However good the arrangements are, there is always going to be a third party between the courts and the delivery arm of the sentence.

- Q245 **Chair:** It is pretty bizarre, isn't it, that the sentencer does not have access to the person who has drawn up the pre-sentence report?

Bambos Charalambous: You are relying on the NPS to provide information that it has not drawn together.

Trevor Shortt: However good the structures and systems might be, where there is a buffer between the CRC and the sentencer, there is always going to be another hurdle to get over. Often, court relationships are built upon personal relationships between the sentencers and those who are involved in their delivery. That has been removed in this set of arrangements.

- Q246 **Chair:** It is the confidence in the sentence point again. If you have



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confidence in the person who prepared the report, you are perhaps more likely to accept a recommendation for a non-custodial sentence.

Trevor Shortt: Yes.

Chair: There seems to be general agreement on that.

Q247 **Victoria Prentis:** You asked for a period of stability. How long do you think the Government should give you before reassessing whether TR is working at all?

Trevor Shortt: It is a difficult question to answer. We have already mentioned some of the challenges on frequency and PBR. As a system, we are in discussion with the MOJ about that, subject to that creating enough stability in the system to allow us to continue for a reasonable period. I think that certainly to the end of the current contract term, which is the beginning of 2022, would be reasonable.

Q248 **Victoria Prentis:** Do you agree?

John Baumback: Yes.

Ed Roberts: During that period, we definitely need to continue to evolve and build on the things that have not quite worked—the ambitions originally put out in terms of improvements around through the gate and some of the other aspects. You can do that in an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary way.

John Baumback: Stability is also about the structure of the organisations delivering services to the courts. One of my major worries is the loss of staff from the sector. This is a specialised sector, with highly trained individuals, and, when they leave the service, typically they leave it for good. Sometimes, high caseloads or poor supervision are down to lack of staff, because they do not exist and they take a while to train. My concern would be that any wholesale or fundamental changes could mean that more people leave the profession, and we just repeat the same mistakes.

Q249 **Victoria Prentis:** Do you think that is an answer for carrying on with something that patently is not working at the moment?

John Baumback: I do not think it is patently not working everywhere. There are pockets of really good practice. It is very easy to look holistically and say that all of it is not working. We strive to produce an excellent service and we are getting there. There are others who are starting to see those benefits. While I agree that you cannot keep flogging a dead horse, I also think that radical change could have a significantly negative impact on the service. It needs building and promoting. We talked about community payback earlier. The lack of understanding outside these walls about what probation does is very low. We need to work on the general public actually understanding the service that we deliver.



Q250 **Victoria Prentis:** You see light at the end of the tunnel.

John Baumbach: Yes.

Trevor Shortt: Definitely. I agree with John. The view that this is patently not working is not accurate. There are really some signs that it is working, and indeed some evidence that it was working, particularly in the last 12 to 18 months. There are still some issues to get through, but it is not by any means a write-off; far from it.

Q251 **Alex Chalk:** Is there not a danger of some slight groupthink? Inevitably, you have a vested interest—this is not a criticism at all—in ensuring that there is light at the end of the tunnel and giving us honeyed words that everything is going to be all right on the night. The figures tend to point in a different direction. How can we be satisfied that this is not just wishful thinking?

Suki Binning: As the chief exec of the CRC, I see myself as the custodian of the CRC, and for me the timescales are really important. Potentially to have a new parent organisation every seven years, which may have a completely different operating model, is going to be quite disruptive. The timing for me is more about the length of the contracts to allow operating models to embed. That is my concern, and my request would be to have longer periods, if it is working.

Chair: Perhaps at the end of the day, that is the big question we will have to consider in our report: if and how. Thank you very much for your evidence and for your time. I am very grateful to you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sonia Crozier, Kilvinder Vigurs, Lynda Marginson and Ian Barrow.

Q252 **Chair:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you for your patience. There is quite a lot we need to get through today, as you will understand. We have had the Minister, Mr Stewart, come along and say he wants to “ensure that 40 years of stubborn rates of reoffending begin to be addressed.” They have not been addressed so far, so why should it be different? What is your objective? How are you going to set about dealing with that? Who wants to kick off, and could you introduce yourselves as you answer?

