

Questions submitted through Mentimeter Clinks annual conference 2022

Questions put to Justin Russell

1. The statistics you provide regarding the how needs are met does not mention anything regarding race and ethnicity. Does the research look at this? If so, what were the differences, and if not why not?

We do look at the ethnicity of the people on probation whose cases are met – I will ask our data team to look at this as part of the forthcoming follow up thematic we are conducting on race equality in probation in spring 2023.

2. I agree with Justin's conclusions, but how can these 'actually' be realised?

Following all of our inspections – both local and thematic – HMPPS is required to produce an action plan setting out how they will respond to our recommendations (these are available via our website). As an Inspectorate we don't deliver services ourselves, so it is up to HMPPS how they respond to our findings – but we do produce effective practice guides (13 so far) highlighting examples of good work that we see on inspection, which I hope will be of help to the service.

3. How might the inspectorate develop the way it inspects probation areas to help develop the way probation areas develop their work with the voluntary sector?

Commissioning relationships with the voluntary sector will increasingly be managed at regional level by regional probation directors and their commissioning leads. From the summer of 2023 we will be introducing a new ratings framework for probation regions as well as local delivery units – which will include a focus on the delivery and effectiveness of these commissioned services

4. Does Justin trust HMPPS can and will improve commissioning processes? Despite the Oldfield review, on very recent evidence we'd say not

My regular discussions with regional probation directors, including Kilvinder, convince me that they are very keen to make these processes work better – including via the use of ROIF funds and new grant arrangements and we see evidence of imaginative things being done locally. So I'm hopeful things will improve on this front.

Questions put to both Justin and Kilvinder

5. We've had issues with practitioners refusing to engage and this has impacted referrals. How far do you think practitioners understand the role of the vol sector in helping them achieve their outcomes?

As I said in my presentation, our local inspections are showing a pretty mixed picture with evidence of some practitioners not understanding what services are available to them or not believing in the usefulness of those services – so we're seeing a lack of referrals in some areas, which is concerning given the amount of money HMPPS is investing in these contracts

6. Probation is the one area of the criminal justice system without community scrutiny. Would more day to day oversight help improve outcomes and raise the profile of probation services with the public?

Yes and we're hoping that by switching to a more local unit of inspection – the 108 local probation delivery units which cover single cities or counties – the public will get a much clearer sense of how their local probation service is performing. Our previous inspection framework – focused on large regions – made this much more difficult for them.

7. As a sub contracted local organisation how can we have ours and our service user voice heard? It doesn't always feel like contract holder allows voice to be heard.

For Kilvinder

8. What is being done within the probation service to weed out bias, subjective views and racism/prejudice/discrimination from interfering with key service delivery and risk assessments?

Our thematic inspection of racial equality in probation published in spring 2021 <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/race-equality-in-probation/> - raised significant concerns. We are reinspecting this topic in spring 2023 to see if there has been progress against our recommendations

9. Employment outcomes are improving, but without the support with drugs / alcohol/ relationships/ housing / mental health etc are we setting ppl up to fail? How long term are we thinking?

Not long term enough – I've got significant concerns about the join up between criminal justice and health services with many gaps and a lack of continuity of care between prison and the community for mental health, substance abuse and accommodation. Our recent thematics on [drugs](#) and [mental health](#) set our findings.

10. The first slide from Justin was quite depressing. Is there a real plan to improve things? If so where can it be seen? If not why not? Thank you.

One for Kilvinder I think

Questions put to Kilvinder Vigurs

11. The approach to probation clearly isn't working. I hear you say you want to focus on the positives and build on those, but isn't it time to really focus on the huge negatives and try to fix them?
12. I have heard many probation officers say London is more risk averse than regions outside of the capital? Does this not discriminate against and hold back people on probation in London?
13. How can voluntary sector providers engage with frontline probation practitioners, especially when they are not part of the CRS? The door is consistently closed and excuses made. How can this work?

14. How can organisations not on the dynamic framework work with probation to help provide services?
15. Connecting with probation practitioners is impossible, email addresses are not shared. How can we reach those practitioners on the frontline?
16. A small voluntary sector organisation is not a failed larger voluntary sector organisation anymore than a satsuma is a failed orange. How can probation services help smaller voluntary organisations to receive funding?
17. Where does the majority of the probation budget get spent?
18. Great to hear about increasing the number of probation staff with lived experience. What are you doing to support them into senior leadership roles & to create safe spaces for them to draw on their lived expertise at work?
19. What data is the probation service collecting, analysing and publishing to be able to not discriminate against people with convictions but also to back up the claim of having increased the number of probation staff with lived experience?
20. Are there plans in progress to change how services are commissioned so that small and medium sized organisations in the voluntary sector can provide the services it is expert at providing?

Questions put to Jim Barton

21. As the director interested in partnerships with vol sector, surely you should know how hard the commissioning process is for small charities? We simply don't have the staffing or resource.
22. Does the Probation Service intend to review the ethnic monitoring system being used across the estate to be more inclusive of the Gypsy Roma Traveller communities?
23. In the unifying of services, small local organisations missed out on commissioned services, which meant valuable staff were lost. And possibly more importantly affected service delivery. How is the commissioning going to change moving forward?
24. Will probation be financially penalised for not reaching targets like sub contractors are being penalised for failing due to issues caused by probation?
25. The pressures of the women's CRS contract means the delivery is not meeting the needs of the women and we and others are unable to retain staff due to pressures. The refer & monitor focuses on numbers and performance, however we work with women in a holistic approach. The two don't match. How will you reconcile this?
26. The pipeline of staff into HMPPS inevitably comes from the voluntary sector, who cannot afford to salary match. How do you balance this with HMPPS's commitment to the voluntary sector and contracts awarded?

27. Are you going to get the organisations that work directly with offenders families more involved in getting the child and families voice?
28. If probation is getting a pay raise will this be reflected in probation contracts and how can you be sure that, if there is additional money getting given to primes gets to subcontractors?
29. Are you going to provide more (free) training for staff working with families of sex offenders? The trauma for families is often only supported by voluntary sector staff.
30. Why is it known that strong family ties reduce reoffending but families are continually ignored throughout the criminal justice system?
31. To get lived experience involved in the review, design and delivery of probation, it is taking months to get our staff through vetting. If you want lived experience involved, how can you change vetting so that it isn't a barrier?
32. We talked about staffing and about lived experience, when will we make it easier for people with convictions to work in the criminal justice statutory sector?
33. Are you aware how many different rules there are between prisons, such as allowed clothing? Would it be possible to have one standard across prisons for ease for residents and their families?
34. There's an issue where best practice is piloted for a short time and doesn't become business-as-usual or nationally rolled out. How do we preserve the learning from pilots and embed best practice when they end?