

Workshop: The Future of Accreditation in Europe
9th-10th February, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK.
Chaired by Fergus McNeill, Professor of Criminology & Social Work at the University of Glasgow and by Mr. Leo Tigges, Secretary General of CEP

Welcoming Ceremony, 9th February

Reducing Reoffending: A Strategy for Scotland (Joe Griffin, Head of Community Justice Division, the Scottish Government).

After extending a warm welcome to the guests, Mr. Griffin reported how we are now in an interesting time in Scotland, where the Cabinet Secretary for Justice Kenny MacAskill has engaged in a progressive conversation, encapsulated with the Prison Commission's McLeish report, 'Scotland's Choice'. We are confronted with two choices. 1) We can carry on as we are with a very high per capita use of imprisonment, which has proven expensive and not effective in reducing reoffending, or 2) place a greater emphasis upon criminal justice with reparation, for example by investing further in the community payback orders and other re-integrative measures. The Scottish Government has to confront the fact that despite its best efforts, and those of many criminal justice practitioners, our prison population is still on the rise, whereas more notionally punitive jurisdictions such as Texas, Florida and California have seen their prison populations decline.

In order to reverse the revolving door facing persistent low tariff offenders we should be utilising drugs and mental health programs, engaging in preventative spending rather than prison building. We need to improve upon our server-user engagement and relationships; this is a system where someone can be released late on a Friday afternoon with no support again until Monday morning.

Mr Griffin expressed enthusiasm to learn from best practice in Europe and therefore his enthusiasm for this initiative and for continuing engagement with the CEP.

Desistance, 'What Works?' and Accreditation: Developing Practice (Fergus McNeill, University of Glasgow)

Fergus invited the delegates to consider the following quote from Cesare Beccaria:

“Would you prevent crimes? Let liberty be attended with knowledge. As knowledge extends, the disadvantages which attend it diminish and the advantages increase. A daring impostor, who is always a man of some genius, is adored by the ignorant populace, and despised by men of understanding. Knowledge facilitates the comparison of objects, by showing them in different points of view. When the clouds of ignorance are dispelled by the radiance of knowledge, authority trembles, but the force of the laws remains immovable”.

What this quote informs us as we wrestle with the relationship between science and law, evidence and principle, but he noted the sting in the tail, that a little knowledge can be dangerous.

Fergus suggested that, in the next 24 hours, the delegates would attempt to explore the many challenges faced by ‘evidence-based’ probation, seeking to escape our jurisdictionally confined viewpoints.

What is the purpose of probation? In Scotland, Fergus noted, we have a system predicated upon the 4 Rs: Reparation, Rehabilitation, Restriction and Reintegration. Accreditation is most closely associated with rehabilitation and reintegration in promoting new capacities to live better. But he noted there are also 4 forms of or strands with regards to rehabilitation: judicial (escaping a criminal records); social (escaping informal labelling), psychological (addressing personal issues, perhaps via accredited programmes) and moral (reforming character and settling debts). Accreditation of programmes reaches some but not all of these strands.

A second problem we encounter is which evidence matters? Is it evaluative evidence only (what works?) or also explanatory evidence (making sense of desistance processes)? Relevant questions extend beyond the change process to the role of staff skills, to social networks, and to the complexities of practice delivery environments.

A third question is whose evidence counts? Experts? Academics? Senior professionals? Policymakers? Politicians? The public? What of the expertise in the people we work with? What can they tell us about how to of pursue better practice.

The scope of this event is broad. We face a big question: Where does accreditation fit in evidence based practice? What are our options?

Fergus noted that the Scottish expert panel is currently being refreshed and its processes reviewed. Some practitioners, programme designers and sponsors have accused accreditation of being too bureaucratic, frustrating, and of stifling in development. Some have asked whether accreditation directs too much resource into design and not practice delivery? The panel itself has also questioned problems in securing adequate evaluation of accredited programmes. And policymakers are struggling with questions around funding: is it better to maintain for a narrow remit or to develop a broader advisory function that can speak as much to routine supervision as to specific programmes? If so, does that mean taking on different experts with different views. Is accreditation the only function of the panel, or simply one function of the panel, amongst many?

Reflecting back on the last meeting of accreditation panels in 2008, we now look to share our experiences as to what we have learned to date and how we can utilise this evidence. The report of our Dutch hosts of that event will assist us in our discussions (http://www.cepprobation.org/default.asp?page_id=157&map_id=116).