Sonia Crozier: Sonia Crozier, executive director for the National Probation Service, and with responsibility for women across Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service. Are you talking about our approach within the National Probation Service to reducing reoffending?

Chair: Yes.

Sonia Crozier: As was said by the earlier panel, the process has to start with good advice to the courts, ensuring that we are giving the full range of options to the courts at the point of sentence, matching the individual to the right kind of sentence requirement, and working with our CRC



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colleagues to ensure that there is confidence in the options that we are recommending to the courts. That has to be the starting point.

Q253 **Chair:** It does not always seem to be that at the moment, does it?

Sonia Crozier: There have been some concerns aired by the judiciary about some of what they have seen around enforcement practice across some of the CRCs. We have a national working group taking that forward. We have been very actively involved with the senior presiding judge for England and Wales to give her assurance that these matters are being attended to.

Q254 **Chair:** Is it difficult, perhaps, in that you are the people talking to the senior presiding judge and the judiciary but you are not the people delivering the follow-up on the ground. That creates a problem, doesn't it?

Sonia Crozier: The CRCs have direct conversations with the senior presiding judge as well. That is an important part of the work we are doing at the moment. Suki Binning made some interesting points earlier about how they have refreshed and rebooted the amount of information they are giving sentencers, and, absolutely, we will support that approach; it is the right thing to do.

Q255 **Chair:** The National Probation Service being an agency of the MOJ, what is your access like to Ministers?

Sonia Crozier: It can be very regular, depending on events.

Q256 **Chair:** Is there a systematic means whereby you flag up to the Minister problems that you are encountering, and how do you do it?

Sonia Crozier: I am routinely called to see both the junior Minister and the Secretary of State. Obviously, with the current commercial in confidence negotiations going on with the CRCs, they are keen to hear my point of view about how we can work better and more collaboratively with the CRCs.

Q257 **Chair:** Do you have any other observations on that point before we move on?

Sonia Crozier: No.

Q258 **Ruth Cadbury:** We have looked, as you would expect, at a selection of reports from the inspectorate relating to your areas, and a common theme to the recommendations is that the NPS could make better use of CRC interventions and rate card services. What have been the barriers to date to you using those services?

Lynda Marginson: I am Lynda Marginson, the director of the National Probation Service North East. I am also the strategic lead for approved premises across England and Wales. Prior to transforming rehabilitation, I was the chief executive in South Yorkshire Probation Trust.



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This has been a huge fundamental change to the delivery of probation services, and a significant amount of time has been spent over the last couple of years putting in infrastructures to help people manage orders in the new way. Yes, there have been some issues raised about rate card usage. It is quite a clunky system.

In certain parts of my division, we have struggled to request the services that are needed. I think you have already heard about some of the more bespoke services that are required, for ex-armed services personnel and foreign-national offenders, for example. It is very difficult for my CRC colleagues to be able to guarantee to put services in place if we as the NPS cannot guarantee that those individuals will come through. We cannot guarantee that, because of course we do not know which cases will come through the courts, so it has been quite difficult to get the services on to the rate card as we request.

Once the services are on the rate card, there are issues about the processes for our staff to request those services. An IT process needs to be gone through. It is quite a complicated process. In my division, we have five community rehabilitation companies with three providers. We have excellent relationships, and the chief execs and I meet every two months. We have shared objectives that are outside the formal arrangements. We have a shared statement of commitment that we want to make the system work. However, we are not managing to present a whole system approach. There is fragmentation and discontinuity, and while we have that it frustrates staff.

Q259 Ruth Cadbury: Is there an obvious route to addressing that fragmentation in the current structures?

Lynda Marginson: There is. Sonia responded in terms of the access we have. Suki mentioned earlier a national strategic group where all the directors and the CRC chief execs meet with Sonia and Sonia's equivalent in the contracting world. We have an opportunity to feed back at those meetings. Operationally, we often get asked to contribute to policy with policy colleagues and to look at how we can influence changes. There are lots of opportunities to voice concerns. The whole system needs to be looked at, so that we can deliver a more coherent service, but the answer lies in the locality, and having strong relationships.

We have had three inspections in my division, in Durham and North Yorkshire and in South Yorkshire, which has just been commented on. All three inspection reports talk about the positive relationship between the NPS and the CRC. There is no hostility against it, but there is frustration at staff level about the cumbersome structures and processes that have been introduced by the model.

