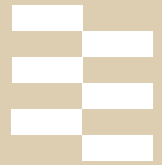


# Hampshire Probation

## Improving OASys review and termination timeliness



NATIONAL  
PROBATION  
SERVICE

### FROM POSSIBILITY...

In the hustle and bustle of a working day with the demands of meetings to attend, operational issues to resolve and targets to strive to achieve it is not easy to step back and consider 'Is there a better way to do this?' Similarly, how often have you heard 'I'm too busy doing the day job to stop and think about improvements'. Yet organisations know that successful teams are those that are able to take time to analyse what they do, how they do it, how successful they are and make changes to deliver improved performance.

Not easy you might say, especially when your organisation is experiencing rapid change in a closely regulated environment and is subject to the scrutiny of not only the Government but also the General Public. But this is the situation that Hampshire Probation has found itself in.

The senior team within Hampshire Probation had identified the need to make a step change in performance across the County to ensure a better position in the Integrated Probation Performance Framework (IPPF) and to enable a successful transition to Trust status. The IPPF is the tool used to measure the performance of Probation Areas across England and Wales. It assesses Offender Management (the process of managing offenders from pre-sentence through to completion of order and supervision) Interventions (the programmes and support given to offenders to enable completion) Public Protection and Operational capability, resource use and strategy. Hampshire Probation was achieving passable performance in each element and was looking to achieve good to outstanding across all four.

The senior team had some evidence to suggest that the focus of improvement needed to be in the middle manager teams at Senior Probation Officer (SPO) level as this is where the accountability for day to day team and individual practice management lies. There was also a perception amongst the senior team that management capability required further attention. They approached Ad Esse for help in understanding whether their concerns were substantiated, to identify where the focus on performance was needed and to enable improvements.

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consulting

## OUR APPROACH

Our first step was to undertake a diagnostic exercise to establish the current state of play. We needed to find out how performance focused the management team was at all levels in Hampshire. We also wanted to know what people felt worked well in the Area and what was not effective. One of the priorities of the senior team was to ensure consistency across the four divisions that made up the Hampshire Area so we focused in on sharing of information and best practice, the strength and effectiveness of the relationship between Offender Management and Interventions and generally, how prepared people felt for the future challenges and opportunities they were facing.

The results of the diagnostic were very interesting. They bore out the senior team's initial concerns but also added other dimensions.

- It was clear that the managers were working hard but not necessarily on the right things.
- The nature of the work had become bureaucratic and management was reactionary
- Teams worked in silos and the relationship between Offender Management and Interventions was provision rather than demand led
- Line management of administration lay outside the operation
- The management structure was not defined and although managers accepted responsibility for what they did there was a clear lack of accountability
- Direction from the senior team tended to be fixed on what to do and not enough on how to do it. Teams were, therefore, interpreting information and adapting processes to suit their own needs
- There was a sense of frustration that there had been a lack of learning and development interventions to develop skills to enable improved performance

What was needed was a fresh approach, an unblocking of the log jam and a high level of pragmatism. What was not in doubt was the overall commitment of the managers to the probation service; that commitment just needed to be harnessed.

The next step was in two stages.

- Development of the senior team to set the context for the subsequent improvement work, improve leadership and redress perceptions of HQ isolation.
- Undertake a performance improvement programme with all middle and area managers to develop skills in internal consultancy, improvement tools and techniques and leadership/management approaches and apply these to real problems.

## IMPROVING THE OASYS REVIEW AND TERMINATION TIMELINESS – A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED

OASys is the offender assessment IT database which holds the assessment of need and risk for all offenders within Hampshire who are under Probation supervision. Offender cases have to be reviewed every four months or when a significant event happens to ensure that any necessary adjustments are made within the duration of supervision. Also, when all periods of supervision have ended the case needs to be terminated on the OASys system. There are specific targets to ensure these reviews and terminations on OASys happen on time and these are part of the Offender Management basket of national standards. For Tier 4 cases the target is 95% and for Tiers 1-3 90%. (Offender cases are tiered using various criteria including severity of offence and further risk of harm).