Thijs van der Heijden, Offending Behaviour Programmes Accreditation Panel, Ministry of Security and Justice, The Netherlands. “The Accreditation of Behavioural Programmes”

Thijs van der Heijden, presented findings from the previous International Expert Meeting held in The Hague, Netherlands. November 2008, The Accreditation of Behavioural Programmes. The general portrait of the resulting report painted was that accreditation focused on behavioural programs. Programs were delivered in prison and/or in the community. In most cases they were delivered as rather stand alone modules. They target generic or specific criminogenic risk or protective factors. The participants of the programs are both adult and minor offenders.

Different accreditation panels operating using very similar criteria. The most important criterion was considered to be the requirement that the program should be based on a sound model of change. Continuity of care was considered another vital if elusive criterion.

In addition to accrediting programs, some panels (in Canada and Scotland) performed site accreditations. This was to follow the implementation process after accreditation to see to whether programs were delivered according to the manuals.

According to the representatives of these panels, the criteria for site accreditation were less well articulated than those used for assessing programs. The general consensus was that although helpful during the implementation process, site accreditation could never replace the effect evaluation of programs.

The general opinion was that accreditation increases the effectiveness of probation services by stimulating the development of programs based on proven effective mechanisms, while discouraging the development and delivery of programs which are based on unproven principles, leading to results which are less relevant in the justice system.

A corner stone of the accreditation process is evaluating the effect of a program after it has been accredited. After some time an accredited program should be looked at again by the panel to determine whether it has actually been effective in reducing crime.

A general concern of all panels was that once a program is accredited, it often doesn't come back for re-accreditation. In many cases evaluation is carried out in a methodologically inadequate fashion or simply does not take place at all. Reasons for this range from the practical: that such research is considered expensive and time-consuming; to the ethical: can you, for example, deny someone access to an accredited program in order to form a control group?

One of today's most prevalent challenges is to develop smart and reliable strategies to evaluate behavioural programs at a minimal cost that also does not hinder the delivery of the program.

All panels considered themselves to be independent bodies. This means that the panels claim to be impartial in their judgments. Proximity to the field differs from panel to panel: some give advice to designers during development; some panels do not want to be involved in the development at all because they think to do so would risk the impartiality of the accreditation process. The question is: what is best? I think the answer depends on the purpose of the whole process, namely to get effective, evidence-based practices.

During the 2008 meeting, different panels put forward that other important aspects of probation services ran the risk of being forgotten. It was stated that there is a need for a more holistic approach: many activities or interventions are considered to be a prerequisite for the effective delivery of behavioural programs, like interventions targeting on intermediate goals or stepping stones, activities to invest in social capital of the offender, staff training etc. These activities should be based on evidence. We should investigate whether these activities should also be part of the accreditation system.

The opinion of the Dutch accreditation panel is that promising activities which are practice-based, should be singled out and stimulated and researched on a small-scale basis, although there is – at the moment – no hard evidence for effectiveness.

The Workshop, 10th February 2012

The Irish Experience: North and South (Viv Geiran, Irish Probation Service ; Geraldine O’Hare and Louise Cooper, Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Vivien Geiran noted that in Ireland, the overarching aim has been to reduce reoffending and promoting reintegration via prison and probation services. The statistics reveal that the workload of the probation service has seen a decrease in assessments but an increase in community service. There has been a growth in the post custody population, numbering over a thousand of the overall population under supervision.

There has been a prioritisation of what works philosophies, with the focus being placed upon higher rather than low level risks. This has freed up more resources by focusing the intensity of contact upon high risk cases. There is no Irish system for accreditation per se; it is, in essence, a la carte. Ireland, it is safe to say, has not bought into accreditation lock, stock and barrel. Rather they have been tentatively dipping their toe in the water. So what does the future hold for Ireland? The starting point is to foster co-operation across borders.

Irish probation professionals tend to believe that programs don't change people, people change people. This is not to denigrate programs or diminish their potential utility, but it is important to appreciate the wider context in which the program operates. For Ireland, the worry is in interfering negatively with currently effective processes.

Louise Cooper provided the perspective from Northern Ireland. The appetite for change in the North has been driven largely by the will of the Minister. There have been criminal justice reviews and reforms in the fields of prisons, youth justice and reducing offending. The factors that have fuelled reform have been post-devolution Assembly scrutiny; focused not least on the effective use of public resources.

