

Changing Probation Practice: Frontline Perspectives on a New Model for Supervising Offenders

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Abstract

This thesis explores probation practitioners' views regarding changes to practice in light of the implementation of a new model of practice, namely the SEEDS (Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision) model. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 15 female and 5 male practitioners from one Probation Trust in the south east of the UK. The sample was made up of probation service officers, probation officers and one senior probation officer. The research focused on practitioners' experiences and views regarding the implementation of SEEDS and the impact this has had on their day to day practice. It also looked at the process of organisational change more widely. The results suggest that the introduction of SEEDS has not thus far resulted in its stated aim of achieving a stock change in probation culture. In order to explain why that is, the three themes of 'Identity', 'Autonomy' and 'Accountability' were explored. In addition, a divide was apparent in the views of respondents and this could be understood in terms of experienced versus less experienced respondents. Whilst the less experienced respondents were welcoming of SEEDS as a resource that offers guidance and reassurance about practice, the more experienced respondents were less embracing. They viewed SEEDS as essentially repackaging the skills they already have in one to one work with offenders. Understanding how changes are received at the coalface has important implications for managers and policymakers when trying to affect significant change in the culture of an organisation. The conclusion that the workforce is divided based on practitioners years' of experience suggests that different strategies need to be adopted for both groups when trying to implement new models of practice.

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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Word Count: 50,382

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Table 6.1: Demographics _____ 67

List of abbreviations

CQSW.....	Certificate Qualification in Social Work
CRC.....	Community Rehabilitation Company
CRISS.....	Check in, Review, Implement, Set tasks, Summarise
DiPS.....	Diploma in Probation Studies
ICMS.....	Integrated Case Management System
IOM.....	Integrated Offender Management
MOJ.....	Ministry of Justice
NOMS.....	National Offender Management Service
NPS.....	National Probation Service
NS.....	National Standards
OASYS.....	Offender Assessment SYStem
OEP.....	Offender Engagement Programme
PJD.....	Professional Judgement Decisions
PO.....	Probation Officer
PSO.....	Probation Services Officer
RSM.....	Reflective Supervision Model
SEED.....	Skills for Effective Engagement, Development
SEEDS.....	Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision
SNOP.....	Statement of National Objectives and Priorities
SOTP.....	Sex Offender Treatment Programme
SPO.....	Senior Probation Officer
STICS.....	Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision
STOP.....	Straight Thinking On Probation
TR.....	Transforming Rehabilitation
VCS.....	Voluntary Community Sector

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Chapter One-Introduction

Purpose and Background

The Probation Service is no stranger to change. Change is evident throughout its history and there have been significant transformations to the organisation and administration of the Service, particularly over the last twenty years (Annison 2013; Annison, Eadie & Knight 2008; Mair 2008; Robinson 2013; Robinson & Burnett 2007; Whitehead 2007). This has seen variations to the way in which staff are trained, a consistent rise in caseloads and not least, significant changes to the very aims and purposes of the Probation Service (Burke & Collett 2010; Canton 2011; Raynor & Vanstone 2007). Some of these changes have sought to fundamentally transform the culture of the Service. However, the culture of the Probation Service has proven to be resistant to change (Farrow 2004a; Kemshall & Maguire 2002; Robinson & McNeill 2004; Robinson, Priede, Farrall, Shapland & McNeill 2014). Many of the changes have been politically driven and have been criticised for being top down rather than bottom up (Mair 2004a; Merrington & Stanley 2000, 2004; Robinson 2005). Therefore, it is uncertain how such changes permeate down to the ground floor and are experienced by front line workers. Despite all of the initiatives that have flooded the Probation Service over recent years such as the introduction of the Offender Assessment SYStem (OASys); the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS); the introduction of 'What Works' and most recently the introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) there is still relatively little known about how those responsible for implementing the changes on the ground actually feel about the changes and subsequently how they adapt and modify their practice accordingly. This is an area worthy of consideration as the intended aims of changes to practice are generally to affect a change in the culture of the Probation Service.

One to one work has long been the cornerstone of probation practice. Its prominence within probation policy and practice is recognisable throughout the history of the Probation Service, although it has taken different forms and has been subject to a changing status (Gregory 2011). It is most commonly encapsulated by the motto 'advise, assist and befriend' which was the legal aim of probation supervision from the inception of probation in 1907 until the introduction of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Nellis & Gelsthorpe 2003). This infamous motto is synonymous with social work values in probation practice and is frequently referred to in accounts of probation's history (Gregory & Holloway 2005; Vanstone 2004). It is suggested that "the task of providing guidance, care and assistance is still the most important work of probation services" (Van Kalmthout & Durnescu 2008, p. 40). However, the aim of this work is

no longer purely to 'help' the offender but to achieve an outcome for society through reducing reoffending and protecting the public (Hall 2009). The notion of 'advise and assist' represents professional and legitimate aims. These elements to practice are still evident in the modern day Service with practitioners seeking to help offenders address their offending related problems through advice, guidance and direct intervention. It is the final concept of befriending that perhaps stands as an anomaly in contemporary practice. The suggestion of 'befriending' offenders does not sit comfortably with the populist approach to practice that currently underpins probation practice. This is perhaps why it is not so easily seen in modern day practice and is largely abandoned as a legitimate aim of the Service. This presents as a paradox considering that the befriending aspect is the most individualised of the aims and therefore aligns itself with the current aim of enhancing offender engagement. Despite variations, one to one work has always played a role in probation practice but perhaps least so in the 'What Works' era. The introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) and specifically Skills for Effective Engagement and Development Supervision (SEEDS) in 2010, represented a renewed emphasis on one to one work and some would argue was reminiscent of probation's past.

Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to consider how a new model of practice, namely SEEDS, has been received by probation practitioners. The objectives are to explore practitioners' understanding of, and response to, the introduction of the SEEDS model and look at what impact this has had on their practice exploring if this represents a change to current approaches to practice. In an organisation that experiences so much change it is interesting to consider how this has impacted on the ground floor. More broadly the research aims to look at how the Probation Service manages change and consider both the implications of SEEDS for the culture of the Service and how the culture of the Service impacts on SEEDS. It is important to consider how new models of practice are perceived and interpreted by those at the coalface else a change in organisational culture will not be effective. In order to achieve an overall change in culture there needs to be a more intimate understanding of the workforce and the research is intended to help in that process.

The experiences of a sample of both male and female practitioners working within a single jurisdiction at a particular point in time will be explored. This will provide an opportunity to gain insight into the realities of being at the frontline of the Probation Service. It also provides

an opportunity to explore what practitioners' day to day practice looks like and how changes to the focus of probation practice are managed and experienced by practitioners.

My Role as a Practitioner Researcher

In undertaking this research I acknowledge that my role is one of both an insider and outsider practitioner researcher (Dwyer & Buckle 2009). I am an insider researcher by virtue of the fact that I am a probation officer currently employed by the Probation Service. In addition I have completed the SEEDS training and I therefore have an understanding of SEEDS from both a theoretical and practical perspective. However, I am an outsider as I am not currently working in the community setting, which is where the sample of respondents was drawn from. I am instead seconded to the Prison Service. My role within the prison is multi-faceted and very different to the work of a community probation officer. In addition to working as an Offender Supervisor, holding a caseload of very high risk offenders, I occupy a quasi-managerial position. I am responsible for allocating cases and pieces of work to offender supervisors and gatekeeping their OASys assessments and a variety of other reports. The team of offender supervisors is made up of prison officers, probation officers and probation services officers and a multi-disciplinary approach is advocated. This presents a number of challenges to implementing SEEDS as a model of practice. To date only probation staff have received the SEEDS training which was delivered externally to the prison by the Probation Service. Currently there are no plans to extend this training to include prison officer grade staff. This created a degree of resentment at the time the training was delivered as prison officer colleagues felt they were being excluded and it risked creating a division in the team. In addition to the staff dynamics, in practical terms it presented as very difficult to implement a model of working that only half of the team were able to deliver.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter two provides an overview of probation's history. The advent of 'What Works' is discussed with an emphasis on the impact this had on the one to one model of working. The chapter then discusses the further changes the organisation has experienced up to the current day and the introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) and Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision (SEEDS).

Chapter three charts the changing status of one to one work throughout the Probation Service's history. The evidence base for this method of working is considered, as well as what

is required for a good working relationship between an officer and offender. The view of both practitioners and offenders on what they consider to be effective is also discussed.

Chapter four discusses the wider literature regarding workplace culture before focusing on the literature pertaining to the culture within the Probation Service. The changing nature of probation culture is explored, with some discussion of the factors that impact upon it. The chapter ends by considering the potential impact of the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda on the culture of the Probation Service.

Chapter five provides an account of the introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) with a particular focus on Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision (SEEDS). The rationale behind SEEDS is discussed before consideration is given to the aims of SEEDS and the approach taken to its implementation.

Chapter six discusses qualitative methodology. A series of semi-structured interviews was undertaken and this chapter provides a detailed rationale for this approach and for the decisions made concerning the sampling process, as well as considering the problems inherent in carrying out research. The chapter also explores the issues of ethics, gaining access and the dynamics of insider and outsider research. A full explanation is provided for the chosen method of data analysis and issues around transcribing data are also discussed.

Chapter seven presents some of the initial findings of the research. Demographic information concerning the respondents is provided. In addition, the characteristics of modern day practitioners are explored in order to provide some more general information, such as why respondents joined the Service and what they like and dislike about the job. A picture of an archetypal probation officer is presented followed by some personal reflection of how this fits my own experience of working within the Probation Service.

Chapter eight provides justification and explanation of the chosen method of analysis, which was thematic analysis. An explanation is provided for the division of respondents into categories of more experienced and less experienced and the rationale is given for this split being at nine years in service. In order to provide some context an overview is presented of the less experienced respondents before a discussion of the three themes is presented. These are under the headings of *'Anxiety and Need'*; *'Take it or Leave it'* and *'SEEDS: A Practice Model Misunderstood?'*

Chapter nine continues with a discussion of the results. An overview of the more experienced respondents is presented before the five themes are discussed. These are entitled *'Not a*

Major Shift From 'What Works'; 'A Return to Probation's Past?'; 'This Stuff Should not Need to be Trained'; 'Freedom and Professional Judgement' and 'Good on Paper or Good With Offenders?'

Chapter ten provides an analysis of two themes on which respondents had differing perspectives, although this was not based on their level of experience. These are the themes of *'Sceptics and Believers''* and *'SEEDS: Saviour or Sell-Out?'*

Chapter eleven presents a deeper level of analysis of the data before suggesting ways in which the differences between the less experienced and more experienced respondents' can be understood. This is presented under the themes of *'Identity', 'Accountability' and 'Autonomy'*.

Chapter twelve provides some final conclusions of my research. There is a lack of research in probation's history which has considered the impact of changes to policy on practitioners. My research has explored how practitioners have reacted to the introduction of SEEDS and subsequently what impact it has had on their practice. I go on to conclude that SEEDS appears to have failed in achieving a substantive change in the culture of the Probation Service. However, SEEDS has highlighted a divide in the workforce and possible reasons for this are presented. Suggestions are made that this needs to be acknowledged if further changes to probation practice are to be a success.

Chapter Two- Putting Probation's Past Into Context

'A Good Probation Officer Should be Full of the Milk of Human Goodness'

Much has been written on the history of the Probation Service with detailed accounts written by McWilliams (1983, 1985, 1986, 1987), Nellis (2007) and Vanstone (2004). It is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of probation's history here but an overview is necessary in order to set the scene and understand the context in which one to one work with offenders has evolved.

The history of the Probation Service can be broadly categorised into periods of high optimism about its effectiveness and periods of extreme cynicism. Throughout its history much of the cynicism has centred on questioning the effectiveness of the Service. The Probation Service has frequently responded by reinventing itself and adapting its aims and objectives in order to meet political expectations of the time (Robinson 2008). This has contributed to what has been termed the "moving target syndrome" (Raynor 1997, p. 24). This can be seen in the distinct phases that make up the Probation Service's history. Each of these stages can be understood in the context of the Service trying to reinvent itself, prove its effectiveness and confirm that it is fit for purpose.

It is important to acknowledge that the Probation Service has always, and remains, subject to differing pressures in terms of practice and policy. It contends with influence and pressure from academics whilst equally subject to constant political interference, making it somewhat of a political 'hot potato'. This is especially true in terms of sentencing where 'populist punitiveness' over sentencing continues to be fuelled by media and politicians (Bottoms 1995; Hough 2002; Pratt 2007). The origins of one to one work can be traced back to the beginnings of probation work in 1876 (Barry 2007; Durnescu 2012). The original aims of the Service had Christian roots and the primary task was considered to be reclaiming drunkards from the street and saving souls through divine grace (Coddington 1950; Jarvis 1972; Mair 1997; May 1994; McWilliams 1983). It was suggested that there was no need for any specific training to engage in probation work as the religious conviction of individuals and divine intervention were considered sufficient in working with offenders (Whitehead & Thompson 2004). Individuals were appointed by the Church of England to work as Police Court Missionaries, who were described by the London Police Court Mission as a "man of God, a man with vocation, a man of character, a man with experience and tact and full of the milk of human kindness" (Jarvis 1972, p. 8).

The Probation of First Offenders Act in 1886 marked the formal 'birth' of probation and gave recognition to the work of the missionaries, although there remained a distinct lack of state oversight (Nellis 2007). Formal professionalisation of probation work is considered to have started in the UK with the passing of the Probation of Offenders Act 1907. This reflected, the then Liberal Government's commitment to the creation of a welfare state and marked the shift from individualism to individualisation (Chui & Nellis 2003; Durnescu 2012; Garland 1990; Nellis 2007). For the first time courts were asked to take into consideration not only the offence but also the offender's character and age before making a decision. The central tenet was that judgment of the court not only had to fit the crime but also the offender (Garland 1990). Consequently these were considered orders of the court rather than a sentence and therefore were not considered punishment (Chui & Nellis 2003; Wasik 2008). Although it was not made a requirement under the Act, courts were encouraged to employ probation officers whose official purpose it was to 'advise, assist and befriend' offenders (Durnescu 2012; Jarvis 1972; May 1994; McWilliams 1983). It was at this time that some scholars and officials started to think about probation as a professional undertaking rather than a mission and there was a shift from a religious and moral discourse to one based on science and rationality (Garland 1985).

A Special Type of Friendship

From the 1930s onwards the ethos of probation work began to gradually change more towards work recognisable of social work, in what was known as the welfare phase. Probation officers became trained professional experts in diagnosing, assessing and intervening in those personal and social circumstances believed to be underlying offending behaviour (Chui & Nellis 2003). The foundations of probation work were believed to lie in trying to introduce a more humane approach into a harsh system (Vanstone 2004). What was considered important was what a probation officer was like in terms of their moral characteristics, not what exactly they should do with an offender (Durnescu 2012).

The links between probation work and social work played an important part in the process of professionalisation. This was not only because of the commonalities in significant tasks but also because the techniques borrowed from social work enhanced the professional status of probation work. Social work represented the closest professional field in terms of the rehabilitation of offenders (Durnescu 2012). The welfare conception of probation work was further reaffirmed by the decision to merge formal probation officer training with childcare and mental health training in the late 1960s (Chui & Nellis 2003).

Consequently, the Probation Service began to adopt more of a treatment or welfare orientated approach to work with offenders. This new notion of offender rehabilitation led to the introduction of social casework which was described as “a direct method of intervention based on a strong and open relationship between the offender and a trained social worker” (Home Office 1962). This marked the formal introduction of one to one work. The relationship between a probation officer and client was described as “a special type of friendship...in which the probation officer’s warm and sincere concern fertilizes the probationer’s capacity for growth and change” (King 1958, p. 73-76). A trusting working relationship between the probation officer and offender was considered to be central to the aim of trying to cure individuals of offending behaviour rather than saving their souls (Garland 1997). Over the years of casework, professional skills became increasingly important in probation work and probation officers were required to demonstrate specialist abilities such as creating a positive relationship and diagnosing and planning. They were expected to display only a few personal characteristics such as warmth and likeability which represented a significant shift from earlier practice (Durnescu 2012).

The Heyday of Probation Practice

This approach to practice prevailed and the 1960s and 1970s were largely considered to be the heyday of probation practice (Chui & Nellis 2003). At this time there was greater penological optimism and confidence in the rehabilitation ideal. As a result the responsibilities of the Probation Service also expanded as they became responsible for aftercare and resettlement (Chui & Nellis 2003). This was evident in practice as caseloads began to expand and more staff were recruited, thus the professional status of the Service began to improve. Although informed by a variety of theories and perspectives, probation officers retained a good deal of discretion in how they chose to work with offenders (Ashworth 2009; Nellis 2007). However, there soon followed a damning critique of the rehabilitation ideal with findings seeming to question the effectiveness of probation supervision. This work began in the USA (Martinson 1974) and was followed up in the UK (Brody 1976; Folkard, Smith & Smith 1976). This led to politicians and the media inferring that ‘Nothing Works’. An era of pessimism in the Probation Service then followed where it was questioned, if probation could not rehabilitate offenders then what was its purpose? (Sluder, Sapp & Langston 1994). There was both ethical and empirical challenge to the rationale that rehabilitation could justify intrusive intervention both on probation and in prison. Confidence in rehabilitation diminished as a result and it was observed that the Probation Service needed to adopt a new approach to offender supervision

if it was to survive as a credible approach in criminal justice (Chui & Nellis 2003). The consequence was a further change in approach.

What followed was the non-treatment paradigm which quickly became synonymous with the 'diversion from custody' approach to practice. The aim of the Probation Service changed from rehabilitation to diverting offenders from custody, the provision of help for offenders, the statutory supervision of offenders and the reduction of crime (Bottoms & McWilliams 1979). It is acknowledged that in reality the decline of the treatment model happened more among academics and policymakers as practitioners continued to believe that offenders' behaviour could be changed (Chui & Nellis 2003). The face of one to one work was to change once more. The focus became the skills of probation officers rather than their personality. Probation officers were required to develop a different set of skills, namely knowledge of the Criminal Justice System, sentencing and skills in communicating with decision makers, especially through social enquiry reports (Durnescu 2012). Whilst the importance of one to one work continued to be central to work of the Service, unlike the previous model of practice, the notion of help was interpreted and led by the client. The case worker did not begin with an assumption of the client's problems; rather they offered unconditional help within certain boundaries (Bottoms & McWilliams 1979). This balance between care and control has long been a source of debate within the probation service (Burnett, Baker & Roberts 2007). The introduction of the non-treatment paradigm transformed the Probation Service and the role of the probation officer from an expert treatment provider to a help provider where the main role was played by the client themselves (Garland 2001). By the very nature of the work, the relationship between officer and offender remained of central importance. However, this central tenet to probation's work was to be later challenged by the introduction of 'What Works'.

The Probation Service was arguably at its most marginalised between 1993 and 1997. Its very existence was under threat as a result of government neglect (Chui & Nellis 2003). An internal shift within the Conservative Government followed which contradicted their earlier claims and it was advocated that 'prison works' (Howard 1993). Prison numbers began to rise and the Probation Service lost its central position within the Criminal Justice System (Annison 2013; Chui & Nellis 2003; Raynor 2008). This shift away from the rehabilitation ideal did not imply the need for any specialist staff skills. The consequences were that resources within the Probation Service were cut and the long standing practice of training probation officers in social work methods was abolished, leaving no official training provision for a short time (Annison 2013; Annison *et al* 2008; Goodman 2006, 2008; Raynor & Vanstone 2007). The very

foundation of the work the Probation Service was doing was questioned following the now infamous conclusion reached by Martinson (1974), which was construed by the media to be saying 'Nothing Works' in reducing reoffending (Durnescu 2012; Goodman 2008; Mair 2004a). This was the catalyst for the most radical change the Probation Service had ever experienced in the form of 'What Works'. It was not until the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s that researchers from the UK (McIvor 1990; Raynor 1998; Roberts 1989) and from Canada (Ross, Fabiano & Ewles 1988) began to question the ideology of 'Nothing Works' and the question of 'What Works?' began to be asked. It is interesting to note that despite the impact on practitioners there was little research carried out around this time investigating probation officers' views of 'Nothing Works', indeed there is little evidence that they were particularly aware of its existence (Mair 2004a; Vanstone 2004a). Despite its weak evidence base the introduction of 'What Works' fundamentally changed the philosophy and everyday practice of the Probation Service.

There was great hope that the introduction of a New Labour Government in 1997 would change the fate of the Probation Service for the better (Burke & Collett 2010; Chui & Nellis 2003). This hope was short lived. New Labour instead pressed ahead with a number of what were considered highly controversial changes. The New Labour Government firmly moved probation work away from social work and significant changes were made to the training pathway for probation officers. Whilst still retaining its links with higher education the new training did not retain any of its links to social work (Goodman 2008). This prompted concerns about the possibility of a two-tier workforce with different training backgrounds and potentially different approaches to the work to be done and very different orientations towards clients (Deering 2010). The Probation Service along with other public sector organisations began to experience a sustained period of 'managerialism' where old processes considered to be ineffective were abolished and replaced with initiatives considered to be based upon the best of private sector practices (Burke & Collett 2010; Deering 2011; Hough, Allen & Padel 2006; Nash 2008). However, it was argued that managerialism actually went further than this and represented "a fundamental assault on the professional cultures and discourses and power relations embedded in the public sector" (McLaughlin, Muncie & Hughes 2001, p. 303).

The Introduction of 'What Works'

The 'What Works' agenda was introduced in June 1998 as part of Probation Circular 35/1998, 'Effective Initiative: National Implementation Plan for the Supervision of Offenders' and was

described as “the biggest experiment in social engineering this country has ever seen” (Kendall 2004, p. 73). The ‘What Works’ initiative relies heavily on a cognitive-behavioural approach to work with offenders and central to the initiative are the principles of evidence-based practice. This suggestion that the causes of offending can be fixed and offenders can be treated is suggestive of a return to the medical model of deviance that previously underpinned probation practice before it was discredited in the 1970s (Raynor 2008). ‘What Works’ is often considered to represent the beginning of group work with offenders. Group work is in fact a method of working that can be traced back throughout the whole of probation’s history (Vanstone 2003), with a significant rise seen in the 1970s (Senior 1991). Despite this and the marginalisation of one to one work at policy level the generalised case work approach that had been so well distinguished in the previous decade continued to dominate in practice (Frayne 1968; Holden 1960).

The introduction of ‘What Works’ served not only to introduce effective practice principles to the Probation Service, it also sparked its modernisation, as it went hand in hand with the introduction of a National Probation Service. This hurried implementation of a new top down management and centralised accountability attracted criticism from staff (Napo 2001; Partridge 2004; Robinson 2005), researchers (Merrington & Stanley 2000, 2004) and academics alike (Mair 2004a). It was widely acknowledged that the hurried implementation of programmes at the same time as restructuring the Service meant that attention was diverted away from case management and the personal support that was needed to help offenders complete programmes and finish their orders successfully (Robinson & Raynor 2006).

‘What Works’ has been referred to as the “largest body of research on effectiveness ever undertaken in Britain” (Raynor 2004, p. 311; Raynor 2008, p. 76). The assumption at the core of the initiative was that those programmes with a cognitive-behavioural base emerged as offering the most promising outcome (McGuire & Priestley 1995). This assumption has been challenged and caution has been sounded about trying to identify the ‘magic bullet’ treatment. Cognitive-behavioural methods have been highlighted alongside other effective approaches such as skills based and multi-modal approaches (Dowden & Andrews 2004; Lipsey 1995). Despite this warning, the focus of work with offenders dramatically shifted and the model of one to one working became increasingly marginalised and consigned to the past (Burnett & McNeill 2005; Burnett & Roberts 2004; Chui & Nellis 2003; Knight 2007a; Ward 2008; Whitehead & Statham 2006; Worrall & Hoy 2005). In its place were more standardised approaches to practice, with referrals to programmes informed by a range of tools based on actuarial assessments (Annison *et al* 2008).

Taking stock

Central to the 'What Works' paradigm is achieving measurable outcomes. The issue of what to measure and how to measure effectiveness remains open to some debate (Newman & Nutley 2003). The 'What Works' initiative lends itself favourably to positivist approaches which are favoured for their experimental approach and ability to demonstrate causal relationships (Raynor 2008). This type of approach reduces the complex world of probation down to quantifiable and measurable entities, capable of being represented by figures, therefore, providing a new way of conceptualising probation practice. It ignores the smaller gains made by offenders which may be of significance to the offender concerned and the source of professional satisfaction for the probation practitioner (Gregory 2011; Whitehead 2007).

The importance of the one to one relationship and the role this can play within the 'What Works' paradigm has been commented on by several researchers (Gendreau, Goggin & Smith 1999; Harper & Chitty 2004; Kemshall & Canton 2002; Maruna 2001; Maruna, Immarigeon & LeBel 2004; Vanstone 2004a). The 'What Works' strategy in 2000 and the report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate Probation (HMIP 2002, p. 8) emphasised the importance of case management, in addition to programmes. The HMIP report clearly set out that the implementation of 'What Works' did not represent a trend of programmes replacing one to one work with offenders and outlined that the traditional case management skills of risk and needs assessments were vital and should not be marginalised as programmes on their own are not sufficient (HMIP 2002). This is a point often missed, despite being stressed in key reports (Chapman & Hough 1998; Underdown 1998) and it is generally accepted that in the rush to implement programmes and achieve targets that were set, this aspect of effective practice was neglected (McCulloch 2006; Robinson & Raynor 2006). Concerns arose from the fact that there seemed to be a preoccupation at implementing interventions or programmes at the expense of providing an experience of wholesome Supervision (Raynor & Vanstone 2007). When he was Chief Inspector of Probation, Rod Morgan warned about 'programme fetishism' (HMIP 2002) as did Hough (2007, p. 30). It was later remarked again that "programme fetishism' seems to have replaced 'normal' supervision instead of supplementing it" (Smith 2005, p. 627).

Whilst 'What Works' was being implemented doubts were being cast over its future as cognitive-behaviourism was described as "like the practices preceding it, it will fall out of favour and other techniques will be experimented with" (Kendall 2004, p. 81). The risk being that probation would then move onto the 'next big thing', rather than learn from its previous failures as history has shown (Kendall 2004). However, despite the research into the

effectiveness of 'What Works' continuing and remaining inconclusive (Gorman 2001; Merrington & Stanley 2000; Vennard, Sugg & Hedderman 1997), the next initiative has been introduced in the form of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP).

It has been argued that over the last two decades, evaluations of 'What Works' have lost sight of the human element of work with offenders and there is a lack of research which considers the wider questions such as what works, *who works* and in what settings (Hough 2007). Even in those instances where an improvement in reconviction rates are seen post intervention, it is impossible to ascertain if it was a result of the intervention and for whom the intervention works or how it works (Goodman 2008; Pawson & Tilley 1997; Raynor 2001). Questions about *who works* raises a number of issues and is an important feature of work with offenders, as working with people is undeniably a skill in itself, especially if they have challenging social and behavioural problems, despite the lack of research or policy interest around this (Hough 2007).

The implementation of 'What Works' has been described by some academics as having failed in its aim of 'rehabilitation' of the Probation Service and concerns were raised as far back as 2005 that "the Service seems likely to pay the price through further reorganisation, fragmentation and perhaps the loss of its name and identity" (Raynor & Robinson 2005, p. 132). The current climate within the Probation Service is perhaps evidence of this having come to fruition. Much of probation's work remains under threat as payment by results and privatisation fast becomes a reality.

It was hoped that lessons would be learnt after the hurried implementation of 'What Works' and that a considered examination into its planning, development and implementation would benefit and shape how things can be managed more effectively in the future (Mair 2004a). Interestingly, the introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) appears to be following much the same route in terms of its introduction and implementation. There appears to be a lack of considered research and a hurried implementation with little thought or consideration given to how this links or impacts on the 'What Works' initiative and current approaches to practice.

A Changing Landscape

The Probation Service was forced to move away from its befriending role in order to survive and its focus became increasingly public protection orientated (Nash 2008). However, for many it has become a punishing service as Paul Boateng, a Minister at the Home Office said, "We are a law enforcement agency. That is what we are. This is what we do" (Newburn 2003,

p. 156). Despite this at the time of writing the Probation Service remains the main agency likely to work with offenders and their families, although this role is increasingly at risk due to the hugely bureaucratic environment in which the Service has to operate (Nash 2008). Following the seminal work by people such as Farrall (2002); Maruna (1999, 2000); McNeill (2003, 2004); McNeill & Weaver 2010; Raynor (2004) and Rex (1999) who all advocated a desistance focused approach to probation practice, one to one work with offenders has once again come back into vogue. A meaningful and respectful relationship with offenders underpins the desistance approach and is believed to be central to an offender's journey out of crime (Durrance, Hosking & Thoburn 2010; McCulloch 2005).

