

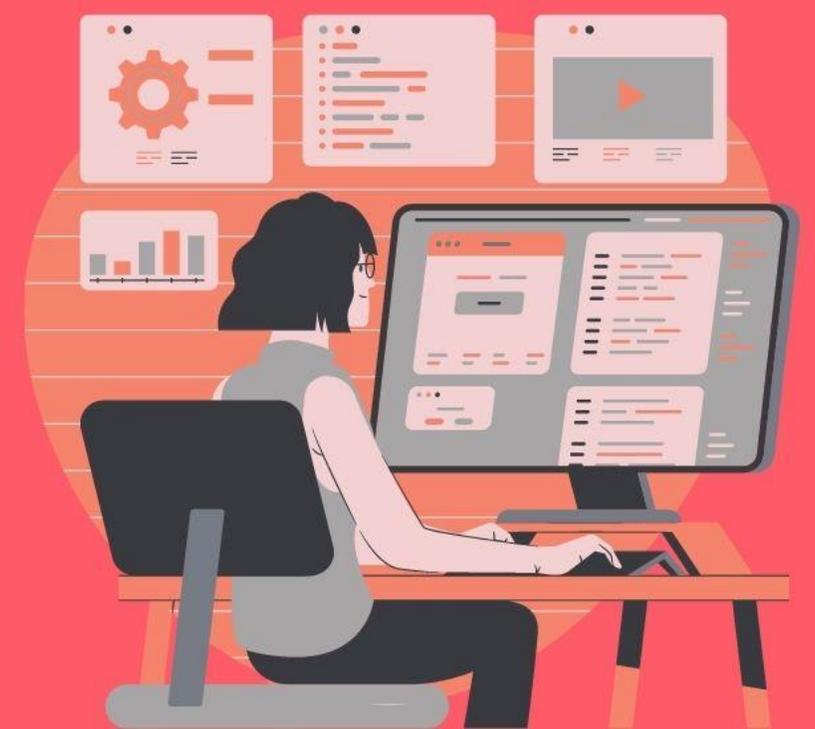
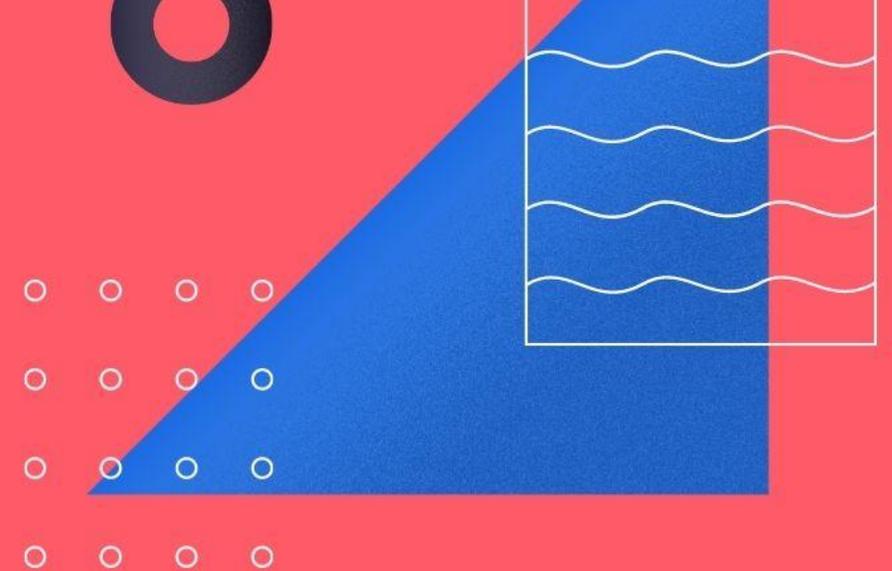


TECHNOLOGY, PROBATION WORK & PROFESSIONALISM: A Round-Up of Current Evidence and Experience