Northern Ireland has its own peculiar crime and justice problems: while recorded crime is down, sentences resulting in custody have risen. There has also been a considerable rise in community orders. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland is trying to make local communities safer by helping offenders desist and change their offending behaviour. This plan has been built atop four pillars: 1) Positive, meaningful, completion of programs. 2) By challenging offending behaviour. 3) Minimising harm. 4) Promoting responsible citizenship.

PBNI's Head of Psychology, Geraldine O'Hare noted that there are no accreditation panels in Ireland, North or South of the border. She commended evidencing the effects of our practice, with or without an accreditation panel. There is a commitment to understanding the impact of programs. Northern Ireland does not concern itself solely with group work, also attending to one-to-one supervision. Not everyone is suitable for accredited programmes, and accreditation criteria often exclude large numbers of people. Northern Ireland's philosophy has been to broaden the definition of who can be supported, extending their remit beyond 'programs'; for example, how do we accredit the skill sets of staff. Client relationship and the style of program are critical to its success. There needs to be a seamless integration between prison and community services where no-one's problems are compounded by a lack of programs or other supports on either side of the prison wall. Research must inform what we're doing in the present but also in the design of future practices. The development of confident and competent staff – using evidenced based practices to build public confidence, depends on measuring and studying the processes and outcomes of our work.

Discussion

The question was put to the Irish delegation that in light of their impressive progress, why do they need an accreditation panel? What are the gains of accredited compared with non-accredited approaches? Vivien drew attention to Ireland's cross-border Sex Offender management program as an illustration of all that's good in broadening the ambit, loosening the criteria, away from the confines of an accredited program. Interventions, he was keen to stress, are evidence-based. In Ireland's case this takes place within a wider practice framework. Numerous staff have said that the benefits of the new sex offender program have rippled out, generating new ways of thinking. This reaches out to the manner a program is set up: it is well resourced, it was implemented incrementally and not rammed down staff member's throats. Delivery has been more comprehensive. The key aim now, of course, is to improve upon this success. Vivien referred to the accreditation as a vehicle; the ultimate goal was never accreditation, but better practice. If a panel promotes better practice, so be it. By programs not being awarded accreditation, the downside could be in the development of a subconscious

reticence towards undertaking accreditation. But if accreditation is the best option, we have no fear - we choose, however, not to blindly adhere. Accreditation should not be a hurdle to better practice.

Geraldine echoed her colleague's sentiments; accreditation is a positive feature which should be embraced, not dreaded. She is, however, of the opinion that the criteria need revisiting. Frustrating experiences in the past have left practitioners sceptical. The system is widely regarded as not being user-friendly.

A delegate questioned whether there needs to be a warm relationship between panel and practitioner? Geraldine O'Hare replied that it is fundamental, but wondered how best to foster such a relationship. Fergus McNeill suggested that the panel needs to act as a critical friend; when accreditation has been denied it does not mark the end of the process, but stimulates further involvement.

Fergus noted that the Irish services boast a wide range of programs but asked what proportion of their caseloads are actually engaged in doing programs? Louise advised that about 1 in 3 people subject to supervision are engaged in program work (a much higher proportion than in most other jurisdictions represented).

Mike Maguire picked up something Geraldine O'Hare mentioned in her presentation: what does 'user friendly' accreditation process mean? Geraldine responded that it is about dialogue, acting as a critical friend, as Fergus McNeill had mentioned, between panel and designers. There needs to be a consistent linked-up approach to the design and development of the service. We need to provide a time and space to reflect back on this process as well as providing practice guidance manual for probationers.

Mike Maguire asked: how do you then get around the issue of the judicial role in determining who gets program conditions in orders or licenses? Louise Cooper answered by suggesting that work can be done during the pre-sentencing stage. A broader form of words relating to the offence could be employed to encourage discretionary targeting of suitable programs. Geraldine noted that there are a range of other services that are helpful.

Regarding failure to gain accreditation, Adrian Smith questioned what other options do we have beyond maintaining this 'gold standard' of accreditation? That has proven difficult as previously laid out. So what is the solution? To pursue more modest claims in reducing reoffending? For example, promoting employment programs that may support reintegration but make no direct claim to reduce reoffending. His solution is the introduction of a silver as well as a gold standard for accredited programs. Fergus McNeill added that there are also issues of scale, that this 'gold standard' requires so much effort that it can exceed the resources available within smaller jurisdictions, especially when only a small proportion of the caseload is eligible for the program.