Q260 Ruth Cadbury: In which case the solution is not just at a local level, but partly in terms of the design.

Lynda Marginson: Yes.



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Sonia Crozier: That is correct. There are plans afoot for the next financial year to have advance purchase orders with the CRCs, particularly around the high-volume elements we buy, such as unpaid work and accredited programmes, which will give them more certainty in being able both to staff and schedule for that delivery, and will allow a bit more freedom for some of the conversations that Lynda described, where we think there is unmet need and smaller bespoke services that we would like them to develop for our offender population and for theirs. Kilvinder, do you want to offer a perspective from London in relation to the rate card?

Kilvinder Vigurs: I am Kilvinder Vigurs, the divisional director for the London National Probation Service, and my lead is national security. To pick up on Lynda's comments, which I wholeheartedly agree with, there are a number of issues that have come out of two inspections. As you may know, I arrived back in November 2016 to the first HMIP report, which was quite negative. We worked really hard with our CRC colleagues to improve our relationships and the access to the rate card, yet we were still found wanting.

A lot of structural problems remain and issues around the IT systems; it is just about doing the functional work to access something and somebody being at the receiving end to receive it. Sometimes the provision is not matched to the need, as already mentioned, whether it be for foreign-national offenders or complex sex offenders. The National Probation Service has nothing but a caseload of violent and sexual offenders. They are complex people, with complex needs, so trying to purchase from a rate card for those individuals is difficult. Asking our CRC colleagues to match that need needs time to grow, but, again as Lynda pointed out, the numbers are not there.

There is an ongoing issue around people we manage as citizens of the community accessing resources there. We want to reintegrate them into their communities and allow them to access local provision. There is conflict with some staff in relation to accessing something that is free in the community, which is about reintegration, or purchasing something. Those are the dilemmas our staff face: structural issues, IT issues, access to provision on a rate card and what is available in the community.

Q261 **Victoria Prentis:** The number of sex offenders in the criminal justice system has grown and is continuing to grow beyond our wildest imaginings, truthfully. We are currently running at about 18%. Are you prepared for that?

Kilvinder Vigurs: I think we are prepared for it. One of the things we are very good at is forecasting our needs. We do not always know what is coming through the courts and the police investigations, but we are geared up through our learning and development plans. We need to strengthen things like emotional resilience. We are moving towards having clinical supervision for our staff. The training remit is quite robust. There are resources. Our problem, which Suki also mentioned, is around



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recruitment. The resources are there. Trying to get people in, and being an organisation that is attractive to a diverse community, is a challenge for us, but there are an awful lot of resources and expertise in the NPS.

Sonia Crozier: We are aware that our caseload has grown since we came into existence, but, to match that, our budget has also been increased over time. This year, we have launched a very ambitious programme to recruit more probation officers to the organisation. Our strategy is very much about growing our own. We do not want to go to the market and take precious probation officers from the CRCs. That is very much our approach.

Ian Barrow: I am Ian Barrow, director of the National Probation Service in Wales with the lead for community supervision. The only point I would add is that we have invested quite a lot of time and effort in the last couple of years in developing a capacity management tool that allows us to plan for workforce needs coming up. That takes into account both the needs and the risks of the individuals that we have coming along.

Lynda Marginson: You are quite right; there have been a number of high-profile cases around individuals who sexually abuse, and, yes, we are expecting a bigger throughput. We have a number of sex offender treatment programmes that we deliver in the community, and we are just about to roll out the internet sex offender treatment programme.

One of the issues that faces me as the strategic lead for approved premises is the number of sex offenders who will be coming through the system, particularly ageing sex offenders, where a care aspect has developed. We are looking at expanding the approved premises estate. Just yesterday, we were discussing options for looking at other facilities that would be able to take those high-risk offenders on release from prison, so we are looking at that issue all the time.

Chair: That is very helpful.

Q262 **Ruth Cadbury:** In your written submission, you explain that phase 2 of the change programme, which was created to implement the NPS operating model, should have ended by the end of 2017. Has it ended?

Sonia Crozier: Our E3 change programme has formally ended. It allowed us to create consistency nationally. We inherited 35 ways of doing things, with multiple job descriptions, and we needed a national approach. We have concluded our E3 change programme.

