



Steve Collett

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Protecting the public from dangerous offenders and reducing the cycle of re-offending is what probation is tasked to do and is key to addressing what the public consistently tells us is their biggest safety concern at the local level – crime or the fear of crime.

Our responsibility to manage dangerous offenders is now undertaken through well-established Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). In conjunction with the Police and Prison Service as the Responsible authorities, we work closely with a range of partners to ensure that each potentially dangerous offender is managed according to the level of risk of harm they pose

to the public. Supervising persistent and prolific offenders is the second key strand of our daily business and we know what works. Statistics from the MoJ (2008) show that overall the average one year reconviction rate for community orders is 36% - 11% better than prison and certainly a cheaper option. Put another way, in terms of reducing re-offending, it works with nearly two thirds of offenders i.e. 64%.

We make a clear distinction between the risk of harm and risk of reconviction. We would contend that prison is the right place for people who commit violent and sexual offences that cause harm. They are needed to protect the community. But community sentences are more effective for those guilty of property crime and less harmful offending. While some may continue to argue for a greater use of custody in such cases, we know that this serves as little deterrent for those serving less than 12 months where the average reconviction rate is 60%.

This rises to a worrying 85% in the case of young offenders (in adult prisons) whose criminality dominates media headlines.

Most crime is committed by local people within their own communities; therefore, the solutions have to be locally based. Local Strategic Partnerships offer a real opportunity for forging ever closer relationships with local authorities, health authorities and the private and third sectors in order to reduce re-offending, protect the public and most importantly reduce the victims of crime.

Preventing the next victim is at the heart of probation's remit. The Probation Chiefs Association is the independent voice of probation, representing all the chief officers/executives in England and Wales. We are supported by specialist Policy Portfolios ranging from public protection and sentencing to community safety, each one led by a probation chief.

For information visit
www.probationchiefs.org