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CONTEXT AND SCOPE

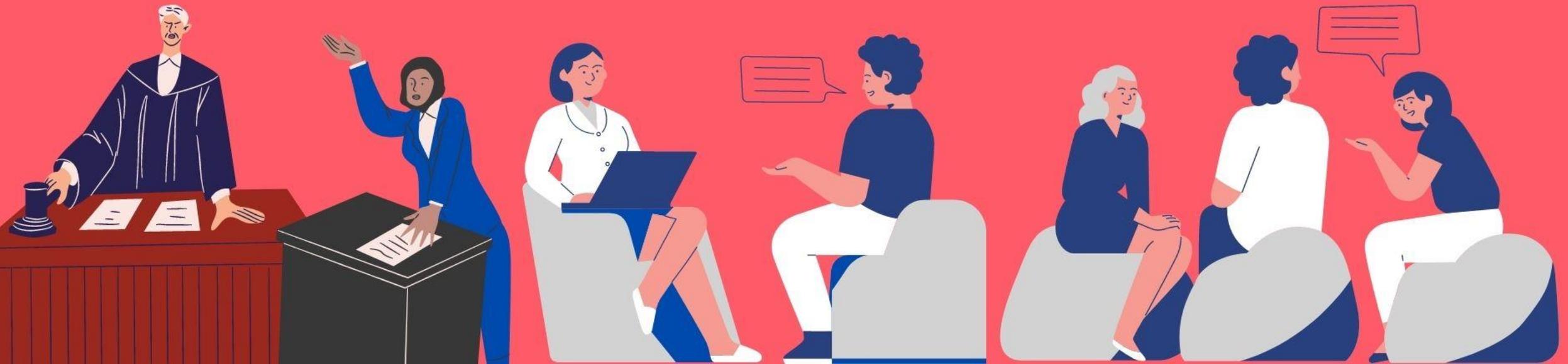
- A round-up summarising evidence and experience: from research literatures and professional practice;
- Timeframe: mostly 2017-2020.
- Limitations: this is by no means comprehensive. It is restricted to what is published in English language, acknowledging the dominance of examples from the United States, England, the Netherlands, Australia. Most of it pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020;
- More independent research is needed to improve understanding of how and why technology is used in probation, how professionals think and feel about it;
- One purpose of this presentation is to encourage discussion and sharing your own insights afterwards.



VIEWS OF INCREASING DIGITISATION & TECHNOLOGY IN PROBATION WORK?

- Utopian
- Retrotopian
- Dystopian

See Nellis (2013, 2019), Phillips (2017), and Bauman (2017).



POTENTIAL STRENGTHS

(of some uses, in some cases)

- Can be used for different purposes in probation;
- Increasing access and engagement, opportunities for involvement, co-production and co-design;
- Personalisation and responsiveness to individuals;
- Positive opinions of service users, fun to use;
- Enhancing rapport and relationships with staff;
- Helping in eliciting sensitive information;
- Access to information, referral to other services;
- Consistency and standardisation of delivery;
- Reductions in time and costs of interventions, staff travel time, and COVID-19 considerations.

Sources: see Kip and colleagues (2018), Ross (2018), Morris and Graham (2019), Pattavina and Corbett (2019), APPA (2020).



POTENTIAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Evidence of effectiveness is limited/emerging;
- Privacy concerns (for staff and service users, especially when at home) and data protection;
- (In)equality, diversity, accuracy, and responsivity;
- Faulty technology, slow or lost connection;
- Misuse, unintended uses of the technology, or punitive uses that affect supervision relationship;
- Professional ideologies, cultures, workload, and implementation, how easy or complex it is to use;
- Lack of up-to-date regulation, protocols, laws;
- Proportionality and intensity: adding *more* to the penal toolkit? Higher risk of breach and recall?

Sources: see Kip and colleagues (2018), Ross (2018), Link and Reece (2020), APPA (2020).



