

in depth:

Improving enforcement



In 2003 – 2004 many Areas within the National Probation Service were struggling to meet their target on the timely enforcement of orders. A number of Areas decided that the best way to learn about performance improvement was actually to do it!

This briefing takes an in depth look at some of the lessons learnt from these projects. The results were impressive, with every Area improving their enforcement performance significantly. For some the changes were very dramatic. In London, where we applied the principles of “lean” processes, they improved from 13% against target to over 90% against target! This was achieved by running a number of “rapid improvement projects” in each of the boroughs. These are some of the lessons learnt.

RAPID IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOP ACROSS LONDON PROBATION AREA.

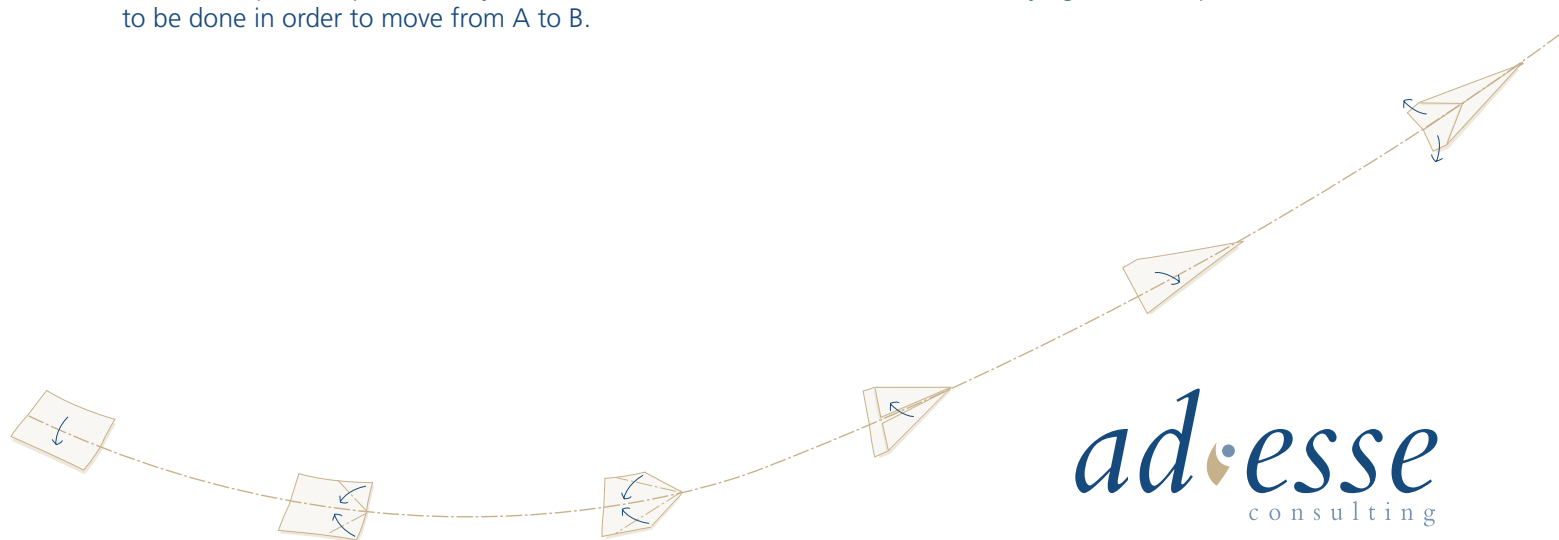
Sometimes called a Kaizen Blitz, basically it's an improvement workshop comprised of 6-7 team members from different areas of the organisation. These workshops were originally used within the automotive industry and were pioneered by Toyota, but are frequently being applied to the service and public sectors to great effect. All team members have the same objective and are committed to improving the operation. The team's objective over three days was to redesign the enforcement process to meet National Standards and Targets. By the end of the third day, the team would present their achievements and findings back to Managers and colleagues.