In the wake of 'What Works' there continued to be a number of changes to the structure and management of the Probation Service. Enforcement, rehabilitation and public protection became the key facets of probation's work (Canton 2013). The Service was centralised and rebranded the National Probation Service in 2001 (Jewkes 2008; Morgan 2007) before the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was then introduced in 2004 (Nash 2008; Raynor & Vanstone 2007; Robinson 2013; Robinson & Burnett 2007). This aimed to provide a more consistent approach to offender management and introduced the concept of commissioning and contestability (Dobson 2004, MOJ 2012a). Linked in closely with this was the review by Carter (2007) who proposed that offender management should be a single process that spans the whole of an offender's sentence known as 'end to end' management (Home Office 2004). The introduction of the Offender Management Model (National Offender Management Service 2005) went further and saw the rebranding of case workers as offender managers with the primary role of brokering and referring offenders to programmes and other agencies to do the work they would normally have carried out themselves. This was not particularly well received by practitioners who maintained an offender focused approach (Chui & Nellis 2003; Durrance *et al* 2010).

There followed further changes with the 42 Probation Boards amalgamating into 35 Probation Trusts by April 2010. This saw service delivery organised into some 150 local delivery units which were largely synonymous with local authorities (MOJ 2012a; Raynor & Vanstone 2007). The suggestion of the Probation Service being subject to privatisation was also voiced. NOMS set out that except for servicing the courts, it need not be Probation Trusts that necessarily deliver the services, suggesting this could be contracted to any provider (Home Office 2005; MOJ 2012a; Raynor & Vanstone 2007; Robinson & Burnett 2007). More recent events have seen this become a reality.

The introduction of the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda is arguably the most significant shake up the Probation Service has ever experienced (Calder & Goodman 2013). For the first time the work of the Probation Service will be delivered by a combination of both public and private providers (Robinson 2013). As well as there being a National Probation Service, a number of Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) have been created. The private sector has been invited to bid for this part of the Probation Service's work under the conditions of payment by results. The rationale behind the TR agenda is not only motivated by cost cutting but also expanding the remit of work already undertaken by the Probation Service, to include supervising every offender released from custody, irrespective of the length of their sentence (MOJ 2013). The central aim of the TR agenda is to reduce the rates of reoffending whilst offering a better value for money service to the tax payer (MOJ 2013). However, concerns have been raised that this could see the 'withering away' of supervision of probationers and even call into question the continued existence of the Probation Service (Cavadino, Dignan & Mair 2013). There continues to be a disconnect in the messages being communicated as part of the TR agenda. Whilst cost saving remains a key objective NOMS have also recognised the importance of properly trained staff. It has been acknowledged that offender management is more effective at reducing reoffending when attention is paid to the quality of delivery "although a focus on quality may make an intervention more expensive, paying attention to quality improves effectiveness and therefore, overall value for money" (NOMS 2013b, p. 13). There continues to be little detail provided in how this will work in practice and how more will be achieved for less (Clarke 2013). This next chapter of probation's history is only just beginning to unfold.

Chapter Three- One to One Work

The Changing Face of One to One Work

The one to one relationship with offenders has historically been known by different names including the supervisory relationship, case work, officer-offender relationship and in more recent years reference has been made to it being a 'therapeutic alliance' (Burnett & McNeill 2005; Dowden & Andrews 2004).

Early research into the therapeutic relationship suggested that the quality of the relationship and the personal qualities that the therapist was perceived as having were more important influences than the theory and methods employed by the therapist (Porporino 2010; Truax & Carkhuff 1967). A positive relationship is characterised as being warm, open and showing enthusiasm, respect and empathy for the offender in order to encourage and motivate them to change (Andrews & Bonta 2006; Dowden & Andrews 2004; Marshall *et al* 2002). Research into the relationship within a counselling and psychotherapy environment identified the key characteristics as acceptance, accurate empathy and non-possessive warmth (McNeill, Batchelor, Burnett & Knox 2005; Truax & Carkhuff 1967). Research involving persistent young offenders concluded it was hard to improve on these factors when looking at what the ingredients of a quality relationship are (Lobley, Smith & Stern 2001). Much has been written about the significance of the 'case work' relationship in both probation and social work texts (Biestek 1961; Monger 1972). It is considered to be an integral part of knowledge both in probation practice and beyond that the professional working relationship between the helper and the helped remains a powerful vehicle for change (Barry 2000; Bentall 2009; Rex 1999, 2012).

The changes made to the probation officer training in the mid-1990s are of significance as they represented the era of a new type of probation officer more focused on control and compliance than care and help. Whilst this was the aim of the then Conservative Government, it was argued that many of the skills needed to undertake work with 'damaged' and 'dangerous individuals' lay in social work training. In order for effective work to be undertaken, practitioners with a 'people-oriented' focus were required. This caused some tension with the more managerialist approach being adopted by the Service at that time (Annison *et al* 2008). Further call for skills similar to those representative of social work training were made by Dowden and Andrews (2004, p. 205) who made reference to workers needing to adopt a 'therapeutic alliance' as part of the quest to reduce reoffending.

The importance of forging relationships with offenders received less attention during the 'What Works' era and was further marginalised with the introduction of the case management model (Burnett & McNeill 2005; Holt 2002). This saw a move away from case management to a more target driven approach which was characterised by a focus on outputs (Raynor & Vanstone 2002). The introduction of the case management model represented something of a contradiction. Case management is considered to be made up of a proper assessment of the offender's needs, linking these to a plan of delivery and then implementing this (Healey 1999). Despite case management being a corner stone of offender supervision there remains little research that examines it within the context of the offender rehabilitation literature, although the importance of comparing this approach with the 'What Works' literature has been acknowledged (Taxman, Shapardson & Bello 2003). Case management is described as the way an Order of the Court is managed and involves, practically, the delivery of all elements of an offender's supervision in an organised and systemised way (Holt 2000; Wood 2007). As part of this it is argued that the model emphasises the importance of the relationship between practitioner and offender (Grapes 2007). However, by the same token the model also advocates outsourcing some of the welfare-orientated work that was traditionally viewed as work of the Probation Service (Oldfield 1998). Whilst this provides Officers with a means of managing ever increasing caseloads it also reduces the type of work that Officers report they enjoy and emphasises their role as being one firmly attached to the management of the case (Wood 2007).

Evidence Base

Despite its prominence throughout the history of the Service, historically there been very little work that has considered the 'quality' of one to one supervision, particularly outside of the UK (Burnett & McNeill 2005; Robinson *et al* 2014; Shapland *et al* 2012). However, this is now an area that is becoming more prominent in the research¹. Other research on effectiveness and values has focused on specific aspects of supervision, such as pre-sentence reports (Raynor, Gelsthorpe & Tisi 1995) and programmes (Goggin & Gendreau 2006). As outlined by the National Audit Office (2008, p. 35) "there are no targets assessing the quality of engagement with offenders...and with... a lack of focus on offender management...there is a risk that service quality could be compromised to meet targets."

¹ See: Offender Supervision in Europe. European Co-operation in Science and Technology.
<http://www.offendersupervision.eu/about>

Research into one to one work and 'What Works' differs in terms of its approach. Research into probation supervision tends to be more explorative in nature and focuses more on practitioners' and offenders' points of view. In order to look into qualitative aspects of the work, it follows that qualitative methods are necessary to explore those elements of practice that cannot be captured by quantitative methods and therefore qualitative approaches are commonly adopted. It could be considered softer in nature resulting in data that is more open to interpretation. As a result there is a tendency for this type of research to be given less credence with policymakers. In contrast research into the 'What Works' initiative adopts a very different approach. Research in this domain lends itself to a positivist approach due to its reliance on data and concrete measures (Raynor 2008). Therefore, it is not assumed that the results of research across the two different approaches are comparable. A concern with the traditional relationship between officer and offender is that it is by its very nature subjective and is therefore considered to be unreliable. This presents as a concern for any government as interventions are not as easily introduced. It has been argued that this is one of the reasons why standardised risk assessment instruments such as the Offender Assessment System (OASys) have been introduced (Burnett 2004). These developments in technology have led to radical transformation of the role of probation officers' from case workers to managers of risk. This has been understood by some as a process of deskilling, whereby old casework skills are replaced by tick-box exercises making practitioners interchangeable (Fitzgibbon 2007). Another area of work where relationship skills have been eroded and practitioners have been effectively deskilled is in programmes. They are designed, described and delivered in a very prescribed and detailed way which does not allow for professional discretion (Durnescu 2012; Fitzgibbon 2008; Hollis 1995).

Research has suggested there is some disparity between what practitioners consider to be effective and quality work and that which is prescribed by the National Probation Directorate (NPD) and the then Home Office (Shapland *et al* 2012). This was cited as a major source of job dissatisfaction for practitioners which in turn affected their commitment to the organisation as a whole. This centred on practitioners being motivated to working with people and 'making a difference' and feeling that what they were expected to do was largely ineffective, with too much emphasis put on meeting targets and the overwhelming amount of paperwork, red tape and bureaucracy (Farrow 2004b).

How is Success Measured?

Official attempts to measure the quality of probation practice in the UK are generally associated with the introduction of National Standards in the 1980s and the introduction of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) who measured performance indicators that were set for probation work (Robinson *et al* 2014; Shapland *et al* 2012). These official definitions of quality have been criticised for being management led and top down rather than being bottom up and owned by practitioners' (Whitehead 2007). It is feared that the lack of focus on measuring the quality of offender engagement will be exacerbated by the unceasing focus on meeting cash linked targets at the expense of meeting everything else (Flynn 2002; National Audit Office 2008; Raine 2002). There have been very few attempts to evaluate the work undertaken with offenders on a one to one basis (Deering, Pike & Thurston 2001). Following such an evaluation it was acknowledged that applying evidence-based principles and evaluating them at a local level is complex and difficult. One such attempt to apply evidence-based principles to one to one practice was the Straight Thinking On Probation (STOP) programme. It was intended to be used with a wide variety of offenders in targeting a range of needs. This provided a framework for Supervision which is very similar to the newly adopted SEEDS model. It consisted of a process of assessment, review and implementation. However, the conclusion following two periods of evaluation of the STOP programme was that no definitive answers could be provided about what works in one to one supervision (Raynor & Vanstone 1996). The programme was said to have failed to yield sufficient data to be properly evaluated and therefore comparisons could not be made (Deering *et al* 2001).

Whilst acknowledging the difficulties in measuring what a good quality relationship consists of, reports by the Audit Commission (2002, 2004) suggested that fostering a good working relationship with offenders was a 'core skill' of the Probation Service and an important component of 'effectiveness'. Andrews and Bonta (2003, p. 313) observed that the most effective practitioners were those that developed 'high quality relationships' with their clients. Research has confirmed that practitioners also view a good working relationship as particularly important in working with offenders (Robinson *et al* 2014).

Research by Dowden and Andrews (2004) extends this further. They conducted a meta-analysis of 273 studies to answer the primary question of whether adherence to the principles of core correctional treatment significantly enhanced the effectiveness of treatment compared to programmes that did not incorporate these techniques. They concluded that the quality of interpersonal relationships between officers and offenders is a significant factor in effective

practice or what they term 'core correctional practice'. The important elements of this are considered to be the effective use of authority, pro-social modelling skills, problem-solving techniques, making adequate referrals and effective communication skills. Research has evolved and it is now suggested that not only is the relationship between worker and client important, it is in fact the establishment of positive relationships which is the most significant in terms of reducing reoffending (McNeill *et al* 2005). Robinson (2005, p. 314) entered a plea that more account needs to be taken of the experiences of front line staff and suggested that neither offenders nor those who supervise them are best served by approaches to practice which limit their opportunities to form working relationships.

The Probationers' View of Quality

There has been some research considering offenders' perspectives of probation intervention and its effectiveness which has yielded mixed results. In the Sheffield Desistance study most offenders reported that they got little support from the Probation Service in their efforts to desist from offending. Most reported that their contact with the Probation Service was merely 'reporting to the probation office' and said that their interactions with their officer were only about general matters. The majority said they had not found their relationship with their probation officer useful in terms of them desisting from crime. The researchers therefore recommended that the Probation Service should consider ways of making the relationship with offenders more meaningful and useful (Bottoms & Shapland 2011).

In his influential Liverpool desistance study, Maruna (2000) reported that successful desisters often talked about the role of significant others, including authority figures, in acknowledging and confirming to the wider community their transition to a crime free life. Rex (1999) has made a significant contribution in developing a desistance focused approach to practice. Following on from her research in which she interviewed 21 probation officers and 60 of their probationers, Rex concluded that those offenders who attributed changes in their behaviour to probation supervision described their officer as committed and engaging and said they were more willing to accept advice and guidance in the context of a genuine and engaging relationship.

It has been suggested that whilst offenders value qualities such as showing empathy and warmth, they also expect and recognise the use of legitimate authority, the setting of clear boundaries and the use of directive approaches, such as pro-social modelling. Research also suggested that whilst group work was highly valued by offenders so was one to one work (Mills, Davies & Brooks 2007).

In a review of the literature on quality in supervision, Shapland *et al* (2012) reported that what offenders' valued most when subject to probation intervention was developing a relationship with their supervisor, being afforded enough time to do this and having a supervisor that listened but maintained a focus on motivating them to desist. In addition they welcomed an approach which encouraged problem solving and allowed them to talk about problems as well as being provided practical help and support with problems that they themselves had identified. The same literature review concluded that despite the limited international research available, practitioners shared similar views on what constituted quality, irrespective of the philosophy behind probation practice at the time. These included involving the offender, communication, building a trusting relationship, starting where the offender was in terms of motivation and motivating them to change and move towards a crime free life using a variety of different methods (Shapland *et al* 2012).

An effective worker is considered to be someone who models and reinforces pro-social behaviour, appropriately challenges pro-criminal attitudes and helps offenders address offence related factors. In addition they adopt a collaborative approach, reach agreement with the factors that need to be addressed and support and encourage offenders to do this, whilst also maintaining boundaries and helping offenders to understand their dual role of help and authority (Ross & Fabiano 1985; Trotter 2009). There is some evidence to suggest that workers do not employ these effective skills in their practice and this can have a negative impact on the effectiveness of 'treatment'. As part of their meta-analysis, Dowden and Andrews (2004) looked at therapeutic integrity and the extent to which interventions were delivered in the way that they were intended. The results from 273 studies suggested that where interventions were not delivered as intended the effectiveness of the intervention was compromised as a result.

There is some criticism that research regarding probation supervision has tended to focus on the personal characteristics and skills of the practitioner, rather than how these skills are actually used in the room and how they are received by the offender (Trotter & Evans 2010). Whilst it is acknowledged that practitioner performance is not in itself a mystery but made up of observable behaviours and actions, identifying them has been acknowledged as more challenging (Raynor, Ugwudike & Vanstone 2010). Despite the prevalence of one to one work and it having been the 'bread and butter' of probation's work for so long, relatively little is known about what takes place during supervision with offenders. This lack of knowledge is encapsulated by the often used phrase "the black box of supervision" (Bonta, Rugge, Scott, Bourgon & Yessine 2008, p. 248). Throughout probation's history an opportunity was arguably

lost to capture what goes on between officer and offender. This was partly because the process of working with an offender under the old style Probation Order was seen to take place in private and to have a researcher in the room was considered too obtrusive. Therefore, relatively little was ever known about the way in which offenders were supervised (Mair 2008). It is argued that understanding the dynamics of offender supervision is important as it is one of the most used disposals for criminal offenders in western countries (Trotter & Evans 2012).

One potential problem with the renewed commitment to one to one work is that it is assumed that staff have the skills necessary for effective case management. It has been argued this may be a reflection of history where social work and psychology graduates were hired as it was assumed they had the skills. This was further complemented by the previous social work training route which lent itself to training people in these skills (Trotter 2000). However, this element of training for staff is rather lacking and there is a notable lack of training on how to relate to people on a one to one basis (Paul & Feuerbach 2008).

There have been a number of significant changes within the Probation Service over the last twenty years such as the changes in direction of practice, the introduction of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), the 'What Works' initiative and now the introduction of the SEEDS agenda. However, there is relatively little research which has explored the impact this has had on practitioners in terms of their practice, levels of morale and knowledge and understanding of the changes. Following the introduction of NOMS in 2004, Robinson and Burnett (2007) interviewed 41 practitioners from four different probation areas in order to gauge the extent to which NOMS was impacting on, and more generally, being understood and perceived by practitioners. They concluded that there were a variety of different personal reactions to the change, ranging from optimism and hope to concern and stress and that the variation appeared to have little do with roles, grades or length of time in service. They equally found that practitioners employed a variety of different strategies in coping "with a seemingly unending stream of fresh initiatives and directives" (Robinson & Burnett 2007, p. 331). Some displayed "passivity with a determination not to get bogged down"; others were inclined to focus on the positives, whilst others expressed anger or cynical resignation (Robinson & Burnett 2007, p. 331).

Commentators on the modern day Probation Service have argued "without doubt the modernised probation world is more technically efficient and accountable...but not necessarily more human, meaningful or compelling" (Whitehead & Statham 2006, p. 76). Despite the recent culture within the Probation Service being largely managerialist and target focused and

the emphasis being on punishment and public protection, there is evidence that 'real practice' continues to be based on a more humanistic person-centred, case model approach (Deering 2010). An understanding of the culture of the Probation Service is critical when evaluating the impact any new initiative or change of policy has on the ground and equally in understanding the impact the culture has on any new initiative.

Chapter Four- Probation Culture

Workplace Culture

Defining organisational culture can be fraught with difficulties. In its broadest sense organisational culture has been defined as “how things are done around here” (Mullins 2010, p. 739). As Deering (2011, p. 25) highlights there are “a multiplicity of definitions of culture and, in particular workplace culture.” Additionally Ott (1989) suggested that subcultures can exist within organisations which can coincide and sometimes conflict with the dominant culture. The culture of an organisation can be defined as “values that are shared by individuals that manifest themselves in the practice of members of that occupation or organisation” (Mawby & Worrall 2011, p 4). Deering (2011, p. 25) and others (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952; Schein 1985; Schwartz & Davis 1981) adopt a different approach and define workplace culture as operating on three levels. The first is the broadest macro-level, made up of overt behaviours and written policy. The second level is made up of organisational values and the sense of what ought to be and the third level is taken for granted as the correct way to behave within the organisation.

Culture shapes an organisation by integrating new members and socialising them into ways of working (Burke & Davies 2011). The development of culture allows organisations to function internally and be able to react and adapt, as well as recruit new members into a specific way of working (Mawby & Worrall 2013). It further acts as a resource for adapting to a new environment (Mawby & Worrall 2013).

It is widely acknowledged that culture exists in all organisations and is complex in nature. Whilst culture can act for the good and as a source of stability it can also act as an obstacle to progression and be resistant to change (Mawby & Worrall 2011; Worrall & Mawby 2013). Research findings suggest that the significance of organisational culture is often highlighted when new or unexpected demands are placed upon it (O’Donnell & Boyle 2008). The significant body of literature within the field of business management suggests that the successful management of change is essential for any organisation in order to achieve continued economic performance and competitiveness (Todnem By 2005). Change is highlighted as being a complex and powerful psychological experience that individuals react internally to (Mullins 2007). Therefore it is suggested that a participative style of management where staff are kept informed of proposals and encouraged to adopt a positive attitude results in a greater likelihood that change will be accepted (Mullins 2007). This is of particular relevance for the Probation Service.

Culture Within the Probation Service

There has been relatively little research examining the culture of the Probation Service, especially compared to the Police Service (Burke & Davies 2011; Mawby & Worrall 2011; Worrall & Mawby 2013). The literature that does exist has tended to focus more on theoretical debate rather than exploring practitioner's actual opinions (Deering 2011). Research by Mawby and Worrall (2011, p. 7) identified the core features of probation culture as including long office hours, group solidarity, high levels of organisation and computer literacy and multi-specialism. Other features they identified were weariness and cynicism about the Service, a desire for autonomy and opportunities to be creative in the way they supervise offenders and a strong belief in the capacity for people to change. Whilst acknowledging the complexity of probation culture they argued that if understood, it can enhance the supervision of offenders rather than undermine it. However, a note of caution is also sounded that attempts to dismantle probation culture through breaking the ties that bind probation workers could be counterproductive (Mawby & Worrall 2011). The significant challenges that the Probation Service is facing as part of the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda could be understood to pose such a threat. Staff are undergoing a period of readjustment following a controversial process of being split into either the National Probation Service (NPS) or the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). This has to some extent seen the creation of new, disparate teams operating within the same offices as before but with the added challenge of working for different organisations with subtly different priorities. The values and principles of practitioners which have underpinned the culture of probation are now being put to the test as the focus of each provider continues to evolve. The team ethos which has long been endemic in probation practice has been challenged and further tensions have materialised due to concerns about possible changes to terms and conditions. Perhaps it is no surprise that what transpires is an increasingly segregated workforce.

There has continued to be some debate as to how established and stable the culture of the Probation Service is. Nellis and Gelsthorpe (2003, p. 227) suggest that the current culture within the Probation Service is ambiguous with straplines highlighting 'enforcement, rehabilitation and public protection' whilst '*A New Choreography*' (Wallis 2001) puts victims at its centre. It is therefore suggested that the Service lacks an overarching moral principle. Mair and Burke (2012, p. 192) suggest that the Probation Service has "lost its roots, its traditions, its culture, its professionalism." Despite claims that the Probation Service is in decline, Mawby and Worrall's (2013) research interviewing sixty probation practitioners about their experience of 'doing probation work' suggested that this is not the case. They concluded that "probation

workers retain a strong sense of their roots, tradition, cultures and professionalism” (Mawby & Worrall 2013, p. 140). They assert that the culture is positive and supportive of creative work with offenders in the quest to protect the public.

Culture within the Probation Service is recognised as being complex and multi-faceted in nature, varying over time and space (Foster 2003; Mawby & Worrall 2013). The literature on police culture has similarly identified the presence of more than one culture (Foster 2003). Within the Probation Service cultural differences can be seen between areas as well as within areas. In addition to geographical differences cultures can vary depending on the type of work that is being done. For example the working culture in prisons, approved premises and unpaid work settings is likely to be different (Mawby & Worrall 2013). Culture is not static, it changes and evolves over time, there are therefore also likely to be generational differences when looking at the culture of the Probation Service. It is recognised that there is a top down influence upon the organisational culture which is not necessarily accepted by all members (Deering 2011). This gives rise to a potential gap between the ‘official culture’ of the organisation and practitioners’ perspectives. The official culture is largely represented by policies, business plans and aims and objectives but it is argued that practitioners modify these to some extent, based on their own values, beliefs and needs (Deering 2011). Despite the imposed changes to the values and aims of the Service in the form of public protection and risk management, the Probation Service has remained true to its core values and has continued to promote an inclusive and holistic approach as one of the methods to meet these objectives (McGarry 2013). It is suggested that one of the reasons the Service has managed to integrate the priorities of risk management with other approaches is the level of training and specialism held by practitioners (McGarry 2013). Alongside child protection services it is recognised that the Probation Service is the most specialised at risk assessment where notions around risk have become centrally organising principles (Hilder & Kemshall 2013). However, it remains to be seen what impact the significant changes made to training arrangements and the TR agenda will have.

Probation training has become increasingly criminologically focused and employer-led rather than the emphasis being on social work (Annison 2007). Trainees were employed by their local Probation Trust and more recently by NOMS directly. They are expected to work to NOMS aims which are protecting the public and reducing reoffending. Practitioners are monitored to ensure their compliance in this and as a result there have been marked changes made to the training curriculum (Skinner & Goldhill 2013). Prior to its implementation concerns were expressed that the new probation training arrangements would “foster an enforcement-driven

mentality” as trainees are exposed to an unrelenting discourse of risk and public protection (Treadwell 2006, p. 1). The unquestioning acceptance of performance culture as the ‘right’ discourse and beyond question has given cause for concern (Carlen 2005). Subsequently the consequences of such fierce target cultures have begun to be explored (Carlen 2008; Nellis 2002). The National Audit Office (2008, p. 35) highlighted that “this focus on inputs, processes and outputs is important but cannot, on its own, guarantee the achievement of the desired high-level strategic outcomes on reoffending, public protection and punishment.” Current performance management strategies such as National Standards have been criticised for their over emphasis on the timeliness of a practitioners work with less attention being paid to the quality of such work or the achievements of outcomes (Merrington & Stanley 2007). It is suggested that in recent decades the focus on targets, performance and managerialism has threatened practitioners’ professional identity (Fournier 2000).

What Symbolises Culture?

It is recognised that the Probation Service has never had, or sought, the symbolic status of other Criminal Justice professionals (Mair & Burke 2012). Unlike other Criminal Justice Agencies the Probation Service has very few visual symbols which depict its culture. Whilst the police have a distinctive uniform, helmet and gadgetry and the Prison Service have a uniform and carry keys, there is no such strong symbol for probation (Mawby & Worrall 2013). This suggests that probation culture is characterised more by implicit components. Some common threads have been identified as running through the Probation Service acting as cultural indicators and identifying probation. Mawby and Worrall (2013, p. 142) suggested these to be practitioner’s motivation, artefacts, which are the most visible parts of an organisation (e.g physical space and layout), job satisfaction and meaning. They argue that central to how practitioners’ find meaning in their work is professionalism, which in this context is made up of credentialism through recognisable qualifications, expertise and autonomy.

Due to their work with individuals who are perceived to be difficult and generally regarded by society as largely undeserving, probation workers have been described as ‘socially tainted’ (Kreiner, Ashforth & Sluss 2006). One of the pervading features of probation culture is the workforce’s belief in an offender’s capacity to change. The desire to be a part of this and working with people is commonly cited as one of the reasons people join the Service (Mawby & Worrall 2013). Many probation workers view their work as a vocation and have a need to do meaningful work and make sense of it. They do this through intellectualising and reflecting on their work whilst retaining a commitment to social equality and respecting social diversity

(Mawby & Worrall 2013). Probation workers occupy an interesting position in being 'all things to all people'. They have a difficult task of bridging the worlds of law enforcement and law breakers, acting as a 'servant of the court' whilst maintaining the fundamental belief in the unassailable worth of the offender as a human being (Worrall & Mawby 2013).

Probation culture has undergone several transformations over the years (Robinson & Raynor 2006). The ethos and focus of practice has continued to shift, largely in line with government agendas. The days of 'advise, assist and befriend' were underpinned by a welfare culture characterised by a desire to help offenders. However, this culture of individualism in probation practice has equally been criticised for its inconsistency and idiosyncrasy (Burnett 1996).

The introduction of managerialism and accountability saw the culture of probation change to one based around evidence (Nutley & Davies 1999) and increasingly characterised by targets and a focus on enforcement (Davies & Gregory 2010; Whitehead 2007). Change is recognised as inevitable and almost continuous in most organisations (Mullins 2007). Within the public sector much of this comes from political and social change such as new legislation. However, it is argued that change also occurs because cultures outlive their usefulness in helping the workforce to make sense of their working environment. The workforce therefore find different ways of behaving and adopt different beliefs which become part of the new culture (Deering 2011). Conversely, culture can be resistant to change. Mullins (2007, p. 824) suggested that this is a result of a combination of factors, including inconvenience, loss of freedom, habit, personal perceptions and economic implications. Following the wealth of changes that have pervaded the Probation Service, the new penalty has been criticised as simply moulding practitioners into conforming with risk management practices through a prevailing discourse, culture or by the power which is inherent in hierarchical organisations (Cheliotis 2006). It is proposed that resistance will continue to blight the Service despite the "breeding of a new, up-and-coming generation of blasé professionals" (Cheliotis 2006, p. 319). There continues to be some debate as to whether significant changes in the field have created starkly different generations of practitioners. However, Robinson *et al* (2014, p. 136) suggest that such divisions do not exist and propose that there is a culture among frontline staff that is "stubbornly cohesive and/or resistant to change" and that this culture retains its alliance with traditional social work values.

There have been many new initiatives over the years such as the introduction of National Standards and 'What Works' which have all sought to affect a change in the culture of the Probation Service, all with varying degrees of success. The current climate of the Probation

Service very much has public protection at its heart and the days of uncensored autonomy in practice are unrecognisable to present day practitioners. The introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) in 2010 represents the most recent attempt at instilling a fundamental change to the culture of the Service. Whilst the Government promote that the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda will allow staff greater freedom to actually do what works with offenders, there is a risk that it will in fact achieve the opposite and prompt a return to an emphasis on process driven practice (Clarke 2013). Concerns have been raised that following the reforms and changes to the Probation Service it is increasingly relying on a “harder working, less autonomous, less qualified and cheaper workforce” (Gale 2012). This gives rise to important questions about how service quality, in terms of reducing reoffending and protecting the public, will be achieved.

Chapter Five – The Introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP)

The Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) was introduced in 2010 in order to improve the quality of service delivery and offender engagement (NOMS 2013a; Rex & Ellis 2012). The central hypothesis to the OEP is that “the one to one relationship between offender and supervisor can be a powerful vehicle for change to reduce reoffending” (Copsey 2011, p. 1). The aims of the OEP are to reduce offending through more effective one to one engagement, enable staff to use their time effectively to balance demands and increase public confidence in community sentences (Copsey 2011; Rex 2012). These aims are arguably not revolutionary and fundamentally speak to what the Probation Service already aims to achieve in its work with offenders. The overarching aim of the OEP was to test a range of evidence-based practices in order to affect a change in culture (NOMS 2013a). It was acknowledged that there were a number of factors affecting whether the changes in practice that flow from the OEP would become embedded in practice including factors such as the future resolve of managers and practitioners (NOMS 2013a).