Q263 **Ruth Cadbury:** All elements of the programme have now been completed.

Sonia Crozier: There have been some elements where—

Ruth Cadbury: Which are not yet complete?



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Sonia Crozier: The ViSOR implementation had heavy dependency on changes in IT. ViSOR is the shared case management system we use with police and probation. While we have completed some of the fundamentals in E3, the final completion of ViSOR nationally has had to be extended. To be honest, the most important thing was national agreement in the way we were going to roll it out within E3.

Lynda Marginson: There are some minor elements of the approved premises changes. There was a huge fundamental change of 101 approved premises coming under similar processes. There are two things outstanding: a new rota system, so that we can anticipate staffing requirements on the rota; and a bed vacancy tracker. Two pieces of equipment are currently being trialled in the north-east and, hopefully, we will get them rolled out by the end of the summer.

Ian Barrow: It is fair to say that the vast majority of what was envisioned in E3, the basics of ensuring that we did a proper benchmarking exercise to ensure consistency throughout the country, is definitely done.

Sonia Crozier: That is done. That was the core element.

Q264 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** Can you tell us about some of the innovative work that the NPS is doing in your areas to help offenders in the community or in custody?

Kilvinder Vigurs: The HMIP report will show that one of the development areas for us was around engaging our service users. We are developing a web-based approach. It is a creative approach for working with somebody and looking at their needs. Imagine that at every point in a spider's web there is a need, whether it concerns housing, drugs, attitudes, behaviours; it is about working with individuals to engage them at their level, to understand where they are coming from and to develop that. That is internally developed and practice led. Our probation officers are often creative and they want to work well with individuals.

Another innovation is around working with victims of chemsex, which is quite a new phenomenon in relation to a group of individuals in the community who use violence through the use of chemicals in sexual activities. That is very new. We are right at the heart of developing that work. Again, it is frontline and practitioner led. One of the benefits of the National Probation Service is that, when we have those innovations, we can develop them and share best practice across England and Wales. They are very small seeds, but they are really innovative and will grow and be developed across England and Wales.

Lynda Marginson: There is lots of innovation. We hear about some of the issues and problems around transforming rehabilitation. Since TR, there have been opportunities to create real innovation. Going back to the earlier question from the Chair about reducing reoffending, we cannot do that alone. Issues around homelessness, substance misuse and



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personality disorder have to be tackled in partnership. A number of the innovative programmes that we have going on in the north-east are multiagency programmes.

One example concerns the issue of IPP sentence prisoners. In Humberside, we have something called the Humberside IPP project, which is a partnership between ourselves, the prison and health, where we are looking at working intensively, through the prison and into the community, with some of the IPPs with personality disorders who are over tariff. We are having some real success rates with that, but they are intensive partnership arrangements. We have a fantastic project in Durham with Durham Tees Valley CRC, the local authority and the prison service, called project beta, where we identify accommodation issues for people when they enter the prison so that we can work with them through the sentence. If they have problems with debt or rent arrears, we can start to address those while they are in prison, and the CRC provides tenancy support on release. That is a really good example of partnership working.

There is another partnership in South Yorkshire between the CRC and the four local authorities. These are quite intensive partnership arrangements between the prison and the PCC, to look at the accommodation needs of offenders coming out of prisons in South Yorkshire, and at what can be done to support those needs. The issues that impact on reoffending are multiagency, and, if we do not get it right, we are not going to be able to address the fundamental issues. I could go on for ages. There are lots of things.

Q265 Chair: If anybody wants to send in some more examples, you can always do it in writing. Mr Barrow.

Ian Barrow: I work in Wales, where the arrangements with the NPS are slightly different, in that my executive director is responsible for both the National Probation Service and the Prison Service in Wales. On the back of that, we have initiated a number of innovative projects. One that springs to mind is around substance misuse, where we have co-commissioned work with police and crime commissioners that starts at arrest, in the police station, and goes through custody and community release. That is working quite well.

Another area is that, with the Welsh Government, we have just completed a forum where we can support those at risk of reoffending, on the basis that many of the pathways that my colleagues have mentioned are obviously devolved in Wales. Being in a position where we are working closely with the Welsh Government has been very important for us.

