

## Written evidence from MTC

### About MTC

With a clear mission to support vulnerable people to transform their lives and build safer communities, MTC has a wealth of experience in the justice sector, both in the UK and overseas. We draw upon our expertise in the USA, where we operate over 20 prisons and employ nearly 11,000 people, and have provided education-based rehabilitative interventions to thousands of men and women in custody since 1987.

In the UK we own and operate the London and Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), which supervise around 34,000 service users. We also operate Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre (STC), a purpose-built residential facility for young people between the ages of 12 and 18.

### Executive summary

Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) have been responsible for the most significant innovations in probation in recent years. Investments by the private sector – despite the contractual and financial challenges – has resulted in a more transparent, innovative and accountable probation service.

While we were deeply disappointed with the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) decision to end the Probation Delivery Partner (PDP) competition, we want to continue to make clear our commitment to ensure our people and systems return to the National Probation Service (NPS) with a focus on protecting the public.

We believe the current proposals of transitioning services back in-house by June 2021 pose significant risk to employees and the public for the following reasons:

- **Complexity of the transition** – In-sourcing all CRC operations in less than 10 months cannot be completed without significant risk to service delivery and public safety. The challenge of bringing together significant number of different operating models from case management, interventions, programmes and other services on a single day in June next year, is a complex and significant undertaking.
- **Ambitious transition deadline** – It is not necessary for the MoJ to take such a rushed approach and risk de-stabilising the service and exposing the public to undue risk. Extending the transition deadline would have given MoJ an opportunity to plan more thoroughly and execute the move safely.
- **Repeating challenges of Transforming Rehabilitation (TR)** – TR was completed over a period of years, with significant resources dedicated to it and without the added complexity of COVID-19. One of the criticisms of TR is that it was carried out too quickly in a “big bang approach” without piloting. The MoJ's proposed in-sourcing of CRC

services, is arguably more complex than TR, but will be attempted in a much shorter timeframe which risks destabilising a now settled and well performing service.

- **CRC outperforming NPS during COVID-19** – According to MoJ’s own figures, CRCs are generally outperforming the NPS since the COVID-19 lockdown began.
- **A significant reduction in the diversity of specialist interventions** – CRCs provide substantial financial support to the VCSE market. With the limited opportunities in the Dynamic Framework (DF) procurement, and the cessation of the PDP, the MoJ will potentially reduce the diversity and richness of VCSE organisations able to support probation delivery.
- **Loss of proven innovations** – A wide range of innovations which have been introduced or are in development, will be lost when the probation service unifies. Such as our innovative case management systems, Omnia, which HMIP inspectors recognised as delivering better quality dynamic risk assessments and sentence planning than OASys and nDelius, which the NPS use. The loss of Omnia and reverting to the current NPS systems, will increase workloads for staff leaving them less time to do meaningful rehabilitative work with service users.
- **Reduced market confidence** – Providers of justice services must now re-evaluate where they invest. While incumbent providers such as MTC will work hard to ensure our services are in the best shape possible when they are transitioned to the NPS, we will be cautious about making any significant investments in future opportunities in the justice sector working into the MoJ.

The pandemic has shown the value of the private sector’s flexibility, adaptability and support in times of crises. Our services have proved to be financially and operationally resilient, and responsive to the needs of local people without burdensome bureaucracy.

An extended transition deadline would have provided more time to design a model which is effectively adapted to the long-term impact of COVID-19, when that impact is better understood. The challenges to extending the current contracts, are significantly outweighed by the risks of a programme designed to in-source all CRC services within 10 months.

## **Our recommendations**

We would urge the MoJ to consider:

- **Extend existing deadline date** – An additional six months would allow for the safe and stable transition of CRCs back into the NPS. It will allow CRCs an opportunity to introduce their new ways of working to recover services safely in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This would allow them to tackle the backlogs in Accredited

Programmes, Structured Interventions and CP provision they are currently facing and hand a more stable service over to the NPS.

More importantly it will allow the Transition Programme Team more time to consult with CRCs and their parent organisations to fully understand their operations and better inform transition plans – thus avoiding some of the potentially yet unknown, but inevitable risks.