Whilst offender engagement is considered to be an important element of probation practice and is once again a priority for the Probation Service, there is surprisingly little reflection about what it is (Hughes 2011b). On one level it has been described as ensuring compliance by motivating and encouraging offenders to attend appointments as directed by the court. This does not represent anything new for the Probation Service and does not require any fundamental changes to the underpinning of the Service (Hughes 2011b). At the other end of the spectrum offender engagement can mean securing the full participation of offenders, encouraging them to take ownership and to take the lead on decisions regarding their goals (Hughes 2011b). This arguably requires a different skill base and does not align itself well with the current approach to practice, with its emphasis on assessment, management and the delivery of approved interventions (McNeill 2006; Raynor 2007).

The Basis of the OEP

The OEP derived from the outcome of various different pieces of work (Rex 2012). It brings together relevant evidence from published sources, small scale local research and evaluation, a commissioned research programme and local innovations and practices and methods that could then be shared nationally (Rex & Ellis 2012). An extensive literature review was recently commissioned in order to contribute to the evidence base for the OEP (Shapland *et al* 2012). It was reported that it is important for supervision to be about developing and maintaining motivation and hope, promoting offenders’ strengths and resources and working ‘with them’,

not 'on them'. This is an important point as it contradicts the ethos of 'What Works' principles and the one size fits all approach associated with it (Shapland *et al* 2012). This type of work can arguably only be achieved in the context of one to one supervision and is not something that can be as easily addressed under the realms of 'What Works' principles.

There are encouraging signs that the OEP is seeking to adopt a more collaborative approach, working with practitioners in research and policy making rather than telling them the results. This stands in contrast to the overly rigid and bureaucratic approach taken with the introduction of 'What Works' (Burke 2010). Central to the OEP was that the programme would be driven by practitioners seconded from Probation Trusts. Practitioners were to be involved in producing the programme as well as acting as a sounding board and quality check throughout the life of the programme in the form of reference groups (Rex 2012).

The OEP is the overarching umbrella under which there are a number of projects that have been piloted and tested in particular Probation Trusts (Copsey 2011). These projects cover a range of areas of practice but they all share the same aim of enhancing offender engagement. Skills For Effective Engagement and Development (SEED) is just one of the projects². This is targeted at practitioners and addresses how they relate to and work with offenders (Rex 2012; Sorsby *et al* 2013).

SEEDS

The SEED pilot came out of three pieces of research. The first was regarding the use of pro-active supervision which resulted in lower arrest rates (Taxman 2008) and the second related to the use of pro-social modelling which was linked to lower reconviction rates (Trotter 1996). The final piece of research was the Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS) project carried out in Canada by Bonta *et al* (2010). The project incorporated the principles of risk, need and responsivity and involved probation officers utilising cognitive-behavioural skills in Supervision in order to address pro-criminal attitudes. Audiotapes of interviews with offenders were then analysed to assess the effects of the STICS training programme. They concluded the project not only demonstrated a change in the behaviour of officers but there was also a reduction in recidivism rates for offenders. It is interesting to note that this research originated in Canada which was also the place of origin for much of the 'What Works' work.

² See Appendix 1 for a diagram outlining the components of the Offender Engagement Programme

The SEED project forms part of the 'enabling framework' which brings together the skills of practitioners and their line managers. SEED aims to bring back to the forefront of probation practice the importance of relationship building skills through training and continuous professional development. This is in line with the central hypothesis of OEP which advocates the relationship as a powerful vehicle for changing behaviour and reducing reoffending (Rex 2012; Rex & Hosking 2013). The aim is to equip practitioners through training with skills of engagement. The SEED training package includes relationship building, pro-social modelling, motivational interviewing, the principles of risk, needs and responsivity, cognitive-behavioural techniques and the structuring of one to one supervision (Sorsby *et al* 2013).

This reflected my experience of what was covered in the SEED's training. The model was clear in setting out that practitioners should receive follow-up training, coaching, action learning sets and observation to ensure these skills are constantly refreshed and built upon (National Offender Management Service 2011). Despite the promise of follow-up training, it was clear from the research that this has not materialised in practice³.

The second part of the 'enabling framework' is the Reflective Supervision Model (RSM) which links in closely with SEED, although it did not form part of the interviews with respondents. This is concerned with line managers' and their role in developing an enabling culture (Rex & Hosking 2013).

There were also other projects that looked more closely at the supervision process, the arrangements for recalled prisoners and changes that were required to improve the use of professional discretion. There were also three other projects introduced that were less focused on the day to day practice but on improving the behind the scenes aspects to the work. This included revising the quality assurance framework for a holistic quality check of work with offenders, providing an external evaluation by academics of work undertaken to date and focusing on improving stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the OEP⁴. Reference groups were introduced in order to support this process, which have become well established for practitioners, middle managers and the wider stakeholders (Copsey 2011; Rex & Ellis 2012). Feedback on the OEP from stakeholders was positive (NOMS 2013a; Rex 2012). This confirms my own observations of practitioners' initial response to SEEDS.

³ Follow-up training events did take place as part of the pilot studies see Sorsby *et al* 2013

⁴ See Appendix 1 for diagram outlining the components of the OEP

The 'enabling framework' is based on the theory that organisational culture can either inhibit or promote effective engagement with offenders and that the culture is largely determined by the behaviours and activities of managers. Therefore by investing in managers the impact should be seen all the way through the organisation in a ripple effect. The 'enabling framework' included a range of enabling activities aimed at facilitating effective engagement and supporting practitioners in developing relational skills and emotional intelligence, reflective practice, professional judgement and defensible decision making. The focus was on the four key themes of pro-social modelling, reflective practice, observed practice and action learning (National Offender Management Service 2011).

Due to the inextricable link between the 'engaging practitioner' and the 'enabling framework' the decision was made to amalgamate them into one⁵. This reflected the importance of the role of middle managers in supervision (National Offender Management Service 2011; Rex & Hosking 2013). SEED therefore became known as SEEDS (Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision). The framework was developed in response to feedback from Trusts who wanted a model that facilitated staff in delivering high quality practice in light of the revised National Standards. It was also called for in order to give senior managers clarity regarding the expectations of good quality practice (NOMS 2012a).

The aim of SEEDS was to "produce a robust, evidence-based framework which can inform NOMS commissioning priorities for 2012/3 and beyond" (NOMS 2012a, p. 3). This quote suggests a forward looking approach to the implementation of SEEDS and raises the possibility that privatisation of the Service was high on the agenda, something which has now come to fruition within the Probation Service. This intention is possibly further evidenced by the quote from Michael Spurr, NOMS Chief Executive, who clearly set out that "structures to deliver probation work in the future will be different- but effective engagement with offenders will remain at the heart of what we do" (NOMS 2013a, p. 1). This suggests that whilst some things are set to change such as who will be delivering the initiative, other things such as the underlying aim of such initiatives will not.

A Collaborative Approach

SEEDS is a model that is applicable to all grades of staff from senior managers all the way through to case administrators. Although not mandatory, NOMS were encouraged that 33 out

⁵ See Appendix 1 for diagram outlining the components of the OEP

of 35 Probation Trusts signed up to receive the SEEDS training which evidences the buy-in to this approach, at least at the level of Trusts (NOMS 2012a; NOMS 2013a).

Results from pilot studies were reported by Martin Copsey, Programme Director, to be “*promising and encouraging*” (NOMS 2013a, p. 2). An external evaluation was carried out in three of the eight trusts who took part in the pilot study by Sorsby *et al* (2013). The evaluation was designed as action research involving participants completing evaluation questionnaires at the conclusion of each training event. A progress report was then produced which provides a detailed look at how practitioners viewed the training and the SEEDS model. Practitioners were reported to have found that the “model has improved the focus and structure of their supervision sessions with offenders and middle managers value the focus on professional practice” (NOMS 2013a, p. 2). The evaluation concluded that the majority of participants rated the topics covered in the SEEDS training as ‘very’ or ‘quite’ interesting” and the majority felt that the topics would be ‘very’ or ‘quite’ relevant to their practice (Sorsby *et al* 2013). At the initial training the structuring of supervision session was the thing participants reported they were most likely to use again (Sorsby *et al* 2013).

It is reported that the majority of participants felt empowered to implement the skills following the training and said they had developed their skills as a result of the training. Although there were differences in what individuals found useful and some things were more popular than others, overall it was considered that all the material was interesting and useful (Sorsby *et al* 2013).

The introduction of SEEDS resulted in something of a professional quandary for me personally. Whilst on the face of it the principles of SEEDS made sense and reflected my own commitment to engaging offenders, I also questioned its validity. This was a result of having both a good theoretical and experiential knowledge of SEEDS having applied it to my own practice. This highlighted a number of practical issues that need to be taken into consideration, especially in my current role within a prison environment. There appeared to be little flexibility in the way that SEEDS was intended to be applied in practice and little thought appeared to have been given to the different contexts in which practitioners have interactions with offenders, such as in a prison setting or approved premises.

Offenders themselves identified that the most important factors in their engagement with practitioners were relational. They identified positive staff conduct, the appropriate use of authority and the provision of practical help and assistance as important factors. Offenders were clear that they wanted interventions to be responsive to their own circumstances but

they were also willing to accept direction from their officer if this was seen as purposeful (Bottoms 2001).

The Jersey study (Raynor, Ugwudike & Vanstone 2014) was concerned with systematically looking at the skills and methods employed by probation staff in individual supervision. It followed from a shared perception that the developments in evidence-based practice seen in England and Wales had not paid sufficient attention to the impact of skilled one to one supervision (Raynor, Ugwudike & Vanstone 2014). The study involved the collection of 95 videotaped interviews to allow for the creation of a checklist identifying the skills and methods used by practitioners. The checklist contained 63 items broken down into the areas of relationship skills and structuring skills.

Provisional findings were that staff varied considerably in the skills they used, although most were quite consistent in their own scoring suggesting that their practice was stable. The greatest variance was seen in the use of structuring skills which included motivational interviewing, problem solving and cognitive restructuring, rather than relationship skills. They concluded that this reflected the social work training that most of the participants had received.

The Jersey study was also concerned with looking at the impact on offenders. It was reported that practitioners who had above average checklist scores also had greater reductions in the assessed risk of offenders on their caseload (Raynor 2011). Whilst this reduction in risk could be a direct result of the above average scores on the skills checklist it is also possible that it could be a result of practitioner bias. The reported reduction in risk is a direct result of practitioner's assessment and scoring, therefore it is open to bias and remains a subjective measure. The skills checklist bears some resemblance to the SEEDS model which also covers both structuring and relationship skills. The SEEDS model aims to equip practitioners with the skills of engagement and then provide ongoing support in the form of training, coaching and action learning sets.

The establishment of the OEP has prompted a renewed emphasis among policymakers of the importance of positive working relationships in sustaining offender engagement and commitment. The very creation of the OEP suggests that prior to its implementation there have been perceived deficits in the level of skills held by probation practitioners in engaging and motivating offenders (Maguire n.d).

The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector

This perceived deficit has stimulated a search for remedies. One such remedy is the use of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) drawing on this sector's ability to engage and work productively with hard to reach groups, such as offenders. This is often achieved through some form of one to one relationship or mentoring in which a close and supportive relationship is developed (Maguire n.d). The difficulty lies in transferring this to probation practice as the rules by which VCS staff and offender managers operate are very different. By the very nature of the VCS sector, the relationships built are often voluntary and are very much client-led. This means the services delivered are often tailored to the individual and delivered in line with their wishes (Maguire *et al* 2010).

An offender's relationship with their offender manager has a very different basis. Attendance is compulsory and backed up with the threat of breach for non-compliance. In addition offender managers have very little discretion in the amount of time they can spend with an offender and must have a focus on risk (Maguire n.d). The principles underpinning the VCS sector assert that any form of coercion undermines the relationship, it is therefore suggested that no matter how well techniques typically used by the VCS are employed by offender managers they will not be successful (Maguire n.d). However, another argument is that there is no reason why the techniques of engagement employed by the voluntary sector cannot work within the probation environment. Although, it is acknowledged that further research is needed to distinguish which skills can work across both environments, which skills work well in the Voluntary and Community Sector that can be adapted and which skills will not map across to the probation setting (Maguire n.d). It has been suggested that one way of addressing this is to use staff and volunteers from the VCS to work alongside offender managers. This would allow staff from the Voluntary and Community Sector to perform the role of mentors and build the close collaborative relationship with offenders, leaving offender managers to focus on assessment and managing risk. An encouraging development was the increase in popularity of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model which advocates multi-agency working in managing and rehabilitating offenders (Senior *et al* 2011). This has extended further as there are increasing numbers of volunteers and mentors being utilised to support the work of offender managers across Probation Trusts.

The Process of Change

Change within organisations is difficult. Evidence suggests that only 30 per cent of organisational change programmes are effective (Kotter 1996). This can also be seen within

the field of community corrections where 'implementation failure' is prevalent (Goggin & Gendreau 2006). This was acknowledged during the formulation of the OEP and was part of the rationale for Trust managers being seconded to the OEP team. These 'change managers' not only brought with them a sound understanding of the practice environment but also acted as the bridge between NOMS and staff. Their key role was to convince practitioners that this was "not just... another change programme being imposed on them..." (NOMS 2013a, p. 5). This suggests that the difficulties of getting practitioners to 'buy into' the OEP were acknowledged from the outset. The creation of practitioner reference groups further evidence this commitment to collaborative working (NOMS 2013a). It has previously been highlighted that one of the most significant challenges for NOMS is maintaining the morale and motivation of staff in the face of major organisational change (Raynor & Maguire 2006; Robinson & Burnett 2007). This arguably continues to be the case as the pace of change continues unabated within the Probation Service. Whilst it was acknowledged that a collaborative style of relationship may not be feasible for some change programmes, it was considered to be at the heart of the OEP (NOMS 2013a). This further evidences the significant change in culture the OEP was aiming to achieve. Traditionally the culture of the Probation Service has been resistant to change (Mullins 2007). There have been attempts in more recent years to affect such a change with an increasing emphasis on managerialism and accountability in the form of a target driven environment. However, it is generally agreed that this was felt more by academics and policymakers rather than at a practitioner level (Newman & Nutley 2003; Vanstone 2004a).

An implicit aim of SEEDS is for managers to model a collaborative approach that is adopted from the very top down. From NOMS staff to Trust staff, managers to practitioners and practitioners to offenders, the intention being that everybody models a collaborative relationship which subsequently reflects what NOMS wants practitioners to do in their practice (NOMS 2013a). This evidences some of the good intentions on the part of NOMS to adopt a collaborative approach with practitioners.

The collaborative approach that SEEDS promotes is perhaps one of the most important ways in which it differs from the introduction of 'What Works' and therefore represents something new. Not only is its implementation different but the lingo of the OEP is also vastly different to that of 'What Works'. The emphasis is very much on 'working with' offenders, rather than doing things 'to them'. The way in which the OEP is sold to practitioners is also different from the implementation of 'What Works', although the optimism with which it is being sold is very similar. Just as the hype around 'What Works' presumed that all practitioners would 'buy into'

the approach, so too does SEEDS. There seems to be a clear belief within policy circles that all practitioners will buy into the ethos and rationale of SEEDS.

Chapter Six- Methodology

Qualitative Research

I was concerned with exploring how practitioners have experienced the introduction of the Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision (SEEDS) model and the subsequent impact this has had on their practice. Practitioners were advised that the research was about changes to practice following the introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) and the introduction of the SEEDS model. In order to gain insight into practitioners' views I chose to adopt a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. This allowed for there to be some structure to the interviews with the flexibility to respond to what practitioners wished to discuss and it provided a relatively inexpensive way of conducting in-depth research which produced a wealth of rich data.

Qualitative research is not a unified or field of theory and practice. There exists a plethora of viewpoints about what it is and how and why it should be conducted and analysed (Merriman 2009). Therefore there exist various definitions that have different points of emphasis, those that highlight the research purpose and focus (Merriman 2009), those whose emphasis is the epistemological stance (Parkinson & Drislane 2011) and those who focus on the process and context of the data collection (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). There also exist more broad definitions "Qualitative research involves any research that uses data that do not indicate ordinal values" (Nkwi, Nyamongo & Ryan 2001, p. 1).

The volume and richness of the data that is produced is one of the distinctive features of qualitative research. Methods used typically involve words and pictures and focus on the what, why and how questions rather than how many (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston 2013). Qualitative research is distinguished by the fact that hypotheses are often generated following analysis of the data rather than at the outset (Silverman 2013). Although qualitative research is typically considered to be largely inductive, it is argued that this is somewhat of an over simplification. There is no such thing as a 'pure' inductive or 'pure' deductive approach as no researcher starts off with a completely blank page and then interprets the data with a completely open mind (Blaikie 2007).

A qualitative approach was adopted as by definition a qualitative study demands it. Due to the explorative nature of the research, a qualitative approach was felt to offer the most flexibility whilst allowing an insight to inside experience and reality as it really is, thus providing a rich source of data (Gubruim & Holstein 1997). Flexibility was needed as the hypotheses were not

determined at the beginning. A qualitative approach allowed a range of different methods and styles to be considered and I was able to respond to the changing nature of the research as new ideas emerged.

Bryman (2008, p. 370) suggests that the main steps in qualitative research are to formulate general research questions, select relevant sites and subjects, collect relevant data, interpret the data, undertake conceptual and theoretical work and then complete the write-up. It is common for there to be more than one period of gathering data and for there to be some tightening of research questions as the stages progress. Crucially, the stages of data gathering and analysis are not seen as distinct stages and are very much inter-linked. This dynamic approach to research reflected my experience of undertaking qualitative research. Following the first three interviews I made some minor changes to the wording of some of the questions and the ordering. This followed some reflection on the data collected thus far which identified areas that could be improved. Some of the questions were amended or removed as they were repetitious. In addition the ordering was also changed to allow for a more natural and progressive feel to the interview. The iterative relationship between data collection and analysis was therefore embraced in the research. There was a continuing process of reviewing the data as the interviews progressed thereby allowing the interview process to evolve. Analysis of the data proceeded through various iterations as themes started to develop.

At this point it is important to acknowledge my own theoretical position and values in relation to qualitative research. I do not subscribe to the naïve realist approach involving myself as the researcher passively 'giving voice' to the respondents (Fine 2002), although giving voice is a legitimate aim of such research. It is argued that even the 'giving voice' approach "involves carving out unacknowledged pieces of narrative evidence that we select, edit, and deploy to border our arguments" (Fine 2002, p. 218). However, giving voice cannot be reduced to simply doing it or not. The voices of the respondents are of central importance to the research and therefore could not be ignored. Whilst not passively giving respondents a voice I took an active part in allowing the voice of respondents to shine through. The research went beyond reporting what was actually said in order to provide a deeper level of analysis. This ensured that the respondents were not presented passively but in a way that allowed for some of their character to be observed and although respondents were in an interview setting they retained their personal agency. Respondents were given ample space and time in which to express their views freely.

Ethics

The key ethical principles as outlined by Beauchamp and Childress (2001) should be taken into consideration in all research. People have a right to decide whether or not to take part, researchers should not knowingly cause harm or expose people to unnecessary risks, people should not be put at a disadvantage and researchers should not deceive people unless there is no alternative and the aims of the research justify this. It is also imperative that researchers avoid fraud and plagiarism and aim to preserve confidentiality. The research underwent full ethical review as part of the University of Portsmouth's ethics policy and was given approval before data collection began (Appendix 1). As part of the invitation to participate, respondents were provided with an information sheet detailing the nature of the research and what would be required of them (Appendix 2). They were asked to give informed consent before participating, by way of a signed consent form (Appendix 3). All of the respondents signed this. Respondents were then assigned respondent numbers in order to ensure anonymity when reporting the data. Respondents were advised that they could withdraw from the research at any time and told they could do this by contacting me via telephone or email. When writing up the research, respondents were assigned pseudo-names to preserve their anonymity whilst also maintaining a 'human quality' to the research and not simply 'reducing' them to a number. Respondents were made aware that participation was entirely voluntary and that no incentives were being offered for taking part. The interviews were then recorded on an electronic device that was stored securely. Care was taken to ensure that no names or personal information were recorded as part of the interview process to reduce the risk of respondents being identified. There were no concerns of an ethical nature raised during the research process and after agreeing to take part none of the respondents subsequently asked to be deselected from the research.

Gaining Access

The process of gaining access for research has been described as a "long and winding road" (Hayes 2005, p. 1200). However, as noted by Hughes (2011a, p. 314) the problems of access do not end once you are 'in' through the door, rather it is an ongoing process of negotiation and renegotiation. It is suggested that the formal process of gaining access is only one part and that there are in fact a number of more informal protocols involved and 'gatekeepers' of the organisation to liaise with (Hughes 2011a). The gatekeepers, although not necessarily formally in charge, are often key individuals and yield a certain degree of power. Negotiation is often necessary in order to access the right participants or the right data and the gatekeeper may

seek to control the nature of the information gathered in order to protect the organisation (Hughes 2011a). Although the Chief Probation Officer granted permission for the research, it was in fact the senior probation officers (SPO's) of each office that effectively fulfilled the role of gatekeepers in the research as they acted as the intermediary between myself in the role of researcher and the respondents. I relied on the SPO's to forward my emails on to practitioners when asking for volunteers to take part in the research. In doing this they also acted as another means of reassurance to practitioners that the research was genuine and being supported by the Probation Trust.

It is acknowledged that research need not always have a direct pay off in terms of influencing policy or practice. However, these are not ordinary times. They are times of greater austerity. The Criminal Justice System is stretched and the Probation Service is experiencing on-going budget cuts (Worrall & Mawby 2013). At the same time the Service is being put under pressure to be more accountable and more cost effective, therefore access to data, offenders and staff cannot be guaranteed. There is growing pressure for researchers to offer something in return. Although the 'what' is often vague, there is often an unwritten but implicit understanding that this will be in the form of contributing to knowledge and the needs of the organisation (Mair 2008).

Whilst adding to the academic literature, the research is also of possible benefit to the organisation in understanding how SEEDS has been interpreted and received by probation practitioners and to what extent practitioners have adopted the principles of SEEDS into their practice. It also makes a contribution to understanding how proposed changes in culture are experienced by practitioners and equally how the culture of the Service impacts on the implementation of new initiatives. More widely it is of potential benefit to the wider literature on affecting organisational change.

My experience of gaining access proved to be relatively straight forward. However, this was possibly as a result of having gone through the process of gaining access once previously in the same Probation Trust which had been a more testing experience. This was largely as a result of there not being any standard procedure in place for requesting access and not knowing the right person to approach. This meant I was directed to several different people with no one taking ownership of the decision. The decision was finally taken by my line manager who granted access. However, a number of restrictions were imposed, including that I was not allowed to mention the Probation Trust for whom I worked. There were a number of other obstacles to overcome but despite this the research was concluded successfully. This

experience stood me in good stead in conducting further research as I knew the right person to approach and what information they needed to be able to make the decision. I prepared a letter outlining the purpose of the research and what I proposed to do and emailed this directly to the Acting Chief Probation Officer, copying in the Assistant Director for my area and my line manager (Appendix 4). This proved to be a relatively quick and painless process as it very quickly opened up the lines of communication with a number of senior managers and I was successful in gaining permission to carry out the research. I was required to confirm that no access to data or systems was required and that no individuals would be identified. After consulting the Information Security Manager, the Acting Chief Probation Officer then granted me access.

It is acknowledged that gaining access is not always so straight forward and my position as an 'insider' researcher is likely to have been advantageous to me in this process. As an 'insider' I knew who the right people to contact were in order to gain permission and my position as an employee may have meant that there was less suspicion about my intentions with the research. In addition when approaching potential respondents, practitioners may have been more willing to trust someone that they knew to be a colleague. My position is also likely to have been of benefit when building a rapport with respondents as I could relate to their experiences and show genuine empathy.

Selecting the Sample

The sampling method used was convenience sampling. This has been described in the literature as "a cheap and dirty way of doing a sample survey. You do not know whether or not findings are representative" (Robson 2011, p. 275). This suggests an element of randomness to the sampling method which can be misleading as there are all sorts of biases and influences that affect it. Convenience sampling was used due to the constraints on resources such as time and availability of the sample population on which to draw from. The sampling was not, however, random or entirely based on convenience as there were some criteria that respondents needed to meet. The research was open to all probation practitioners based in the community i.e both probation service officers and probation officers. This was regardless of location so those in approved premises, offender management and programmes teams were invited to participate. There was one exception as the research also included one senior probation officer who specifically volunteered.

The sampling process initially involved sending an invitation via email to all SPOs in offices and approved premises asking them to forward it onto practitioners (Appendix 5). This ensured

that I reached the maximum number of people whilst maintaining anonymity, as the email could then be forwarded on to whole office groups rather than being targeted at individuals specifically. I considered this to be a more ethically sound approach as I was not directly contacting respondents which arguably may have led to them feeling under pressure to participate. Respondents were able to volunteer of their own free will. However, it did rely on the good will of SPOs, who fulfilled the role of gatekeepers, to forward this email on to all probation officers and probation service officers.

The email explained that the aim of the research was to explore the views and experiences of practitioners in light of the introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) and more specifically the Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision (SEEDS) model. It also explained what would be required of them and confirmed that it was supported by the Probation Trust. In addition a more detailed 'participant information sheet' was attached to the email which contained more information (Appendix 2). If they were willing to participate I asked for respondents to contact me directly and gave them both my work and personal email address. I then made arrangements to visit their office, or another location if they preferred, in order to carry out the interview. After two weeks I repeated the process and asked the SPOs to re-send the email as I was well aware of the pressures that practitioners were under, meaning they may have forgotten or deleted the original email. I was keen to get representation from across the Trust so as the research progressed I continued to target offices from which I had had no response. In total there were 20 respondents from seven offices across the area (15 female, 5 male). This meant that nearly half of the fifteen offices were represented. There were approximately 240 practitioners who were invited to participate. The gender balance is considered to be largely representative of the gender make-up of the staffing group as a whole and indeed reflects the national picture. Women have continued to make-up approximately 71% of the staffing group and this has been consistent since 2009 (Burke & Fitzgibbon n.d; MOJ 2012b)

As part of honouring the principles of qualitative research there was no predefined sample size. The focus was on quality and reaching a point of saturation rather than being based on a positivist approach and recruiting large numbers in order to provide a representative sample. I made the decision that saturation had been reached with 20 respondents as the same themes continued to emerge and there was little new ground covered. The sample is considered to have provided a good cross section of probation practitioners. The respondents and what they said are recognisable of the modern day Probation Service and are believed to accurately represent probation practitioners. However, it is acknowledged that care must be taken before

generalising the results due to the sample being relatively small in size and only being drawn from one Trust in the country. Although convenience sampling is considered to be less robust than other sampling methods, the sample that was in the end obtained did effectively reflect the world of probation at this point in time. In order to increase the robustness of the sampling method and research findings, care was taken in the sampling process and careful decisions were made such as making sure that there were respondents from across the geographical area of the Trust.

It was encouraging to find that there have been a number of other pieces of research carried out into probation practice with a similar sample size. In her research, Farrow (2004a), adopted a qualitative approach exploring the extent to which experienced probation officers are still committed to the Probation Service and working with offenders. The research involved interviews with six probation officers and then a focus group with the same individuals. It was concluded that whilst experienced probation officers remain committed to their work with offenders, they are no longer committed to the Probation Service overall. A similar sample size was employed in a study by Gregory (2007) who interviewed 15 probation officers about their experience of probation, before deciding that saturation had been reached. She concluded that despite the rise of managerialism, practitioners balanced the demands of justice and care and had continued to adopt a reflective approach to their work. Digard (2010) interviewed 20 recalled prisoners about their perspective and experience of being recalled. He found that many believed the reasons for their recall was highly subjective and consequently they blamed their offender manager for their imprisonment. Similarly, McNeill (2001) carried out research looking at effectiveness within probation practice through 12 semi-structured interviews and Hughes (2011b) carried out 24 semi-structured interviews with members of probation staff and offenders exploring sentence planning and offender engagement. Hughes (2011b) concluded that interpersonal contact and relationships with offenders are of most significance in encouraging compliance and engagement. McCulloch (2005) carried out 12 semi-structured interviews with six social workers and six of their probationers in her research looking at the attention given to probationers' social contexts in supporting their desistance from crime. She concluded that workers already recognise the importance of the probationer's social context and shape their practice accordingly. Davis, Bahr and Ward (2012) adopted a qualitative approach with a sample of 16 offenders to understand their perspective of the process of reintegration. The sample size in my research is therefore considered to be in keeping with other research studies in this field.

The 20 respondents were assigned pseudo-names when transcribing the interviews and writing up the research rather than using respondent numbers. This was a principled choice and important to the research. At its heart the research is about practitioners and it was therefore important for them to come across as individual practitioners rather than just a number. The use of pseudo-names assisted in bringing the respondents to life and getting across their character and a real sense of who they are as practitioners. It also made it more personal when discussing quotes rather than using respondent numbers. Care was taken to ensure that the names chosen were not the actual names of any of the respondents in order to further protect their identity.