Q266 Bambos Charalambous: I would like to ask about the HMPPS's new offender management model and how it differs from the previous model. How will the new model improve local partnerships and cross-agency/departmental work, especially in the areas of education,



employment, training, benefits and housing? Can you shed some light on that?

Sonia Crozier: One of the key principles of the new offender management in custody model is having more time for prison officers, in their revised role as key workers, to spend with prisoners to ensure they are making better use of the regime that is available in the prison. All prisoners will have a dedicated key worker in the new model. There are opportunities for those key workers to better manage the relationship for their prisoner with the through-the-gate services as well, because there has been a disconnect, and the new key worker role should assist with that.

Prisoners who are going to be supervised by the National Probation Service when they are released from prison will have not only a key worker, but a dedicated prison offender manager, who will drive both the risk assessment and progression through the system. The reason they have an additional worker is that most of our serving prisoners are serving more than four years, many of them are in scope for parole and many will be subject to multiagency public protection arrangements when they come out, so they will get a higher level of risk management and progression. Again, I can see that having real benefits in enhancing through the gate.

Prison offender managers are taking on responsibilities that previously sat in the community, such as undertaking annual risk assessments. That will demand that we put more probation officers into the prisons nationally, to ensure that they have additional time to spend with the longer-serving prisoners, getting them ready for parole, and so on. They should be better prepared when they come up for parole and then for release. The national implementation of offender management in custody has commenced. We are seeing the recruitment of additional prison officers to fulfil the key worker role. Lynda, for example, now leads in her division the OM implementation for all the prisons in the north-east, and Kilvinder leads in London. Our plan is to have the additional probation officers in prisons in late 2019, so that we can fully stand up the model.

Q267 **Bambos Charalambous:** As the converse of that, what are your views on compulsory 12-month post-sentence supervision for offenders who have served custodial sentences of less than 12 months? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Sonia Crozier: One of the main principles of TR was to extend post-release supervision to those sentenced to less than 12 months, and it brought an additional 40,000 individuals into the supervision system. I think that was commendable. Many people given short-term sentences were often in a revolving door, without that kind of supervisory net. There were some voluntary schemes that prisoners could opt in to pre TR, but they were patchy and inconsistent across the country. This gives some consistency.



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As you have probably already heard, although I do not think any of us on this panel would disagree with the introduction of post-release licence, we know there needs to be some change in the way that through the gate is delivered. I cannot disagree with any of the observations that the inspectorate has made on what it sees as the generally quite poor quality being offered to that particular cohort.

Chair: You mentioned some staffing issues. Ms Rimmer, do you have any more questions you wanted to raise on the staffing point?

Q268 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** Yes, just one question. You talked about the recruitment of staff and the need to recruit a significant number before the end of March. Can you tell us how many you have recruited, and how many of those are trained up to the standard of face-to-face work?

Sonia Crozier: We have had significant recruitment campaigns. The published data from December 2017 showed that in the National Probation Service, over the last year, we brought in an additional 34% of new probation service officers, so that is significant, but at the same time, over the last year, we lost 6% of our probation officers. At the moment, we are bringing in large numbers of recruits.

Ms Marie Rimmer: But losing some of them.

Sonia Crozier: We will not realise the benefit of that until we get into 2019, when those big numbers start to qualify. It takes between 15 and 21 months to qualify as a probation officer.

Q269 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** How many have you benefited from? You have lost some; we understand that. You will have recruited 1,500, supposedly, by the end of this month. How many have you benefited from? How many are you left with?

Sonia Crozier: We have around 4,000 in the system, but in terms of the actual numbers of probation service officers and probation officers—

Kilvinder Vigurs: You have my London figures, which may help. Broadly speaking, over the last 12 months, we have seen an increase of at least 50 newly qualified officers, but the reality is, in essence, that we have an 18-month plan, a bit of a tidal wave, to bring us up to where we need to get to, but we still have an issue. We have attrition, but it is not as bad as people believe. People in the NPS stay in the NPS, but they move around. My issue in London particularly, and many of the home counties, is that we have national terms and conditions. We know the pressures of recruiting staff to the public sector here, and there are lots of opportunities. We have highly motivated individuals working with very difficult, complex cases, who have different opportunities.