- **Take a phased approach to transition** – Rather than the proposed ‘lift and shift’ approach with all CRCs and services transitioning to the unified service at the same time, a phased transition would pose less risks for service delivery and public safety. This would allow employees to continue using their existing risk and case management systems and local service provisions for a period of time, allowing the service to gain a level of stability while new operating systems and processes are further refined. A delayed transition to the unified model in a single region first and building on the lessons learnt for the wider roll-out would also allow for a stable and safe transition nationally.

## **The Model**

### **Q1: What are your views on the decision to end the competition for Probation Delivery Partners (PDP) and bring those services back into NPS delivery?**

- We are disappointed at the suspension of the programme at an advanced stage of the bidding process. The decision could set the probation service back and undo much of the investment and progress made in recent times, which we detail below.
- **Fragmented provision** – The exclusion of the PDP from MoJ’s Target Operating Model (TOM) could result in :
  - A significant reduction in the supply and diversity of specialist rehabilitative interventions.
  - Fragmented provision of services as many smaller, local providers will be pushed out of the sector.
  - The loss of specialist private sector experience and investment in innovative approaches to working with service users.
  - Rises in reoffending rates due to limited access to local interventions that meet the complex needs of service users.
- **Reduction in the diversity of specialist interventions** – CRCs provide commercial and financial support to the VCSE market, and some in the voluntary sector are anxious about a future without CRCs and the PDP.
  - VCSEs put significant effort into honing their specialist services in anticipation of working with PDPs to provide them to the unified NPS. Many of these

organisations will simply not be in a position to compete for the Dynamic Framework (DF).

- This loss of support from the private sector, and the limited scope of the DF procurement, will inevitably lead to a significant reduction in the diversity and richness of VCSE organisations the NPS will have access to.

### **Risk to the public**

- The public protection risks of trying to in-source by June 2021 are significant and the MoJ cannot know how long it will take, and how difficult it will be, to transition all CRC services, because it does not yet fully understand what it is proposing to in-source. By sticking to a fixed, single transition and not extending the deadline, MoJ is putting at risk the stability of a sector that is now delivering to significantly improved standards and which is underpinned by a financially stable and cost-effective model.

### **Q2: How were private sector providers involved in the decision to end competition?**

#### **What opportunity were providers given to make alternative proposals?**

- We received minimal consultation over the course of approximately one week prior to the decision being announced. That consultation came about because the providers contacted the MoJ when the PDP competition was suspended, with their concerns about the future of the PDP competition. We assume we would not have been consulted at all had we not approached the MoJ first, and our impression was that we had little real opportunity to influence the outcome at such a late stage in the decision making process.

#### **What effect will this decision have on the future of private sector involvement in the criminal justice system?**

- Organisations will be extremely cautious of making any significant investments, and the MoJ may find it increasingly challenging to expand its pool of specialist justice providers.

### **Q3: What are your views on the new model of probation?**

#### **What do you like about the new model?**

- Reunifying offender management will address some of the inequalities that have resulted from the two tier system under TR:
  - Role and pay structures should, over time, be consistent for all probation practitioners – creating more clarity around role responsibilities, and remuneration appropriately matched to employee experience and accountabilities.
  - Standard professional development and training will be available for all practitioners, as part of the Workforce Strategy, ensuring all follow consistent best practice approaches to working with service users and protecting the public.

- Professional recognition through the development of the national, statutory register for probation professionals will hopefully instil employees' pride in their work, increase retention and encourage individuals to see probation as a viable employment option.
- Despite our concerns about the limitations and likely outcomes of the DF competition, we are heartened to see the MoJ still recognises the valuable contribution others including the VCSEs can make to the probation sector.