It is acknowledged that asking practitioners to volunteer may have had both positive and negative effects. It could be argued that the sample is less representative as a result of a selection effect (Raynor 2008). Asking respondents to volunteer may mean only those with particularly strong opinions or those who may be less busy may have volunteered, therefore not capturing potentially significant information from those who are experiencing particularly high workloads. Equally, the sample may have been skewed predominately by respondents who understood the concepts and nature of the research having volunteered. Those who did not understand the nature or the importance of the research may have been less keen. However, asking people to volunteer also has the advantage of providing them with a 'voice', which Farrow (2004b, p. 208) suggests means they are likely to be more motivated to give their time. One of the critiques levied at individuals having volunteered for the research, rather than having been selected, is that it cannot be assumed that those taking part had attitudes representative of all practitioners within the geographical area (Farrow 2004b). Despite all the possible disadvantages I am confident that the group of respondents in my research did represent probation as a whole, not only in terms of gender, age and number of years' experience, but also in conveying the views that are both widely and deeply held within the profession. The respondents were frank during interview and there was no evidence that they were reserved in their responses. This may be testament to the rapport I built with the respondents and possibly another advantage of being an 'insider' researcher as respondents saw me as one of them.

Careful consideration was given to the issue of reflexivity and the way in which my characteristics of a young, White, female, probation officer acting as an 'insider' researcher may have impacted on the research. Attempts were made to minimise this by being aware of the dynamics of my relationship with the respondents and taking care to present as having an empathic understanding of their views rather than being collusive. I was mindful that

respondents would potentially see me solely in my role as a probation officer and not as a researcher and therefore it was important to remain objective and professional. Whilst showing interest in their views I did not seek to challenge these, neither did I express my own views or frustrations about the issues that were being discussed. This appeared to be an effective approach as respondents reacted well and continued to engage well in interview.

There has been research which suggests that the gender of the researcher is important when carrying out interviews. Warren (1988, p. 44) referred to this as the “focal gender myth of field research” and commented “It is almost a truism of interview research, for example, that in most situations women will be able to achieve more rapport with respondents because of their less threatening quality, and better communication skills.” For many years this claim justified males taking on the role of writing up research, with sometimes anonymous females, having carried out the interviews. However, later feminist research challenged this and claimed that the gender of the interviewer mattered, but male and female researchers would generate different types of knowledge (Padfield & Proctor 1996).

My experience of carrying out the interviews led me to question the possibility of there being a gender difference in terms of the way respondents interacted and responded to questions. My experience of the interviews with the female respondents felt very natural and productive. It was easy to build a rapport and I felt they opened up and were honest in their responses. My perception was that the male respondents presented as more guarded in their views. In my role as a probation officer I am very used to interviewing men as there are significantly more men subject to probation intervention than there are women. Therefore, my skills and experience lay mainly in interviewing men and I do not consider that my style or approach was any different. Although the male respondents had all volunteered to take part and answered questions, they did not appear to always be as frank as the female respondents in expressing their views. There was a sense that they were trying to paint a positive picture and portray themselves as being more upbeat than they possibly felt. One of the reasons for this could be the impact of gender difference. It has been suggested that within interviews females show more social desirability effects than males (Lueptow, Moser & Pendleton 1990). However, this was not apparent in my research. My experience of interviewing does not fit with research by Flore-Macias and Lawson (2008, p 100) who found that male respondents were more egalitarian in their responses when interviewed by a female.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The purpose of qualitative interviews is largely heuristic; developing ideas rather than gathering statistics (Oppenheim 2007). I chose to use a qualitative interview in my research as I felt it was the most appropriate method in order to explore the aims of the research. It offered a relatively inexpensive way of conducting in-depth research which produced a wealth of rich material.

Other methods of data collection such as focus groups were considered but ruled out. Due to the research relying on respondents being candid in their responses the concern was that they may not be as willing to open up in groups made up of their peers. When considering the research design I rejected other methods and types of data collection such as ethnography, experimental and longitudinal research. The latter was rejected due to the time constraints of the research. An experimental approach was equally ruled out as it did not fit the aims of the research which were more exploratory in nature. Ethnography was rejected for various practical reasons such as the time and the logistics involved.

Interviews are typically described as a formal meeting or dialogue between two people where personal and social interaction occur (Davies 2006). They are a very flexible and adaptable tool and therefore they can take many different forms. The most common means of interviewing is face-to-face; however, it is also possible to carry them out by telephone and via computer. These methods are often favoured due to their cost and time effectiveness (Davies & Francis 2011). Interviews have the potential to be an invaluable source of gathering information and opinions that generate reliable and valid data. Face-to-face interviews allow for the collection of rich non-verbal information such as facial expressions and body language which can enrich the qualitative aspects of the data (Davies & Francis 2011). This was one of the reasons face-to-face interviews were selected for the current research.

There are generally considered to be three types of interview; structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The semi-structured interview allows for some structure with clear topics to be covered but also allows enough flexibility for questions to be changed or added in order to fit in with the information being received (Denzin 1998). As Arksey and Knight (1999, p. 6) note, "Interviewees are encouraged to be open and spontaneous...to speak about the issue in question using language and ideas of their own...to generate deep understanding of their world."

A flexible design was adopted as this allowed for concepts to emerge naturally and for them to be examined as they manifested themselves. It also allowed for relationships and themes to be identified as they developed (Semmens 2011). There was little pre-specification and I did not seek to control the interviews. Interviews are defined as “a conversation with a purpose” (Robson, 2002, p. 228) thereby allowing me to discuss the research topic with individuals and look for patterns as well as similarities and differences between them. Semi-structured interviews were used as there was a clear focus to the research and a sense of direction. The semi-structured interview allowed enough flexibility for respondents to talk about what mattered to them and for them to digress, thereby providing a rich source of data. Whilst an interview schedule was used (Appendix 6), this was not adhered to as a rigid structure thus allowing respondents to elaborate and interpret questions as they chose. The interviews, which were all digitally recorded, lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and took place between April 2013 and July 2013. Recording the interviews was considered to be advantageous as it allowed me to then concentrate on the conduct of the interview (Robson 2011). I was able to listen intently and be responsive to respondents as well as avoid taking copious notes, which I felt would affect the flow of the interviews. As there was limited time it was important to build a rapport quickly, as the issues I wanted to discuss required respondents to be honest and disclose their thoughts, feelings and attitudes. The interviews all took place at the office in which the respondents worked. This was their choice and largely for their convenience. However, it is acknowledged that there was a potential risk in carrying them out in their work environment as it could have inhibited them and limited their responses somewhat. Given the richness of the responses and the frank and honest disclosures that were evoked I do not consider that this was the case.

There are many advantages to interviews. They allow the interviewer to prompt and encourage the respondent to open up and develop responses when they are unclear. As a result they offer a rich source of data as respondents respond using a variety of language. Face-to-face interviews in particular, add the dimension of being able to observe body language which can provide a rich source of information and inform the researcher’s interpretation of what has been said (Robson 2011). This requires a great deal of skill on behalf of the researcher which provides further evidence that interviews are not a soft option when it comes to research (Robson 2011).

However, there are also a number of disadvantages to interviews as a research method. It can be difficult for the interviewer to build up a rapport which is important, especially when asking the respondent to divulge personal information or their thoughts, feelings and attitudes about

particular subjects. There is also a danger that the interviewer may misinterpret what the respondent said and care must therefore be taken to assign the right meaning in the right context (Semmens 2011). Other disadvantages are that interviews are time consuming and costly. One interview can last several hours and it then needs to be transcribed, which in itself is a laborious and very time consuming task (Oppenheim 2007). The interviewee may not be wholly truthful and may give what they believe to be desirable answers or what they believe the interviewer wants to hear. This can be for a variety of reasons, such as the power dynamic which is particularly relevant in practitioner research. There are also a number of logistical issues to consider which can potentially be disadvantageous such as agreeing the location and timing of the interview. It was important that I was as flexible as possible in terms of the times I was available and always being willing to travel to the respondents. Recruiting respondents for interviews has been highlighted as an issue as they provide less anonymity than surveys (Robson 2002). Similarly concerns have been raised about the possible bias that arises from interviews, which coupled with the lack of standardisation raises concerns about reliability (Robson 2011). The validity of interviews is also often called into question and some assert that interview results can only be understood as a by-product of the interview process, rather than unmediated expressions of respondents' real opinions (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000). However, the face validity and credibility of research is considered to be strengthened by the respondents presenting their reflections in their own words (Patton 2002). This was certainly evident in my interviews with respondents.

I was mindful that the style of questions and the way in which I asked them could bias or lead respondents. I was also conscious that my own bias or views regarding the research could come across. I therefore kept closed questions to a minimum as I did not want to force or lead respondents to respond in particular ways. Open questions allowed for a richer and more varied response. As Semmens (2011, p. 67) outline, care must be taken to avoid leading questions or questions that invite a socially desirable answer. They also suggest that best practice is to avoid technical or ambiguous language and use only one idea per question. Interviewing is considered to be very demanding and requires the interviewer to be attuned and responsive at all times (Bryman 2008). I was mindful of the need for accuracy and was confident that my skills and experience as a probation officer would stand me in good stead for undertaking interviews. Whilst research interviews are not the same as interviewing offenders, the skills needed such as good listening, engagement and communication skills are all transferable skills. Whilst I relied on my experiences of interviewing offenders as a probation officer when carrying out the interviews, it was however, apparent that different

skills were needed. It was necessary to think on my feet and respond to unexpected diversions from the questions, which was not always easy.

There have been different criteria proposed as a means of judging the quality of interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 70) use the terms credibility and thoroughness whilst Katz (1983) cited by Mishler (1986, p. 115) discusses representativeness, reactivity, reliability and replicability as criteria to judge quality. I adopted this criterion in my own research. Upon reflection I found that some of my questions were too similar which resulted in a repetition of information and may have negatively impacted upon the respondent's experience. As Gillham (2000a, p. 21) outlines this is a common mistake and makes analysing the data very difficult. I therefore made some changes to the questions and reflected on the interview and my style throughout the process.

'Insider' and 'Outsider' Research

There are different types of researcher who may be identified according to the position they fulfil: those who work within the Probation Service, 'insiders', and those who work outside of the Service, 'outsiders'. Both may explore critical issues but from different perspectives although they can support each other (Sheptycki 1994). In undertaking this research I fulfilled the role of both 'insider' and 'outsider'. I am an 'insider' in two different ways; in the respect that I am a probation officer currently in post and recognised as such and as a practitioner that has undertaken the SEEDS training. I am an 'outsider' as I am not currently working in the community and am seconded into a prison. Those who work within the Probation Service and therefore regarded as 'insiders' are likely to have a different perspective and approach to research than 'outsiders'. It has been noted that when regarded as an 'insider' there are fewer problems making contacts to obtain the necessary information (Jacobs 1974; Marquart 1986). Consequently 'insiders' are in somewhat of a privileged position with regards to access to data. However, it is also recognised that with this privileged status comes pitfalls.

One of the potential problems is that of occupational pressure resulting from occupying a dual role of both researcher and employee. These roles can often be competing in terms of demands on a researcher's time and I therefore had to employ excellent organisational and time management skills. I considered that the most successful way of managing this was to take annual leave in order to carry out the research to ensure that the boundaries were maintained and to reduce the likelihood of any conflict in time management. 'Insider' research also has the potential to expose a multitude of ethical and moral dilemmas that may not be as commonly encountered by 'outsider' researchers (Marquart 1986). One such dilemma is role

conflict, by the very nature of practitioner research this is a subject that must be considered. Before undertaking the research I assessed that the potential harm to respondents in my research was limited as I did not hold a position of power over them; therefore they could refuse to take part in the research without any consequence.

However, role conflict was an issue that I encountered in other ways in my research. I was conscious of maintaining objectivity in my role as a researcher and presenting as a researcher rather than a colleague. During one of the interviews a respondent reflected a question back to me and was keen to hear my views. Whilst this was positive in terms of evidencing my connection to the respondents and the positive research relationship I had created, it also presented as a dilemma and highlighted the difficulties of fulfilling a dual role. This may have been an attempt on the part of the respondent to seek reassurance that they were not alone and that their views were indeed shared. In order to avoid leading the respondent and potentially biasing the research I empathised with them but did not offer my own opinion. I was however, mindful of the potential impact this could have on my relationship with the respondent and was careful not to present as dismissive or intentionally obstructive to their questions. These types of situations need to be handled with care as the practitioner researcher must be aware of the power they hold, both within research and over research outcomes (Fox, Martin & Green 2007). Whilst practitioner research has the potential to strengthen this power in terms of developing resources and the credibility of both expert and position power, which can then be used in future research, this must be done responsibly. Expert practitioner researchers bring expertise, resources and the power of their position to the research (Handy 1988).

As well as carrying out research as an 'insider' I was also occupying the position of a practitioner researcher. There is an ever growing literature base regarding practitioner research, as it has become recognised as a significant and legitimate form of social inquiry (McNiff 2002). It is generally accepted that practitioner research should directly benefit practice and be constructed by those who understand the field. Ultimately it presents an opportunity for practitioners to develop research that is meaningful and practical (Fox *et al* 2007). Instead of attempting to eliminate any researcher effects, it advocates the researcher acknowledging these effects through reflexive practice and incorporating them into the research design. The practitioner researcher is forced to address questions about their own values which are embedded in their own thinking (Dadds 2006 cited by Fox *et al* (2007, p. 81). This was an important consideration in my role as a practitioner researcher. My own values and beliefs concerning SEEDS and offender engagement could not be ignored as they

inevitably would underpin my approach to the research. It was therefore important to be aware of my starting point and acknowledge that the one to one professional relationship with offenders is an important issue to me and something that I value as a practitioner.

Another point of consideration was balancing my position as a researcher and as an employee of the organisation. Whilst neither role can be disregarded the risk was that it may lead to respondents viewing me only as a probation officer and colleague rather than as a researcher. One way in which this would be evident would be practitioners not taking the interviews seriously or asking my own opinions throughout the interview. This would be problematic in terms of remaining objective and in trying to limit my own biases influencing the research. One of the difficulties with practitioner research is that the boundaries between acting in the course of practice and in the course of research can become blurred meaning that identifying time to carry out the research may be problematic (Fraser 1997). This was difficult to mitigate against other than by ensuring that I carried out the research in my own time. This allowed me greater authority to assert myself as a researcher during that time. Another practical problem is confidentiality and anonymity which is hard to guarantee, particularly when carrying out research at a local level. However, this did not present as a problem in the research. All of the respondents were aware of the limitations and agreed to take part despite this. During the course of the research there were no disclosures or concerns around confidentiality that warranted further discussion.

When carrying out any research within an organisation, it is important to be aware of the “shadow side of the organisation” which “deals with the covert, the undiscussed, the undiscussable and the unmentionable” (Egan 1994, p.4). By their very nature ‘insider’ practitioner researchers are at an advantage as they know the ‘shadow side’ far better than an ‘outsider’ researcher could. This is considered to be particularly important if the purpose of the research is evaluative, as it is only through research that the ‘shadow side’ of the organisation can be understood (Fox *et al* 2007). Whilst these are considered to be the advantages of practitioners researching their own organisation, there are also significant difficulties. One such difficulty is that it can bring to light issues that the organisation would rather remain hidden (Egan 1994), particularly in public sector organisations which have a higher level of accountability to the public.

Transcribing data

As already discussed the interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. There are a number of recognised advantages to recording interviews. It principally allowed for a more thorough

and repeated examination of what respondents said and avoided the pitfalls of relying on memory alone. It also allowed for a greater level of accountability and afforded for the data to be opened up to greater scrutiny. The data could be subjected to secondary analysis by other researchers; therefore ensuring that it was not influenced by the researchers own biases and values (Bryman 2008).

The process of transcription is well documented to be a laborious and time consuming task and it forms a substantial part of interviewing which should be borne in mind when planning research (Denscombe 2003). However, it is argued by some that it should be seen as “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (Bird 2005, p. 227). There are a number of questions to consider when transcribing data, relating to how it should be laid out and what should be included (Hammersley 2010). Due to the time consuming nature of transcription some writers advise that the analysis of qualitative data should not be left until all the interviews and transcription have been completed and that it should be an ongoing process of review. This allows the researcher to be more aware of emerging themes, thereby defining the research process (Lofland & Lofland 1995).

My experience of transcribing data was very similar to that outlined by Denscombe (2003, p. 183). I underestimated the amount of time it would take to transcribe one interview and how tedious it became. There are a number of errors that can occur during the transcription process. The most common being that of mishearing or recording what you thought you heard or what you thought the respondent meant. It is acknowledged that researchers rely on their own assumptions about language and culture when transcribing data (Green, Franquiz & Dixon 1997). There is a danger that what is transcribed is not a full and accurate representation of what was said which can significantly affect the analysis and final conclusions (Bryman 2008). It is possible to transcribe just those parts of the interview you think are relevant, however, the risk is that something is missed or further transcription is necessary if something emerges later on in the analysis (Gerson & Horowitz 2002). Initially the decision was made to transcribe fully those interviews that were considered to contain the most data. The interviews with respondents who had less to say were transcribed partially, picking out the salient points from each interview. However, after several interviews this was reviewed and taking into account the considerations already discussed I decided to fully transcribe all of the interviews. Although this was more time consuming in the short term, it proved to be an efficient approach as it was easier to identify themes and saved having to revisit the raw data and do further transcription later on in the process.

Thematic Analysis

The data was analysed by means of a thematic analysis which involved identifying themes, “moving from description through explanation to synthesis and implications for action” (Labonte & Feather 1996, p. 24). Despite being widely used there is no clear agreement on what thematic analysis actually is and how you do it (Tuckett 2005). One definition is that it involves “a search for themes that emerge as being important to the phenomenon” (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman 1997, p. 135). It involves recognising patterns in the data where the emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). It is suggested that thematic analysis is in fact very poorly branded compared to other means of qualitative analysis such as grounded theory or discourse analysis. As a result it is often not explicitly identified as the means of analysis even when it is apparent that it was the method used (Braun & Clarke 2006). The search for themes is an activity that can be discerned in many different approaches such as critical discourse and grounded theory, therefore, thematic analysis does not sit apart as a distinctive cluster of techniques (Bryman 2008). Grounded theory remains “an influential general strategy for conducting qualitative data analysis” (Bryman 2008, p. 550). It adopts an inductive and iterative strategy to the analysis of data in order to systematically, yet flexibly construct theory from the data itself (Charmaz 2014). Aside from the time involved other potential disadvantages of this approach are that it is arguably not possible to start a research study without some form of pre-existing theoretical ideas and assumptions and it can be difficult to know when categories are saturated and the theory has been sufficiently developed (Robson 2011). These were some of the considerations I took into account when deciding on the analytical approach that I would adopt.

An advantage of thematic analysis over other methods of qualitative analysis is that it does not require the detailed theoretical knowledge or the commitment of some approaches such as grounded theory and so in that way is more accessible. It provides social as well as psychological interpretations of the data and has the potential to generate unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis also has the benefit of not being wedded to any theoretical underpinning and it can therefore be used within different theoretical frameworks, in different ways and to do different things. It can serve to reflect the reality of a situation or it can be used to unpick or unravel the reality of a situation. It can be a realist method which reports meanings, experiences and the reality of respondents. Equally it can be a constructionist method used to examine how events, realities, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses that operate within society (Braun & Clarke 2006). It can also be a ‘contextualist’ method sitting between the two poles of realism and constructionism and

characterised by theories such as 'critical realism'. This acknowledges the ways in which individuals make sense of their experiences and in turn the ways that the broader social context impinges on their meanings, whilst retaining a focus on the material (Braun & Clarke 2006).

An inductive approach was taken to analysing the data meaning the themes link closely to the data (Patton 2002). In this way the analysis was data driven and was not coded in order to fit into pre-defined categories or to preconceived conceptions (Braun & Clarke 2006). However, it is acknowledged that researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical commitments and do not operate within an epistemological vacuum. A researcher's fundamental belief about how knowledge is acquired and how we learn about reality will invariably influence their approach to analysing the data (Bryman 1984).

Undertaking a staged approach to thematic analysis is not a new concept (Attride-Stirling 2001), but it does provide a means of approaching and organising the data. The analysis was undertaken at both a semantic and latent level and involved three levels of analysis. The first level involved identifying a central organising theme. On a surface level this enabled the data to be divided which assisted in the analysis. It was very quickly apparent that there was a substantial divide between the more experienced and the less experienced respondents. This divide was obvious early on in the research and did not require any in-depth analysis in order to identify it as an overarching theme. The data was then split based on the number of years in service the respondents had. When deciding where the cut off was between the more and less experienced respondents, it was evident as the interviews progressed that this division was at nine years. Therefore, all those respondents with nine years and over in service were considered to be the more experienced respondents and those with less than nine years were classed as the less experienced group. Further validation for this division comes from research by Farrow (2004a, p. 208) who used qualitative interviews to explore morale in the modern day Probation Service. Farrow's research was concerned with exploring the views of experienced practitioners and defined these as practitioners with over ten years' experience. One potential drawback in the way that respondents were divided in my research was that the division only took into account the number of years in service rather than in role that respondents had. This meant that some people may have been in the Service for a long number of years, for example in an administrative role, but have been qualified as a practitioner a relatively short period of time; however they would still be classified as an experienced practitioner for the purposes of the research. Despite this, the criteria remained the same as it was considered that it was the years in service that was the important criterion.

The rationale for this decision was that those who have been in the Service for a long period of time but had only been practicing for a relatively short time have still experienced changes within the Service and would hold views and opinions that reflect these experiences.

The second level of the analysis involved looking at what the respondents had said and then grouping this into key themes to build a narrative. Five themes were identified for the more experienced respondents and three themes for the less experienced respondents. The final level of analysis involved identifying organising principles going beyond what they said. This was done by comparing and contrasting the two groups in relation to three key themes which were identified as capturing the underlying current behind what was going on.

Chapter Seven- Being a Probation Officer: Highlights and Bugbears

Demographics

The respondents provide a good cross section of the probation staffing group in terms of the demographic breakdown. The interviews were insightful and there was a genuine sense of commitment and openness from the respondents. This was evidenced by the frank and honest way in which they spoke and their willingness to get to the heart of the matter. Respondents did not talk ‘office speak’ but used emotive and evocative language which further added to the authenticity of the research. The respondents’ accounts help to provide a richer insight into the realities and underlying meaning of SEEDS and the impact this has on day to day practice.

The sample consisted of twenty respondents made up of both male and female practitioners who were cross grades and from a range of locations across one Probation Trust in the south east of England. Respondents were from seven different offices which were a mixture of both large and small towns and both the larger and smaller offices within the Trust were represented. Table 6.1 below sets out the demographic breakdown of the respondents according to their gender and role.

Table 6.1- Demographics

	<u>Probation Services Officer</u>	<u>Probation Officer</u>	<u>Senior Probation Officer</u>	<u>Total</u>
Male	2	2	1	5
Female	6	9	0	15
Total	8	11	1	20

The gender split is considered to be largely representative of the probation staffing group as a whole. The respondents mean age was 35.4 years with a range of 22 to 54 years. In terms of experience, respondents ranged from having 9 months in service to 22 years with a mean of 9.37 years and a median of 8.5 years. In terms of age, gender and experience the respondents provide a good cross section of probation staff and it is possible to be confident that they represent the Probation Service as a whole. Convenience sampling was used to generate the sample. Although this is a less than perfect technique which does not offer the same benefits as random sampling, such as generalisability, it none the less yielded a good result. A number of careful decisions were made, such as the criteria for selecting respondents, to ensure that the sample accurately reflected probation practitioners. It was evident from the respondents’

open and engaging manner as well as what they said that they represented modern day probation practitioners and they were recognisable as such.

The Highs and Lows of Working in the Modern day Probation Service

Although there were clear differences between the less experienced and the more experienced respondents there were a number of issues on which respondents agreed regardless of their level of experience. These are things that are not necessarily new or surprising. However, they reinforce our knowledge about the occupational culture of the Probation Service.

The respondents were united in their passion for the job which they fundamentally saw as centring around one to one work with offenders. This desire to actually 'do' work with offenders was commonly cited as a motivation for having joined the Probation Service. This reflects the findings of earlier research carried out by Farrow (2004a, 2004b) and Annison *et al* (2008). A further similarity between the two groups was respondents' shared dislike of OASys (Offender Assessment SYStem) and the reported lack of time to get the job done which has been commented on by Mair, Burke and Taylor (2006, p. 13). Whilst not revolutionary in their nature they are still findings relevant to the analysis. Not least, they add a layer of authenticity to the research. They also seek to further reinforce the commonalities in probation practitioners and evidence that despite the rapid pace of change in probation policies and practices, the same issues continue to be of concern.

When asked why they joined the Probation Service, it was possible to categorise the respondents' entry into the Service into three distinct pathways. The first group were those who actively chose it as a career path and succeeded. This group spoke about working with people as the main appeal. In addition to supporting people it was the belief that they would be able to make a difference:

"I thought I could make a difference with people who are vulnerable and at the same time are a threat to the public. I felt that I could make a difference, I could see that. I think we are making a difference, there is no doubt about it" (Simon, 8 years in service)

"I've always been interested in working with people and it was just that opportunity to support people in changing, for them to create a lifestyle for themselves that's not in the Criminal Justice System and to support people really and try to empower people and try to make them believe that things can change" (Sophie, 6 years in service).

The second group were those whose orientation was probation work but they entered the Service in a round-about way:

"I trained as a psychiatric nurse and then I went on to become a child protection social worker and then I joined probation because on the basis that they got more holidays. It was also working with people so to me the core bit is, and the reason that I chose all the different professions, was believing that you could make a difference and you can only make a difference if you have the ability to engage with people, if you don't have that ability then to me, you process people" (Rachel, 22 years in service).

Interestingly, 9 out of the 20 respondents entered the Service having already achieved a degree or even Masters level qualification:

"I did a degree at Portsmouth in Sociology and Criminology, did a work placement at probation, loved it so decided to apply for a job" (Annie, 9 months in service)

"I did a Psychology degree. I sort of thought I knew about probation but I didn't really so I got a job in admin and then I really understood what it was about it and thought 'I like this', I was quite interested in the people" (Lisa, 9 years in service)

"I did a Masters in Criminology and Criminal Justice then I went on the dole. I was in the job centre, an admin position came up, I went for that, they said you're over qualified apply for a PO, that was it, so that was how I got into it" (Lee, 9 and half years in service).

The third group were those respondents whose entry into the Service was random and more by chance:

"It was by accident to be honest. When I finished my first degree I thought I wanted to do something in public sector, working with people but I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do so I just applied to loads of different public sector jobs and this is the one that I got" (Andrea, 5 years in service)

"I was torn between mental health and crime as two interest areas after doing Sociology so I went for the crime. And after doing my Masters in Criminology I thought, 'oh Probation might be quite interesting' but to be honest with you I was going for lots of jobs" (Emma, 9 years in service).

Although respondents differ in terms of their routes into the Service, the reasons for joining linked very closely to what respondents reported they liked most about their job. All of the

respondents made reference to working with individuals which is evident from their quotes. There was an overwhelming sense of pride and commitment that came through from talking to the majority of respondents. All of the respondents cited the actual work they did with offenders as the most satisfying part of their job. They were clear that one to one work with offenders is what they joined the Service to do and this remains at the heart of their practice.

It was possible to make further distinctions from the terminology that respondents used, between those whose motivation lay in wanting to work with offenders; the actual 'doing' the work and those whose motivation lay in seeing results and 'making a difference', so somewhat more outcomes focused. Those who described seeing results as the most satisfying aspect to their work clearly articulated that:

"To see them reintegrate back into the community in a positive way, getting themselves employed, challenging their behaviour and helping them to understand how their way of thinking is driving them to act in a certain way and helping them to reflect on their way of thinking and how it is not helping themselves" (Simon, 8 years in service)

"I think seeing someone make a small step. I think that's what keeps me going in the job really" (Sophie, 6 years in service).

These respondents were clearly motivated by feeling like they had made a difference, much of which came to bear out of one to one work:

"Feeling like I've made a difference. Working with people is why I went into it, to try and change their behaviour and change and direct them into a different way of life and look at what their issues are and look at how we're going to address this" (Naomi, 7 and half years in service)

"The one to one work, that I enjoy because I like seeing the light bulb. You can just see it on their face when something has just become so much clearer to them" (Annie, 9 months in service)

"I think one to one work. That's what I enjoy doing, I like seeing people begin to change. I like it when the penny drops and you know, hoping that possibly my intervention might have some impact" (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

It was clear from talking to respondents that they embrace the ethos of one to one working with offenders and they seek to individualise the work they do, treating offenders as unique

individuals and tailoring their approach in response to this. Seeing an offender succeed and working with them to develop their skills in order to see them progress was a strong motivating factor for respondents:

“Seeing people develop...seeing people develop discrepancies in where they were and where they are now. Actually enjoying that change process” (Lee, 9 and half years in service)

“For me if I have the odd occasion to sit down and do some meaningful work or do something with an offender that I feel is making a difference, whether that’s in terms of their offending or their well-being or whatever, that gives me a sense of pleasure” (Tricia, 15 years in service).

Those that described their enthusiasm for the job in terms of the actual work they do with offenders described a more hands on approach. They used more interactive terminology and spoke about their practice in terms of directly working with offenders:

“Oh, working with offenders, actual direct working with them” (Karen, 22 years in service)

“Engaging with the people that we work with. I enjoy the face to face engagement with people” (Rachel, 22 years in service)

“I think the actual helping people with their lives, that’s an enjoyable aspect” (Frank, 9 years in service).

The responses support work by Knight (2007b, p. 60) who explored what attracts people to a career in the Probation Service. She found that the most highly rated reasons were people centred and focused around wanting to help people change.