I have a vacancy rate of about 8% or 9%. We use agency staff because they have the freedom to come and go as they please. We have a new generation of career people who do not stay for 10 or 20 years. We are working with a modern workforce of people who are coming in, spending



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a certain amount of time, and have lots of other opportunities to go to. We are bound by national terms and conditions. Those are the sorts of infrastructure issues that we have to deal with, but we are desperately trying to recruit staff: probation officers and probation service officers. We have an increase in quality assurance staff as well.

Sonia Crozier: I have the figures. In this financial year, we have brought into the organisation 476 trainee probation officers and 437 probation service officers, which is the grade at which they cannot do some of the more high-end serious work, but they are equally important.

Q270 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** But you are still short on the recruitment/retention of 1,500.

Sonia Crozier: Our plans for next year are to bring in 650 trainee probation officers and an additional 600 probation service officers nationally.

Q271 **Chair:** Do you have figures for the attrition rate?

Sonia Crozier: Yes, our attrition rate currently is running at about 6%, which as an industry standard is quite good. When we get people through the door, we keep them, but, as was mentioned earlier, one of our biggest challenges is that we have a real north-south divide in recruitment. Possibly, that will only be addressed if we are successful in pursuing our business case for pay modernisation.

Lynda Marginson: In the north-east, I have an overall establishment of 1,900 staff and, broadly, 800 of those are probation officers. My division goes from the Berwick-upon-Tweed border with Scotland right down to the Wash in Lincolnshire. It is a huge division made up of eight previous trusts. Across, the whole division, I am carrying 78 probation officer vacancies at the moment and, hopefully, they will start to come through the system.

We should not lose the benefits that PSOs bring in our system. I have PSO vacancies as well, not as many, but we offer opportunities for PSOs to do VQs 3, 4 and 5, and a huge number of my PSOs are eligible for, and have gone on to, PQiP to train to be probation officers. We have even had administrative staff who have acted up as PSOs and gone through that route. I started my career 35 years ago as a clerical officer and worked through the system, so I absolutely promote those developmental opportunities.

Q272 **Ms Marie Rimmer:** There is career potential, isn't there?

Lynda Marginson: Yes.

Q273 **Bambos Charalambous:** I have a quick question about agency staff, who were mentioned earlier. What is the effect of agency staff at local level in terms of building relationships with your organisations and CRCs?



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Sonia Crozier: This year, we have spent £26 million on agency staff. I want that figure to reduce, because I want a more stable workforce of permanently employed staff. We cannot ever completely get rid of agency staff. We will always need them for cover arrangements and so on. We have observed that when they are used too much, and there are too many changes of officer with individual offenders, that is not good offender management. Yes, we are reliant on agency staff, and some of them are very good and stay with us for a while, but our goal is to reduce that spend.

Ian Barrow: My experience of agency staff is that they are often people who have previously worked in the system, so on a local level they are quite often known, in terms of the relationship issue. Latterly, my experience has been that a number of agency staff have applied for and been successful in obtaining permanent jobs with the National Probation Service.

Lynda Marginson: It can be positive. Because we have such a high volume of recruitment going through the north-east, particularly PSOs, in order to support that and to get them as confident as soon as possible, we have recruited 14 PSO mentors through the agency. They are recently retired managers or practitioners who do not want to come back to manage a caseload but who have been absolutely fantastic at mentoring and supporting less experienced staff.

Q274 **Ruth Cadbury:** My question goes back to the relationship between CRCs and the NPS. We have heard that the split between the CRCs and the NPS has created a two-tier system, with each side, shall I say, feeling it is in charge. Obviously, that must cause operational difficulties. What have you done, and what will you do, to improve relationships between the NPS and CRCs, both at the national level and at a more local level?

Sonia Crozier: Some of this has been picked up by Suki Binning. At a national level, we have regular meetings with all the senior leaders in probation. We have agreed a work plan to resolve some of the issues that we know have been getting in the way, the rate card being an obvious example of a recent piece of work we have been working on collaboratively. It is about having structures where we can come together and resolve items at a senior level. The other area of new development has been about having a better sense of future workforce planning collectively and a level of integration around professionalisation. Those are the more recent initiatives at a national level, but I will hand over to Ian to talk about things more locally.