Thijs van der Heijden asked for clarity on who is to determine what is best practice? What is its connection to evidence based work? Geraldine O'Hare replied that vision and evidenced based practices are the best and they are not mutually exclusive. Thijs van der Heijden made the point that when the Dutch minister asks "why just evidence

based, why not also practice based?”, it becomes clear that we simply cannot deal with only theoretical discussions.

Mike Maguire suggested that since there are major programs accredited in 20 countries that are culturally alike to a significant degree, the possibility of sharing or transferring accreditation should be considered. Why keep reaccrediting freshly in each jurisdiction?

The Nordic experience

Program Accreditation in Norway

Gerhard Ploeg, Senior Adviser at Norway’s Ministry of Justice and Public Security

Gerhard Ploeg provided the Norwegian perspective, drawing attention to Norway’s unique geography and the challenges this brings with it. There are 4,000 cells distributed across the country in many small prisons. 2,500 – 3,000 people are on community sentence in the course of a year. The number of hours is prescribed by the court while probation decides upon the sentence’s content.

The accreditation panel in Norway consist of 5 psychologists and 1 sociologist. They are experts on program activity, cognitive theory as well as research and evaluation. There is no scoring system, they do not accredit but advise the directorate. It is the sole responsibility of the Director General to accredit. The panel is tasked with making recommendations to the directorate on whether to accredit, preliminarily accredit or not accredit a particular program as well as delivering a preliminary assessment of programs that are proposed to be introduced in corrections. The secretariat is tasked with preparing cases for the panel; make a pre-assessment of the application as to whether it fulfils the basic requirements to be presented for the panel (If not, improvements must be described and reported back to the applicants); and recommend to the directorate for certain programmes to apply for accreditation. The accreditation criteria read:

1. A clear theory-based model of change
1. Target group selection
2. Targeting dynamic criminogenic factors
3. Effective methods
4. Skills oriented
5. Pedagogical aspects: sequence, duration, intensity
6. Program integrity and quality-control
7. Regular evaluation

Norway however has seen a drop in their number of deliveries of programs in general. Gerhard wonders if this is necessarily an entirely negative development. He posits that the disappearance of programs that have failed is positive. The low number of program deliveries cannot be attributed solely to faulty design, but can be down to

much more generalized factors. For example, most accredited programs are group focused, so when combined with the fact that 60% of custodial sentences last less than 3 months, finding an adequate number of candidates to make a group program viable is not always an easy task.

There is some criticism that the complicated process based on the accreditation criteria causes a braking effect, killing initiative, discouraging already active programs that are until then considered to be successful. Many programs have been working successfully in the eyes of many of those delivering them right up until the accreditation process. Programs that do not receive an accredited status after they have applied for one, will need to disappear. This may lead to protests by and conflicts with those who believe the program has specific merits notwithstanding their failure to meet the criteria.

The example of the Alternatives to Violence program proved instructive. Despite this program's undoubted utility and favour amongst its users, it was rejected by the accreditation panel for failing to meet the criteria. This begs the question: what do we do with non-accredited programs?

A model is currently being worked on in Norway in answer to this question.. It draws a distinction between "programs" that directly target behavioural change (which still need to meet traditional accreditation criteria) and "interventions" with broader or different aspirations (e.g. social integration) which call for different criteria, different evidence and different assessment.

Hans Monrad Graunbøl, Kriminal Forsorgen, "Danish experiences on Accreditation".

Hans began by highlighting Denmark's distinction between substance abuse and cognitive behavioural therapy. The treatment of substance abuse within prisons began only in 1997, initially trialled at the King's Island facility. In 2007 every prisoner was granted the right by legislation (referred to as 'the treatment guarantee') to enrol in a substance abuse program. There was an unprecedented explosion in demand. Substance abuse programs are in fact contracted out to private providers.

Hans detailed Denmark's five-year plan. Previously accreditation's organizational responsibility rested in the hands of one man. The easy part is in making an application to the accreditation panel. Where it runs into difficulties has been in determining whether programs are delivering on their accredited credentials. The documentation practices of private companies have been found wanting, even if they have shown a year-on-year improvement. The result is that sanctions come into competition with one another.