Hampshire's performance in OASys timeliness was at 77% for Tiers 1-3 and they were achieving the 95% target for Tier 4 cases. Improvements had already been made which had enabled Hampshire to achieve the Tier 4 target and there were examples of good practice across the county that needed to be harnessed. The task of improving performance against this target was given to the South West (SW) division. The SW incorporates a wide area including the city of Southampton and its surrounding area and as far as the more rural New Forest.

Our first step was to undertake a one day workshop on leadership skills. The team took the opportunity to discuss their frustrations about volume of work and the dilemma they face being managers and making difficult decisions within a 'caring profession'. We looked at staff management strategies and how to manage expectations and also to make the transition to becoming a performance driven team.

We followed this with a two day workshop on the DMAIC problem solving process. This proven method to define, measure, analyse, improve and control performance improvement included a real probation problem within a case study to ensure the team were experiencing addressing performance improvement within a familiar issue and to see the benefit that could be gained.

When the team were comfortable with the process we embarked on addressing OASys timeliness using the DMAIC process. Once the problem was defined, we supported the SW team in measuring the current situation by analysing available performance data. They also undertook a survey of their colleagues across Hampshire to establish what level of understanding there was about reviews and terminations, what processes were in place and whether people were confident and understood what they had to do to achieve the target.

## TO ACTUALITY...

### A new process

When undertaking any DMAIC problem solving there will inevitably be a number of causes of a problem. The SW team were no exception in that they identified several. The key is to establish which is the root cause. The team decided that the root cause was the lack of a clearly defined consistent, county wide process. They knew that once the right process was in place, their colleagues would understand their role within it, who was accountable and how they could achieve target. Other causes such as lack of training in sentence planning and risk management would be passed to the learning and development team to address.

In mapping the new process there were several other decisions the SW team had to make. There are several people involved in meeting this target. There are the POs who undertake the reviews and terminations, the Case Administrators who manage the administration and the SPOs who manage the performance of the team. The SW team decided to clearly define that the responsibility of undertaking the review and termination was the PO's. The Case Administrator would provide all the admin support to enable this to happen and the SPO would manage the performance of the process. This ensured that all were clear on their responsibility and accountability. There would also be less reliance on paperwork and effective utilisation of the IT systems.

The next step was implementation. The SW team decided to pilot the new process in their own division to ensure that it worked before roll out to the rest of the county. As there is a delay of six months before the national standards probation performance data is available the team built in measures for the trial run to ensure that the process worked and importantly, targets were met. Clear communication prior to implementation was a priority as was ensuring all potential participants were involved.

At the time of writing the SW team are due to embark on their process pilot.

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## THE BENEFITS

Consultants should not be surrogate leaders because once they leave (and they do!) there is a lack of transference of skill into the organisation. Transferring skill and capability was key to this piece of work. Ad Esse consultants working alongside and coaching in house facilitators enabled them and the teams to have confidence that they could use the DMAIC process in other areas of their work to improve performance.

We left Hampshire Probation with the following:

- A clearly defined process to achieve the target of OASys reviews and terminations timeliness
- An understanding by all involved in the process of their responsibility and accountability in achieving the target
- Case Administrators who were clear that they were in support of the operational team and had an instrumental impact on achieving the target
- SPOs who are able to step back from monitoring the detail in activities and are able to manage the performance of the process and the team
- Less bureaucracy as the process is lean and does not rely on paperwork
- Experienced managers who are able to use the DMAIC process to improve performance in other areas of the organisation and are able to plan the 'how' as well as the 'what'
- Experience and skilled in house facilitators who are able to work with teams to address performance issues.

Stepping back from the day job and analysing what you do, how you do it, how successful you are and making changes to deliver improvements is a fundamental part of managing performance. Something that Hampshire Probation are now embracing.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

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