Ian Barrow: At a local level, I must say that I do not particularly recognise the picture of either organisation feeling they are in charge. We have what are called service integration meetings locally with senior managers from the National Probation Service and the CRC and contract management, where we regularly discuss issues. We hold joint senior leadership meetings for heads of local delivery units and managers to talk and discuss issues. As time has evolved, the clearly defined roles in each



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organisation are becoming better understood. We involve the CRC in secondments that we do on things such as serious organised crime or some of the substance misuse issues I talked about. I would characterise our relationships with the CRC as quite positive, to be honest. It is an evolving picture in terms of that integration.

Lynda Marginson: We talked before about sentences. In the north-east, outside the formal service integration structure, the CRC chief execs and I have been meeting every two months since February 2014, before TR started, so that we could work together. We have issued a statement that we are committed. We have shared objectives, one of which is improving sentencer confidence.

I have spent most of my career in and around courts, and I know that sentencers want to know, "What do you do and is it done?" Those are the two questions we are trying to address. We have joint CRC and NPS meetings with our sentencers. All our CRCs have now provided us with, for want of a better phrase, glossy brochures about "What is it that you do?" The sentencers want to know that. We also meet them at a local level to give performance information about how the CRCs have been performing.

There are some absolutely fantastic examples. Northumbria, which is run by Sodexo, is probably our best example; staff managers in the CRC go to team meetings in the NPS, and they understand what the offer is and how to access it. That has left us with an overspend on our rate card, because it is starting to pick up apace now. There are structural issues, there is no doubt about that; but we are trying to resolve them at local level. There is a review and it needs to address some of those things, because they detract from doing work with offenders, which is what we are there to do. If we did not spend so much time on the interface issues, and the bureaucracy that frustrates staff, there would be more resource to do the actual work that will make a difference.

Q275 **Ruth Cadbury:** You have partly anticipated and addressed the next question. I wanted to probe a little more on improving sentencer confidence. What has been the reception of sentencers to your quarterly bulletins?

Kilvinder Vigurs: I have not had any direct feedback from them about the bulletin, but I have had feedback generally around sentencer engagement. Back in November 2016, as I said, the HMIP report said that we needed to develop our relationship with our CRC colleagues. Part of the plan when I arrived was to start looking at how we do joint events. We have held a number of magistrates and judges events, both locally within the boroughs and London-wide. Sentencers have been very favourable about us doing joint events. They are well aware of some of the issues that we are facing around enforcement and unpaid work. There have been some very robust conversations and challenges by sentencers direct to myself and my CRC colleagues.



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The 2018 report shows that we have made huge improvements in that relationship. It is a plan of work we have together. As Lynda says, across the country, CRCs and NPS have shared outcomes that we want to achieve. We have stepped in to support CRC colleagues, whether on unpaid work or on seconding staff to support their quality around breaches. There is a lot of good work. It is going to take time to bear fruit, but I am hoping that the sentencers will see that that is what we are doing together. That does not take away the challenges, but, hopefully, people will see that there is an improvement plan and we are making good progress.

Q276 **Chair:** Do you have a programme, for example, where you would meet the resident judge at, say, Kingston Crown court or any other Crown court in London? How do you do that?

Kilvinder Vigurs: There is the old-fashioned probation liaison that happens locally.

Q277 **Chair:** That is still happening, in effect, is it?

Kilvinder Vigurs: That is still happening, yes. As the operational director, I give opportunities to bring people together. Local provision is very much the local probation officers providing what you want. If they are not doing that, it can be escalated to me, but I rarely hear anything other than positives around what people are trying to do locally to deal with the obstacles. What we are doing is very positive. Nationally, Sonia meets the national senior presiding judge. From local to national, I think we have it covered.

Q278 **Chair:** Is that across the country?

Ian Barrow: It varies. For example, in north Wales there is a strategic sentencer forum chaired by the resident judge and it includes magistrates. For south Wales, the director of the CRC and I often go together to meet judges and other sentencers.

Chair: Thank you very much for your evidence. If there is anything else, you can always drop us a letter by way of follow-up, but I think that has covered the ground. There has been a lot to get through. Thank you very much for your time and your patience and for your evidence. The session is concluded.