The Danes have been the architects of their own dilemma. Having granted prisoners the right to treatments, they have been forced towards pragmatism as to what can actually be accredited. Denmark has no plans in the future for new programs.

Hans speculated that some programs will come, some will go, but accreditation will be reserved only for high intensity and cognitive behavioural therapy programs because following up is a drain on resources. He did note that a few high-intensity drug/alcohol programs can be replaced and 3 more programs might soon be accredited. Denmark is instead looking at how to best ensure valid and reliable documentation so as to ease applications towards the accreditation panel and adequate evaluation of accredited programs.

Martin Lardén, Head of Central Coordination in Treatment, Swedish Prison & Probation Service. “Accreditation of Behavioural Programs in Sweden”.

Martin Lardén informed the meeting that there are 283 programs operating without accreditation. Sweden's first accredited program was a cognitive behaviour program; since then 17 have gained accreditation, with 15 still operational.

Sweden's accreditation panel operates under the auspices of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (SPPS). Ultimate discretion rests with the Director General of the SPPS. Taking inspiration from England & Wales, accreditation is a part of the “What Works” agenda. The purpose of accreditation is to create a basis of programmes for the Swedish Prison & Probation Service, that is directed to a majority of the clients and that is built on the principles of “What Works”. Running group program's through the probationary service has proven particularly problematic.

An accredited programme is a programme that is based on research and that is expected to reduce recidivism, if correctly administered. Accreditation criteria includes: a research-based model of change; targeting group and allocation of offenders; dynamic risk factors; effective methods; skill orientation; engagement and motivation; intensity and duration; ecological validity; programme integrity; on-going evaluation.

Numbers across programs are not always commensurate so low completion numbers may not be down to a failure in the program's design but may have to do with their reach. For example the domestic abuse program's only reach ¼ of the sentenced population compared to a 100% guaranteed program uptake for sex offenders. Sweden takes pride in the impressive numbers returned from their large scale studies, chief amongst these the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory 2000. The study measured the following factors: Organisational Culture; Program implementation; Management/staff; Risk-Need management; Program characteristics; Core Correctional Practice; and an External co-operation evaluation. Completion rate for programs in probation over the last few years has been both high, consistent, and slowly improving: 80% in 2009, 84% in 2010, 83% in 2011.

Overall Sweden's experiences with accreditation have been overwhelmingly positive. Accreditation programs and panels are possessive of a relatively high status. There has been on a focus on integrity and implementation issues. The aim in this circumspection is to improve both the quantity and quality of programs. Particular attention was drawn towards the expertise of the programs trainers.

Discussion

A member of the Dutch delegation noted how Sweden experienced better results with interventions focused on group work: what were the reasons behind this? Gerhard Ploeg responded by accepting that Sweden were more professionalised, but stressed the effect of Norway's peculiar shape and size and the innate logistical problems entailed in this. Martin Larden credited Sweden's success with accreditation being of central significance to effective implementation. Gerhard Ploeg conceded that Sweden have a centralised unit, whereas Norway have no organisational structure built around implementation.

Lars asked whether there could be another reason. In Sweden, if targets are not met, surplus funding is returned to the central unit. Gerhard responded by informing us that Norway does not earmark money for specific purposes. Whilst a report is returned when expectations are considerably lower than predicted, it is not accompanied by a fiscal sanction. Fergus McNeill interjected with a series of questions, wondering whether the high number of completers in Sweden refers to the number of programs. What proportion of eligible people are doing programs? Are these short motivational programs for lower risk people thus allowing for higher completion rates?

Geraldine asked Gerhard Ploeg whether programs were delivered in the community in Norway? Gerhard responded by saying that far more programs are delivered within prisons. In community sanctions, accredited programs can only be a small proportion of court imposed hours.

Tina Vogt-Airaksinen added that in Finland it is the prison officers who feel that those who run programs are 'soft', that they are doing little more than patting offenders on the head. Gerhard Ploeg responded by saying that Norway's limiting of the use of programs was not a sign that they do not care. A lot of action undertaken is by highly trained staff unaffiliated with programs, e.g. prison officers. Dominic Clarke asked whether there is any outcome data other than pre and post-program psychometrics? Gerhard Ploeg replied in the negative, that they simply rely on before and after tests, that are not much more complicated than asking whether their program did what we want by comparing starting conditions with end conditions.