The following quote by Emma perhaps captures the purist motivation of probation practitioners’. It has the process of being in a room with an offender at its heart. When motivation is unpicked, regardless of the results, probation practitioners’ value the process involved in working with offenders and this remains at the very core of what motivates them. This is what makes the job worthwhile. This is what makes practitioners tick:

“Gosh I am so fascinated by people, which is such a naff thing, but I really love to try and work out what makes someone tick and awkward buggers and difficult people. I really enjoy trying to work out how to work with them” (Emma, 9 years in service).

The quote from Lucy perhaps serves best to sum up the reality of the modern day practitioner:

“When it’s shit it’s shit but I think it’s a very rewarding job and if you get that it’s really nice” (Lucy, 5 years in service).

The further quote below from Lucy was particularly emphatic in describing her love of the job and the sense of achievement she derives from it:

“I love my caseload and I’m proud of some of the work that I’ve done” (Lucy, 5 years in service)

It is also interesting that both Lucy and Pauline talk about their caseload with a sense of personal responsibility and they explicitly take ownership of it. This suggests practitioners’ take a sense of pride in their work:

“I like seeing my people, seeing what’s going on and motivating them and finding out what’s going on. But I always think about it and think ‘you know what, if there’s one less victim out there I feel like yeah, I’ve done something that’s good” (Pauline, 9 and half years in service).

This links to research by Raynor (1996), Rex (1999) and Trotter (1999) who reported the importance of focusing on effective processes and relationships rather than focusing exclusively on programmes. Similarly work by Ditton and Ford (1994) explored the personal and professional attributes of practitioners’ that were related to effectiveness and suggested that exercising authority appropriately and showing firmness and control in a relaxed way were important. This approach to practice is arguably a direct consequence of the Offender Management Model (National Offender Management Service 2005) which advocates ‘end to end’ offender management and one officer working with an offender from the beginning to the end of their sentence.

When asked what the least satisfying parts of their job were, there were equally common responses. Not only was OASys the most frequently cited complaint, it was interesting to note that for many this was referred to instantly and emphatically emphasising the strength of negative, almost visceral feeling they felt towards this aspect of the work:

“Filling in OASys to be honest. You know, sitting behind a computer for however many hours it takes, it’s just so tedious. I find OASys very frustrating” (Andrea, 5 years in service)

“OASys, it’s got to be the amount of time I spend on the system. If that could go and be summarised, it’s got its benefits, it’s a database, a national system blah blah, blah but if it

could be summarised in some way. It doesn't have to be that long, it doesn't have to take that amount of time" (Sophie, 6 years in service).

Respondents' were unequivocal in their dislike of OASys and did not seek to play down the strength of their feeling:

"OASys. I hate it. When I've done an assessment I think, 'oh thank god I've done that'" (Lucy, 5 years in service)

"OASys, especially OASys R. It's a bind, it's hard work, it's an absolute nightmare (Naomi, 7 and half years in service)

"Oh god it's OASys. Yeah OASys every time" (Karen, 22 years in service).

The strength of negative feeling felt towards OASys was overwhelming but also unsurprising. There have been numerous commentaries on the negativity felt towards OASys over the years (Farrall 2004; Horsfield 2003). One such critique was provided by Robinson and Dignan (2004, p. 316) who explored the ambivalence practitioners' felt towards assessment systems. They stressed the need to question the integrity of such systems and they remain critical of such tools. The strength of feeling felt towards OASys is perhaps understandable given that OASys remains one of the most time consuming tasks to undertake and it continues to be at the centre of all that probation does.

Despite the recent relaxation in National Standards, the bureaucracy that practitioners face on a daily basis continues to present a challenge. To many this is a hindrance and one that affects their overall enjoyment of their job. OASys inevitably forms part of this bureaucracy and increasingly the bureaucracy feeds into, and is becoming part of, probation's culture. Therefore, the inference is that probation's bureaucratic culture is felt to be becoming increasingly toxic. This was certainly the view of some of the respondents' and was cited as a bugbear:

"It is a bit ridiculous, all the bureaucracy and I am quite systems based myself but form filling for the sake of form filling is a bit silly" (Emma, 9 years in service)

"Having to fill in loads of forms, having to do new forms for every single thing and just the amount of bureaucracy involved, that's frustrating" (Frank, 9 years in service).

Others spoke more generally of their frustration about being unhappy with the negative working environment and poor management:

“I think it’s the culture, it’s the environment that we work in and expending a lot of emotion in being unhappy with the way things are being dealt with. Poor management, that’s my least favourite part of the job... Seeing injustice, seeing things done to staff that harm them which is nothing to do with my core job” (Harriet, over 20 years in service)

“Currently everything, because there is too much with not enough resources. People are so unhappy, people are so stressed, morale seems very low. It’s not enjoyable at all. The pressures are just too much” (Tricia, 15 years in service).

Respondents were quick to offer suggestions when asked if there was anything they would like to be able to do with offenders that they are not able to do now. Much of this centred around being able to spend more time and be more creative in the way in which they work with offenders. This mirrors the findings of Davies (2009); Davies and Durrance (2008); Mair, Burke and Taylor (2006); Mehta (2008) and Robinson and Burnett (2007) who have all discussed the difficulties of time pressures. These suggestions are reminiscent of a return to what is perceived as the ‘golden era’ of probation’s past in terms of practice:

“Probably getting out a bit more out of the office. Doing more community work would be good” (Sophie, 6 years in service)

“I think having more time to be able to actually do more things physically in the community would be better. You know, going with people to the job centre, going with people to housing, those kinds of things. I don’t physically have the time to do that and I know ideally we would, that’s just not the reality that we’re in” (Andrea, 5 years in service)

“Gosh, the old time with them. I’d like to be able to spend more time, so yeah time with the offenders because ultimately that’s going to make more of a difference isn’t it” (Emma, 9 years in service).

Some practitioners however, refuse to be constrained by the restrictions of time and continue to find time often at the expense of working additional hours:

“I just do what I want. If I want to go somewhere with them I just go. I’ll make the time. Generally if I think it’s beneficial I’m doing it. I put a lot of hours in” (Lucy, 5 years in service).

Lucy’s comment is reminiscent of the findings of Robinson *et al* (2014, p. 130) who reported that practitioners were willing to go the extra mile in trying to achieve quality in their work with offenders.

When speaking about what they would like to be able to do with offenders, some respondents' spoke in nostalgic terms about their past practice where they felt they were able to be more creative in the way that they supervised offenders. They made reference to their past practice and there was a clear sense that they felt creativity had been lost from their practice:

"Um, I think something that has been lost a bit is being able to be creative about the work we do, so it's quite prescribed now in a way, we've got all these toolkits that we use, programmes are set. When I first started we used to run them like in-house, so we'd do an alcohol study group, so you'd get together with a colleague and work it out, there was a set plan that you'd run to but you could be a bit creative to suit the need of the people coming onto the group" (Karen, 22 years in service)

"I would like just to be a little bit more creative about where to supervise really and sort of what constitutes supervision. So I'd like to be able to do a little bit of what I did in the past. I would like to be able to go out and have a coffee with people and do supervision over a coffee, that kind of thing, not welfare, just really looking at their learning styles and thinking about how can I get the best out of this person rather than just sitting opposite them at a desk in an office all the time" (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

Although there is much that divides the less experienced and the more experienced respondents in terms of their views and attitudes, there is clearly also a lot that binds them in terms of their outlook on probation practice more widely. It would appear that the introduction of the OEP and specifically SEEDS aims to address some of what practitioners perceive to be the fundamental problems within probation.

The respondents comments about their route into the Service and their likes and dislikes allows for a portrait to be cast of the archetypal probation officer. The typical probation officer joined the Service because they wanted to work with people and they wanted to help people. They aspire to make a difference to offenders' lives. When they joined the commitment was one to one work with offenders. This is what they believed the job was all about. They fervently believe in the capacity for people to change. They want to be part of an offender's process of change. They draw reward and motivation from seeing offenders succeed and recognise the significance of seemingly minor changes. The typical probation officer loathes OASys and the increasing bureaucracy. They resent the increasing amount of time that is spent at the computer and away from what they see as the core of the job; one to one working with offenders. What they want to do is be creative in their practice and responsive to offenders'

needs. The typical probation officer faces a daily struggle reconciling what they want to be able to do with offenders, namely spend constructive time with them and what is required of them from an organisational perspective, such as meeting various targets and completing countless forms. They often solve this dilemma by working longer and longer hours with no remuneration in an attempt to do it all. The consequences can often be increased levels of stress and personal sacrifice.

This picture I can relate to. I joined the Service for similar reasons. I was full of optimism and motivation for what I might be able to achieve in my work with offenders and the help and support that I might be able to offer others. I was passionate and committed when it came to individual work with offenders. I remember early on in my career being amazed that not everyone felt the same way. This was further confirmed as I witnessed the culture increasingly move away from this style of working, particularly with the introduction of Supervision and Reporting Centres. Staying true to my own professional values came at a cost. This was particularly true post-qualifying as after having been taught the text book or idealistic way to do things; the reality was then having to face the fact that you could not do everything. It felt like there was a choice to be made, you were either the practitioner who kept up to date with the paperwork and gave less time to your offenders or you were the practitioner who was committed to giving time to your offenders and cut corners with the paperwork. This presented as a difficult choice to make and indeed it generated a degree of resentment that the very choice had to be made. It was one that I refused to accept for a long time. Instead I tried to achieve it all as I believed there must be a way and the feedback from my manager was 'well this is the job'. I felt like a failure and pushed harder and harder to do 'everything'. However, this resulted in working very long hours and high levels of stress. I learnt some hard lessons. You cannot do everything you would like to do with every offender all of the time and meet every target and requirement that the organisation demands of you. However, what is important is achieving some balance in this and remaining true to your own professional values and holding on to the reasons you came into the job in the first place. The rewards of the job are huge and can come from the most unlikely of places. Being part of someone's journey of change is one of the most rewarding aspects of the job and the reason I continue to be proud to be a probation officer.

Chapter Eight- 'New Recruits'

The first stage of the thematic analysis involved identifying a main theme or set of themes as a means of organising the data. It was immediately apparent that there was a clear division based on the number of years in service respondents had. There was a clear divide in how the more experienced respondents viewed the world of probation practice compared to the less experienced respondents. It did not require any in-depth analysis for this to become apparent. It was therefore appropriate for the data to be divided in this way for the purpose of analysis. In terms of deciding the threshold between less and more experienced respondents, the division manifested itself at the nine year point. Therefore, all respondents with fewer than nine years in service formed part of the less experienced group and all those with over nine years in service were in the more experienced group. This coincidentally, more than as a result of judgement, led to an equal split with there being an equal number of respondents in each group. I positioned myself in the middle of this divide. By virtue of having been in the Probation Service seven years I sit within the less experienced group. However, in terms of my views and approach to practice I would align myself with the more experienced group. I have always adopted a questioning approach to my practice and been interested in the theoretical rationale behind my work. This coupled with my ongoing research may account for why I class myself as falling between the two groups. This however, proved to be an advantage. I understood the emphasis that the more experienced respondents placed on their training and their need for independence. Yet I could also empathise with the anxieties expressed by those in the less experienced group. I felt it quite natural and straightforward to build rapport with members of both groups.

The second level of analysis involved the examination of each group separately, looking at what respondents actually said and then grouping this into key themes in order to build a narrative. Eight predominant themes were established across the less experienced and the more experienced group. Three key themes were identified when looking at the less experienced group of respondents. The first was *'Anxiety and Need'*. The less experienced respondents welcomed the structure and resources that SEEDS provides, as a means of guiding them in what they should be doing in a room with an offender. The second theme was *'Take it or Leave it'*. Whilst on the one hand respondents' appeared to welcome SEEDS as a resource, it was interpreted and treated as something that was optional that they could choose to implement or not. This message was being fed from the top down from a senior management level. The final theme identified for the less experienced respondents was *'SEEDS: A Practice Model Misunderstood?'* The intended aim of SEEDS was for it to be embraced by practitioners

and become firmly embedded in practice. There was in fact a lack of deeper understanding as to the rationale behind SEEDS and its wider implications which suggests that it has not been embraced as a change to probation's culture.

The less experienced respondents were typically younger in age. They generally had less life experience with many having gone through University prior to joining the Service. By virtue of having fewer years' experience in the Probation Service, the less experienced respondents typically did not have any experience of what practice looked like prior to the introduction of 'What Works'. Their experience of practice is from the bureaucratic era where the focus was more on targets than offender well-being. They are programmed to seek guidance from their line manager before making any decisions. As a result they are not used to exercising professional judgement or acting autonomously.

Anxiety and Need

Many of the less experienced respondents concentrated on the lack of direction they felt in their practice. What were they actually supposed to do in the room with an offender?

"When I started as a TPO, I didn't know anything at all" (Simon, 8 years in service)

"I remember my first session when I started as a PSO thinking, 'what am I going to talk to him about?'" (Claire, 5 years in service).

Respondents reported advice coming in many guises but it became clear that the gap was always around what to actually do with an offender:

"At the start in this role there was no training...that was awful. I couldn't tell you what I did in the Supervision sessions because I just made it up because no one told me what to do. But now that I've had training and SEEDS I feel a lot more confident about what I'm doing in a one to one session" (Lucy, 5 years in service)

"I think when I first started I was always like 'am I doing this right?' No one really told you what you actually did with an offender. They told you 'this is what you do with an OASys'; 'this is what you do with this document' and that's what you do. No one actually said 'this is what you do when you meet an offender'" (Andrea, 5 years in service).

The quote from Andrea serves to highlight that despite the fact that working with offenders is what the job is actually about this is often not the first thing that is taught. This chimes with the now well-known phrase "the black box of community supervision" (Bonta *et al* 2008, p.

248) which is commonly used to describe the hidden elements of one to one practice. It also serves to highlight that the less experienced practitioners seemingly have an acute training need. The feelings of intense anxiety and stress evoked by 'being thrown in the deep end' are ones that most practitioners can relate to when thinking back to when they were new in practice. The intensity of these feelings and the stress that many of the less experienced practitioners' are under in trying to navigate their way through and understand their role should not be underestimated. They embraced SEEDS as a model because of that. It provided not only direction and guidance to practitioners but also structure and resources. These came in the form of suggested worksheets and a new universal template that was introduced using the acronym CRISS. This provides a template of Check in, Review, Implement, Set tasks and Summarise (CRISS). It is expected this will be used to structure all Supervision appointments. Both the template and worksheets were welcomed, particularly by the less experienced group of respondents:

"I mean my first Supervision session I didn't know what I was doing with this person. But now you've got the CRISS model to follow, I think that's really good...it's nice to see the worksheet they've given us in the manual to take away and attempt to use with my caseload, so I found that good" (Annie, 9 months in service)

"The structure is brilliant, the worksheets I think are really good" (Lucy, 5 years in service)

"Lots of the worksheets are good" (Annie, 9 months in service).

These comments reflect the findings that came out of the SEEDS pilot projects where the majority of participants reported that SEEDS had improved Supervision sessions and they were now doing more structured and better quality work, with over 70 per cent of practitioners citing their time as being more focused (NOMS 2012c; Sorsby *et al* 2013).

Although respondents in this group reported to have gained a lot from SEEDS in terms of improving their knowledge and skills, they continued to express concern about the lack of managerial oversight in their work which is perhaps borne out of insecurity and a lack of confidence:

"The SEEDS roll-out is, I believe a good thing, in that it will enable us to be observed at least twice a year which isn't enough I don't think" (Richard, 3 years in service)

"I know there's meant to be observations by your line manager which I actually think is a good thing ...when you go and speak to her about a case saying 'I'm having difficulty with this' they

can give you feedback but they don't know what it's like in that room with that person. So yeah I think it's better for them to get to see what you're doing" (Lucy, 5 years in service).

There was also a sense that observations were welcomed as a means of proving accountability:

"That's the other thing that frustrates me about how we work, is the fact that I can't show people what happens in a room....if we're exercising such power you've got to be able to be observed and you've got to be able to hold yourself to account of what you said, how you said it" (Paul, 7 years in service)

"I have always wondered why what happens in the room is never observed" (Simon, 8 years in service).

The less experienced group of respondents clearly value SEEDS as meeting an identified gap in their skills and knowledge. However, it was clear that it provided much more than that. SEEDS also provided a means of allaying their fears and anxieties around what to do in the room with an offender. SEEDS addressed their concerns at being thrown in at the deep end. SEEDS provided less experienced practitioners with the opportunity to learn new skills. In addition to providing a resource, SEEDS provided the opportunity for direct managerial oversight and the sharing of responsibility which was something that was actively welcomed by this group.

'Take it or Leave it'

Respondents in the less experienced group were largely positive about the structure SEEDS offers their work:

"I would put on my sentence plan 'I will work to the SEEDS model to engage with this offender', definitely, cos it helps you plan, you know structure, I think it's really important" (Richard, 3 years in service)

"Sessions are more structured, now I take the time to plan what we're going to do but can't always stick to that" (Claire, 5 years in service)

"The structure is brilliant...the amount of time someone's coming in and I've thought, 'oh my god what am I going to do with this person', like today and actually I haven't even used it but it was in my mind I was thinking 'this is what we've talked about'" (Lucy, 5 years in service).

Despite its acknowledged usefulness there was a sense that SEEDS was viewed as optional across the board, from a managerial level down to practitioners. Crucially the less experienced

respondents viewed SEEDS as an optional process that they could either choose to buy into or not. You could take it or leave it:

“Some people definitely use it more than others... I think some aren’t really doing it still...from what I’ve seen on their contact logs... I thought when we did the training that was it and right that’s what you do now, from this point you use CRISS [acronym used to structure the running and recording of sessions] and that’s how you do it but maybe other people interpreted it in a different way but then I haven’t heard anything since then saying ‘right now everyone start using it’” (Andrea, 5 years in service).

This sense of optionality was further reinforced by some of the respondents’ definite views regarding the limited applicability of SEEDS:

“It (SEEDS) just doesn’t fit with us. Because we are a bit like a sausage factory, we get them in we put them on the group, they go to monthly reporting, it’s just kind of what the Supervision Centre was developed for” (Annie, 9 months in service).

The perception that the SEEDS approach to practice is in some way optional appears to be reinforced from the top down as line managers also appear to have varying approaches towards SEEDS and how they communicate this to their teams. The main message from management appears to be that practitioners are required to do it because it is auditable, thus making it reminiscent of a mechanical and manual-based process driven by targets. This is arguably in the same vein as the ‘What Works’ approach to practice:

“We have had some correspondence from our senior probation officer saying ‘make sure you’re using it at least some times because there’s random checks going on by our Assistant Director’. When I was going through my appraisal, she was like ‘I need to look at a couple of your cases where you’ve been using CRISS’, and I was like ‘I’ve been using it on all of them, I thought I had to’. She was like ‘oh that’s good’, so maybe there are quite a few mixed messages still about it” (Andrea, 5 years in service)

“Our ICMS (Integrated Case Management System) logs are looked at and then we have managers sending a group office email going ‘it is now expected that all ICMS logs use the CRISS model’ so that’s managerialism dictating” (Paul, 7 years in service).

It would appear that to date, SEEDS has been interpreted by practitioners as something that is optional and that may be occasionally required for appearances sake. It is perceived as yet another initiative or fad within the story of the Probation Service. The result is that it has

become something that is being complied with for appearance sake in order to satisfy an official objective rather than being whole heartedly embraced. This is evident from the top down. SEEDS is being implemented and embraced to varying degrees and is something that practitioners appear to like or not and therefore they choose whether they are going to take it or leave it.

However, in other parts of the same Trust there appears to be even less emphasis on SEEDS. When asked what messages had been communicated by senior management regarding SEEDS, one respondent said:

“The only communication I’ve had is from training telling me ‘read these attachments’, I haven’t heard anything from my manager about it. Nothing” (Sophie, 6 years in service)

“The only information I’ve had is from the 3 days training and now we’ve had the training we’re expected to get on and implement it” (Annie, 9 months in service).

It was suggested that the introduction of SEEDS would be more keenly felt by managers than by practitioners:

“I think it will give managers a bit more flexibility to not be so harsh about targets and I just think it will give us more of a licence to say ‘I’m doing this or I’m doing that or this is my focus and this is why’, rather than it be bang, bang, bang, OASys, targets, hopefully. That’s what I hope but I don’t know” (Naomi, 7 and half years in service).

The relaxation of National Standards was a planned component of SEEDS. The aim was to cut through some of the red tape binding practitioners’ practice and allowing practitioners some greater autonomy and management over their time. There was some evidence of practitioners utilising this greater licence over their practice as they reported to be making use of the reduced National Standards. Interestingly, none of the respondents appeared to relish the relaxation in reporting arrangements under the revised National Standards. All were continuing to exercise their professional judgement in continuing to see offenders on a weekly basis beyond what was mandated. One respondent challenged the apparent contradiction between the relaxation in National Standards and the emphasis within SEEDS on building a positive relationship with an offender and highlighted the apparent contradiction in how you do one to one work:

“Another thing that annoys me actually, that we’ve now reduced further the amount of input that we actually have. So we’re doing this SEEDS thing, yeah great, but then you’re seeing them

once a month, what on earth is going to happen in half an hour session once a month? (Paul, 7 years in service).

This respondent's comments presented as somewhat of an anomaly. Despite being in the less experienced group Paul's comment echoes how the more experienced group would feel and how they would talk about the changes in practice. It serves to demonstrate that whilst respondents can see the benefits to SEEDS, not all practitioners, regardless of experience, are unquestioning of it. It also raises the 'classic dilemma': time with offenders versus keeping up to date with paperwork. This is an age old dilemma that continues to plague practitioners.

Whilst respondents were largely positive about SEEDS, particularly in terms of the structure it gives their work, it appears to have been largely understood as a three day training course interpreted as a 'fad' or as something that is optional that can be applied to practice or not. This half-hearted approach appears to be coming top down from line managers who are merely ensuring some level of compliance from their staff, albeit it on a superficial level. This speaks to SEEDS being misunderstood as a handbook driven process that can be taken or left. There is something about SEEDS for both practitioners and managers that has an element of 'take it or leave it'. This is the polar opposite of its intended aim which was for a change in culture.

SEEDS: A Practice Model Misunderstood?

The group of less experienced respondents were largely accepting of SEEDS and did not seek to challenge its theoretical basis or evidence base. There was evidence to suggest that some respondents lacked a deeper understanding as to the roots of SEEDS and the principles behind it. However, there was a distinction between those respondents who did not understand the link between SEEDS and the OEP⁶ and those that were unquestioning of it and the wider principles associated with it:

"I don't know about the OEP, is that any different to SEEDS?" (Claire, 5 years in service)

"Um, obviously what I know is we now have to follow the SEEDS model and we had three days training and I guess I know a little bit, I know what I have to do as a result, in terms of recording and planning of sessions, the structure of sessions that kind of thing. That's what I know about it" (Andrea, 5 years in service)

⁶ See Appendix 1 for diagram outlining the components of the OEP and its relationship with SEEDS

“I think that recognising the relationship between offender manager and offender is important, whereas I think that maybe that wasn’t something we really thought too much about before” (Andrea, 5 years in service).

There were respondents that were not aware that the OEP is a three year change programme that started in early 2010 focusing on one to one work. The purpose of the OEP is to equip practitioners through training with skills of engagement. The aim of SEEDS was therefore a stock change in culture. However, none of the respondents were aware of any of the pilot projects that had taken place under the umbrella of the OEP which had been running for some months. This was evident when respondents were first of all asked about their understanding of the OEP. Some said that they did not know anything about it, despite a member of staff from the Trust being involved in national focus groups. Others assumed that the OEP was SEEDS. This evidences a lack of understanding as to how SEEDS fits into this bigger picture⁷. However, this was not unique to the less experienced respondents and was also portrayed by the more experienced respondents.

Many of the respondents demonstrated an unquestioning approach towards SEEDS and did not seek to challenge what they were presented with:

“I haven’t really thought about whether they’ve done it in an appropriate way or I haven’t really analysed that really. But we knew it was coming and it came and we did it and now we’re doing it” (Sophie, 6 years in service)

“We did have offender engagement days but that is not probably the same as what you’re asking, we had a couple of days open to offenders. After they had been in to their Supervision appointments they went into the meeting room where they were asked questions about what was good about probation, what’s not so good, we had some good feedback” (Claire, 5 years in service)

“(Interviewer- have you had much involvement with the OEP programme?)” “I did the training last week, SEEDS. I thought SEEDS was good and again it’s getting us ready for you know, what’s to come in terms of it looks like it’s a consistent way that the organisation hopes to work” (Sophie, 6 years in service).

Whilst the less experienced group were largely unquestioning there was one exception which was Paul. He has already been identified as an anomaly in terms of his position within the less

⁷ See Appendix 1 for diagram outlining the components of the OEP

experienced group. Paul summed up his concerns about the way in which SEEDS was being rolled out and implemented. He sounded a note of caution as to the way the training was being delivered and spoke again in a way that was reminiscent of the more experienced respondents:

“I, at points got frustrated and I just felt that with all PowerPoint presentations it’s presented as the truth and that’s really dangerous. It should be presented as this is one truth, this is maybe what’s happening, it might not be you know, I just think that’s safer for everyone’s expectations” (Paul, 7 years in service).

Although the intended aim of SEEDS was to prompt a change in culture within the Probation Service this was not reflected in the discussions with the respondents. They did not present as having a good understanding of the theoretical background and rationale to SEEDS and therefore they have not sought to question its implementation. But they do appreciate it. SEEDS is particularly helpful for insecure novices so it was interesting to learn from one respondent that SEEDS training is not being provided to any new starters to the Service. He said the new starter was told the reason behind this was because SEEDS is supposed to now be embedded within office culture to such an extent that it will be picked up within the office environment. Given some of the experiences of the less experienced respondents when they first started there is clearly a need and real value in training such as SEEDS for new starters. It is therefore somewhat ironic to deprive those who are most in need of something from which they would so clearly benefit from. Given the inconsistencies in SEEDS being applied in practice and the lack of deeper understanding demonstrated by practitioners this may be expecting too much.

Chapter Nine- 'Old Hands'

The more experienced group represent a different breed of practitioner. They were typically older than the less experienced group. For many of them the training pathway they had experienced had been the Certificate Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). Their perceptions were therefore very different. The more experienced respondents seek to question any new initiative and then make comparisons between this and what they think is best practice. The introduction of SEEDS was yet another change of direction in practice, something this group are accustomed to dealing with given their ability to recall the introduction of other new initiatives such as 'What Works' and NOMS. It is therefore, not surprising that the more experienced respondents think back to the introduction of 'What Works' at the point of SEEDS being introduced.

There were five themes identified for the more experienced respondents. The first was *'Not a Major Shift From 'What Works''*. Many of the more experienced respondents were able to reflect on the experience of 'What Works' being introduced, having practiced within this paradigm. They did not view SEEDS as representing a noteworthy shift in practice, nor did they see it as a significant cultural shift for the organisation. The second theme was *'A Return to Probation's Past?'* The more experienced respondents were measured in their recollections of past practice. Whilst they were reminiscent of some aspects of past practice, namely greater autonomy and more creativity, none of them sought to romanticise the past or called for a return to the 'good old days' with all respondents recognising the need for the greater levels of accountability that now exist in practice. The next theme identified was *'This Stuff Should not Need to be Trained'*. This captured the view that at its core SEEDS was about something that was intrinsic to probation practice and at the heart of what probation does. Therefore it should not need to be trained as it should be what all practitioners are already doing. It was almost incomprehensible to some of the more experienced respondents that the skills taught within SEEDS and the concept of the one to one relationship required training and were somewhat of a revelation to some of the less experienced practitioners. The next theme was *'Freedom and Professional Judgement'*. One of the main advantages to SEEDS was the perceived greater autonomy it gave practitioners over their own practice. Respondents welcomed this and saw it as evidence of their professionalism and something they should be exercising as trained practitioners. Greater autonomy and the use of professional judgement were seen as testament to 'old' styles of working and were welcomed. However, there was a degree of caution and scepticism as with this came new ways of recording such decisions under a specific 'button' which raised suspicions. This linked to the final theme *'Good on Paper*

or Good with Offenders?’ Respondents identified a tension that exists in practice between work with offenders and the paperwork and recording side. There was a general sense that it was not possible to do it all and that there was a choice to be made about the type of practitioner you would be.

‘Not a Major Shift From ‘What Works’

The ‘What Works’ era represented a significant change to the way in which probation worked with offenders (Mair 2004a). It arguably heralded a new breed of probation officer as the emphasis of probation’s work turned to a more risk focused approach. Much greater importance was placed on enforcement and public protection. Probation work became dictated by targets and standards. Levels of accountability increased. The message from senior management and NOMS centre was clear. Probation needed to prove that it was effective. As a result of all this, one to one working between offenders and offender manager’s became increasingly marginalised. There followed an era of managerialism and a culture very much characterised by targets (Mair 2004a; Whitehead 2007).

Many of the more experienced respondents were able to recall back to when ‘What Works’ was at its pinnacle. Their use of language further depicts their ability to reminisce and recount their memories of past practice as they make reference to what they remember:

“Like we said with the ‘What Works’ movement it was about programmes, programmes”
(Emma, 9 years in service)

“‘What Works’ was around when I first started I think. There was all the ‘What Works’ exercises and the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach was the thing of the time really, so I guess when I started it’s always been there, that kind of approach. Doing it in programmes” (Karen, 22 years in service).