The team comprised of a range of Managers, Probation Officers and Administrative staff from different functions. Prior to the Rapid Improvement Workshop, all team members were trained in a range of process improvement principles. The Rapid Improvement workshop comprised of:

Day 1: The teams mapped and analysed the current process. Once the team had mapped the current process, they listed all of the problems they thought existed. Using this as a guide, they agreed what other data they required to understand the process further.

Day 2: The teams collected data and measures from the process, talking to colleagues to gather their views on problems with the current process and examined current supporting documents, for example Breach Prosecution Reports, information sheets and forms.

Day 3: The team agreed a blue sky “future state map”, i.e. What would a perfect breach process look like? With an understanding of the current process and its problems, and a vision of what a future process might look like, they then developed the process they would move to within the next month, identifying an action plan of what needed to be done in order to move from A to B.



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The team was supported by a project manager and a consultant at key stages. This helped to ensure that the project not only delivered the results it was tasked with, but that process improvement skills were transferred to the team as they applied them to the enforcement process. Teams used learning logs to capture the key learning points of process improvement.

WHAT WAS FOUND?

The following summarises the lessons learnt. The principles of what an excellent process looks like are common across all organisations. This shows how they apply to the enforcement process and how we embedded them within enforcement processes across many Probation Areas.

“SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF A GOOD ENFORCEMENT PROCESS”

1. KNOW WHAT YOU’RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

If people do not know what “good” looks like, they are unlikely to be able to achieve it. The projects found:

- There were very different standards / views on whether appointments / contact should continue whilst the enforcement process was in progress
- There were very different levels of understanding of the targets and other National Standards relating to enforcement
- Some POs had a 25% caseload in breach, while others consistently had below 5%. Differing approaches were being taken, leading to inequities for offenders and mixed messages

Simple communications techniques were introduced to ensure people understood the targets and what they needed to achieve and raise the profile of enforcement.

2. GOOD HOUSEKEEPING -EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE AND A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

You cannot build a palace on a waste dump. One of the first steps in building an improved process is to get the basics right. The projects found:

- The original casework was not organised. Papers missing, for example Court Orders, led to excessive delays and chasing of old documents when collating Breach Packs
- No standard organisation of casework meant time was spent searching through files for relevant Breach information
- There were few document checklists

Staff created simple checklists and developed a more organised file structure.

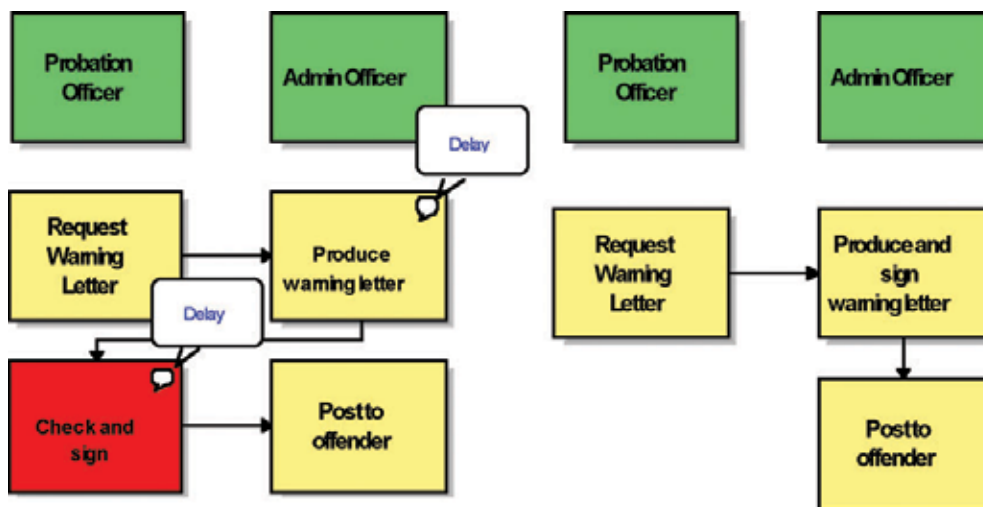
3. MINIMUM VOLUMES OF WORK IN PROGRESS, OR BACKLOGS OF WORK TO BE PROCESSED

Once a process has started to create backlogs of work, you know it’s going to be riddled with problems. The backlog itself will create its own set of issues to manage! We created a system where, once enforcement action is initiated, the Breach Pack was prepared “**Just in Time**” i.e. 2 days before case is heard. This:

- Reduced excessive tracking of cases which are “lost” somewhere in the process
- Eliminated the need to re-process steps by having to return to the PO for an update on progress
- Reduced the opportunity for excessive “checks” by Court Probation Teams

4. ALMOST NO MOVEMENT BETWEEN STAGES - REDUCE THE HANDOVERS BETWEEN PEOPLE

Excessive checking will only ever add cost; delay and opportunities for things to go wrong. We removed all unnecessary checks by error-proofing the process.



5. VISUAL MANAGEMENT AND TEAM OWNERSHIP

The case management system, when applied to enforcement, relies on people never taking holidays, or being absent. There was no visible management system which enabled colleagues to take effective enforcement action when the case manager was absent. No-one (but the case manager) could visibly “see” if:

- An offender had failed to attend
- An offender was in breach
- The 10 day target was approaching
- The pack was due to be sent to the court team

We worked with administrative staff to make the process “visual”, so everyone could see where the case was, without having to spend masses of time searching. This enabled them to take team responsibility for enforcement when colleagues were absent.

6. REDUCE WASTE – “ANY RESOURCE -CONSUMING ACTIVITY THAT DELIVERS NO VALUE TO THE CUSTOMER”

No organisation has the time or the money to operate processes which produce “waste”. Out of all of the enforcement processes examined:

- One Area produced 6 copies of the full Breach Pack
- One Area produced 3 copies of the full Breach Pack
- One Area produced 2 copies of the full Breach Pack
- One Area produced 1 copy of the full Breach Pack

What’s the right number? Any more than necessary is waste. Another example of waste was within the breach report process:

- One Area produced a breach report / prosecution brief which was 2 pages long
- One Area produced a breach report / prosecution brief which was 5 lines long

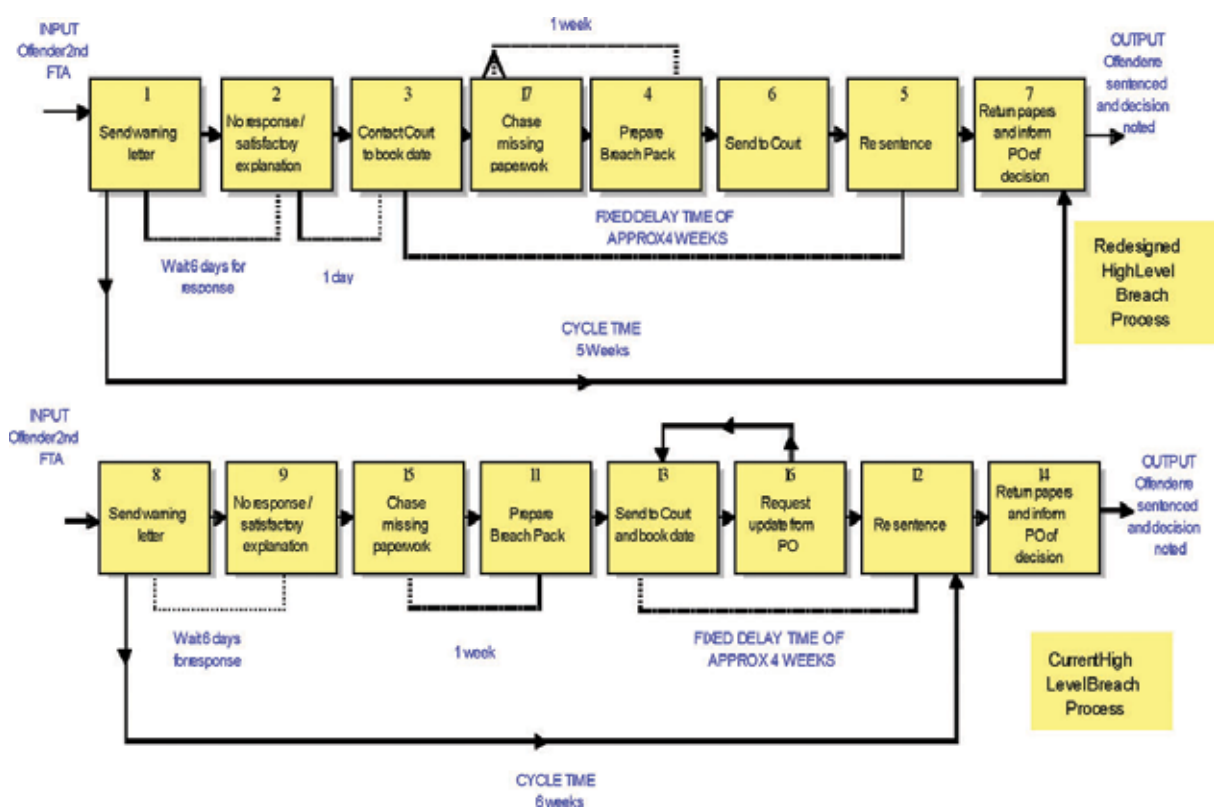
The difference in real process time was 45 minutes. The project challenged assumptions about what a good breach report looked like. It embedded the rule that any more than necessary is waste. But the major problem was the variance in what each pack contained. Out of all the breach processes examined:

- One Area produced a Breach Pack that contained 13 documents
- One Area produced a Breach Pack that contained 3 documents

The difference in “error rate” i.e. when the court team returned papers to the PO was 80% for the pack with 13 documents and 20% for the pack with 3 documents. It takes longer to chase, copy, collate and check 13 documents, so the delay and real process time increases with more documentation. What documents are legally required? Any more than necessary is waste.

The pack of information was standardised and no more than was necessary to take the offender back to court was prepared. This significantly reduced the amount of time chasing documents which were never used.

7. REDUCE DELAYS AND EFFORT, DOING ONLY WHAT IS REQUIRED, WHEN IT’S REQUIRED, WITH THE MINIMUM AMOUNT OF EFFORT / PAPERWORK. EARLY CONTACT WITH THE COURT TO BOOK THE DATE WILL ALWAYS REDUCE OVERALL CYCLE TIME



Reducing end-to-end cycle time is a critical factor in good enforcement. Enabling staff to look at where time delays were occurring and how to speed the process up by reducing delay was essential.

By delaying the start of the “court” process, which will always have an element of fixed delay while the summons is issued and the offender returns to court, you will always increase the time it takes to meet the end outcome. What’s the minimum amount of information the courts need to start their process?

WHAT BENEFITS WERE IDENTIFIED?

The projects identified the following benefits:

PERFORMANCE AND PROCESS BENEFITS

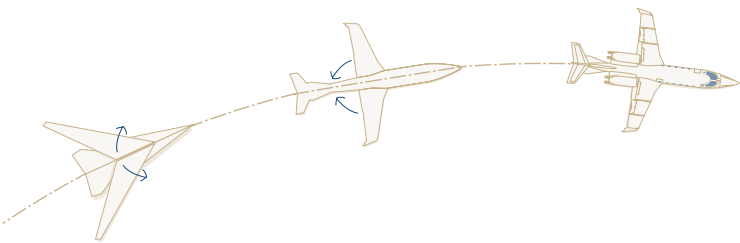
- Reduction in overall cycle time by between 1 and 4 weeks
- Reduction in paperwork of up to 75%
- Visible Management System introduced
- Reduced checks in the process
- Reduction in errors (i.e. return rate from Court Teams due to poor quality cases)
- Reduction in process steps and handovers
- Procedures updated and linked to process

PEOPLE BENEFITS

- Increased staff understanding of National Standards
- Measurable improvement of knowledge of process improvement skills
- Measurable improvement in staff's attitude to process and performance improvement

Ad Esse Consulting can help you to improve performance rapidly and embed these skills into your workforce to tackle future performance issues.

Put simply, we work with people in organisations to make change happen and move organisations



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