PROBATION PROTOCOLS AND PROVISIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Selected European Countries	Probation population rate (2019)	Provisions for supervision by phone or using digital technology	Provisions to suspend, increase or extend use of electronic monitoring	Provisions to cancel, suspend or extend community sentence enforcement (including time limit lengths)			Provisions to cancel, suspend or extend community service and unpaid work activities (including time limit lengths)			Provisions to suspend or cancel rehabilitative programmes (e.g., drink driving)	Provisions to require monitoring or meeting in person if there is good reason to	Provisions for activities that individuals undertake while staying home
				Cancel	Suspend	Extend	Cancel	Suspend	Extend			
Denmark	138	✓ phone	✓ suspend					✓				
Estonia	329	✓ both				✓			✓	✓	✓	
Finland	53	✓ both			✓						✓	✓
Ireland	129	✓ both			✓			✓		✓		
Latvia	323	✓ both			✓			✓		✓	✓	
Netherland	204	✓ both			✓			✓			✓	
N. Ireland	214	✓ both			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Norway	45	✓ both	✓ increase	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Scotland	397	✓ both	✓ increase		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sweden	99	✓ both								✓		✓

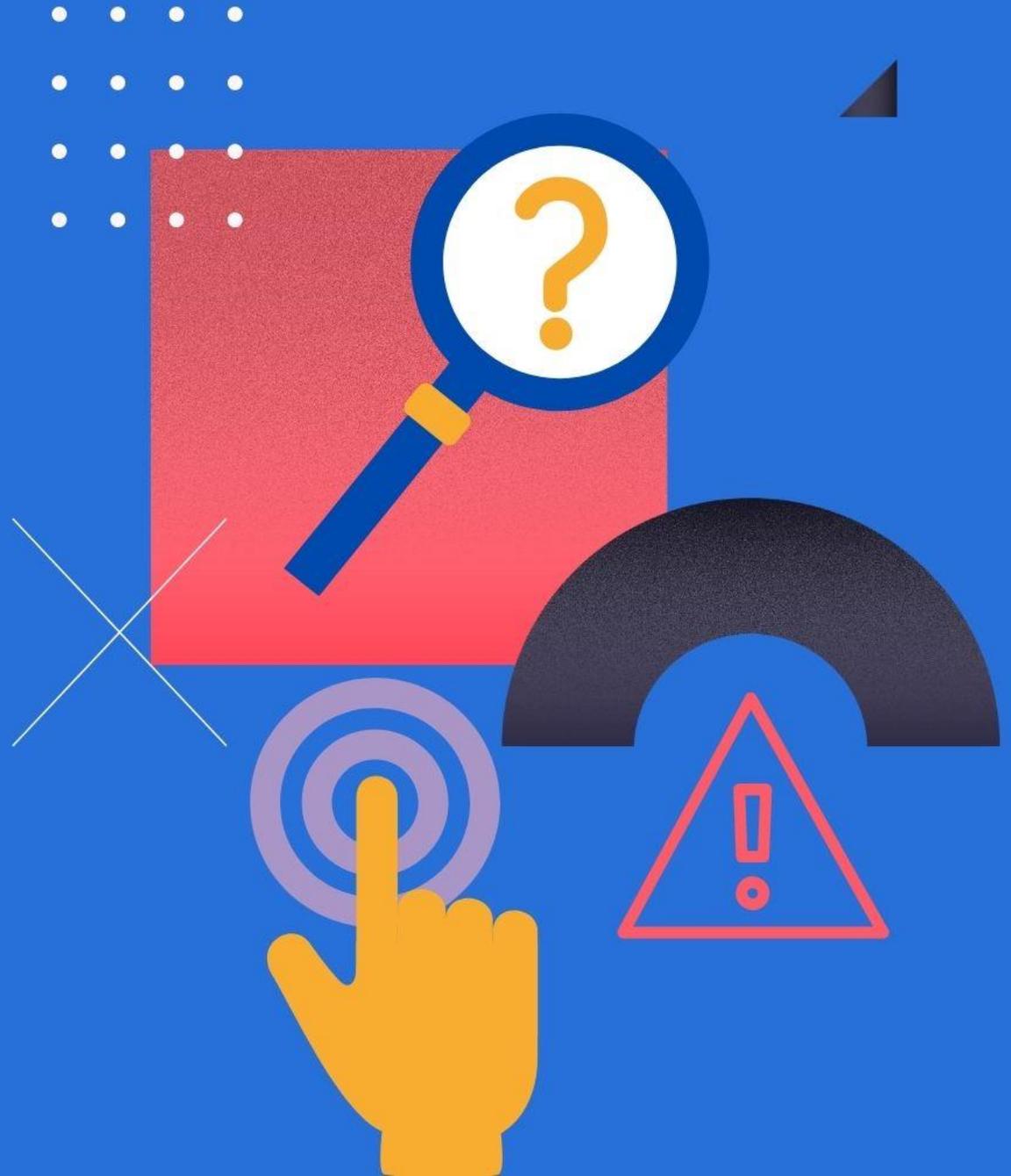
Note: This may not be wholly accurate. It is contingent on what a country has reported in English. Protocols/info may change.

