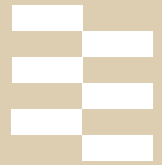


Hampshire Probation

Improving Compliance Performance



NATIONAL
PROBATION
SERVICE

FROM POSSIBILITY...

As strategic objectives change in response to customer or regulator demand, organisations may find themselves re-structuring to deliver a better service. Jobs change, people move and although every function within an organisation should be working together to achieve the collective goal, there may be a shift in emphasis in terms of supply and demand. This is when there is a need to establish sound, effective working relationships between teams. 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 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 (OM) (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. 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.

ad•esse
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, 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 and the strength and effectiveness of the relationship between OM and Interventions. The results of the diagnostic were very interesting. They bore out the senior team's initial concerns but also added other dimensions.

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 OM and Interventions was provision not 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.

A 'classroom' based management development programme isolated from reality would not address the real problems within the area and change performance results.

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

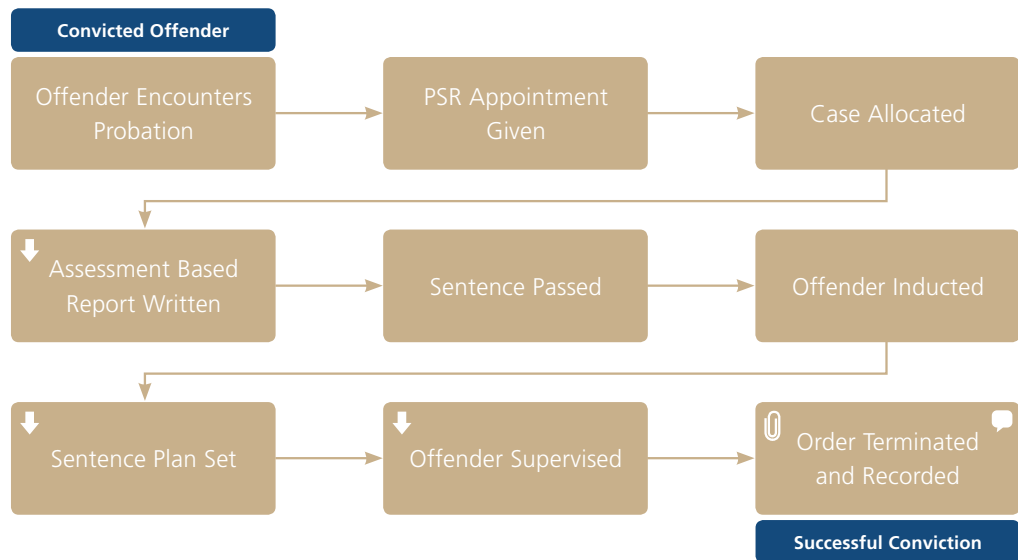
IMPROVING THE COMPLIANCE PERFORMANCE – A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED

The problem with which the South East Team was tasked was that of compliance, which simply put, is where an offender complies with the order of the court. There are two targets set for compliance, we therefore stated the problem as: 'HPA does not meet its compliance target (i.e. % cases that reach six months stage without requiring breach action by 1% [69% against 70%] and successful completions by 4% [66% against 70%]) and we perform below national average of 71% for compliance & 67% for completions.'

From the figures, it is clear that Hampshire is performing just below the target, which poses a particular problem, it can mean that:

- The problem is not seen as a priority
- It can be interpreted as 'just squeezing an extra bit of performance'
- It can reinforce a mindset of just reaching targets, rather than aiming for excellence.

Having agreed the problem and improvement objectives, the team embarked upon the investigation stage of the problem-solving cycle. The current 'as-is' process was mapped, with all of its attendant problems and stakeholders were analysed, both in terms of need, and levels of satisfaction. As a result of this exercise, it was clear that there was a process in place, but there were all sorts of problems with it.



The next step was to investigate the process further to determine root causes of problems. The team generated a list of existing data that needed to be examined, and other data which had to be collected. From the analysis, it became clear that there were four main problem areas:

- Some parts of the process were unclear or very open to misinterpretation
- Where there was a clear process, it was not necessarily being followed because staff did not realise the impact of not following it
- Poor recording leading to accomplished work not being credited or a poor 'trail' to manage individual situations
- Insufficient focus on specific categories of offenders. This was a particularly interesting finding from the examination of tiering & successful completions. The team found that tier 3 offenders had the lowest rate of successful completions. As a large proportion of these offenders had drug rehabilitation orders, it was agreed that having impact in this area, whilst not necessarily easy, would have the best outcome in terms of numbers.

The data analysis also highlighted some other areas for improvement, that were identified as being wider issues that could be further explored by Hampshire at another time.

TO ACTUALITY...

The team worked on a solution that divided into two main parts, firstly overall improvement and secondly a focus on Drug Rehabilitation Requirements, where there are a large number of offenders, with a poor rate of completion. DRR offenders are excluded from the calculation of the Compliance target so any improvement made in this area would only impact on the successful completions target.

Specific solutions relating to DRR's included: the inclusion of DIP workers at court, negotiation with DIP workers to offer potential DRR cases defer assessment months, all individuals with DRR's to have 1:1 induction and three-way sentence planning meetings without fail, each offender to be given a diary of monthly appointments as a reminder, and a best practice guide from nationally and locally collected information – written and shared throughout the County.

Specific solutions for general compliance improvement focussed on: the redesign of sub-processes, such as actions pre-sentence; development of a checklist for entry into supervision; development of standard wording for proposals; feedback to magistrates when SSO's are not activated; the development and launch of a best practice guide across the County, including advice on how to keep the compliance issue on the agenda through supervision and team meetings.

Hampshire Probation

Improving Compliance Performance



THE BENEFITS

As with all problem-solving, 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating', and the Area is just beginning to implement its solutions. The team are enthusiastic and confident that the selected action will result in the required level of improvement. We left Hampshire Probation with the following:

- A clearly defined implementation plan to improve compliance as now determined by national standards, but more importantly to actually ensure that offenders are given the best possible chance of fulfilling
- A refreshed overall process, with newly designed sub-processes, and specific attention to DRR's where there is a high yield to be had
- Raised awareness of the impact of individual staff behaviour on compliance performance
- A better understanding of how different roles within the organisation
- An increased understanding of how to implement successful change
- A list of related performance issues to be investigated further by Hampshire
- Managers who are able to use the DMAIC process to improve performance in other areas of the organisation
- Experienced and skilled in house facilitators who are able to work with teams to address performance issues
- A team that is confident and empowered to make decisions and implement improved ways of working.

STOP PRESS: At the time of going to print, i.e. within 8 weeks of completion of this project, compliance had reached 79%. It must be noted that the Area has undertaken other pieces of improvement work that has undoubtedly contributed to overall improvement.

FURTHER INFORMATION

To receive regular case studies and articles like this one, you can subscribe to our newsletter 'Actuality'. Contact us at Ad Esse Consulting Ltd.

PHONE: +44 (0) 844 826 6162 EMAIL: seriousfun@ad-esse.com WEBSITE: www.ad-esse.com