The experienced respondents’ use of language highlights their ability to reminisce and recount their memories of past practice as they make reference to what they remember. Their past experiences shape how they make sense of new ideas and initiatives. This is something not seen in the less experienced group, whose recollections of the past make reference to when they were new in practice and ‘did not know anything’:

“I do remember a time when we were just encouraged to send everybody off (to programmes) and not spend that much time with them ourselves” (Karen, 22 years in service)

“I remember people used to say to me very frequently when I was a PSO, ‘you don’t deal with sex offenders at all in Supervision, they go to SOTP, they deal with that’” (Lisa, 9 years in service).

This stark division of labour between programmes work and offender management is not as prevalent today. Respondents generally felt that the work between offender managers and programmes staff has become more joined up. In fact the pendulum has swung very much the opposite way and it was highlighted by many of the respondents that the demise in recent years of accredited programmes has seen a shift in the emphasis of their role as an offender manager. They are now required to fulfil many roles and take on a far greater responsibility for the delivery of interventions:

“When I went off on maternity leave and then came back there was the lack of programmes, so when I went off there was loads and I came back... there was like no programmes and it was down to you to deliver the intervention now” (Lisa, 9 years in service).

The more experienced respondents could therefore have regarded SEEDS as a significant shift in the culture of the Service. They had after all experienced the full force of the ‘What Works’ movement. They were now seeing the importance and value of the one to one relationship once again recognised. However, this was not borne out.

The respondents in the more experienced group in fact agreed that their core approach to practice had remained unchanged throughout their years of practice. They expressed their commitment to one to one work and fostering a good working relationship and confirmed that for them this had prevailed throughout the ‘What Works’ era, despite the significant sea-change in approaches to practice:

“I didn’t feel there was a great amount from ‘What Works’ that impacted on the work that I was doing. It wasn’t delivered in a way to me that I thought ‘this is where it’s coming from’” (Lee, 9 and half years in service)

“I think ‘What Works’ was still quite big when I was training so you couldn’t ever go through the training without kind of knowing what it was really. It was kind of one of the core things and so definitely, I’m of some of the cohorts it was drilled into it really, what works? this works! we work! that kind of thing. So you know, that’s probably one of my core beliefs in terms of what works in probation, well we do, prison doesn’t work” (Alice, 10 years in service).

This commitment and perseverance to continue balancing the demands of care and justice in practice supports research by Gregory (2011, p. 60), who found that practitioners were continuing to demonstrate a reflective approach to their work utilising their professional experience and training.

When asked their views about working with offenders now compared to when they first started, respondents summed up their commitment to working with offenders:

"I think generally my focus has remained the same, in other words I try to support people in identifying what it is that makes them offend and how to reduce that. So yeah that's what keep me going as a probation officer, is sort of hanging on to why I do the work and that hasn't really changed" (Harriet, over 20 years in service)

"In terms of working with people, I don't think that's necessarily changed. I know that the SEEDS is all about the offender engagement and that's technically given you the structure with the CRISS model and most people I'd think, well me personally anyway, did that in my Supervision sessions anyway" (Lee, 9 and half years in service)

"I've never lost sight of that (engaging with people), they can put in whatever systems or whatever, it's the bit about being able to engage and giving somebody the time they need to be able to share whatever it is going on with them" (Rachel, 22 years in service).

This supports research by Annison *et al* (2008, p. 268) whose research focused on exploring why people join the Probation Service and what aspects of the work they derive job satisfaction from. They concluded "officers continue to put people and helping skills first and are likely to continue to do this, even if the circumstances of their practice do not encourage it."

When asked if her practice changed over time another respondent recalled:

"I remember there was a phase in probation where we were told that the relationship didn't matter and they (offenders) could be farmed out to see whoever and that's obviously turned back around now... it didn't make sense to me at all, so the way I worked with people was the same. I think the way I work with people has always been the same really" (Karen, 22 years in service).

However, whilst on one level 'What Works' appears to have had limited impact on practitioners in terms of their core values and approach to practice, it was clear that a tension

was building. It was becoming increasingly difficult for practitioners to remain faithful to their belief in one to one work:

“It never went for me really, but I know for other people it changed during that period” (Karen, 22 years in service).

When asked how engagement with offenders has changed over the years Frank reflected the following:

“When you’re speaking to them (offenders) you know you’ve got a lot of paperwork, you’re very conscious of the fact that you’ve got to go back to that” (Frank, 9 years in service)

“It’s much more business-like than it would have of been before. In reality there’s a bit less humanity in that you’re seeing it from a much more business-like perspective. I think every probation officer would say that to some extent” (Frank, 9 years in service).

Frank then shared this anecdote:

“There’s an old joke we have upstairs, where it’s almost a nuisance when people come in because you’re too busy writing about them, which I think is a general thing that people say” (Frank, 9 years in service).

This type of anecdote has previously been reported in research. In his article, Matthews (2009, p. 65) made reference to having heard and repeated similar comments, which alluded to the actual face-to-face contact with offenders being a hindrance to the job.

When asked how they had managed the conflict between complying with the bureaucratic side of their role and continuing with their practice as they had done before, all the respondents agreed that this had been at a personal cost. This was in the form of working extra hours with no remuneration. Respondents recognised that the bureaucratic side to their role was non-negotiable but at the same time they did not want the actual work they did with offenders to be compromised. This is reminiscent of conclusions reached by Phillips (2011).

When asked if they had encountered any difficulties in continuing to focus on one to one work throughout the ‘What Works’ era one respondent said:

“I guess it was more problematic. Because it’s such a small team we didn’t have the same resources to send people to...so we were carrying on blissfully and then it (one to one work) came back in fashion again so it’s fine” (Karen, 22 years in service)

“I work quite a lot of extra hours. I suppose the SPO’s have said if you choose to spend an hour with somebody that’s your look-out really, in terms of getting the paperwork done, so I probably couldn’t balance the two without working quite a lot of extra hours. A definite cost, but for me working with offenders is the important part. If I don’t do that in a way that I think is effective there’s no point me being here” (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

It is suggested that ‘What Works’ had very little impact on practitioners’ core approach to one to one work with offenders; although it is clear that operational practice was affected to some extent. This supports the assertion made by Vanstone (2000, p. 172) that the impact of ‘What Works’ had been more strongly felt by academics rather than at a practitioner level. This might further explain why the introduction of SEEDS and the supposed cultural shift that this represents is not so strongly felt on the ground. Thus, ‘What Works’ represented a different practical approach that seemingly left the core values of those implementing it untouched. SEEDS therefore did not need to change practices, as much as re-legitimise them.

A Return to Probation’s Past?

The more experienced respondents did indeed not believe that SEEDS represented anything new in terms of their core approach to practice. However, SEEDS affirms and reassures that what practitioners have always done is back on the agenda:

“I think it’s good. I think it’s coming back to what is really important working with people of any kind, in any role, in any sort really” (Karen, 22 years in service)

“I like the way it legitimises techniques of working with people that we’ve always wanted to do but maybe possibly never had time to consistently do with offenders” (Alice, 10 years in service).

Perhaps the only new thing to be taken from SEEDS was the way in which this was to be recorded, using the new CRISS template⁸. All of the respondents welcomed this quite emphatically. It provides them structure to help them stay focused. Respondents believed it would save them time in terms of recording their contact with offenders:

“What’s new is the structure that’s in place, so the recording on ICMS, using the CRISS, a lot of it I was already doing it’s just slightly tweaking here and there to make it fit” (Karen, 22 years in service)

⁸ See Appendix 1 for a diagram outlining the links between SEEDS and CRISS

“The way that the training was delivered I thought was excellent, none of it was new stuff but the delivery of it I think was excellent” (Rachel, 22 years in service)

“It’s kind of what we’re doing already but this one is giving me a space to think ‘hang on what am I doing?’ rather than just, ‘oh right there’s a worksheet’” (Emma, 9 years in service).

That said there was also a general sense of anti-climax associated with the implementation of SEEDS:

“Everyone had talked about it like it was this wondrous new thing and that we were all going to come away from it and go ‘oh wow the light bulb moment’” (Lisa, 9 years in service)

“Here, we were waiting and waiting and waiting for SEEDS and SEEDS was going to be the answer to all our problems so I think, yeah, the build up to it was perhaps not very helpful...there was a big build up to something that was different to what everyone thought it was” (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

The sense of anti-climax was linked to the build-up and perhaps even hype that preceded the SEEDS roll-out. Many respondents spoke about ‘hype’, which undoubtedly would have led to a degree of expectation around the training with many of the respondents couching this in the language of how it was ‘sold’ to them. Many of the respondents spoke about the pilot projects that had taken place in two of the offices within the Trust. This seems to have built expectations further. Owing to this group having more years of experience there is an assumption that they know what they are doing in terms of practice, which would further add to the sense of anti-climax they experienced.

There was a sense of resentment that SEEDS had not been able to deliver what it had been billed to do:

“SEEDS has been made this massive important aspect. And it’s like not really, it’s no different to what we do, it’s conceptualising it” (Lee, 9 and half years in service)

“You know it’s been rolled out as this saviour of everything, as long as you’re working in this way everything will be fine” (Alice, 10 years in service).

The quote below from Alice perhaps most accurately sums up the reaction of the more experienced respondents when faced with the reality of what SEEDS had to offer:

“The way it was sold to us was very much, SEEDS is coming, this brand new way of working and then when people got on it, they were like ‘hang on a minute, we’ve been trained to do this before” (Alice, 10 years in service).

Whilst respondents initially welcomed the validation of their approach to work and were emphatic about the way in which SEEDS was sold to them, the reality proved to be less favourable. To these seasoned practitioners SEEDS represented more of an attempt to reinvent the wheel. They could not help but find its introduction somewhat of an anti-climax. The more experienced respondents had cause to feel they had been duped as they did not receive what they expected to from SEEDS.

Whether or not SEEDS represents a return to the past is a complex question. There is always a danger of romanticising the past, focusing on what was good rather than that was lacking or what could have been improved. However, respondents did not attempt to do this with some remaining quite critical of past practice:

“The examination of our work was not in any way the same, so I guess the freedom for bad practice to happen was greater” (Karen, 22 years in service)

“What wasn’t so good was that we weren’t held to account as much as we are now in terms of written records, so people could sort of get away with minimal written records” (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

All of the respondents in the more experienced group recognised the need for developments in practice. No one advocated a return to the days of ‘advise, assist and befriend’ which were underpinned by unprecedented amounts of professional freedom and little in the way of accountability. Some cited examples of bad practice and gave examples of the ways that increased accountability and recording had improved standards within the Service:

“I do think that probation officers needed to be more accountable, because you did have people who I didn’t think were necessarily behaving professionally... so I do think you needed to have standards” (Rachel, 22 years in service).

It was clear that whilst respondents felt that SEEDS was an inherent part of their practice this was within the world of probation as we know it. A world with an increased level of bureaucracy and accountability, where the one to one relationship is important and valued but also constrained by appropriate boundaries and one in which the offender is appropriately challenged. SEEDS very much represented a way of working that spoke to probation values

whilst also maintaining professional integrity. It was clear that respondents viewed this as a way of working that they believed the Probation Service ought to be adopting.

However, there was an overwhelming sense from the group of more experienced respondents that whilst SEEDS is not objected to, neither does it represent a significant change. SEEDS is an approach to practice that is welcomed by all in raising the profile of one to one work and legitimising it in a way not done before. It represents a renewed emphasis on 'old fashioned' probation values in relation to one to one work. That is welcomed by this group. The novelty of having that approach integrated into accountability is new but equally welcomed. On the other hand the sense of anti-climax following the implementation of SEEDS is also telling. In the view of this group, SEEDS is in fact neither truly new, nor is it a genuine return to the past.

'This Stuff Should not Need to be Trained'

SEEDS was rolled out across the Trust as a three day training package that all practitioners were required to attend⁹. In addition to generic offender managers, it also included practitioners in programme teams, hostels and prisons and provisions were made for Case Administrators to attend, albeit for the first day only. Many welcomed the inclusive approach to the training, which started with senior management being trained some months before, *"I think it's quite good that they've made it something that everyone across the board has to take on as part of their work"* (Karen, 22 years in service). However, the respondents in the more experienced group believed that the principles behind SEEDS should not need to be trained as in their view they form an inherent part of probation values and practitioners' core approach to practice. In addition they believe that some of these are essential human qualities that cannot be taught; you have either got it or you haven't.

It is well known that the way in which probation officers have been trained has changed over time. The Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) was suspended in 1996 and then replaced in 1998 with the Diploma in Probation Studies (DiPS) which saw the training become more academic based. This was replaced in 2010 with the Probation Qualification Framework (PQF) with the aim of making the training more accessible and 'on the job', as practitioners complete the training whilst continuing in their role as probation services officers. The PQF also introduced for the first time, the Diploma in Probation Practice. This is a mandatory qualification at Level 3 for all new probation service officers (PSOs) to complete whilst also offered to existing PSOs (NOMS 2012b).

⁹ see chapter 5 for an outline and description of SEEDS

A number of the more experienced respondents had trained as probation officers through the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). This was highly valued. The more experienced group perceived this training route as providing training in many of the core skills needed, such as engagement and building a relationship. This is where the more experienced respondents differed significantly from the less experienced group. They presented with the belief that they did not need to be trained in the principles of SEEDS owing to their previous experience but perceived that those newer into the Service, or not social work trained, would need to be. This suggests that the more experienced group viewed the need for SEEDS as being somewhat of a deterioration in the standards of the Probation Service. When asked what they thought about the SEEDS training, one respondent said:

“I think that’s different for me because I’ve been working in the job such a long time and I was social work trained which includes motivational interviewing and those kind of things that are a big part of SEEDS, so I think it wasn’t new for me” (Karen, 22 years in service)

“Yeah I still find it quite hard that people who came into the profession in recent years find this something of a revelation. It’s like someone seeing the world in black and white and then someone saying ‘you can see colour’ and you think ‘the colours always been there, why do they need to be told?’ I don’t know, I think the rub is that the organisation is still very much target driven and if you’re spending 90 per cent of your time filling in your forms, that’s 90 per cent of your time you’re not engaging with your clients” (Rachel, 22 years in service).

Whilst the more experienced respondents were of the view that SEEDS should not need to be trained they appreciated its value for those newer into the Service. Respondents were aware that follow-up training was available but none had received it. Many of the respondents in the experienced group cited concerns that the momentum with SEEDS would be lost:

“SEEDS is a good thing as long as the momentum is kept up, because so many times in probation we have these new fantastic things. Then they’re brought in and it’s the best thing ever and then suddenly, there’s no follow up support or anything with it and then it dies a death because it’s not continued...I would hate to see it slip away” (Alice, 10 years in service).

The fact that respondents referred to the follow-up training as promised to them further evidences the sense of how let down they felt by this not happening:

“Everybody was promised follow-up training in three months...but there’s now a backlog of the whole Service and I think it’s a real pity... you never really hear people talking about the

learning and it needs to be kept live to be part of what you do” (Harriet, over 20 years in service)

“They said there’s follow-up training ...which really excited me. I thought ‘brilliant because that will keep me on track’ because like they said, the point of that being is that something is great, you’re on board but after about six weeks you can start to trail off a bit, but apparently that training hasn’t actually gone out to anyone yet, so that’s really disappointing” (Emma, 9 years in service).

Whilst for this group of more experienced practitioners the introduction of SEEDS is not believed to be so keenly needed, its introduction was largely considered to be positive. However, this group have seen many different initiatives come and go and have experienced many changes to practice over the years. It is perhaps then without surprise that the lack of follow-up training leads them to consider SEEDS in a more sceptical light.

All agreed that what makes them good practitioners is either inherent or comes from being social work trained. What makes a good practitioner is empathy. When asked if they had had any training on how to build a good working relationship with offenders, all agreed that they had not received any formal training specifically on this subject. The nearest thing to it was through other training events such as motivational interviewing and pro-social modelling. One respondent said:

“Not in recent years, no. It was probably part of the social work training that I did. It was the things that we all know about, empathic sort of interviewing style, those sorts of things, which isn’t rocket science and is what we’re expected to do now as part of SEEDS isn’t it? Being reflective, listening skills and all those sort of things” (Karen, 22 years in service).

An interesting contradiction was observed with the more experienced group of respondents. On the one hand they were firmly of the opinion that the fundamental principle of SEEDS spoke to skills they had already been trained in, largely as a result of the social work basis to the training they had undertaken. Hence they saw little personal relevance of SEEDS to themselves. However, the more experienced group equally then spoke about the skills underpinning SEEDS as innate and as either possessed or not by practitioners. They were of the opinion that these core skills cannot be trained.

The more experienced respondents generally agreed on the skills required to be a good practitioner:

“I think having all that empathic, unconditional regard is actually quite a core skill. You need to be able to listen, that’s a huge skill and some people can’t” (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

Other skills endorsed were those of prioritising, good personal skills, being able to make difficult decisions, listening, assessing, reflecting, sharing and valuing the person. There was a general sense of agreement that not all of these skills can be taught, with some believed to be innate that people simply possess as part of their character:

“I think there are some people in the Probation Service don’t and won’t ever have empathy...you need to be able to get on with people that’s a starter and you can’t teach that” (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

The group of more experienced respondents placed great value on the CQSW as a route to qualifying as a probation officer. They saw this as equipping them with the core skills needed in practice and they rated this as superior training compared to the various routes that have been implemented since then. However, maybe it is because of this type of training in core skills and engagement that the more experienced respondents struggled to see the need for SEEDS training for themselves. In addition, respondents concluded that one of the limitations of SEEDS is that a three day training event simply cannot teach practitioners empathy skills. The skills of engagement have become so embedded for them that they have become second nature and may well feel innate.

Freedom and Professional Judgement

The more experienced group of respondents believed that SEEDS represented a welcomed return to practitioners using their professional judgement:

“I like that. People have been very reliant on their manager’s and I think we should be respected as trained probation officers who can make sound judgements so I like the autonomy. I think the autonomy is part of our development and it makes us feel professional. If we have to run to somebody every time we’re making, want to make a decision about something, I think that undermines the training and experience that we’ve got” (Harriet, over 20 years in service)

“It’s a really good change for me. It’s good because it allows me freedom of practice and frees me from the constraints of previous National Standards” (Alice, 10 years in service)

“I really like that because it also encourages us to record our thinking a bit on the logs” (Emma, 9 years in service).

However, there was also some angst and frustration:

"I just hate it when it becomes a stick to beat you with really (Interviewer-has it become that?) A bit, because now you've got to be observed doing it and you've got to do your peer learning" (Karen, 22 years in service).

There is something of a contradiction between practitioners welcoming having increased professional autonomy whilst still valuing the managerialist ethos that National Standards represents. This suggests that there have been many positive aspects taken from the managerialism era and that whilst practitioners talk about the Probation Service's past as being the 'heyday' there is clearly a lot to be taken from a more rigid and standardised approach to practice:

"I've carried on using the same Standards. I still have people in weekly for the first four months and then I make it fortnightly cos I think that actually works. I think you actually need to have weekly appointments with people to actually get to know them and to have the continuity" (Karen, 22 years in service)

"I'm a bit of a traditionalist I think. I tend to stick to the weekly for quite a long time so I've rather ignored the reporting Standards because I think in order to build up a picture of somebody you need to be able to see them regularly and consistently over quite a lengthy period of time...so I largely ignore them" (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

Others used the old National Standards as their starting point and reported feeling more comfortable with using this as a template from which to navigate from:

"I come from the culture where it was a lot more 'you see someone for x amount of time' so I've got a bit of an idea what the ideal is. But I think if I was new into the Service now as an officer I'd find it quite disorientating to gage how often do I think I need to see this offender because it's a bit like how long is a piece of string? Especially with the chaotic ones, you could end up having weekly forever" (Emma, 9 years in service).

When discussing the recent changes in National Standards and subsequent emphasis on practitioners' own freedom in deciding on the frequency of engagement, one respondent expressed concern:

"I think it's much harder, especially when you know that ultimately if something goes wrong you'll get blamed for it anyway, or so it feels. So I think it's much better to have clear structure in place of what is expected" (Karen, 22 years in service).

When discussing the frequency of OASys reviews similar concerns were also raised:

“I just think that’s all very wishy- washy and unclear as well because it’s such a matter of judgement. It’s a very unsafe place to be, as somebody that is concerned about if something happens and I get the blame for not doing a review for a couple of months, when actually I just think it’s all so unclear really and everyone has a different understanding of it as well” (Karen, 22 years in service).

A recent change to practice has been the requirement to record professional judgement decisions as a separate entry on the offender’s contact log. A specific button has been created to facilitate this. The introduction of a button under which professional judgement decisions are to be recorded and respondents’ reactions to it embodies the contradiction that exists around professional judgement. Whilst the more experienced group were unequivocal that the increase in autonomy was something that they welcomed, they equally expressed deep cynicism and suspicion about the potential repercussions. The recording of decisions under a specific button could allow for practitioners to be made a ‘scapegoat’.

Interestingly the ‘button’ was described by respondents almost as if it was a living entity. Respondents were very animated when discussing professional judgement and the expectations around the recording of such decisions using the ‘button’. They used emotive language and were frank when discussing their fears and concerns about being made a ‘scapegoat’. Arguably, professional judgement, decision making and autonomy are core skills for all practitioners and skills that are used in every day practice and have been for many years. On the face of it the ‘button’ seeks to formalise the way these decisions are recorded and provide some consistency. However, the ‘button’ appears to hold much deeper meaning and is perceived to pose a much greater threat to practitioners than might be assumed. The strength of feeling and emotion expressed by respondents when discussing the button was indicative of them seeking to personify it. It was inferred from respondents’ comments that the ‘button’ was a separate entity capable of causing them harm. The way in which it was described and discussed gave it a much more sinister feel:

“It’s rubbish. I actually think its rubbish because ultimately we’re not really allowed to have professional judgement I don’t think. I think what that does is allow managers to avoid having to take any flack; it puts the blame on the offender manager when something goes wrong. I mean the whole point of recording these things is because if something goes wrong and somebody’s looking at the file they can see how that decision was made but I still think that

your decision can be picked holes in if it suits whoever's doing that review. It doesn't work for me" (Karen, 22 years in service)

"I haven't had a chance to use that button yet. The button had come onto ICMS before I went onto maternity leave...I really like it because I think it encourages us to have to take a step back and really think about our cases a bit sometimes and give a bit of backup. But on the other side if it all goes horribly wrong and we've used that, I suppose you could say it could come back on us and we could get the blame more. I hope it isn't used that way. I hope it's just that we can explain our decision making" (Emma, 9 years in service).

It is interesting that the introduction of the 'button' has almost sought to define and legitimise the very process of professional judgement and decision making. Professional judgement is not a new concept and fundamentally underpins the day to day work of practitioners. This can be understood in reference to the theory of 'street level bureaucracy' advocated by Lipsky (2010) who claimed that exercising professional discretion formed a critical part of much of the work of a range of public service workers. However, this was often not done to high standards because workers lacked the information, time and other resources to apply on a case by case basis resulting in mass processing of people and thus affecting the quality of treatment (Lipsky 2010). The introduction of the 'button' seeks to change the way in which this is recorded. In doing so it can expose a practitioner's practice and decision making and offers an insight into a previously hidden aspect of probation work.

There is no mistaking that the introduction of a 'button' has evoked strong feelings in respondents and there remains a great deal of suspicion around it. Another concern raised was that whilst professional judgement and greater freedom of practice was welcomed and seen as a positive development, it was still embroiled in bureaucracy which made exercising greater autonomy more difficult:

"Professional judgement doesn't get rid of that; you haven't got the autonomy not to use systems when you don't think they're appropriate" (Frank, 9 years in service).

Whilst respondents in this group said they welcomed the return to greater autonomy in practice they acknowledged that there has been no official training or guidance offered around professional judgement and decision making. However, they did not perceive this to be a negative for themselves:

"We are trained as officers, we have to have our wits about us and I don't know, do we have to be spoon fed about absolutely everything?...if we're always being told we need to go on

training and have this, this and this done we're never going to have confidence with our own abilities" (Emma, 9 years in service).

Despite not seeing the relevance to themselves, they acknowledged that this may not be as comfortable for those less experienced practitioners who are newer into the Service. This distinction between those who would be more and less comfortable with having increased freedom of practice appeared to be entirely based on when practitioners were trained or came into the Service. Those who came into the Service or trained prior to 'What Works' and the DiPS training pathway were largely considered to be competent and confident in exercising autonomy and decision making as this is considered to speak to 'old fashioned' probation values. However, those newer into the Service and particularly those coming in or training during the 'What Works' era will have experienced practice at its most stringent, when National Standards were at their most rigid and the managerialism ethos very much prevailed. Experienced respondents felt that for these practitioners the increase in autonomy might well present the most challenges, as for them this will be an unknown quantity:

"For those people who are less confident I imagine its more difficult and people who have been trained in the era of, you know go to your manager for anything, I think it could be quite difficult" (Harriet, over 20 years in service)

"I think depending on when you were trained certain people are going to be more or less comfortable with doing that...I think a lot more training needs to happen with people to make them feel a lot more comfortable because I feel comfortable with it but if I discuss it with someone else then they'll be like 'oh I'm not quite sure about that' and then that makes you think 'should I do it?', you know so it's kind of like this wave of uncertainty that comes through" (Alice, 10 years in service)

"I think people who were trained most recently when National Standards was at its most restrictive; I think they are struggling quite a bit because the whole professional judgement agenda is completely alien to them. I think people who trained a long time ago recognise the kind of basis to professional judgement but feel a little bit kind of 'oh well can we do that, we used to do that but we weren't allowed to do that' but you know, I think they feel a lot more comfortable with it than kind of people who were trained in the strict target kind of era...it's just about working with those practitioners to say 'look this is ok because the rules have changed'" (Alice, 10 years in service).

It is interesting that whilst the respondents have been grouped by the length of their Service in order to facilitate analysis they also seek to group themselves in the same way. They do this on the basis of when they were trained. With those who were trained via the social work route rating this as superior to any subsequent training. If you are trained as they were, SEEDS and any other form of training simply does not live up to expectations.

The group of more experienced respondents saw a benefit of SEEDS as being the greater freedom it gave them over their practice and they welcomed the emphasis on professional judgement. For this group this represented a return to a way of working that they value and that they believe demonstrates their professionalism and skills as trained practitioners. However, there were many contradictions. Respondents were suspicious about the introduction of a button under which to record professional judgement decisions and expressed concern that the shift in putting emphasis for decisions onto practitioners was a way of scapegoating them if anything subsequently went wrong. Whilst increased autonomy was welcomed on one hand it was ultimately considered to represent a bag of mixed blessings.

Good on Paper or Good With Offenders?

There is a clear discrepancy between what practitioners consider to be good practice and what they believe the organisation considers to be good practice. The dilemma is that people-focused tasks are what provide the job satisfaction, however it is the bureaucratic tasks that tend to ensure job security (Annison *et al* 2008). This is an issue that experienced practitioners are passionate about. Respondents' use of language all speaks to this and evidences the strength of feeling that exists. These contradictions are not easily reconciled:

"I'd like to be able to spend more time doing the SEEDS stuff with offenders, doing the activities with offenders, doing the interventions, but for survival, because you're on a computer all the time you can't. You know at the end of the day you can be the most wonderful person in the world working with offenders but if your written work doesn't meet the Quality Assurance standards it doesn't make any difference, you know you'll be up before the coals" (Frank, 9 years in service).

Respondents felt genuinely aggrieved at what they feel to be an impossible position for them between doing 'good work' with offenders and maintaining good records which is a priority for the organisation. Respondents held strong views on what they consider to be good practice and many appeared willing to pursue this despite the consequences that follow for themselves. There was a sense that if you want to maintain your own value base and continue

working in the way that you believe works, it will be at a personal cost which some were willing to accept. One respondent referred to it as a “harsh balance”, whilst another discussed the threat of receiving a “bollocking” but seeing this as worth it:

“I know that my OASys don’t always meet the target and I will be called in and given a right royal bollocking and be told that you could go on performance whatever, well that’s fine do it (laughs). Getting a bollocking, being threatened with that is fine, I’d still rather do that and know that I’ve given Fred Blogs the right amount of time he’s needed...to me it’s a safe way of working. Whereas I could see somebody for half an hour and spend an hour writing it up and making it all look beautiful and actually not know the slightest thing about that person. So I get boltlocked for not keeping good notes but I do good work” (Rachel, 22 years in service).

Respondents clearly prioritised the actual work they did with offenders but recognised the increasing pressure to be up to date with the recording of this and the computer-based work. However, they also questioned the long standing assumption they feel that is implicit within probation culture, that the best performing or most competent practitioners are perceived to be those who are up to date in terms of record-keeping, meeting targets and completing reports with little recognition given to a practitioners ability to forge a therapeutic alliance (Matthews 2009). This presents a real conflict between these practitioners’ values and the modern day Probation Service:

“People are so focused on targets. I know that’s about showing we do good work. But equally somebody could be great at the computer and rubbish with somebody in supervision. So sometimes it can look like some of the more effective probation officers are the ones that have it all up to date on the computer, whereas actually the ones that tend to spend the time with the offenders tend not to have it all up to date on the computer and I think that’s a harsh balance really because the people that genuinely want to work with people spend that time listening to people’s problems” (Lee, 9 and half years in service)

“I mean we have had some observations of supervision. And I think a large part of it is what we write on paper, so you can give a person the most wonderful thing on paper but you might be the useless person dealing with the actual offenders” (Frank, 9 years in service).