Source: Country reports to [COVID-19 section](#) of Confederation of European Probation (CEP) website and EuroPris [website](#).

ISSUES IN CONTEXT...

Example: Probation in England and Wales and HM Inspectorate of Probation (2019):

“Typically, probation officers supervise individuals through regular face-to-face meetings. Some Community Rehabilitation Companies [private] – who are responsible for supervising low and medium risk offenders – have turned to technology instead. Some individuals are limited to telephone contact only and call their probation officer every six weeks or so. Others use electronic kiosks to check-in at an office and do not see a probation officer during their visit. Research published by HM Inspectorate of Probation did not find evidence to suggest remote supervision leads to better outcomes... You need to see people in order to support them to change their lives.”



ISSUES IN CONTEXT...

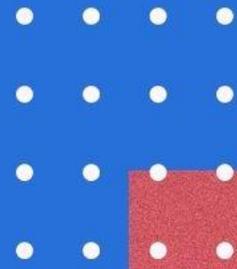
‘Exceptional delivery’ of probation in England and Wales during COVID-19:

“We have had to stop some activities such as unpaid work... For probation officers, it means that we cannot do as much face-to-face contact, so we are prioritising our face-to-face contact for our most high-risk offenders. We have a small number of offices open, but we are doing more doorstep visits. We are carrying out telephone, Skype and video messaging for people under our supervision.” *Jo Farrar, Chief Executive, HMPPS (UK Government)*

“Workloads are high, with 60% of probation officers carrying a workload over the 100% target level and some much more than this. This reflects an ongoing and, in some areas, critical shortage of probation officers.” *HM Inspectorate of Probation*

“The workload has actually increased as a result of the exceptional delivery model.” *Katie Lomas, NAPO (Trade Union)*

