

Cambridge Community Safety Partnership Meeting 17 October 2018

A pre-advised question was raised at the Cambridge City West / Central Area Committee by Mr Richard Taylor and was tabled for the next Cambridge Community Safety Partnership meeting:

Question:

Given the rise in suspended sentences and community orders reported in the media can the Cambridge CSP provide reassurance that sufficient action is being provided by the probation service to safeguard the public?

Response:

The National Probation Service (NPS) would like to point out that the comment made about reports in the media regarding an increase in community orders and Suspended Sentence Orders (SSOs) is not correct. According to sentencing data kept by NPS going back for the last 12 months, there has been an approximate reduction of 30% in orders and SSOs made in Cambridgeshire courts. This is believed to be part of a national trend.

From the outset at initial Court stage through to the supervision of offenders in the community, the National Probation Service (NPS) is committed to ensuring that the public are safeguarded, and work with offenders to make positive changes and move away from offending behaviour. At pre-sentence stage, NPS staff are available to the Court to assist in the assessment of risk of harm and likelihood of reoffending. If a pre-sentence report is ordered by the Court, the NPS team will assess the criminogenic needs of that person and make a sensible recommendation to the Court that holds public protection at the very heart of the proposal. The proposal will be based upon the current circumstances of the person to assess what the causes of that offending behaviour is/are and what needs to be addressed to ensure that this does not happen again. A recommendation for a community penalty will only be made if the report author is sure that the risk can be managed safely in the community. As well as interviewing the defendant at Court and reviewing details of the offence for which they are appearing, the NPS Court team will also seek to obtain details from other key partner agencies including Social Services for checks in relation to whether the offender or their children might be known to them, or to the Police for information in relation to previous convictions. If there is an issue in relation to drugs or alcohol the NPS will ask one of the local substance misuse support providers to assess suitability for a specialist drug or alcohol intervention to run alongside other community requirements that may be proposed. If the NPS staff member has concerns in relation to child or adult safeguarding an immediate referral will be made to Social Services at the Court which will continue to be monitored and managed through the length of that order.

Upon sentencing, all cases, whether they have been subject to a pre-sentence report or not, are assessed using a Ministry of Justice approved tool named the Risk of Recidivism tool or 'RSR'. This ensures that the case is allocated quickly and accurately to either the National Probation Service or to the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) based upon the likelihood of reoffending. Some cases are automatically assigned to the National Probation Service based upon the

risk of harm or whether that case is a MAPPA eligible case. MAPPA eligible cases are those that fall under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and include all those who satisfy the criteria set out in sections 325 and 327 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. When a case is transferred from Court to either the NPS or the CRC, the electronic records alongside all other information provided at Court will 'follow' that offender ensuring that all relevant information relating to risk and safeguarding also moves with them to the allocated supervising officer and team.

Once allocated to a community team, the Responsible Officer, whether that is the NPS or the CRC, is required to undertake a full written assessment in which a further comprehensive assessment of the risk of harm or likelihood of reoffending is undertaken with a Sentence Plan also made for the work to be done with that person to ensure that the likelihood of reoffending and risk of harm posed is reduced. This assessment continues throughout the lifetime of the community penalty and action is taken should the offender not comply with any part of the sentence. Both the NPS and CRC teams work on a daily basis with other stakeholders to manage those serving a community sentence or their licence in the community by continual sharing of information and joint meetings. If risk increases during the management of low to medium risk offenders by the CRC there is provision to manage that risk escalation and move the management of that person from CRC to the NPS who manage high risk offenders. For those deemed as being 'prolific offenders' some are managed within a scheme aimed at reducing harm to the public under the Integrated Offender Management Scheme in partnership with the Police which enables a focused joint approach to offender management. For those on the Sex Offender Register, Police and NPS staff work closely together throughout the management of the community order to manage the risks posed and safeguard the public. For all offenders being supervised in the community public protection and the prevention of further victims is at the heart of all that the NPS and CRC do. Whilst we can never guarantee that a person will not reoffend, if further reoffending does take place, a review of the case and work being done with that person is undertaken. Where serious further offences have occurred the NPS and CRC will undertake lengthy internal investigations to ensure that lessons are learned and training undertaken to prevent this happening in the future.

Research shows that taking someone out of the community and placing them into prison on a short term sentence does not always work as effectively as keeping someone in the community. There are often protective factors that probation officers can work with that will assist in an offenders rehabilitation. Those protective factors may be stable accommodation, family or friends, or a job; or possibly current drug or alcohol treatment, mental health support. Cutting ties can sometimes leave that offender in a worse position if under a short term sentence and subsequent licence, thus impacting negatively on the person's ability or motivation to change. Recommendations made to the Court in terms of community penalties will always be based upon rehabilitative need for the offender with the aim of safeguarding and public protection.

National Probation Service

5 October 2018

Response from The Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Community Rehabilitation Company (BeNCH CRC) Limited

BeNCH CRC is committed to working to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. We make sure that we receive good quality information from National Probation Service colleagues who assess service users in Court before they refer them to us. This includes information about risk factors which will then inform how we work with an offender. The Ministry of Justice has recently determined that all service users should be seen face to face by their officer on at least a monthly basis and BeNCH is applying this principle.

Some of the ways we ensure we are learning from work already completed includes monthly case audits, thematic audits and cascading learning from these to our frontline staff via managers. We are developing 'champions' in risk and domestic abuse in order to support and embed good public protection and safeguarding practice across BeNCH, learning from the feedback that we have assembled from a variety of sources over the past year. This includes Serious Further Offences (SFOs) where practice is carefully scrutinised both internally and externally. We continue to assess risk of harm and put in place good risk management plans including working with key agencies, such as Children's Social Care, to support this practice.

Each year we review our training and ensure that staff have access to the most up to date and effective training to support effective practice. We have practice policies in place that we expect our staff to adhere to, including Domestic Abuse, Risk, Child Safeguarding and Adults at Risk. Most importantly our frontline staff receive supervision with their line manager at least every six weeks, where particular cases and work issues can be discussed. This formal process supplements the conversations that happen with managers on a day to day basis as staff consider what action to take to support effective, safe case management.

Through a range of partnership arrangements and our own operational partners, the CRC works with service users to identify their needs to assist them in their rehabilitation into the community. This is largely focused on providing assistance in building social capital in areas such as accommodation, job searches, financial planning, access to mentoring services and family support. In addition, the CRC is committed to meaningful engagement with users of our services, centred on our Service User Council and our partnership with the User Voice charity which enables us to receive additional feedback from offenders who use our services about what they found the most useful in supporting them to address their offending behaviour.

BeNCH, like every Community Rehabilitation Company, is also monitored closely by a local Contract Management Team and this scrutiny further supports the safety element of our work, ensuring that we work within a set of practice standards that have been agreed. We are accountable to the Contract Management Team for the safe and effective delivery of services that enable the service user to be rehabilitated, as well as the public to be protected. Senior leaders, myself included, meet with them at least every month. That team has free access across our offices and can engage with our staff at any time to assure themselves that what we say is happening on the ground actually is.

I hope that this goes some way to providing the assurance that is being sought and am happy to offer further clarification as required.

Ali Hancock
The Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Community
Rehabilitation Company Limited (BeNCH)

16 October 2018