Fergus McNeill drew attention to NOMS' recent large tender for intermediate measures that promote desistance moving beyond reconviction thinking. Mike Maguire answered that these moves were baby steps towards the development of more sophisticated evaluation. Fergus McNeill pondered as to the value of measuring improvements in social capital. Martin Larden responded that many measures are better than one; a combination creates a matrix, a net that gives us a richer appreciation of what is progressing. The lack of a sound theoretical model is damaging effectiveness. Gerhard Ploeg brought up the example of the Alternatives to Violence program that had no defined goals per se. As such, it wasn't an accredited program despite its success and the goodwill directed its way. Why allow the accreditation panel's stringency to stifle this success?

Leo Tigges asked whether progress is difficult to gauge in longer programs, does the evaluation framework exist to confront more complicated cases.

Tamar Fischer, fischer@law.eur.nl, Criminology, Erasmus School of Law, Rotterdam, “The accreditation process and the practice of behavioural programs in Dutch probation”.

The Netherlands have 1 accreditation panel which has been active since 2005. It consists at any one time of 11 behavioural scientists and/or experts in practice. They are tasked with accrediting behavioural programs for both juvenile and adult offenders, using 10 criteria as the standard.

These criteria read:

1. Theoretical model
1. Clear selection criteria
2. Direct criminogenic factors
3. Effective or promising methods
4. Training of skills
5. Intensity based on risk principle
6. Attention to motivation of participants
7. Continuity intervention and supervision trajectory
8. Intervention integrity
9. Evaluation plan (continuous evaluation)

There are 3 different probationary organizations, the ambition being to address all criminogenic needs; reach all (possible) groups of offenders; have a limited number of different programs; be effective or at least show promise in becoming effective.

To better serve these ambitions the Erasmus University Rotterdam Study (Fischer, Captein, Zwirs, 2012) focused upon the following:

1. Which criminogenic needs remain unaddressed?
1. Which offender groups were unreachable and why?
2. Which adjustments or additions can be advised

The studies results can be grouped into the following headings:

a.i.1. Selection of programs

A selection of approved programs for adult offenders as of 2012 included Cognitive skills; Cognitive skills for intellectually disabled; Addiction related relapse prevention regular; Addiction related relapse prevention short; Working skills; ART-Wiltshire; Alcohol and Violence (temporarily approved).

Such a selection missed out the importance of social relations to offenders which in retrospect should form part of other program's choices from the beginning.

Gains in behavioural programs were not clearly linked to social needs. For example, Addiction is a long program which is not easy to enter, the threshold for applicability is simply too onerous for a lot of offenders. Also in general, there are no easily to enter motivational programs. There is certainly scope for a lowering of entry threshold for programs such as this, especially when considering that there is no individual one-to-one equivalent of these types of group programs.

The study revealed that within the current selection of approved programs, important criminogenic needs are not being addressed. They do not take into consideration important social factors such as their housing and financial situations. There are limitations of fixed group programs e.g. current programs fail to be effective when numerous criminogenic needs are present nor are they suited to prisoners on short sentences.

a.i.2. Indication criteria for programs

There has been a high prevalence of exclusion criteria from programs. For example, based on the available evidence, exclusion criteria can be triggered by as many as 45% amongst probationers with criminogenic needs as addressed in the behavioural programs, because of their suffering with psychiatric problems. We have been unable to clarify the causes of this exclusion in part because of the difficulty in diagnosing the problems. Other important reasons (for about 20% of the population) for exclusion are: addiction; intellectual disabilities; lack of motivation; disruptions in daily living (housing/relations); dominating behaviour. It is an area that requires further study and the use perhaps of new methods and instruments.

Moreover, the prevalence of such a high exclusion rate can partly be explained by the indication and advisement process where the following can be noted:

- Criteria are complex and varying
- The reasoning for criteria is not always clear
- The criteria ask for in depth diagnostics which are often not available
- Uncertainty leads to indicating forensic treatment/care?

3. Practice and position of programs

There has been a strong focus on quality and integrity of programs. However trainers have experienced limited flexibility when materials are not relevant to the participants; the level of the exercises is too high/low; or participants need more individual attention. Possibly, trainers have been too strict upon themselves when in reality the panel provides more space in which to improve programs.

Further problems can be encapsulated by the isolation of programs from case management. This can be within an organization where advisors are unfamiliar with programs, or it can be with regards to program trajectories. With respect to trajectories

problems include a lack of knowledge regarding the supervising probation officer; motivational interventions; use and applicability of psychiatric/addiction treatment; existence of work, housing and budgeting programs.