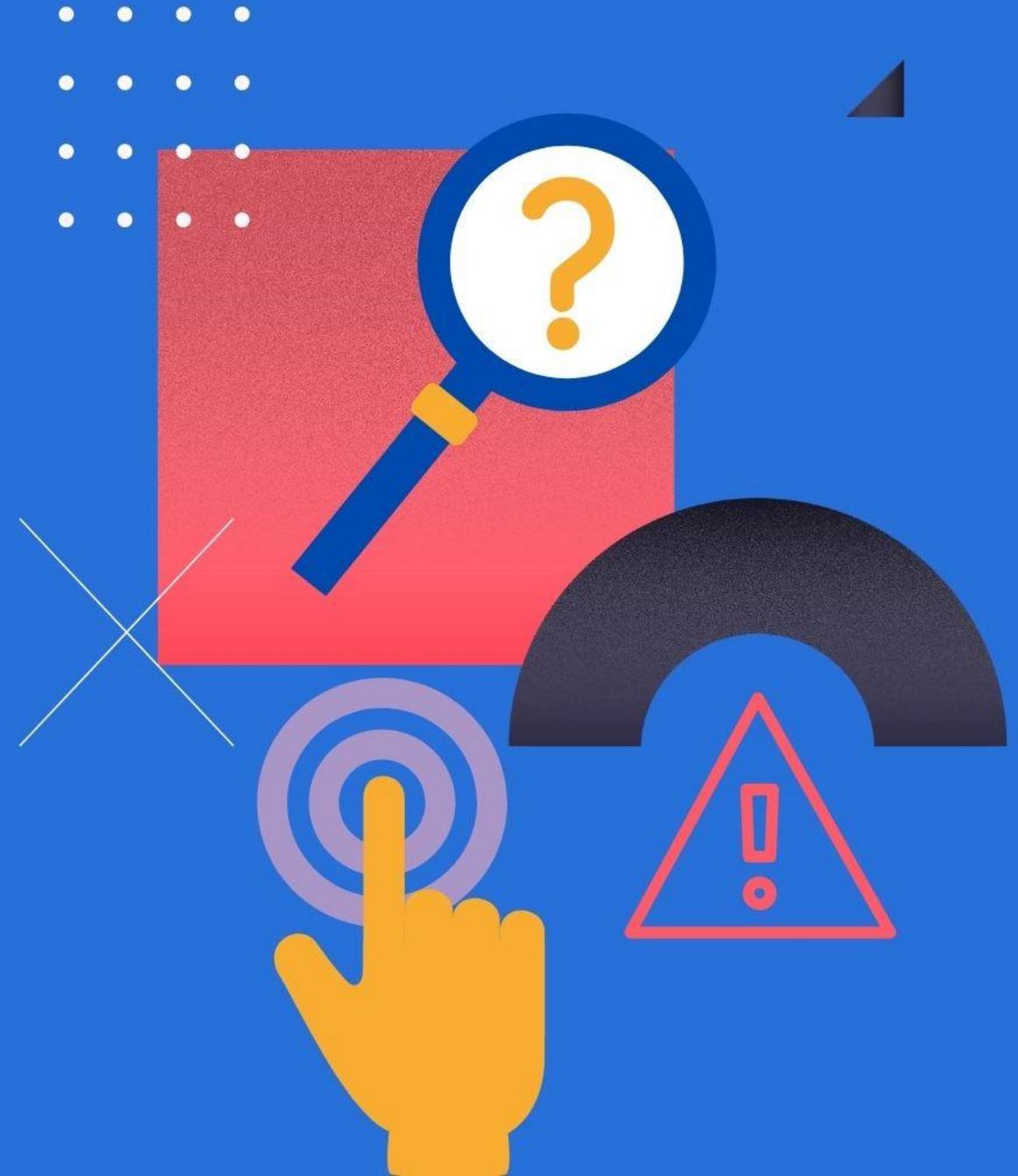
“About 2,000 staff everyday are self-isolating.” *Amy Rees, HMPPS*



ISSUES IN CONTEXT...

HM Inspectorate of Probation (2020) on tech and youth offending teams (YOT) in England and Wales during the COVID-19 pandemic:

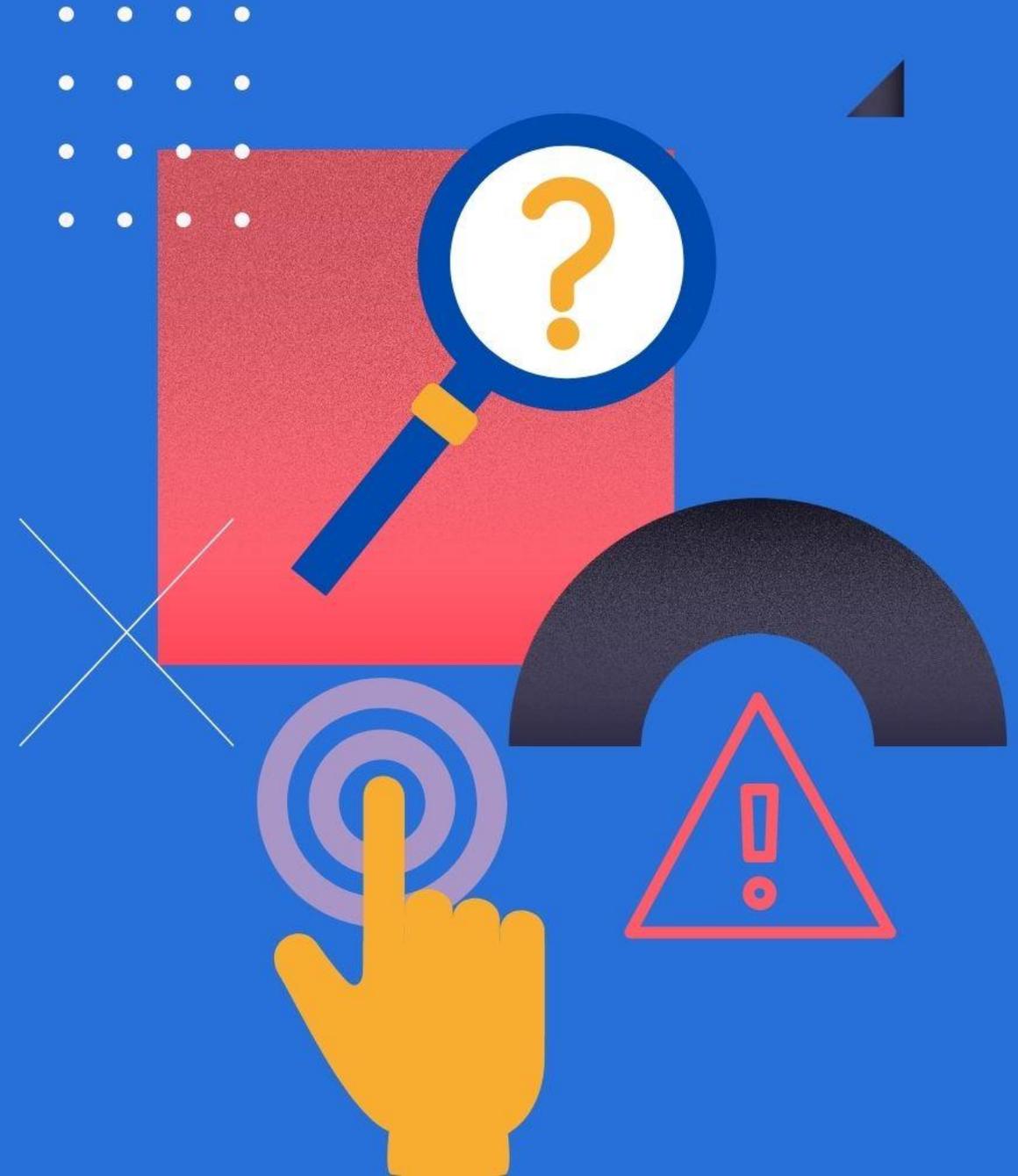
“[As] the country went into lockdown, we saw a rapid increase in the use of virtual communication systems such as Microsoft Teams, Skype and Zoom. Staff had learned how to use these quickly and developed confidence in their ability to chair and participate in meetings... There have been some key benefits of remote working for staff. Attendance of professionals at multi-agency meetings has improved, and the ability to contact children’s social workers has become easier. Many staff told us that they would like to retain this aspect of working. For staff in large rural areas, remote working has had significant time-saving benefits... YOT staff have been innovative in contacting children via smartphones and social media. Feedback from children has been that they have liked this type of contact... Both children and staff stated that virtual contact is a useful addition to case management but should not replace safe in-person contact.”

