

**SOUTH YORKSHIRE PROBATION PARTNERSHIP FORUM****NOTES OF FORUM MEETING HELD**
4 FEBRUARY 2009

1. PROBATION DEVELOPMENTS

Attention was drawn to 4 developments within the Service.

- a) Probation Trust – all Probation Boards are required to go through a Trust application process during the financial year 2009/10. Trusts will be “licensed to practice” i.e. authorised by the Secretary of State to provide Probation Services within a specified geographical area. If a Board fails the application process, it seems likely that an alternative provider would be found, initially perhaps another Trust although the possibility of a tendered approach can not be ruled out. The SY Board had resolved to apply for Trust status to the May 2009 deadline. It is not clear at this stage what changes or benefits would result from the achievement of Trust status but existing commitments and liabilities including contracts would pass over to the Trust. There is a clear expectation that Trusts will have a diverse supplier base and will be the main focus for commissioning / contracting services.
- b) Offender Management Inspection – various partners had taken part in the recent O.M. Inspection and were thanked for their positive inputs. Inspectors had seemed impressed with the partnerships and contractual relationships in place. The process for completing and publishing the Inspection report was explained. Relevant findings will be disseminated once they have been published.
- c) Directors of Offender Management (DOMs) – the merger of Prison Area offices and Probation regional structures was explained. Each region will have a DOM. An announcement about these appointments is expected at the end of February. The DOM will hold contracts with Prisons and Probation Trusts.
- d) Diversity and Community Integration Strategies – it was noted that the Board had recently approved a Diversity Strategy and was now seeking to consult as widely as possible on this and its approach to community engagement and integration. The work was being lead by Kathy Anderson, Head of Diversity & Inclusion. Partners felt they were well placed to assist and that a future Forum meeting should be used for a discussion with Kathy.

2. BEST VALUE FRAMEWORK

A previous meeting of the Forum had discussed the NOMs proposals for the Best Value regime. This had informed the Boards response to the consultation exercise. NOMs had published its response to that consultation in December and had quickly followed this up by the release of a Best Value Framework, although it was not clear how or where this document could be accessed. The Framework outlined a particular and quite narrow interpretation of the Best Value process. Services to be reviewed would be identified by NOMs centrally, who would also produce a specification for that service. It would be the role of Boards / Trusts to benchmark their own service delivery against this national specification and identify the direct costs involved in delivering the service. This information would be returned to the centre. If the outcome of that work indicated poor value for money then the centre (via DOMs) would require an Improvement Plan and this might require market testing. The first two services to be subject to review were victim services and unpaid work (although it was not yet clear if this was to be a specific element of UPW or the whole service). Further details were awaited.

3. PARTNERSHIP FORUM – THE FUTURE

There was a unanimous view that the Forum provided a useful function. Twice yearly meetings were felt to be appropriate with dates fixed as far ahead as possible. The preferred months were November to allow information to be shared about SYP's future funding position, and May. Special meetings could always be organised if necessary with information distributed by email in between meetings.

It was agreed that attendance should be primarily those organisations directly or indirectly contracted by SYP. However any organisation interested in working with SYP should be welcome to attend. It was noted that various "infrastructure" organisations were invited to attend (as a means of widening links) but rarely did so. It was agreed that notes of the meeting should be sent to those organisations with a request that they publish or draw attention to them through their websites. Publication on the SYP website was felt to be a good idea. Because of the local focus of the Forum and, hopefully, the local focus from commissioning, it was felt that the DOMs office and Prison Service representatives should only be invited to attend meetings for a specific purpose. The Forum was seen as providing a very useful conduit for partners to hear and ask questions about NOMs developments. There also seemed to be the opportunity for partners to contribute to service thinking – diversity and integration, user engagement, quality measures / standards were identified as areas for discussion at future meetings.

4. SYP RESOURCE POSITION

Attention was drawn to the very difficult resource position facing SYP for 2009/10 and the years beyond. The Boards commitment to a continued engagement with partners was reiterated.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Attention was drawn to:-

- a) A “meet the Buyer” event being hosted by Rotherham Council but involving all public sector agencies working within the Borough. This was being held on the 5 March at the Consort Hotel – contact and information at www.businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk
- b) The ROMs office are currently refreshing the Regional Reducing Reoffending Action Plan. This would be circulated for information in March. BK would ensure distribution to Forum members.
- c) The second meeting of the Regional VCS Open Forum would be taking place on the morning of the 7 May. As the first meeting had been in Sheffield, this event would almost certainly be outside of South Yorkshire.
- d) A conference was taking place on the 21 May in Bradford – “Beyond Conviction ... the story of children and families affected by imprisonment and offending behaviour”. Details available at www.partnersofprisoners.org.uk/events.