The study's future research lies in finding out why there are such large swathes of offenders that do not end in appropriate programs, and what are the variations between regions within the Netherlands and how local differences contribute to any change in effective practice.

Mike Maguire, Cardiff University and University of Glamorgan

Mike Maguire opened by noting the need to increase the effectiveness of probation by promoting evidenced based practice whilst simultaneously diminishing less relevant practices.

The role of the panel in relation to its proximity with the field (i.e. designers, developers, sponsors) is to ensure independent and impartial accreditation. In England and Wales, 19 out of the total of 46 programmes accredited by 2010 were focused on substance abuse. 8 were sex offender programs, 7 were violence programs and a further 7 dedicated to general offending. There is also a new generation of programmes being developed, which are modular, shorter, more flexible with both group and one-to-one modes of delivery. The philosophy of desistance and the Good Lives Model have influenced these programs.

England and Wales has a probationary population of 250,000, which includes those subject to community sentences and post-custodial licenses. Program numbers have declined to under 10,000. These programs are of a very high intensity and are centred around mid to high risk offenders with significant criminogenic needs. The financial crisis has actually helped accreditation. Perhaps through better targeting, the completion rate has increased from 40% to 70%, though many never start; in prison this figure is over 90%. But what of the proportion of appropriate offenders on accredited programs: only 58%.

The coalition government has propounded a greater commitment to localism, akin to that explicated in Gerhard Ploeg's presentation, where central government does not control its disparate regions. Yet accreditation requires economies of scale: it is expensive, requires precise targeting taking into account mental health, housing, employment and what we know to be other contributing factors to offending. The shift to Payment by Results suggests must less concern with which mechanisms deliver reductions in reoffending and more reliance on whatever is associated with success on binary reconviction measures.

Discussion

Lars Krantz asked whether there have been changes in the role of the panel, be that in its limits or the variety of its functions? How does this link to the right needs or the right risks? Mike Maguire answered by saying it is grounded in a pragmatism based on finance. The only way out is more modular programs in addition to one-to-one

delivery approaches, otherwise, to our detriment, we will have a one-size-fits-all system. Manuals should be less prescriptive with more freedom given to practitioners.

In discussing 'rolling' or modular programs, Tamar Fischer suggested that in her experience the effect of disruptions in membership can be traumatic upon the group dynamic. But Fergus suggested that peer challenging and peer support can be delivered in more open 'mutual aid' models, as in some 12-step programs.

Leo Tigges remarked that the Netherlands have reduced the length of programs in line with measures adopted by the UK. Do you really need to host 20 sessions? Mike Maguire concurred, stating that he and his colleagues argue on this point all the time. The number of sessions never drops below 5. The average number of sessions has decreased 20% to around 22 lasting about 2 hours each. A dilemma occurs by our desire for shorter programs but also for them to be more finely attuned to individual needs. The reality is that we cannot afford to do both.

Fergus McNeill suggested that whilst the core element may be reduced over time, bolt-ons, supplemental modules, will increase, allowing for a greater degree of customizing for particular needs. Adrian Smith spoke of the example of a rolling sex offender program where facilitators were skilled up and allowed to decide when completion took place. This has resulted in some 212 sessions carried out on medium to high risk offenders, with a minimum of 40 and maximum of 60 sessions for low risk offenders. He added that they had reviewed all programs collectively and came up with the Thinking Strategies Program (TSP). Now everyone is doing TSP, replacing programs that are running down, in every trust, every prison. Mike Maguire asserted that the adoption of TSPs is a preferable development because it places an emphasis on staff skills.

Hans Monrad advocated more individual modules utilizing modern technology.

In relation to the problems of exclusion criteria discussed by Tamar, Mike responded that there are the OASYS scores to contend with, where we have people who do not possess the intellectual capacity for admittance or who have psychopathy checklist scores which render them ineligible. Ian enquired as to the scale of the delivery being undertaken in England and Wales. If one third are ineligible and one half are non cooperative, is the falling demand actually of benefit when it comes to the management of resources?

Mike Maguire replied that in the case of sex offenders, there may be 8,000 registered but we do not require 8,000 programs. What is required is more thoughtful targeting.