### **What do you dislike?**

- **Lack of community focus** – The unified model without private sector involvement may result in limited opportunities to tailor services and access specific interventions to meet local offending profiles and individual service user needs.
- **Centralised control** - This model will see a more centralised probation service. It's disappointing the model has not incorporated local partners in its service design. Prioritising stronger relationships with vital community partners such as Local Authorities', Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and local groups is vital reduce reoffending. For the model to work, it must at the very least deliver meaningful decision making and financial authority to the NPS regional directors – but this is likely to present a challenge to the MoJ.
- **Reduced service user engagement** – Under current day one plans, provision of interventions will initially be limited, inevitably not meeting the needs of some service users.
- **Loss of proven innovations** – A wide range of innovations which private sector providers such as MTC have introduced, will be lost when the probation service unifies.
  - An example is our case management system, OMNIA, brings these two elements of case management together on one platform, Omnia has proven to almost halve the amount of time practitioners spend uploading records – freeing them up to spend more time doing meaningful rehabilitative work with service users.

#### **HMIP's 2019 inspection report of London CRC stated:**

- “The Omnia case management system is enabling staff to improve the quality of their work with those under probation supervision.”

#### **HMIP's 2019 inspection report of Thames Valley CRC stated:**

- “The management information system, 'Tableau', is impressive and has been used to good effect.”

#### **Employee feedback survey and focus group findings:**

- “The difference between nDelius and OASys with Omnia is night and day. Omnia captures everything, it's so clear. I dread having to go back to OASys.”
- “Omnia makes you think about the different 'Risk and Needs' sections in more detail. I develop the assessment in more depth in terms of reoffending and behaviour patterns.”

**Q4: Does the new model address the issue of confidence in community sentence options? If yes, how? If no, why not?**

- No. Having initially not been granted access to sentencers, private sector providers/CRCs have invested significant time in building relationships with sentencers, and explaining the range of rehabilitative interventions available as part of a community sentence. This progress, and sentencers' regular access to evidence of positive intervention outcomes and increasing confidence in current providers, may be lost through further disruption to the system.
- **Decrease in service delivery and community options** – The scale and complexity of transitioning Unpaid Work, Accredited Programmes and structured interventions delivery into the NPS cannot be underestimated and, as is typical of any large scale transition, service delivery is likely to be negatively impacted. This will inevitably be compounded by working at pace within the challenging timeframe available, and risks eroding sentencers' confidence once again.

As the range of interventions available from day one of the new unified model will decrease, sentencers' options will also decrease – inevitably increasing their reliance on custodial sentences.

- **The challenge of up-scaling Unpaid Work delivery** – While operating the largest CRC in the country (London), MTC has spent a significant amount of time understanding the issues surrounding delivery of Unpaid Work to the large volumes required over such a wide and diverse geographical area. None of the adjustments we have made appear to have been factored into the new model, which is more suited to smaller scale delivery rather than the large volumes that will be necessary in London particularly. A failure to meet Unpaid Work sentencing needs will discourage sentencers from using this intervention which has such potential to transform lives and build safer communities and which is seen as a constructive and popular disposal by the courts.

**Q5: The new model aims to strengthen integration between prisons and probation by integrating Through-the-Gate roles, processes and products with sentence management. What is your view on this? Do you anticipate any gaps/challenges?**

- Strengthening collaboration between prisons and the probation service will be extremely beneficial, increasing the potential to improve service user engagement and support them to turn their lives around.
- There is little clarity on what the resettlement service will look like under the unified model. .

- More needs to be done to strengthen the initial service user assessment process and sharing of information with community teams, to ensure continuity of support for service users upon release from custody.
- **Anticipated gaps in provision for service users leaving prison** – Currently, individuals leaving custody have access to a range of interventions through probation ‘Through the Gate’ teams, including:
  - Benefit and debt advice, including help setting up bank accounts.
  - Employment support.
  - Serious Group Offending interventions.
  - Mentoring services.
- These interventions are not currently in scope to be provided under the Dynamic Framework. Failing to provide them is likely to have a detrimental effect on service user outcomes.