The two aspects of the job, the paperwork and offender contact were discussed as polar opposites. If you are “great” at one you are inevitably “rubbish” at the other, “wonderful on paper”, “useless in supervision”. This suggests that you have to make a choice about what type of practitioner you will be. The inference is that the job of a probation practitioner is

impossible to achieve. You cannot be good at it all so there is a choice to be made. This certainly presents an interesting challenge in the modern day Probation Service as increasingly there is pressure to be good at it all. The introduction of SEEDS has seen an increased emphasis put on one to one work and meaningful engagement with offenders; however, the amount of paperwork and recording has arguably not reduced with respondents saying that the relaxation to National Standards has had limited impact. Therefore, it remains to be seen how it can all be done.

Chapter Ten- Across the Years: Supporters and Cynics

Finally, there are two themes identified in this stage of the analysis that reflect respondents' different perspectives, although these were not based on the number of years' experience they had. The first was *'Sceptics and Believers'*. Regardless of the amount of experience respondents' had there were some who believed SEEDS was an approach that was already being adopted. However, there were other respondents who cast doubt over this and attributed this disparity to cognitive distortions. The second theme in which respondents were united was *'SEEDS: Saviour or a Sell-Out?'* Although I did not ask any questions specifically about privatisation of the Probation Service, it was a theme that emerged from the research. Respondents aligned themselves to one of two camps, those who viewed SEEDS favourably and as something that might 'save' probation from privatisation and those who viewed SEEDS suspiciously as something that could be used to assist in privatisation.

Sceptics and Believers

Respondents, particularly those in the more experienced group, were firm in their opinions that SEEDS does not represent anything new in terms of their approach to practice. They presented as almost aggrieved at the insinuation that they needed to be taught these skills and maintain that the biggest change is the way that things are recorded, rather than any significant change to their actual practice.

However, there were some respondents who cast doubt over the suggestion that the principles of SEEDS were firmly embedded into practice. Moving beyond what was actually said, a deeper level of analysis suggested a number of theories as to why this may be the case. Crucially though, some form of cognitive distortion appears to underlie each of them:

"My experience of doing the training and some of the exercises is that people actually find it really difficult to do some of the stuff that they think do on a regular basis...I think it's a pity that people say 'but that's what we do' because it suggests that there hasn't been as much learning as you would have hoped from the training. That mismatch, I think its cognitive distortions I really do. I think it would be really easy to say 'yeah that's what I do' because that's what you want to be doing, but if I asked for evidence there's probably only a few people that could say 'yeah you know I did that problem solving skills exercise yesterday, I always have a focus for supervision even if someone comes in in crisis I can make my session into a focused session'. So I think, yeah, it's just cognitive dissonance I suppose but that's what the research suggests, so people think they're doing it but they're not" (Harriet, over 20 years in service).

This was echoed by another respondent:

“That sort of relationship we’ve got with offenders is behind closed doors, no one comes in, you don’t really know. So the way it’s actually done, by this peer support, by having to fill in this worksheet and evidence stuff and things, it’s probably being able to be measured more. So probably, the academics are getting quite excited about it in that way. And we’re having to formalise it more in the words we’re using, the implementation, we’re having to show what we’re doing, so probably we were feeling we were doing stuff and we weren’t evidencing it. And maybe sometimes, bless us, we think we’re doing better than we are and actually we just need someone to come along and just you know, I don’t know refresh us and things” (Emma, 9 years in service).

These quotes serve to demonstrate that practitioners may look at their own practice through rose tinted glasses and with a degree of optimism. This could be understood as practitioners seeking to protect their professional identity. It also suggests there is an element of practitioners’ pride being at risk of being damaged by truly reflecting on their own practice and sharing this with others:

“I can understand how they might think that way (SEEDS is a manual based process to follow), especially if they were training in that period, where actually this is just another thing we need to do, because they wouldn’t have known what life in probation was like before. Because the culture they were trained in was very much that approach, so I can see maybe from how the training was delivered, because it was you know ‘on your contact logs you must adhere to this CRISS thing’ so I can see how they might think it’s just another thing to do. It’s disappointing because I know the benefits of it and I can see how it could work” (Alice, 10 years in service).

It was initially thought that it would be the more experienced respondents who would hold strong views on why practitioners did not perceive SEEDS to be a significant shift in the culture of Probation Service, however, the less experienced respondents equally had an opinion:

“I felt that everyone in the room said ‘oh yeah it’s good to be told, it’s good to know we’re doing it already’ but I don’t know. I think people need to evidence that they are doing it if they are doing it” (Richard, 3 years in service)

“I know people in the training were saying, ‘oh yeah we do that all the time’. I don’t think so and unless their contact logs are a lie I don’t think so...People think they’re doing it but they’re not.” (Lucy, 5 years in service).

It was clear that many respondents did not agree that the ethos of SEEDS and the practices it promotes was what has always happened. The reasons why practitioners might say they have always done this were varying, although namely come down to the same point which is that of good intention. Respondents' viewed practitioners as generally having good intentions and suggested that perhaps the distortion between what they think they have always done and what the evidence suggests they have done is borne out of genuine cognitive distortion. Perhaps it is a practitioner's pride that prevents them from acknowledging the worth of SEEDS; as to admit its usefulness would almost be to admit flaws in your own practice when it comes to one to one work and cast doubt over what approach you have been taking over recent years. It must also be remembered that what goes on between officer and offender is largely hidden and has been throughout probation's history. Therefore, for practitioners' practice to be exposed in this way risks their professional self-image. It is possible that this accounts for the casual dismissive tone in which SEEDS is discussed.

SEEDS- Saviour or a Sell-Out?

An interesting question arose from the research that was not anticipated. SEEDS has undoubtedly been met with a degree of suspicion as to the true reason or intention behind its introduction. This is largely owing to the timing and having coincided, with arguably the biggest threat to its future that probation has ever seen. With 70 per cent of its work due to be privatised, the threat of privatisation appears to have passed and it is instead a sealed deal (MOJ 2013). Understandably this has left practitioners anxious as to the future of their jobs. During the interviews no direct questions were asked about the timing of the SEEDS roll-out, or indeed, the reasons behind it. Respondents were nevertheless forthcoming in their views, suggesting it is something that is at the forefront of their minds. Interestingly the views lent themselves to respondents aligning themselves with one of two camps. Those who saw SEEDS as being the possible 'saviour' of probation or those who saw it as another step closer to privatisation and as 'selling out' to the private sector. These views did not map onto the less experienced versus more experienced division of respondents that structured the analysis.

Some respondents presented as suspicious about the true intentions behind the roll-out of SEEDS. They perceived it as a way of neatly packaging up the work that the Probation Service does making it easier for private companies to take over this work. From the way that respondents spoke there was the suggestion that they felt this had been planned for some time, with one respondent talking about SEEDS and the increase in professional judgement being deliberately introduced in order to prepare staff for privatisation. Another respondent

spoke about SEEDS discrediting probation work by casting doubt on the work that practitioners have been doing over the years. One inference to be drawn from these respondents' views is that SEEDS is regarded as the catalyst for privatisation and as the mechanism which will allow it to take place:

"It's almost come at a time when probation needs to prove we're doing work with offenders and yet it's almost saying by the nature of the training, that's not what we've been doing all along, when I think it completely is what we've been doing. If someone looked at it and said, 'well how long have you been around and you've now developed training on offender engagement.' No, we've been doing that all along....I think that with the changes to privatisation, some elements we have set ourselves up for, like with the Reporting and Supervision centres" (Lee, 9 and half years in service)

"I think it's an ideal model for the private sector to latch onto and to learn quickly in a nutshell really, how to supervise and engage with offenders. So even though it's probably copyrighted or patented or whatever, it's an ideal package to say you know, 'right there you go- one day training- become a PO, there you go'" (Sophie, 6 years in service).

There was a strong sense from other respondents that SEEDS was being implemented and rolled out almost in almost a desperate last bid attempt to prove probation's worth and save it from the jaws of privatisation. Respondents were equally as suspicious about the reasons behind SEEDS and its timing but saw the ultimate aim as being a positive one:

"We're trying to sell ourselves, saying 'no one can do it better than Probation' and I think that's putting a lot of pressure on people, with this whole kind of implement the SEEDS training and all of that and I think it's kind of a lot of pressure to show our worth and why you shouldn't get rid of us" (Annie, 9 months in service)

"I think a hidden agenda in it is the whole privatisation issue. Two of the facilitators on the SEEDS training I was on commented that G4S don't know how to do this. So you know this is an excellent sort of selling point of ours so to speak. And I just kind of wonder if this is why, cos SEEDS is what we all do anyway, they're just formalising it under a heading sort of thing. And I just wonder if the big drive on this is to save us in some respects so we've got all these skills and we do this and we do that which other organisations can't do" (Tricia, 15 years in service)

"Maybe the timing isn't right only because Probation have their own challenges to deal with in this moment with staff retention and all the things that are happening but if it's (SEEDS) going

to help people keep their jobs then maybe it's the right thing to bring in at the right time"(Pauline, 9 and half years in service).

Overall there were more respondents of the belief that SEEDS acted as a positive development that could operate as a 'saviour' rather than a 'sell-out':

"I think what I took away from the SEEDS training was that we do have systems of working and we do have professional credibility from one to one working. I think that's quite nice. I didn't necessarily think that wasn't there but it was quite nice to have that from a political perspective, from an organisation to kind of go 'yeah there is some basis for one to one work'. It validated one to one work which I had a lot of faith in anyway" (Paul, 7 years in service)

"I think it was timed really well, in that it was a point where we're starting to get more staff back and hopefully there's a bit more enthusiasm for things. You could argue what's the point because we're all going to get cut and go off to the private sector or whatever, but I think it gives a good argument for why we are good at our jobs and do what we do" (Emma, 9 years in service).

Whether they were of the opinion that SEEDS was a 'saviour' or a 'sell-out' the majority of respondents were opposed to privatisation. There was one exception with one respondent believing that privatisation was a positive development and something that should happen:

"I think the key issue at the moment is privatisation and I do think some of our work should be privatised. I think it's a purchaser, provider split" (Rachel, 22 years in service).

Whilst the question of whether SEEDS is neatly packaging up probation's work, making it a prime target for privatisation or not, was not an intentional aim of this research, it none the less prompts an interesting discussion and gives an insight into how practitioners have viewed the timing of the SEEDS roll-out. Whilst arguably SEEDS does provide a neat package and model of working that private companies may welcome as a way of working, it does not replace the years of training, experience and skills that practitioners bring to it as a method of working.

Nevertheless, this provides little comfort to those practitioners on the coalface who are living with the uncertainty of what is to come, whilst having to carry on with the day job. Whilst the pessimists might say that SEEDS is part of the move to large scale privatisation and the optimists might say it is to move the Probation Service away from such, the fact that

respondents referred to this issue unprompted and spoke so freely is testament to how strongly they feel about the issue.

Chapter Eleven- A Cultural Shift in Probation Practice? Insights From the Shop Floor

The aim of SEEDS was to prompt a sea change in the organisational culture of the Probation Service (Sorsby *et al* 2013). Throughout its history the culture of the Probation Service has been fundamentally underpinned by a commitment to one to one work with offenders, although this has been seen in different guises throughout the years. This culture was fostered and maintained through the CQSW training pathway and became embedded into practice (Burnett, Baker & Roberts 2007). The introduction of the 'What Works' agenda represented a significant shift in organisational culture. The Probation Service needed to prove its efficiency and effectiveness in a bid to survive. The 'What Works' approach had its foundations in evidence-based practice which was based on 'effective practice principles'. The focus of interventions with offenders shifted to an emphasis on programmes at the expense of one to one interventions. This formed part of the managerialist culture which came to bear within the Probation Service. Effectiveness became a measurable quantity through targets and quotas (Nash 2008). The work of the Probation Service became more business-orientated rather than welfare-orientated and the ultimate measure of its effectiveness was reconviction rates. With all of this came significant changes to the focus of practice. Practitioners saw changes in the amount of freedom they had over their own practice and a reduction in the amount of professional autonomy they were able to exercise. Those joining the Service at that time were greeted with a very different ethos and way of working compared to their experienced peers. Probation work had become embroiled in bureaucracy (Phillips 2011). Whilst from an academic perspective, the introduction of 'What Works' was believed to represent a significant change to the culture of the Service, the extent to which this was felt by practitioners was questionable (Vanstone 2000). Many practitioners reported staying true to their values and continued with their practice much as before, maintaining an emphasis on one to one work with offenders.

It can be concluded from this research that the less experienced respondents are conscious of their gaps in knowledge and are willing to embrace any initiative or way of working which provides them with more structure and direction in their work. SEEDS meets this need. This group joined the Probation Service during the managerialist era and are therefore well accustomed to seeking guidance and assurances from their managers. The concept of professional judgement and autonomous decision making is alien to them and is something they fear as a result. They welcome increased levels of accountability through observations as they are less confident in their practice and are wary of having greater freedom to exercise professional judgement.

In stark contrast the more experienced group can remember back to days before the levels of bureaucracy increased, when one to one work was the 'bread and butter' work of a probation officer. Some of them have lived through the introduction and demise of the 'What Works' era and this arguably shapes their perceptions and approach to SEEDS. This group have experience of acting autonomously and welcome the return of this style of working. For them this employs their skills as skilled and trained practitioners'. This group have seen many changes in the direction of practice over the years and for them, SEEDS represents yet another phase in probation's history (Rex & Hosking 2013). However, their confident and assured identity as practitioners causes them some problems. Their identity is more fixed and they are therefore, less embracing of change. SEEDS represents one such change. Their strong belief in what is effective in working with offenders leads them to question any new initiative to see if it lives up to their expectation about what probation practice should look like.

One to one work has had a changing emphasis within the Probation Services' history. The introduction of SEEDS has refocused attention on this approach to working with offenders (Sorsby *et al* 2013). However, this research suggests that thus far SEEDS has failed to achieve the cultural change that was intended. In order to explain why that is, the three themes of 'Identity', 'Autonomy' and 'Accountability' were explored. It is important to consider how SEEDS is perceived and interpreted by those at the coalface else a change in organisational culture will not be effective. In order to achieve an overall change in culture there needs to be a more intimate understanding of the workforce. This research is intended to help in that process.

Identity

It is well known that probation identity has undergone something of a transformation over the years. The welfare approach that prevailed for much of probation's history and the social work training that accompanied it provided practitioners with a strong sense of identity (Newman & Nutley 2003). Although the subsequent challenges to this approach had important implications for both the culture of the Probation Service and the identity of practitioners, there has been relatively little research exploring this (Eadie 2000). The introduction of 'What Works' led to a re-evaluation of probation's identity and the focus of its work began to fundamentally change to one of enforcement (Mair 2004a). However, the focus has now changed once more with the emphasis on offender engagement, desistance and focusing on an offender's journey away from crime (Burnett & McNeil 2005; Dowden & Andrews 2004; Rex 1999). SEEDS forms part of this. Whilst not representing a return to the past, there are arguably some important

similarities to previous practice. Notably, putting the offender back at the heart of practice and recognising the importance of practitioners' autonomy in their work with offenders. For some this represents a return to previously recognised probation values, whilst for others this is new territory. Regardless of whether this represents something new or not, it is a further change to the identity of the Service.

One of the main influences on the way in which SEEDS is interpreted by practitioners and subsequently woven into their practice is how practitioners view and define themselves. It was clear that there was a marked difference in identity between the less experienced and the more experienced group of respondents. This difference can be understood largely by the training pathway that respondents' undertook on entry into the Service. The training pathway has a marked effect not only on how practitioners perceive themselves and other practitioners but also on their attitude and approach to the work.

Those who entered the Service via the CQSW training route viewed this as superior to any training pathway that came later and there was a sense that these practitioners regard themselves as superior practitioners as a result. By virtue of when this training took place, this was those respondents in the more experienced group. This entry route was seen as equipping practitioners with the fundamental skills needed to work with and engage offenders, such as motivational interviewing. The CQSW training route was very much viewed as training practitioners in the key skills needed to be a good practitioner. Although it was largely agreed upon about what skills make a good practitioner, empathy was considered to be an essential skill for practitioners to possess and as one underpinning the day to day work of practitioners. Crucially it was also considered to be a skill that cannot be taught and certainly not through a three day SEEDS training event.

This speaks to innate skills required of practitioners' that are not teachable. There remains some debate within the literature as to whether empathy is an innate quality or something that can be taught (Durnescu 2012). Trotter (2006, p. 32) argues that empathy can be taught and consequently classifies it as a professional skill. The suggestion is that there are certain characteristics that individuals hold that predispose them to making good practitioners, such as empathy.

The CQSW training pathway was perceived as standing people in good stead for working with offenders and is still thought of in high regard. The perception is that any subsequent training has not been to the same high standard. It is suggested that this has resulted in a dumbing down of probation practice and has led to a generation of practitioners not trained to the

same level. This is symptomatic of a divided workforce. There is a risk that 'old fashioned' probation values and ways of working will die out. As the more experienced practitioners retire there is undeniably a loss of skills and knowledge from the Service. Replacing them are a new breed of probation practitioners with different reference points and whose only experience is of the newer approaches to practice. Arguably, the Probation Service will be left with a workforce that has a very different identity and set of ideals than has been seen previously.

Those trained in the CQSW era drew a strong sense of their professional identity from their experience of the training and they presented with a much stronger sense of their identity and confidence in the purpose of their role than those in the less experienced group. Respondents in the less experienced group had a much more fluid sense of their identity when it came to professional practice. Less experienced respondents are arguably more flexible in their approach and less rigid in response to change as they have not had the same committed training and therefore, do not have the same strength of identity as those in the more experienced group. Whilst they demonstrate a willingness to change there is also a sense of a non-committal, perhaps even a laissez-faire attitude to change.

These subtle differences have a significant impact on the way the two groups approach and manage change. Whilst not necessarily always embracing it, those in the less experienced group present as less resistant and more willing to invest in change. Their approach is on one level unreserved. This may partly be borne out of their inexperience and therefore, reluctance to question new approaches to practice. This stands in stark contrast to the more experienced group whose natural instinct it is to first of all question. When presented with the prospect of change or yet another shift in the direction of practice, the more experienced practitioners measure it against a yardstick of what they believe probation practice should be and how it used to be. Only when this reconciles do they accept new initiatives. Therefore, change can be hard for the more experienced group to accept, particularly when changes do not live up to previous ideals of how they think probation practice should be.

The sense of identity that practitioners hold goes some way to explaining why the more experienced group do not see the necessity for SEEDS to be trained and see it as being at the core of the job. The more experienced respondents' identity is very much fixed and they express a sense of frustration toward those who are newer into the Service about why they need to be trained on such things. Consequently they seek to make a distinction between themselves and less experienced respondents. The less experienced respondents welcome

SEEDS as training that gives them clear guidance and direction as to what they should be doing in the room with an offender. It provides them with reassurance that what they do is right and their adaptable sense of professional identity allows them to take SEEDS on board as a new initiative and adapt their practice accordingly.

It is interesting to note that whilst those in the more experienced group held strong views about their younger counterparts this did not work vice versa. The strong sense of identity that comes with being a more experienced practitioner possibly leads to them seeing their less experienced colleagues as weaker practitioners with no backbone. However, this very commitment to 'old style' probation values could present as a disadvantage to the more experienced respondents. Their experience and fixed identity renders them less willing to embrace change. The risk being, that they become a group of practitioners left behind in the rapidly evolving world of probation practice. This is concerning in terms of continuous professional development as practitioners need to be open minded and continuously willing to develop and take on new ideas in order to improve their practice. The less experienced respondents arguably represent a group who are more susceptible to change and less questioning. They present with more malleable identities capable of soaking up new ideas and demonstrate a willingness to adapt. Therefore they are easier to train and it also perhaps means that old fashioned values will not be protected by the workforce. Sadly it could be argued that the less experienced respondents in this respect are better equipped to cope with the ever changing world of probation and are in fact better cut out for the 'new world' of probation.

Practitioner identity is an important concept to be aware of when considering the way in which SEEDS is understood and woven into probation practice. Practitioners' identity underpins their attitudes and approaches to work and the most significant building block in forming this identity is the training route into the Service that the practitioner experienced. It is clear that the CQSW training route is still regarded as a pinnacle of probation training and as the one that best equips practitioners for the day job. For the less experienced respondents, SEEDS is a further extension of their uncertainty. It does not represent a promised land but is a throw-back to when they did not know what they were doing. For this group SEEDS is an opportunity. One they only want if there is security, which for them comes in the form of accountability. Whilst there is much that binds the less experienced and more experienced respondents, their sense of professional identity is what divides them.

Autonomy

There is a re-emergence of autonomy in probation practice (MOJ 2011). There is a clear divide in how this is perceived. The concept of autonomy meant very different things to both groups. The more experienced respondents were comfortable with exercising autonomy in their practice. They understand what practice looks like and know what they are doing. They want to be left alone to get on with it. For this group their ability to practice in an autonomous way is countered by the rise of accountability. In contrast the less experienced respondents were understandably anxious at the prospect of what they perceived to be greater responsibility. Their anxieties were mainly borne out of their lack of experience in practicing with autonomy. The less experienced group had a very different skill set on which to draw from, owing to the different training route they have experienced. Namely, skills focused around enforcement and meeting targets. Their experience of training, with an increased emphasis on public protection and accountability, would have been very different to the more experienced group. Therefore, for some of the less experienced respondents, practicing with autonomy may well have been a relatively new concept. It represents the unknown and as a result there is a fear. The fear of doing it wrong, the fear of isolation, the fear of being at risk as a result. This is further exacerbated by what they perceive to be a lack of guidance and training that is being provided to support them in this.

It must be remembered that the less experienced respondents lack expertise in this area of practice. It can be easily forgotten that those newer into the Service have never experienced the days of autonomy and professional freedom that their more experienced colleagues were used to. For them autonomy is only welcomed if it goes hand in hand with increased accountability so that someone is looking over their shoulder. Less experienced respondents were clear in their desire for increased levels of accountability and oversight of their work. For them this offers reassurance that what they are doing is right. It appeases their anxieties and concerns about taking more control over their practice and practicing autonomously.

The single biggest indicator of an increase in the amount of autonomy that practitioners have is the change to National Standards. There have been several revisions to the original National Standards which were introduced in 1992 (Home Office 1992, 2002, 2005; MOJ 2011b). The relaxation of National Standards was introduced as part of the Offender Engagement Programme, with the intention of removing some of the bureaucracy and the unnecessary barriers that practitioners faced in their work with offenders (MOJ 2011b). However, this requires practitioners to be confident in their own abilities to make judgements and decisions

and therefore links in very closely to autonomy. The less experienced respondents understandably find this daunting and they expressed their concern at what they perceived to be a lack of guidance around making these sorts of decisions.

In stark contrast, the more experienced respondents embraced the changes to National Standards and the subsequent increase in their autonomy. For this group, having greater autonomy over their practice represented a return to 'old style' probation values and a way of working that they were accustomed to. The more experienced respondents presented as more confident in practicing in this way and greater autonomy was therefore welcomed as it is considered to be at the very heart of probation practice. However, it was acknowledged that this is likely to be more difficult for those who were newer into the Service and thus less experienced.

The introduction of a specific button on ICMS under which to record professional judgement decisions created further angst and suspicion. Respondents were forthcoming in expressing their suspicion and doubts about the true reason for its introduction. There was a distinction between the less experienced and more experienced respondents in terms of their reaction to the 'button'. The less experienced respondents' suspicion and concerns were borne out of their inexperience and lack of confidence in utilising professional judgement and then explicitly recording this. Their comments suggest there is a fundamental lack of understanding as to the basis of professional judgement. Making sound assessments and decisions based on professional judgement underpins the day to day work of probation practitioners. This is not a new concept. However, for the less experienced respondents, professional judgement is another 'initiative' that they believe can be put into a box and treated as a separate entity from the rest of their practice.

Whilst for the more experienced respondents the actual decision-making did not represent a significant change, the way in which the decisions are recorded does. They recognised that the decision making was in fact what they had always done and was fundamentally part of the 'day job' but the way in which decisions were being recorded was being made explicit. They expressed concern and cynicism and were deeply suspicious that the 'button' represented an attempt to scapegoat them should anything go wrong. Their views were equally borne out of their experience, albeit different experiences, of having seen many different initiatives come and go and practice change direction many times. The more experienced respondents were also able to reflect on and make comparisons to their experience of the introduction of 'What Works'. Therefore, they understandably had opinions to voice. This is something that

respondents felt strongly and even aggrieved about. There was a striking sense of defeat evident in the way that Karen spoke on page 96. There is no mistaking how aggrieved she feels at the prospect of being made to blame. This is perhaps a reflection of her past experiences or an insight into how 'old hand' practitioners view the modern world of probation.

The 'button' symbolises the contradiction that practitioners face. Whilst they can make their own decisions, this is not with freedom. There remains in place oversight and accountability which limits their autonomy. The 'button' helps to explain the differences between the two groups in terms of their identity, autonomy and accountability. For the less experienced respondents, the 'button' represents their malleable and more susceptible identities evidenced by their fear of using it and getting it wrong. It feeds into their anxieties about knowing 'nothing' and not being told what is right and what is wrong. They dislike the unstructured world of autonomy and professional judgement where there is independence and individual decisions to be made. For this group accountability is welcomed in partnership with autonomy, as a safer world where there is greater oversight of practice and more clear guidance and direction. This is in stark contrast to the more experienced group whose identities are more fixed. They are more confident in their identity and their role and want to be left to get on with the 'day job'. Autonomy is welcomed by the more experienced respondents. For this group it is reminiscent of a return to a previous way of working which they value and consider to be at the very heart of probation practice. It is undeniable that autonomy is once again a feature of the modern day Probation Service. However, it is one that continues to divide the less experienced and more experienced respondents.

Accountability

Accountability has increasingly become a common feature in public sector work. There is increasing pressure for public sector organisations to be held to account not only in the work that they do but also in terms of how taxpayer's money is being spent and proving their cost effectiveness and value for money (McNeill 2000).

The need for accountability in probation work has continued to increase over the years, particularly through the 'What Works' era and as a result of managerialism (Newman & Nutley 2003). It has increasingly become an unavoidable aspect of probation practice that is at the very heart of day to day practice. The quest for accountability is sought in different ways. Practice has become more regulated with the introduction of more targets and key performance indicators, many of which are cash-linked thereby ensuring compliance from Trusts. Systems have been implemented to ensure a streamlined approach to practice across

the country. These have included the introduction and subsequent revisions of National Standards several years after the turning point of the Statement of National Objectives and Priorities (SNOP) which set out the expectations for probation (Home Office 1984). This was received with mixed feelings (Liddle 2001; Lloyd 1985). The introduction of OASys and the subsequent developments to this area of practice epitomises the rise of accountability in probation practice. OASys lies at the heart of every practitioner's work and the rigid nature of the original National Standards, and their first revision, demonstrated the bureaucratic and inflexible approach to practice that had been adopted as a result of the managerialist agenda. Further evidence of the increased levels of bureaucracy is evident through the endless form-filling now required of practitioners. Whilst there were aspects to accountability, and the need for it, that both the less experienced and the more experienced group agreed on, it was clear that at its heart accountability actually meant very different things to both groups.

The less experienced respondents were welcoming of closer scrutiny and managerial oversight over their work, particularly through the form of observations. They perceived this to be of personal benefit to them as well as good for the organisation. The less experienced respondents recognised observations as a means of accessing mentoring and coaching and as another means of receiving guidance and reassurance that what they were doing in the room with an offender was right. It also provides them a means of getting direct and timely feedback on their practice, something which is actually otherwise very hard to achieve in probation practice. This is evidenced by the way in which the less experienced respondents spoke about observations and their desire for this to take place. They very much spoke about observations and accountability from a personal perspective, in terms of how it will affect them and what they stand to gain from it. The language they used evidenced the sense of ownership they take and the personal way in which they interpret accountability. There was less sense of the bigger picture in terms of the organisational perspective. This contrasts with the more experienced respondents who talk in much broader terms and focus on the benefit of observations to the organisation and other practitioners rather than themselves.

Not only do observations seek to soothe less experienced practitioner's anxieties but it allows for them to apportion some blame and avoid taking full responsibility if something were to go wrong. In the event that their practice is scrutinised and called into question they are safe in the knowledge that they have been observed and therefore, the responsibility for their practice becomes shared with their line manager or whoever has observed their practice. In this respect it is easier to see why the less experienced respondents welcome increased accountability, as for them it offers greater levels of protection and assurance.

The more experienced respondents had rather more mixed feelings towards accountability. Whilst they recognised why this was necessary, they spoke about it in more general terms and very much from an organisational point of view and as detached from their own individual practice. They acknowledged the need for 'practitioners', but not necessarily themselves, to be more accountable in their practice citing examples of bad practice from the past as justifications for this. This group did not seek to romanticise the past, nor did they call for unlimited freedom of practice, recognising the need for limitations and control and for the need to be held to account in their practice.