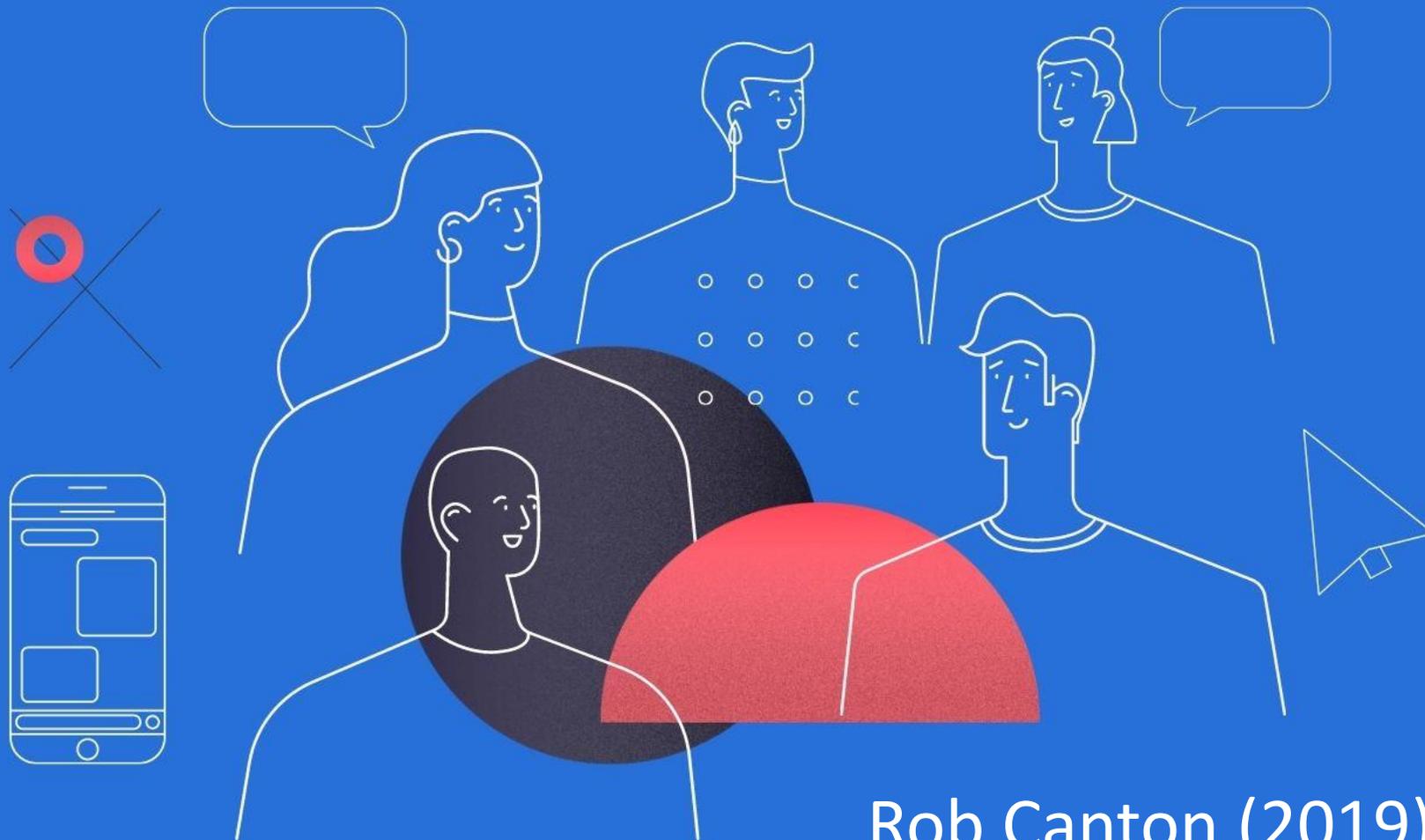


ISSUES IN CONTEXT...

HM Inspectorate of Probation (2020) on tech and youth offending teams (YOT) in England and Wales during the COVID-19 pandemic:

“The pandemic has brought the issue of the digital divide into sharp focus. For those who do not have the equipment, signal strength or finances to fund internet access, the pandemic has increased that gap. In our sample, just over half (53 per cent) of the children had access to internet-enabled technology... Some families did not have computers. We came across examples where the only device in the house was a smartphone, which had to be shared between parents trying to work and children trying to download and research school work or keep in touch with their YOT worker... For some families, the cost of broadband packages was prohibitive, particularly where parents had lost their jobs or were furloughed. In some areas, signal strength for Wi-Fi and internet speed were poor. This resulted in difficulties downloading information, accessing educational resources, and attending meetings without signal disruption.”





Rob Canton (2019)