**Q6: What progress has been made in implementing the probation reforms in Wales?**

**What lessons have been learnt so far and how are these being shared?**

- The Wales model relates to the transfer of OM not the current model now being proposed
- The Transition Programme Delivery Board have produced some interim findings which a number of our senior teams have had access to via various meetings. We assume they have been with other CRCs Lessons learnt include, the need for:
  - Active and visible collaboration between the NPS and CRC to agree a joint strategy to communicating with employees – with the aim of breaking down any pre-conceptions around the continuation of a ‘them and us’ culture, post transition.
  - Appropriately phased and regular internal communications to set expectations and prepare employees for the transition – addressing key issues such as role assignment and caseload allocation, at the appropriate time.
  - Ensuring probation practitioners transferring to the NPS have sufficient training and support on new IT systems so they can continue to confidently manage their caseloads from day one of the transfer.
- With a view to avoiding some of the pitfalls that were encountered during the Wales transition of Offender Management, and helping to shape and strengthen local plans, these learnings are being shared with London and South Central joint NPS and CRC sub-groups. See our response to question 11 for details of how we are incorporating the learnings around communications to best support our employees between now and the transition.

**Q7: How will the National Probation Service ensure that it maintains the innovation and best practice achieved during the Transforming Rehabilitation Reforms?**

- **Opportunity to learn from providers** – Rather than building on the innovations and improvements which private sector providers have introduced over the past five years, the draft Target Operating Model (TOM) suggests a return to previous, more ‘conventional’ modes of probation delivery.

It will be disappointing if the MoJ does not, as appears to be their intention, take the opportunity to adopt the positive changes providers have made to the service and how it operates.

- **Working collaboratively** – Encouraging our employees to suggest new ideas and try out new approaches to their work has driven quality improvements and efficiencies. We have invested significant time in working closely with practitioners to understand some of the challenges they face when working with service users, and to co-create new solutions to help them improve the quality of the work they do. For example, Omnia was developed in close collaboration with our practitioners.
- Our Service Centre (see case study below) is another example of the benefits of this approach, and we would recommend the MoJ take the opportunity to draw on the experiences of employees to drive innovation and continuous improvements.

**MTC’s Service Centre**

Recognising a lot of the time practitioners could have been spending doing meaningful rehabilitative work with their service users was being taken up on admin tasks, we ran a series of employee workshops to understand this better.

Based on their feedback on where they most needed help, we introduced a centralised Service Centre to provide seamless admin support and high quality customer services around three key areas:

- Case management.
- Call handling.
- Community Payback field operations.

Since its launch, the Service Centre has effectively ensured practitioners have less paperwork to complete and significantly reduced duplication of tasks and chasing of information. In just seven months of launching, it saved practitioners 18,378 hours of admin work, translating to an incredible 2,450 days that were freed up to spend working face-to-face with service users.

## Commissioning: Dynamic Framework

**Q8: Does the new model offer a level playing field for small and specialist voluntary and third sector organisations in regard to the commissioning? Given the challenges in the previous model, how will a new national service secure input from smaller providers?**

- The intentions of the Dynamic Framework (DF) are commendable: the importance of probation having local access to a diverse range of rehabilitative interventions and services for its service users is positive. However, the competition will pose challenges for smaller VCSEs, including:
  - **Lack of certainty** – not being able to forecast income as a result of having to pitch for each piece of work, even after passing the framework registration stage, may be untenable for many small organisations.
  - **Complexity of the process** – not having the capacity or experience to draft tender documents quickly enough when bid opportunities become available may mean that the process is too expensive and onerous for many VCSEs.
  - **Wide scope of lots** – finding the size or diversity of some lots too challenging to consider.
  - **Size of risk** – considering TUPE to be too big a risk.
  - **Barriers to entry** – struggling to meet practical requirements such as information security and quality assurance.

**What impact has COVID-19 had on this, if any?**

- We understand that some VCSEs have had to close or are facing an uncertain future.
- The situation for VCSEs has been exacerbated by unpredictable commissioning processes across the justice sector which makes financial planning much harder.

**The 2019 Clinks annual report on key trends for VCSEs working in the criminal justice sector said:**

“On average, specialist criminal justice organisations have just 1.4 months of reserves and non-specialist criminal justice organisations have three months. This is significantly lower than the 6.3 months of reserves held on average by the UK voluntary sector as a whole, which indicates that specialist criminal justice organisations are more vulnerable to external shocks.”