The more experienced respondents have the benefit of years of experience and hindsight and have seen many initiatives come and go and many changes in the direction of practice. They are therefore, well aware of the potential pitfalls and challenges that come with increased levels of accountability. The less experienced respondents are anxious at the prospect of having increased levels of professional judgement and being held to account. They fear getting it wrong which is borne out of their inexperience and lack of confidence in having to take this level of responsibility. Those newer into the Service have become accustomed to practicing within a managerialist culture where reliance on management is promoted and indeed desired. This is in fact the opposite for the more experienced respondents. Having autonomy over their practice very much represents a return to 'old fashioned' probation values. However, this is not something that they wholly heartedly embrace. Years of experience has led them to realise this is not without consequence. They are therefore sceptical and cynical about the intentions behind this and are understandably cautious about being made a scapegoat should things go wrong.

Whilst the less experienced and the more experienced respondents appeared to welcome accountability, it was not as straightforward as this. It is clear that when discussing accountability this fundamentally meant different things to different practitioners depending on when they joined the Service. Accountability serves a different function based on the years of experience a practitioner has. For the less experienced group accountability is welcomed through the lens of mentoring and as a means of providing reassurance and guidance that what they are doing in a room with an offender is right. They welcome the additional buffer to their practice. For them accountability represents an additional safeguard in the event of anything going wrong, as the responsibility becomes shared once they have been observed and the burden lifts. For the more experienced group accountability represents a bag of mixed blessings. Whilst they do not seek to romanticise the past and they do see the need for accountability, this is very much from an organisational point of view. The more experienced

respondents are less willing to see the relevance to themselves and there is a degree of detachment in the way that they talk about accountability.

The three dimensions of identity, autonomy and accountability further develop what is known about the different ways that SEEDS and the wider Offender Engagement Programme is being perceived, understood and implemented by practitioners based on how long they have been in the Service. However, they cannot be understood in isolation as each factor is interlinked in terms of developing a wider understanding. A practitioner's identity is fundamentally bound up in when they entered the Service and the training pathway they undertook. Part of their identity make up is their attitude towards autonomous practice and prior experience of this. The more experienced respondents have a more fixed identity and greater experience of this type of practice owing to the years they have been in practice. This links into their experiences and attitudes towards accountability. The more experienced respondents have experienced the introduction of 'What Works' and the rise of accountability and therefore they view accountability differently. The picture looks very different for the less experienced respondents. They are a group with a flexible approach and a willingness to change; their identity is far more malleable. They have fewer preconceptions but with that comes inexperience and consequently fear of the unknown. This is what autonomy represents to them. They have no prior experience to base this new approach to practice on and therefore they look to their managers for guidance. In this vein they welcome the increased levels of accountability as for them it provides guidance and assurance that what they are doing is right. They feel protected by this whereas the more experienced respondents feel accountability is a means of scapegoating them in the face of adversity.

Chapter Twelve- Conclusions: Is SEEDS New Wine in Old Bottles?

The aim of this research¹⁰ was to consider how a new model of working, in the form of SEEDS, has been received, understood and incorporated into practice by probation practitioners. More broadly the research aimed to look at how the Probation Service manages change and consider both the implications of SEEDS for the culture of the Service and how the culture of the Service impacts on SEEDS. During the design and implementation of this research each of these aims have been achieved, although, as discussed later in this section the area of change within probation and how it is implemented and responded to remains an area worthy of further research.

Despite the pace of change in the policies and practices of the Probation Service there is relatively little research which examines the impact this has on practitioners and more importantly the impact it has on their practice (Ellis & Boden 2004). Research by Powell and Di Maggio (1991) suggested that organisational change is characterised by negotiation, appropriation and resistance and that these processes can result in new ideas being interpreted differently and multiple strategies being created as a means of adapting. Increasing knowledge about the organisational culture of the Probation Service would help to shape the implementation of any changes to practice. Having an understanding of how change is negotiated on the ground floor is critical, particularly when the aim of such transformations is to affect a significant change to organisational culture. If it is not understood how practitioners experience such changes and apply these to their practice, the chances of influencing and changing the culture as a result is significantly reduced. This supports research by Robinson *et al* (2014) who concluded that attempts to change practice are likely to fail unless work is undertaken to engage and challenge practitioners about their existing perceptions of practice.

Cultural Change?

This research suggests that the implementation of OEP and SEEDS has not achieved the stated aim of affecting a stock change in culture. However, it is acknowledged that the research was confined to one probation Trust. This stands in contrast to research by Sorsby *et al* (2013) who carried out a review of practitioners' responses to SEEDS following the pilot programmes. They concluded that the cultural change promoted by SEEDS was welcomed by practitioners. This difference in outcomes may be as a result of the passage of time. It would be understandable

¹⁰ See Chapter 1

that following the roll-out of the pilot programmes, practitioners would have been optimistic and positive, especially with the promise of follow-up training and support. However, this has not been borne out in reality which may have contributed to some of the negative findings. The difference in findings may also be attributable to the methods adopted. I undertook a series of in-depth qualitative interviews which yielded rich data. This may also account for some of the differences in my findings and that of Sorsby *et al* (2013). My research offers a snap shot of practitioners' views some two years after the initial SEEDS pilot training took place and is therefore timely in providing an update.

It is well documented that changes to organisational culture are not easy to achieve (Mawby & Worrall 2011, 2013; Newman & Nutley 2003). It has been suggested that the culture within the Probation Service is equally resistant to change (Robinson *et al* 2014). It requires 'buy-in' from the very top of the organisation, all the way down to the grass roots. Such changes need to be reinforced and modelled by everybody in the organisation and it is only over time that changes in culture can be seen. However, time is one thing that the Probation Service does not allow. The frequency and pace of change in the focus and ethos of the Probation Service does not allow enough time for any such significant changes to be integrated and then subsequently become embedded in practice. The Service is under constant political pressure and is required to respond and adapt its working practices in-line with the current political views on crime. Changes in the culture of the Service are almost expected over night with little acknowledgement of the complexities involved. This was evidenced by the hurried implementation of NOMS, only three years after the creation of the NPS (Dobson 2004). A single training event explaining the concept and introducing the 'new way of working' is expected to encapsulate the very essence of change and evoke significant changes in practitioner's attitudes and behaviour.

This suggests there is an assumption that practitioners adopt a robotic approach to their practice, merely moving from one approach to another without questioning. The reality is that practitioners are exposed to a wealth of different research, theories and policies over their time in practice. It is not as simple as one initiative or theory replacing the other and practitioners benignly changing their practice accordingly. Seasoned practitioners are capable of processing, analysing and evaluating new information. They resist changes they do not agree with and negotiate ways of incorporating new approaches to practice, finding their own way of doing things. They form their own views on the validity and reliability of initiatives. Their practice is modelled on a hybrid of different theories and approaches to practice which they are likely to have adapted in a way that fits their values and beliefs about what works

with offenders. This supports the work of Cheliotis (2006, p. 323) who concluded that “practitioners will always have a certain amount of discretion and what escapes the system is the panoply of personal values and idiosyncratic meanings that individual decision makers bring to their decisions.”

As well as utilising a collaborative approach to its introduction, SEEDS was also promised to be an initiative that practitioners would continue to receive training on as it developed. However, the research suggests that this has failed to come to fruition. This is certainly the case within the prison setting where SEEDS has failed to have any impact. Practice continues as it was before and SEEDS has for now at least, become a forgotten model of practice. SEEDS appears to have been hastily implemented. It has been expected to act as the ‘magic bullet’ in changing the entrenched culture of managerialism which is characterised by a focus on targets, at the expense of offender engagement (Nash 2008). However, it risks being another ‘fad’ in the Service’s history if more is not done to educate practitioners as to the wider theory-base and its relevance. For an effective change to probation culture to be recognised in practice, there needs to be a whole system approach (Rex & Hosking 2013) and a commitment to engaging with practitioners and getting a buy-in from the very people who will be responsible for implementing the changes in practice (Robinson *et al* 2014). There needs to be greater investment in training and reinforcement of the principles of SEEDS for it to achieve credibility with a range of practitioners.

A Workforce Divided?

Research into probation practice has suggested a united workforce regardless of age, grade or years of experience when considering issues at the heart of probation, such as approaches to working with offenders (Robinson *et al* 2014). There are a number of commonalities that bind probation staff such as their motivation to join the Service, what they like about their job, what they dislike and their values. Despite these commonalities being a feature throughout the history of the Probation Service, the results of my research suggested that the probation workforce has become very much divided. This division can largely be understood as a consequence of the differences in practitioner identity which links in closely with the training route undertaken. The number of years’ experience respondents had was an important factor in understanding their identity. There was a divide evident between the more experienced and less experienced respondents. The threshold was found to be at the nine year point. This has important implications in terms of understanding the more experienced respondents’ identity as the majority had been trained with a more welfare-orientated focus. In contrast, the

replacement training had more of a focus on criminology with an increasing emphasis on cognitive-behavioural methods and 'effective practice' principles. The more experienced respondents presented with a more fixed sense of their own identity. They are less receptive to change and demand a higher standard of evidence before being willing to accept changes to their practice. They find ways to adapt and negotiate new initiatives to fit their preferred way of working. This supports the findings of Gregory (2010) and Mawby and Worrall (2013) who found more experienced practitioners were more resistant to change and less likely to adopt a uniformed and conformist approach to change, instead finding more creative ways of meeting expectation. The increased emphasis on professional judgement allows for some discretion (Deering 2010) and practitioners' own personal agency mitigates against the managerialist agenda that has dominated probation practice over the last decade (King 2013). In contrast the less experienced respondents present with a more pliable sense of their identity. They are more accepting of change and new approaches to practice. They adopt new ways of working with less questioning of the evidence-base or rationale to their work. For the less experienced group SEEDS has enabled them to develop their practice and engage with offenders in a more constructive way to support their desistance from crime.

The divided workforce presents as a double edged sword for the organisation. The reluctance and challenge the organisation faces from the more experienced practitioners in implementing changes represents an acute management problem. For these are strong-minded practitioners with their own views and value base. In addition practitioners are increasingly finding themselves more experienced than those they take orders from and who manage them. These practitioners are less susceptible and less willing to conform. They are used to working autonomously with relative amounts of freedom. It is, therefore, possible for them to carry on in their practice in a way they feel is productive with little managerial oversight. As shown in the research, for many of these practitioners 'What Works' represented little change to their day to day practice as they carried on much as before. It could be suggested these practitioners are less cut out for the 'new' world of probation with its increasing bureaucracy and rapid pace of change. These 'culture carriers' do not let changes in policy affect their fundamental beliefs about how to work with people (Mawby & Worrall 2013). They embody what the Probation Service stands for and can be seen as the 'guardians' of probation values and traditions. As the Service evolves and increasingly the more experienced practitioners leave the Service or retire, so too is a great deal of experience lost. This experience cannot be replaced or replicated in the same way. Coming through the ranks are a different type of probation practitioner. These practitioners have been trained through the 'What Works' era

when managerialism and bureaucracy were at their peak and the primary focus for practitioners was meeting targets. From a policy perspective the skills of building relationships with offenders, and using this as a tool in managing them, has arguably been lost. In its place are a group of practitioners whose skills base is grounded in accountability, micro-management and meeting targets with little understanding or experience of utilising professional judgement and practicing autonomously. These practitioners react like sponges to initiatives such as SEEDS. They welcome toolkits that allow them to follow a prescribed set of procedures. This alleviates their anxieties and fears around working with offenders and masks the deficits in their training compared to their more experienced counterparts. The more experienced respondents sought to distinguish themselves from the less experienced group and whilst they acknowledged the relevance of models such as SEEDS for inexperienced practitioners, they saw themselves as different and as not needing such training.

Is SEEDS the new 'What Works'?

The introduction of the Offender Engagement Programme (OEP) and adoption of SEEDS under this umbrella has not been seamless. Whilst its aim was to evoke a change in culture there is little evidence that this has been the case. The SEEDS approach, which is central to the overarching Offender Engagement Programme (OEP), is very different to that of 'What Works'. It has been designed to be a collaborative approach involving practitioners in its very design and delivery rather than 'doing to' practitioners, which has long been the method adopted in the Probation Service when implementing new initiatives or ways of working. SEEDS has been designed as a reflective and developmental process that promotes continuous professional development. This was further evidenced by a promise of ongoing training and workshops which provide a chance to update skills. However, this has not come to fruition which respondents cited as a source of disappointment.

As the Probation Service strives to retain its credibility within the Criminal Justice System, the OEP and SEEDS has been branded the next 'big thing' in probation practice. Many of the respondents had been in the Service long enough to remember the introduction of the last 'big thing', namely 'What Works'. Therefore there was understandably an air of scepticism about the impact OEP and SEEDS would have in practice. There was a sense that for some it represented going full circle in terms of the approach being taken to practice. However, it is clear that not all has been lost from the 'What Works' era. SEEDS borrows from it the principles of cognitive-behavioural methods as one of the fundamental tools to practice.

Concerns were voiced following the advent of offender management that the same care and attention that was being promoted with offenders had not been afforded to practitioners who were the very people responsible for implementing practice (Robinson 2008). It is suggested that the organisation needs to practice what it preaches and adopt the same reflective approach to working with practitioners, as it teaches practitioners to do with offenders. Just as the ethos of SEEDS reflects the individualistic nature of probation work and the need to tailor work to individuals, there also needs to be the same approach taken in reflecting the individualistic nature of practitioners with consideration given to how changes to practice will be received and implemented by individuals.

Whilst the fundamental ethos and delivery of SEEDS is different to 'What Works', there are some practical ways in which SEEDS could be understood to be the new 'What Works'. Although promoting offender engagement and putting the relationship back at the heart of probation practice, SEEDS relies on a formulaic approach underpinned by a manual which is somewhat reminiscent of the 'What Works' approach to practice. The idea of working through exercises from a manual and then recording the details of supervision, using the CRISS acronym, is suggestive of a prescriptive, tick-box approach to practice.

Whilst some of the lessons from the implementation of 'What Works' appear to have been learnt, the same mistakes have arguably been repeated in trying to force change through the organisation. The way in which SEEDS has been rolled out has attracted much criticism. The piece-meal approach to training and the lack of follow-up training has left practitioners feeling let down. There is a general sense of anti-climax associated with the introduction of SEEDS.

Although a by-product of the research, a further interesting issue regarding the privatisation agenda was highlighted. Respondents brought this up themselves. This clearly is an issue at the forefront of practitioners' minds and one they are keen to discuss. Their eagerness to raise this unprompted within the forum of the research may suggest that practitioners are not otherwise provided the opportunity to discuss this. There is little research which considers practitioners' perspectives on this issue or on the impact and toll it takes on them. This is indicative of it being something that is 'done' to practitioners rather than in collaboration with them. The lack of collaboration with practitioners over changes in policy is something that the Probation Service has been criticised for throughout its history. With practitioners continually having to react and adapt to changes that are inflicted on them, rather than being a part of them, perhaps it is not surprising that the fundamental culture of the Service is so resistant to change.

Where to Next?

The research suggest that in order for change to be effective the organisation needs to adopt a strategic approach and have a far greater understanding of practitioners' day to day practice and how they experience and internalise changes in practice. One strategy would be for the organisation to acknowledge the divided workforce when implementing change and employ different strategies of implementation for each group accordingly.

Although it is debated how successful the implementation of SEEDS has been in respect of changing practice, one positive outcome that it has achieved is to have brought relational one to one practice with offenders back to the forefront of probation practice. SEEDS arguably provides an opportunity in which to train an up-and-coming workforce in a generic approach to one to one work with offenders and create a skilled workforce that are speaking the same language across the Service. Instilling a fundamental change in organisational culture is a significant task that needs to be embedded from the top down and it cannot be assumed that has taken place. Furthermore, it is those practitioners who are new into the Service that form the next generation of probation and who will be relied on to carry forward the culture of probation. Surely, therefore, this is worthy of investment.

Further research is needed to explore the divided workforce. As it has been demonstrated, it is not as simple as a 'one size fits all' approach. Practitioners do not all respond in the same way to things and therefore it cannot be assumed that a stock change in culture will follow any new initiative or policy. The changing nature of the workforce is also a factor that needs to be taken into consideration. As the 'old hands' retire and leave the Service, so too does a wealth of experience that is not easily replaced. This increasingly leaves a workforce predominately trained with a criminological focus and fewer with a social work training background. It remains to be seen whether the divide in the workforce will reduce as a result.

It is relatively early days in the implementation of SEEDS and therefore the research base remains limited. This is sure to develop over time, as more research into SEEDS and its impact on practice is needed to avoid SEEDS being prematurely replaced with the next 'big thing'. There needs to be a better understanding of how practitioners respond to changes in practice and of the reality of practitioners' day to day practice. More ethnographic research would provide an interesting insight into how practitioners talk about and experience change. It is only with this knowledge that the impact of change can be understood and initiatives like SEEDS can develop.

A stock change in culture is not possible without practitioners on-board. Therefore, the culture of the Probation Service is an area worthy of further exploration. This needs to consider not only how culture is changed within the Probation Service but also how the culture itself impacts on changes to practice that are introduced. As the workforce continues to evolve so too do the values and principles of practitioners. Coming through the ranks are a different breed of probation practitioner with different perspectives and approaches but who are arguably still in pursuit of the same aim, namely to reduce reoffending. What is clear that working with offenders remains a complex business and not one that can be reduced to a simple tick box exercise. Introducing models and ways of working is not enough on its own, it requires professional and well trained practitioners who understand the complexities of offender's lives and who are motivated to work with them towards an offending free life. The SEEDS model is potentially a helpful tool to assist in this process; however, it is not enough on its own. It is not something that can be trained as a manual and delivered by anyone. The wider knowledge base and skills of practitioners and the relationship formed with the offender is arguably at the heart of any success. However, given the current climate in the Probation Service and the threat of privatisation becoming a reality a timely question is, when all the dust is settled who will be left to put into practice the principles or SEEDS with offenders?

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Appendix 1 Diagram Outlining the Components of the Offender Engagement Programme



Appendix 2 Ethical Approval Letter

Miss Zoe Robinson
Professional Doctorate Student
Humanities sub-brand
Institute of Criminal Justice Studies
University of Portsmouth

REC reference number: 12/13:05

Please quote this number on all correspondence.

8th February 2013

Dear Zoe,

Full Title of Study: Listening to the professionals: the reality of one to one engagement with offenders.

Documents reviewed:
Consent Form
Invitation Letter
Participant Information Sheet

Further to our recent correspondence, this proposal was reviewed by The Research Ethics Committee of The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

I am pleased to tell you that the proposal was awarded a favourable ethical opinion by the committee.

Kind regards,
FHSS FREC Chair
David Carpenter

Members participating in the review:

. David Carpenter

. Richard Hitchcock

Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet



Study Title: Listening to the professionals: the reality of one to one engagement with offenders

Researcher Zoe Robinson
Supervisor Jane Winstone
ICJS,
University of Portsmouth
Ravelin House,
Museum Road,
Portsmouth,
PO1 2QQ

We would like to invite you to take part in our research study. Before you decide we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear

(You might wish to include one or two sentences explaining the study here. You might also wish to provide further information about research.

What is the purpose of the study?

The research is being carried out for my thesis as part of my Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice. The purpose of the research is to explore the views and experiences of practitioners in light of the introduction of the SEEDS agenda and Offender Engagement Programme.

Why have I been invited?

I am inviting all practitioners who have face to face contact with offenders to take part. Paul Gillbard has given his consent for me to carry out the research. Staff from every office and Approved Premises will be contacted via email and invited to take part in the research.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide to join the study. We will describe the study and go through this information sheet. If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you consent to taking part you will be given a participant information sheet and asked to sign a consent form, I will arrange a convenient time and location for the interview to take place. The interview will last approximately an hour and can take place where ever is convenient for yourself. The interview will cover questions about the offender engagement programme and your experiences and views, only basic personal information such as gender and age will be asked for. The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed. You will only be identifiable by a participant number in the research. Individual responses will not be passed to the organisation, they will only receive a copy of the collated and analysed results.

Expenses and payments

Unfortunately no expenses can be met and there is no payment for participation.

What will I have to do?

Take part in a semi-structured interview that should last approximately an hour.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The risks and disadvantages are considered to be minimal. Taking part involves giving up your some of time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The potential benefits of the research are that it will hopefully provide a snap shot of how changes in policies and practices within probation affect practitioners and identify how practitioners feel about this and how they incorporate and deal with these changes in practice. It is hoped that the research will identify ways of improving offender engagement as a result.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

You will not be personally named in the research and will be allocated a participant number which will be used when including a quote of something you might have said. Details of who has consented to take part in the research will not be passed to the organisation nor will details of those who do not consent.

Data about you will not be collected without your knowledge and the only information that will be used is the information you give during the interview. The interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed, however, your name will not be given during the interview and you will be identifiable through a participant number. The information will be transcribed anonymously and when direct quotes are used, reference will only be made to a participant number. Data will only be used in the current study and will not be stored for use in any other research. No other person will have access to information that identifies you and all data will be deleted a year after completing my Professional Doctorate (2015). You have the right to check the accuracy of data held about you and to correct any errors.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw at any time from the research up until the point the information has been analysed. If you choose to withdraw before the data has been analysed the interview will be deleted and not used in any further part of the research.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you can speak to myself as the researcher or my supervisor, Jane Winstone, who will do their best to answer your questions. Jane Winstone can be contacted on jane.winstone@port.ac.uk. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the head of department, Phil Clements contact phil.clements@port.ac.uk .

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will form part of my thesis. If you wish to receive a copy of the findings please advise of this at the interview stage or contact me at zoe389@hotmail.com. You will not be identified in any report/publication unless you have given your consent.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being funded by myself and is being sponsored by the University of Portsmouth who provide on-going supervision and insurance during the course of the research.

Who has reviewed the study?

Research in the University of Portsmouth is looked at by independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee.

Further information and contact details

Contact details are provided below if you would like any further information-

1. General information about research

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press

Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research* (3rd ed.). Chichester: Wiley

2. Specific information about this research project.

Contact the researcher Zoe Robinson on zoe389@Hotmail.com or Supervisor Jane Winstone on jane.winstone@port.ac.uk

3. Support organisations

Contact Probation's independent support and advice services, CIC on 0207 937 6224

Concluding statement

Whether or not you wish to go on and participate, thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you decide to participate you will be given a copy of the information sheet and asked to sign a consent form.

Appendix 4 Consent Form

Consent Form



Researcher Zoe Robinson
Supervisor Jane Winstone
ICJS,
University of Portsmouth
Ravelin House,
Museum Road,
Portsmouth,
PO1 2QQ

Study Title: Listening to the professionals: the reality of one to one engagement with offenders

Name of Researcher: Zoe Robinson

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 13 October 2012 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time up until the point the data is analysed without giving any reason.
3. I understand that data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from the University of Portsmouth or from regulatory authorities. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data
4. I agree to my interview being audio recorded
5. I agree to being quoted verbatim
6. I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Name of Person taking consent :

Date:

Signature:

When completed: 1 for participant; 1 for researcher's file.

Appendix 5 Request Letter

Michael Toner
Senior Probation Officer
15Canada Close
Marley Way
Banbury
Oxon
OX16 2RT



19 May 2012

Dear Mr Toner

My name is Zoe Robinson. I am a postgraduate student at the University of Portsmouth undertaking a Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice. I am currently working on my thesis investigating practitioners experiences of offender engagement I would like to obtain professionals' perspectives on how they build relationships with offenders, what skills are required, what barriers they face and what they believe would improve their ability to work more effectively on a one to one basis with offenders.

I would be extremely grateful if I could visit your offices and interview all grades of offender facing staff, in order to assist in my research. The interviews should last no longer than an hour each. If you would like to verify that my research is genuine please contact my supervisor Dr Jane Winstone who will be able to help with any questions you may have, her contact details are as follows:

Supervisor contact details

Jane Winstone
ICJS (Institute for Criminal Justice Studies)
University of Portsmouth
St Georges Building
141 High Street
Portsmouth
PO1 2HY

Email: Jane.Winstone@port.ac.uk

If you would like a copy of my thesis I will be happy to supply it to you upon completion. Thank you for taking time to read this letter. I hope you will be able to accommodate my research and I look forward to your response. My email address is: zoe389@hotmail.com if you would prefer to respond in this way.

Yours sincerely

Zoe Robinson

Appendix 6 Invitation to Participate

Participant Invitation



Study Title: Listening to the professionals: the reality of on to one engagement with offenders

Researcher Zoe Robinson
Supervisor Jane Winstone
ICJS,
University of Portsmouth
Ravelin House,
Museum Road,
Portsmouth,
PO1 2QQ

Dear Potential Participant

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study.

My name is Zoe Robinson and I am a Probation Officer based at HMP Woodhill. I am carrying out a piece of research for my thesis which forms part of my Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice. I wish to interview offender facing staff of all grades about their views and experiences of the offender engagement programme. I am aware that this has not yet been rolled out across the trust and that not all staff may have an understanding of what it is about. This is not a requirement, nor is having completed the SEEDS training. I am interested in talking to all practitioners regardless of experience or knowledge in this area.

I have sought permission from the Acting Chief Officer, Paul Gillbard to carry out this research across Thames Valley Probation Trust. I am therefore making contact with all offender facing staff in each office via email to invite them to take part in the research.

Please find attached a copy of an information sheet which gives more information about the research and what is involved and a consent form to be completed if you consent to taking part.

If you wish to take part in the research please reply via my work email or email me on zoe389@hotmail.com.

Participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw easily if you change your mind up until the point the data has been collated and analysed.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have questions at all please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Zoe Robinson

Appendix 7 Interview Schedule

Intro (consent to record the interview, outline the aim, confirm anonymity and outline structure)

Gender, age, years in service, current role, office base

Ice breaker- How long in service, experience of different roles within the service

Give opportunity to identify a key message they wished for probation to hear

1/ How has life in the probation service changed?

What is the single biggest change you have seen during your time in the service?

2/ What are your views about working with offenders now compared to when you first started?

3/What does your practice look like now compared to when you first joined the service?

4/In your opinion what are the three key issues that probation has had to face now and over the last twenty years?

What are the most satisfying elements of your job?

What are the least satisfying parts to your role?

How much of your time is spent in supervision with offenders?

5/ What are your views on how such changes are managed by the service?

Prompt- what types of support are you aware of?

Prompt- what is your experience of getting support

6/ Can you summarise how you feel about the recent changes in practice

Prompt- introduction of OEP, working within a desistance paradigm, change in NS, PJD

7/ In what ways, if any, has a change in national standards made a difference to your work with offenders?

Prompt- what are your views about changes to discretion and autonomy in practice?

Prompt- give examples of how it has impacted upon your practice?

8/In what ways did the 'what works' initiative impact on your practice in terms of one to one work with offenders?

9/ What is your understanding of effective practice principles?

Discuss views on diversity and how different approaches to practice have addressed diversity considerations

10/ Have you had any involvement with the offender engagement programme?

Prompt- examples

Prompt- what are your views on it?

Prompt- strengths and weaknesses of OEP

Prompt- Levels of confidence using OEP

11/How has information about the OEP been communicated to you?

Prompt- views regarding this

Prompt- strengths and weaknesses

12/What are your views about the impact OEP will have on practice?

Prompt- are there any practice examples?

Prompt- how do you feel about the changes?

Prompt- who will be affected, in what way

Prompt- positives and negatives

13/ What is your understanding of the SEEDS agenda?

Prompt- strengths and weaknesses

Prompt- training and skills (what skills are needed, do you have them, how did you/will you acquire them)

Prompt- levels of confidence

14/ What philosophy of probation practice underpins your work with offenders?

15/ What are your views about the purpose of one to one work with offenders?

16/ What are your views about the developments and changes in theory and polices?

Prompt- impact on practice

17/ What influence do you understand changes in theories to have on practice

18/ What is your understanding of the different methods available when working with offenders?

Prompt- how do you decide what approach to take

19/ What do you see as the focus of probation intervention?

Prompt- has this changed over time?

Prompt- strengths and weaknesses

20/ Is there anything else you would like to add before we conclude the interview

Thank participant

Participant number

Gender

Age

Role

Office base

Time in service

Time in current role

FORM UPR16**Research Ethics Review Checklist**

Please complete and return the form to Research Section, Quality Management Division, Academic Registry, University House, with your thesis, prior to examination



Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information		Student ID:	441941
Candidate Name:	Zoe Robinson		
Department:	ICJS	First Supervisor:	Professor Francis Pakes
Start Date: (or progression date for Prof Doc students)	01/10/2012		

Study Mode and Route:	Part-time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MPhil	<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrated Doctorate (NewRoute)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	MD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prof Doc (PD)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			PhD	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Title of Thesis:	'From SEEDS mighty oaks grow?' An exploration of practitioners' views in relation to SEEDS, probation practice and change
Thesis Word Count: (excluding ancillary data)	49,452

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRIO Finished Research Checklist: (If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)	
a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?	YES
b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?	YES
c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?	YES
d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?	YES
e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?	YES

*Delete as appropriate

Candidate Statement:	
I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)	
Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):	12/13:05
Signed: <i>Zoe Robinson</i> (Student)	Date: <i>14/09/14</i>
If you have <i>not</i> submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain why this is so:	
Signed: (Student)	Date:

