

For staff in South Yorkshire Probation Area

November 2006

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### Welcome Roz Brown



## An Interview with the Chief Officer

**Welcome to South Yorkshire Roz. What made you decide to apply for the top job here?**

Well, I suppose the totally true answer is that the opportunity became available just at a time when I was thinking it was time to move on from North Yorkshire, so I went for it.

Having said that, though, I was particularly pleased that it was South Yorkshire that became available at the right time for me.

I had always thought South Yorkshire was the perfect probation area - big enough to count as a met, with all the authority and importance that comes with that, whilst small enough both in terms of staff numbers and geography to be

manageable, to get to know staff, and to make a difference.

I was also told before I applied that South Yorkshire staff were the friendliest around, so that was a great attraction.

**And has your experience proved that to be the case?**

Absolutely - everyone has been very kind, friendly and welcoming and have put up with me constantly asking questions with great patience.

**Have you got round and met all the teams yet?**

Not yet - but I intend to do so over the next few weeks - I think it is a very important part of my *continued on page 2*

# An Interview with the Chief Officer

induction that I meet as many staff members as possible and that they are given the opportunity to tell me honestly how it is from their perspective.

It is only by doing that that I will get a real feel about what makes South Yorkshire work and what we may want to do differently in the future.

**So, tell us something about yourself - we know you came from North Yorkshire but not much else.**

That's absolutely right - I have worked for North Yorkshire Probation for the last 18 years. I started as a probation officer in Skipton and then doing just about every job available until in 2001 I was appointed as the Chief Officer when the National Probation Service was formed. So coming to a new Area is quite a change for me.

Otherwise I am married - my husband manages the Immigration and Asylum team for Bradford Council, and I have three grown up children and two grandchildren.



Currently I live in York and travel to Sheffield every day, but I am hoping, fingers crossed, to move closer before Christmas.

**What plans do you have for South Yorkshire? Are you going to bring in lots of changes?**

I have one plan for South Yorkshire and that is to ensure it is a successful, high performing Area that can prove it makes a difference to the public of South Yorkshire.

Clearly, like everyone else, I am concerned about our present position in the weighted scorecard and I am looking closely at structures, processes and staff roles to see if perhaps anything in the current set up is getting in the way of our performance. It is very early days yet, but I will be talking to staff as I visit teams to find out what you think and then discussing any conclusions I come to with managers and the unions.

**Thank you**

## Risk of Harm

**THERE is no higher priority than the management of the risk of harm (*writes Roz Brown*).**

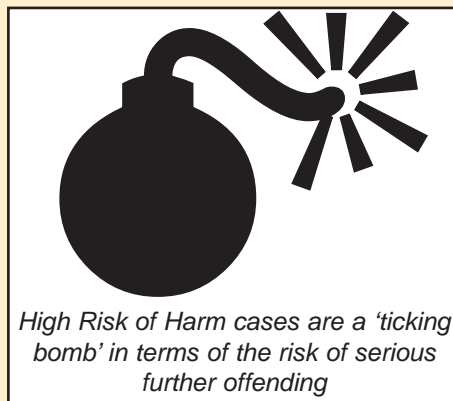
This area of our work must always come first and must be given the necessary time and resource by staff and managers alike.

I was very worried when I first came to South Yorkshire to read the follow up report from HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) into South Yorkshire's management of risk and to learn their conclusion which was that practice had got worse since their first inspection in April 2005 raised concerns.

This inspection suggests that 60% of assessments of risk of harm were NOT satisfactory.

If we don't assess adequately we will not plan adequately and we can not then intervene adequately - and consequently we can't confidently tell the public of South Yorkshire that we are contributing to their safety.

National standards and proper



enforcement must be met for EVERY high risk case - anything less than 100% is not defensible if our practice is challenged.

I have required an audit of each and every high and very high risk case - once that is completed I will have a better idea of how we are managing risk when it has been identified - and I will share the findings with all staff.

What that will not tell me is whether we are assessing risk correctly in the first place and I am currently making arrangements for that to be more thoroughly assessed as

well.

Comprehensive and excellent training is available for all staff. Your line manager will ensure you know about it and will sign you off when you have successfully completed the training necessary for your role.

Not undertaking the training is NOT ALLOWED. Any staff member who after the training continues to struggle with this work, will be given further training and support from their line manager.

We will circulate examples of excellent practice so everyone is clear what we are looking for and managers will receive training to help them assess what is good enough and what is not.

But the bottom line is:

**High Risk of Harm  
MUST come first and  
MUST be done to a  
high standard**

# The National Offender Management Model

ON 27 June 2006, the latest National Offender Management Model was published (*writes Roz Brown*).

It is available on EPIC and is well worth reading because it explains clearly and carefully what we do as a probation service and how we should do it. In many ways it does not differ from what I did as a probation officer when I first qualified in 1976, but the model places our work into a coherent whole which, I think is both new and very helpful.

The central over arching process within the National Offender Management Model is:

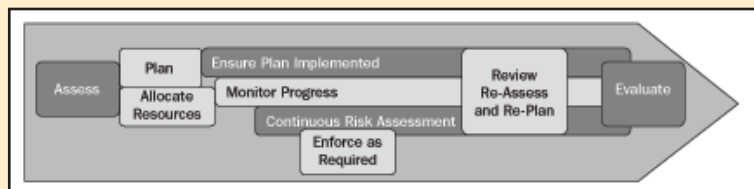
## A.S.P.I.R.E

**Assess** - the assessment process starts by gathering information, from different sources, including from the offender him/herself, and including from other assessments completed by other service providers. A view then has to be formed about what this all means in the context of the objectives of the organisation.

**Sentence Plan** - a sentence plan is then formulated to decide who is to do what and when in order to achieve the objectives applicable to the case. The OASys summary and

the Risk of Harm assessment will tell you what are the priorities for each offender.

**Implement** - ensuring that the plan is implemented requires the relevant offender management team for each offender to be formed and for everyone involved to know for which part of the plan he/she will be responsible.



**Review and Evaluate** - and finally every good plan MUST be reviewed and evaluated to make sure we have done what we set out to do, and to measure whether it was successful. Only then can we re assess an offender and know whether the risk of harm or the risk of re-offending has been reduced by our involvement.

**RESCORE OASYS AT 16 WEEKS, AFTER EACH INTERVENTION AND ON COMPLETION OF THE ORDER**

## National Developments

**ALL of us have experienced considerable change over the last few years, and most of us wish it would stop for a while to allow us to catch our breath (writes Roz Brown).**

However I have to say that change is with us to stay, and currently there are a number of developments happening or being considered nationally that will have an effect on us and how we work in South Yorkshire.

I see my role as being one of looking forward and of ensuring that South Yorkshire is as well positioned as possible to face these changes and to survive and prosper through them.

I can't take them away and I can only protect South Yorkshire from them with your active support and help, so you need to know what is happening, what might happen in the future and what we need to do now to prepare for it.

**Special Measures.** South Yorkshire is not currently in special measures because its performance on the weighted scorecard at the end of the last financial year was good. Six areas are, however, and they face

being the first to be performance tested, once that is allowed, if they do not improve.

Currently South Yorkshire's performance places it at risk of being put into special measures at the end of this year. We must not allow that to happen. We can relatively easily avoid it provided we all pull together, especially as a lot of the problems are about work not being recorded, not work not being done.

**Performance Testing** has been applied to the prisons for a number of years and will be applied to the National Probation Service once legislation is passed. What it means is that any Area whose performance is below 0 (and ours currently is -89) will be given a date by which to improve and if they don't their work will be offered to another organisation to deliver, with staff being transferred under TUPE arrangements to any new organisation.

**Performance Measures** are likely to change over the next couple of years to include a much greater emphasis on outcomes rather than just, as is now the case, on inputs.

At the moment our targets mostly measure things we do, we are not currently measured on what we achieve. Indeed at the moment we don't routinely measure or know what we achieve.

This needs to change, not only because that is what will become the targets of the future, but also because we will need to sell ourselves to the Regional Offender Manager (ROM) and why should he buy from us if we can't even prove that what we do makes a difference.

So one thing we can start doing now is to review cases using OASys routinely at 16 weeks, at the end of any intervention and at the end of the order or licence, and remember to RESCORE.

This information can then be used with the offender to show him or her what progress has been made, and can be collated at Head Office to show the ROM what excellent and positive outcomes we have with our offenders.

**OASys Information** will more and more be used to decide what we should deliver in terms of interventions. Currently we provide interventions

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# National Developments (continued)

largely based on the target set by the NPD, and they set these simply proportionately to the size of the Area.

As OASys information is used more and more we can then make sure we offer the right number of, for instance, drug interventions depending on the number of drug users in South Yorkshire, or the right number of alcohol interventions depending on the number of offenders assessed as having an alcohol problem that causes them to offend.

This will only work however if we do timely and high quality assessments, but it will, as we get better at it, significantly alter the current resourcing mix for interventions to make sure we offer

the right interventions to the right offenders to make a difference.

**Legislation, Contestability and Commissioning.** The National Offender Management Service has been set up by the Government with a structure that has a purchaser/provider split.

That is the Government has decided to separate the decision about what should be provided (commissioning undertaken by the ROM) from the person or organisation that provides it.

Under current legislation the ROM can only commission probation services from local Probation Boards. The Government, however, intends to bring in legislation to change this and, once this is passed, the ROM

will be able to choose from whom he buys probation services.

I am told that the necessary legislation will be in the next Queen's speech. When this legislation becomes law we will need to bid in competition with other private or voluntary and community services to win what is currently our work.

To put in a successful bid we will need to be able to demonstrate we offer good value for money and be able to prove that we are effective.

There are a number of ways we can do this but one obvious and relatively simple one is to rescore OASys and, hopefully, demonstrate that we are reducing the problems associated with offending in the offenders we manage.

## Performance Targets

**CURRENT targets fall into three basic areas (writes Roz Brown):**

**Firstly** there are those that are associated with speeding up the criminal justice process - timeliness of court reports, for instance. We know that delayed justice is bad justice, that for the consequences of actions to effect future behaviour they need to follow as quickly as possible after an event. It therefore follows that as a service we should support this initiative in every way we can. We are not currently meeting these targets.

**Secondly** there are those that are associated with the offender management processes. Enforcement and compliance for example. Again research tells us that an important part of our role, when it comes to effecting future offending, is the bit that concentrates on bringing structure and boundaries to the lives of offenders. Good enforcement makes a difference to re-offending. It also encourages compliance, and we can not change behaviour if we do not see people. Again we are not currently meeting these targets. In addition there are those that are about putting together in a timely way sentence plans for high risk and

prolific offenders - this must make sense, with no plan we cannot intervene purposefully - if someone poses a high risk we cannot afford to wait. Plans can always be reviewed to improve their quality, but we must be thinking clearly about what measures we need to put into place to protect staff and the public on day one - day 20 could easily be too late.

**Thirdly** there are the targets that are about challenging offenders in a structured and purposeful way, in the way research says is most likely to change their behaviour. The targets around referrals to, for example basic skills, and those around completions of orders such as Accredited Programmes, Unpaid Work and DRRs are all part of this. I believe referrals to the appropriate intervention are an equal opportunities issue. Any offender who we have identified through OASys as having a specific need who is not referred to the best most appropriate intervention we have available, is one we have failed, one where we have not offered the best opportunity for them to change and improve their lives. This does not seem right to me or to be in line with our values. And yet we are not hitting these targets.

I was particularly concerned to learn recently that scheduled ASRO programmes have had to be cancelled this year due to a lack of referrals.

I find it impossible to believe that we do not have sufficient offenders in the community with an identified alcohol problem. In fact my experience tells me that it is probably true for at least 40% of them.

Following discussion with the programme team it has been agreed that they will offer alcohol specific ASRO programmes over the next few months. This is because research shows that mixed drug and alcohol programmes are not the best we can offer, and I thought it was possible that this was discouraging offender managers from referring. However an alcohol specific ASRO is effective.

I therefore expect any offender who has scored 3 or more in OASys against alcohol to be referred unless there are good reasons why not to and these reasons have been agreed by the relevant manager.

In the same way I expect all those identified as having a drug problem to be considered for a DRR and all with basic skills deficits to be referred for help etc etc.