**Q9: What is the anticipated effect of procuring resettlement and rehabilitative services using a dynamic framework?**

- This will depend on the size, scale, length and value of the call-offs being commissioned. It is likely to result in a postcode lottery for service users in respect to the interventions and services which will be available to them.

**Do you foresee any problems with this model?**

- Please see our response to question eight.
- **Gaps in service provision** – It's key that the need for local service provision is addressed within the weighting and evaluation criteria under the competition framework. The opportunities available to VCSEs will be finite and – in light of the challenges we've outlined – the number that will compete and be successfully commissioned through the framework will be limited. This may lead to a paucity in available services and significant gaps in provision in key areas of need. It's unclear how unmet needs and backlogs in the system will be met.
- **Impact on service user engagement and reoffending rates** – In turn, this could have a negative impact on service users who will be passed between a range of providers, potentially creating barriers to engagement. Critically, the complex needs of individual service users must be front of mind when shaping the dynamic framework. And consideration should be given to ensuring the right balance of spend between supervision and provision of interventions to best support reductions in reoffending.

**Q10: What progress has been made so far in the commissioning of services through the dynamic framework (DF)?**

- **Lack of evidence-based decision making** – To date, the Programme Team has had limited consultation with us as an incumbent supplier of probation services to determine what the regional interventions needs are. We do not have visibility and understanding of the NPS's commissioning intentions. This intelligence is critical to shaping the DF and competition requirements, and ensuring the available interventions are sufficiently diverse and meet regional needs.

**Transition**

**Q11: CRCs and NPS staff are being brought back together under the new model. How is this transition being managed?**

- **No visibility of project plan**
  - By not having sight of detailed project plans, milestones, and a critical path, we have no sense of when particular information requests or communications updates are likely to be received.
  - While the Programme Team has issued a range of materials such as FAQs and presentations, it is proving challenging to coordinate employee communications on this basis.
  - The speed at which the transition is happening, the information that is received – and the language it uses – can often leave the reader with the impression that CRC employees are 'being done to', whereas the reality is that a fair amount of work is going into workforce and organisational culture development.

- This is obviously unhelpful when the transition will have a significant impact on employees who are already feeling unsettled, with many having experienced significant change over recent years.
- **Decisions being made while extensive discovery is still under way** – We continue to receive a significant number of information requests from the Transition Programme Team. These are being received by different parts of the organisation, often making it challenging for us to respond in a timely and joined-up manner.

As the challenge of having insufficiently detailed data was highlighted as one of the key learnings from TR and the transition in Wales, it is essential the Programme Team dedicate sufficient time to their discovery phase. With just ten months to go until June 2021, and the complexity of the transition ahead, there's a fear that decisions will be made without sufficient information.

### **What support is available to staff during this time?**

- **A collaborative approach** – We are proactively engaging with union representatives in the run up to the transition. And we are developing joint communications plans with our NPS colleagues through the regional sub-groups for London and South Central. This ensures colleagues who currently work for MTC, CRCs and the NPS receive important transition updates at the same time. It includes publication of a joint newsletter and hosting of joint employee engagement events.

To ensure employees have an opportunity to raise any concerns and feel supported, we are committed to briefing our senior leaders and people managers on major transition news – ahead of us cascading it to all our employees – so they are better prepared to assist their teams.

- **Two-way communication** – Wherever possible we are providing employees with opportunities to ask questions and raise any concerns they may have about the transition. We have a dedicated email address which we promote in all communications, including in our newsletter and on our intranet site.

Our planned series of joint engagement events give employees an opportunity to hear from, and to ask questions to, senior leaders from both the NPS and MTC.

- **Regular updates** – We have a dedicated intranet site on which we publish the latest transition updates and news.

### **How are service users being supported through this transition?**

- We have received little guidance from the Transition Programme Team on this as yet. Our aim is to limit the impact on our service users as much as possible. In line with day one

delivery plans, we hope initially our service users will continue to report into their existing practitioner at their existing office location.

**Q12: CRCs currently use several different operating systems – how easy will it be to merge these into one model? Do you foresee any challenges?**

- Rather than merging countless operating models, current plans show all CRCs moving to use the NPS's existing risk assessment and case management platforms from day one of unification. The complexity and risks associated with doing this are significant for the following reasons:
- **Extensive training requirement** – a significant number of CRC employees will struggle to use nDelius and OASys' as they only know how to use Omnia, MTC's case management system. It took six months for MTC to train its 1,200 employees on Omnia. To ensure minimal disruption to service delivery, it took longer to plan and schedule this training. Delivering training for employees from all the CRCs in the time available will be a significant challenge.
- **Dips in quality and recording** – learning and embedding any new system takes time, and maintaining quality of service user assessments and records during this period of change will be a challenge. Recording of key processes such as breaches, recalls and risk escalations are in danger of being negatively impacted.
- **Increased workload and drops in productivity** – our practitioners' workloads will increase as full risk assessments take two and a half hours in Omnia, and up to four in OASys. Whereas they'll be used to the modular nature of risk assessments in Omnia, they'll have to create them all in one go on OASys. Also, it typically takes seven clicks to access information on nDelius, reduced to three in Omnia.
- **Loss of critical information** – having to transfer thousands of service user records from many different CRC case management and risk and needs systems into one is an extremely complex exercise, with the very real potential for mapping errors and data loss if it's done too quickly. This could lead to public protection risks and further lack of confidence in the probation service.

**Q13: What impact is the transition having on the voluntary/third sector organisations already providing probation services?**

- We are not in a position to be able to answer this question at this time.

**Q14: The Ministry of Justice made the decision to end the competition for Probation Delivery Partners and bring these services into the NPS. These services are to go live in June 2021; is there sufficient time to transition probation over to the new model?**

**Extending the transition deadline** – Attempting to in-source all services in such

a short timeframe is not, in our view, a good balancing of risk. It is not necessary for the MoJ to take such a rushed approach and risk de-stabilising the service and exposing the public to undue risk. Extending the transition deadline would have given them an opportunity to plan more thoroughly and execute the move safely.

**National Audit Office, Transforming Rehabilitation Progress Review (March 2019):**

“Introducing such a significant change into a complex system at this pace created significant risks.”

**If anything, what needs to be taken into consideration during this time?**

- We would urge the Ministry of Justice to consider the following options:
- **Explore extending the transition deadline** – More time would give CRCs more of an opportunity to introduce their new ways of working to recover services safely in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This would allow them to make good headway in tackling the backlogs in Accredited Programmes, Structured Interventions and CP provision they are currently facing and hand a more stable service over to the NPS.

It would give the Transition Programme Team more time to consult with private sector organisations to fully understand their operations and better inform transition plans – thus avoiding some of the potentially yet unknown, but inevitable, risks. It would provide contingency and allow things to go wrong – which is so often the case in challenging programmes like this.

- **Take a phased approach to transition** – Rather than the proposed ‘lift and shift’ approach with all CRCs and services transitioning to the unified service at the same time, a more considered approach would pose fewer risks for service delivery and public safety. Piloting the unified model in a single region first and building on the lessons learnt for the wider roll-out would be another potential option.
- Allowing employees to continue using their existing risk and case management systems and local service provisions for a period of time would help the service gain a level of stability while new operating systems and processes are further refined. Bearing in mind how many of them will likely transition to the NPS, the benefits of MTC’s practitioners continuing to use Omnia at the point of transition would far outweigh the likely challenges of them immediately moving to OASys and nDelius – with what is likely to be limited training considering the limited time now available.

**Workforce**

**Q15: Does the new model address workload issues eg high caseloads, recruitment/retention?**

- The ‘Lift and shift’ model will not - on the contrary, it is likely to exacerbate it:
  - CRC employees who transfer will continue to hold their existing caseloads, which are higher than those of their NPS counterparts, for some time.
  - Moving to use nDelius and OASys will put added pressure on CRC employees as they adapt to using – in the case of those who work for MTC – not one, but two new systems.
  - The likely paucity of available rehabilitation interventions will undoubtedly create significant challenges for supporting service users with Rehabilitation Activity Requirements (RARs).
  - While there’s a commitment to recruit 1,000 new trainee Probation Officers by January next year, this will not solve the significant shortages of experienced employees in particular that will still be apparent at the point of transition.
  - The Probation Workforce Strategy goes some way to address the root causes of employee retention. The question is whether it goes far enough.
  - Pay remains a significant barrier to employee retention, and needs addressing.