Leo Tigges retorted: how? Is this actually a question of managing expectations? Mike Maguire agreed with this assertion. We can act to persuade offenders, for example with pre-programs, so as to better manage our drop-outs. Ian proposed that we can make a difference before pre programs, pre-pre-programs if you will. He is confident that group meetings will help reduce drops outs even further.

Summary of the Workshop

Leo Tigges asked the delegates to share what they would take away from the meeting. Dominic was taken aback by the enormous spend on accreditation and by the distinction between group work and an individual's management, which was a pronounced theme throughout all the presentations. The two track approach suggested by Norway had proven an inspiration.

Hans Monrad felt his own fears were confirmed by his colleagues: despite the different levels of organizational set up amongst jurisdictions, we come up against the same problems in documenting and evaluating our practices. We are well versed in theoretical considerations but that does not make solid evaluation any easier.

Gerhard Ploeg implored that we keep our practices simple. He was particularly impressed with Denmark's relaxed and uncomplicated solution in addressing the link between addictions and offending behaviour. We need to forgo low intensity programs in the current climate and focus our resources on high risk offenders.

Martin Larden was struck by the structural and financial needs expressed in the Netherlands. He wonders whether there is enough evidence; we need more than reducing recidivism, otherwise we are fooling ourselves to make accreditation programs fit an unhelpful standard.

Geraldine O'Hare echoed a recurring sentiment, to keep it simple. The models that were showcased gave her food for thought, especially the importance afforded to the integration of case management into programs and subsequent offender supervision.

Michael Cutland of the Jersey Probation and After-care service, reiterated the need not to overcomplicate matters. Norway's transparency was a point of inspiration. They can be seen to be fostering confidence amongst their practitioners which will hopefully transfer into their clients.

Thijs van der Heijden recommended we embrace flexibility, that we make protocols less strict and earlier to implement, that the skill sets of staff be broadened. The Norwegian stance on a two track approach to promoting more effective practices reflects the tone of the discussion within the Netherlands. Treatment readiness is paramount and it is imperative we commit to its improvement. To do so we should need be afraid to of thinking outside the box. He advocates the use of smartphone apps, the internet, but also current instruments need to reflect upon their own criminological and environmental theoretical groundings. We should look at our own report again to see how we can update our goals for our next meeting, a new framework for new discussions.

To this point Leo Tigges asked: in what way can we update our frameworks? Thijs van der Heijden recommended more regular meetings so as to keep current with developments. Gerhard Ploeg concurs saying that an EU funded project could link in with more frequent meetings. On top of this he recommends a less probationary focus for the next meeting and a greater focus on programs.

Closing Remarks

Fergus brought proceedings to a close by unifying the day's findings under the theme of sovereignty. Practical questions of limited resources encourage collaboration and the sharing of resources. A commitment is to be made towards program development and evaluation as much as the very act of accreditation. Can we not pool our resources so we do not struggle so much?

Evidenced based practice possesses a far broader focus than simply programs. Accreditation is not a silver bullet. There are many games to be played, upon many different fields.

A special mention was given to Gerhard Ploeg's distinction between programs and interventions – and the need to assess and accredit them by different standards using different evidence. In both endeavours, panels face the challenge of being friendly and supportive or whilst ensuring integrity, independence and transparency.

Sweden has done more than most to evaluate the impacts of its accredited programs. Many others have, in comparison, limited their own effectiveness and credibility by failing to evaluate. We need to realign our practice with our commitment to evaluation: design alone is not enough.

There are specific challenges for community-based programs. An unconfined, under defined and complex population makes adaptability and flexibility an important feature. This comes into play when considering lowering accreditation thresholds, whether to be effective *enough* rather than strive for an unattainable perfect standard. Legislative changes, like Denmark's drug treatment guarantee and Norway's reintegration guarantee have forced some jurisdictions to adapt pragmatically.

These guarantees represent a wonderful ideal but also a profound resource pressure.

In all of this, we should perhaps turn from Beccaria to Copernicus, in escaping 'a confined view of things' that puts our interventions or programs at the centre of our universe of practice. We run the risk of being too preoccupied with intervention. We assume that we 'produce' outcomes, but we must come to appreciate the convoluted connections between our practice and our results. People are ultimately in control of their own change processes. Desistance belongs to the 'desisters', we are but their supporters. We can't control it and therefore we cannot claim it as our own. And only communities can deliver reintegration. Our job is perhaps to mediate and support these two processes.