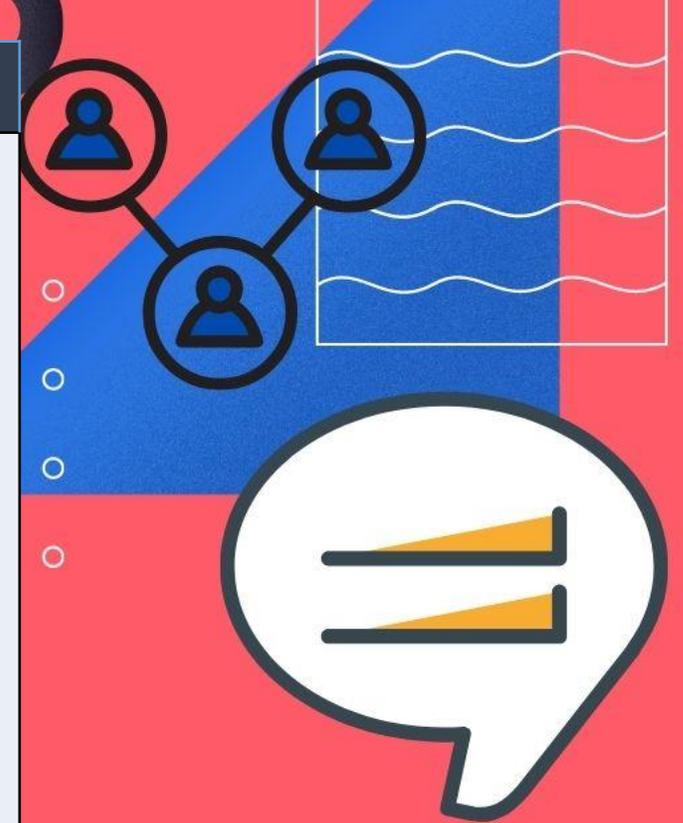
“In the quest to find out ‘what works?’, it is essential that the moral values at the heart of probation are kept in clear sight and that they are realised in policy and in practice. Probation has never been simply a technical process, to be appraised solely in terms of efficiency or even effectiveness, but is fundamentally concerned with how society is to respond to people who have committed crimes... The moral worth of probation is established not only through outcomes (rehabilitation, public safety), but also through its processes and day-to-day practices.” (2019: 4)

Organisational Professionalism

- Discourse as control used increasingly by managers in work organisations about practitioners.
- Rational-legal forms of authority.
- Standardised procedures, rules.
- Hierarchical structures of authority and decision-making.
- Managerialism, efficiency logic.
- Accountability and externalised forms of regulation, target-setting and performance review.

Occupational Professionalism

- Discourse constructed within professional groups about themselves.
- Collegial authority.
- Professional discretion respected, occupational control of the work.
- Practitioners trusted and valued by both service users and employers.
- Controls and rules operationalised by practitioners, leadership from within.
- Professional ethics monitored by institutions, oversight associations.



Probation Professionalism, Values and Cultures

Sources: adapted from Evetts (2013: 788); Graham (2016)

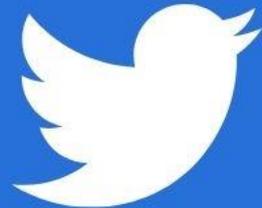




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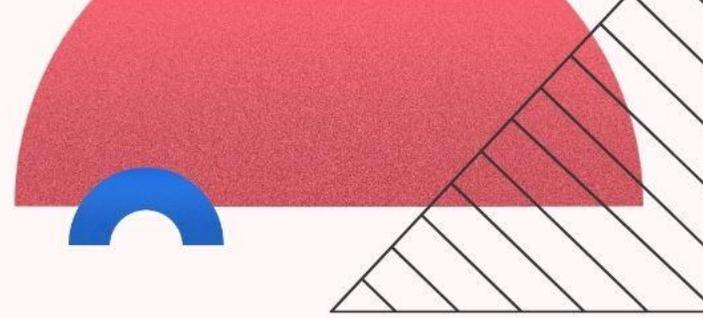


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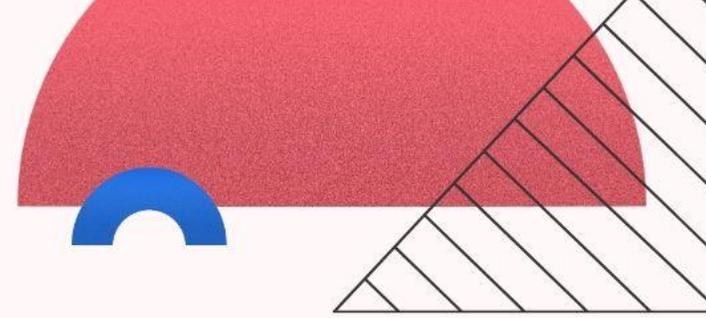
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