**Q16: What progress has been made towards probation being recognised as a “skilled profession”?**

- Hopefully, the Probation Professional Register will go some way towards this, but more work is needed. It is important that the focus is on the wide range of roles which work in probation and not just on Probation Officers (PO) and Probation Service Officers and the PQiP qualification. Instead, there needs to be consideration around the wider skills needed outside core case management. An example is CP Supervisors who, while not qualified POs, spend up to seven hours a day engaging service users in meaningful activities.

**COVID-19**

**Q17: What impact has COVID-19 had on the probation service?**

- While the COVID-19 pandemic has posed many challenges for us, as a private sector organisation we have been able to react and adapt quickly to continue to support service users we’ve been unable to see face-to-face. During lockdown, we introduced new ways of engaging and working remotely to ensure service user compliance and to reduce potential risk of harm to the public. And, in areas where these new approaches have proven to be effective, this has led to us maintaining and building on them as we continue with our recovery planning in line with MoJ’s increasing requirement for us to return to our pre-lockdown service levels.

**Immediate and anticipated long-term impact:**

- We quickly lost access to interventions and provisions in the community as providers had to withdraw services, and all our CP projects and Accredited Programmes closed down.

Impacting on our ability to deliver sentence plans and court requirements, we had to review how we could best manage risk.

- While we quickly deployed additional resources and technology to support practitioners, we still face backlogs of service users waiting to complete their Accredited Programme or CP requirements as we're adopting our recovery plans.
- As attempts to clear backlogs in courts continue, we anticipate new sentencing trends as different case types are prioritised, eg. domestic abuse, as highlighted during Oral Questions to the Justice Minister in the House of Commons on 14 July.

### **Operating at a reduced capacity:**

- Ensuring the safety of our employees, service users and partner organisations is our guiding principle for service recovery. As such, we are retaining stringent social distancing measures, further impacting on our delivery of group interventions.
  - We've developed online resources to work remotely with service users who are sentenced to Accredited Programmes.
  - We have also dedicated significant resources to identifying new, outdoor CP projects which we can safely run with smaller groups of service users. This involves significant numbers of employees working closely with CP beneficiaries to thoroughly risk assess individual sites and put a wide range of health and safety measures in place before projects are cleared to open.

### **Need for modern communications:**

- We are exploring wider use of modern technology platforms and mobile communications to maintain quicker and frequent contact with service users.

### **Q18: What lessons have been learnt from this period of Exceptional Delivery (EDM) that should be taken forward into the new model of probation delivery?**

- It has underscored the value and resilience of the mixed economy of providers from the public, private and third sectors.
- And the importance of technology and the ability to be agile and work flexibly.
- We've also seen the benefits of remote working and how successful telephone supervision and contact with service users can be. Maintaining weekly telephone contact with CP service users has kept them motivated, resulting in high compliance when projects have reopened.

### **How are lessons learnt being shared with probation practitioners?**

- Achievements while working to our EDM, lessons learnt, and details of things we want to build on as part of our recovery planning are being shared in a number of ways, including:
  - Employee phone-ins.
  - A series of intranet articles and intranet updates.
  - Videos from senior leaders.
  - People manager and operational briefings.

- Organisation-wide emails.

## **Other**

**Q19: Are there any other areas relating to the Probation Reform Programme that you would like to brief the Committee on, that are not already covered by the Terms of Reference above? (If yes, please provide information)**

- **Employee attrition** – As NPS Regional Directors start putting their teams together, we have already started to lose some of experienced people to them. We anticipate many of our experienced Probation Service Officers leaving as they respond to the NPS’s recruitment drive for the PQiP programme.

**Reform criminal justice lead:**

“Previous reforms have been rushed, and the next steps must be taken carefully. The Government must not make the same mistake of under investing, which crippled the current model, and avoid overburdening probation services with unnecessary centralisation.”

*September 2020*