

## **BBC Radio 4 Today**

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Probation Service – Dave Beaumont, Drew Jagger, Carrie Wale, Heather Munro

**Sarah Montague, presenter:** Now, acupuncture and hypnotherapy are not usually associated with the probation service, but the treatments are part of a programme designed to tackle alcohol-related offending in Leicester. Dealing with drink-dependent offenders is a growing part of probation work, as our home affairs correspondent Danny Shaw reports in the final part of his series on the probation service.

**Danny Shaw, home affairs correspondent:** Euston Street Custody Centre in Leicester. Here in the cells is where the process of dealing with the city's problem drinkers begins. Police Inspector Dave Beaumont.

**Inspector Dave Beaumont, Drugs Testing Project:** If you'd like to go in. And you'll see that there's a one-size-fits-all bed which is very low to the floor. Obviously the reason behind this is that when people come in having consumed alcohol, often they tend to fall off the beds.

**Danny Shaw:** About half the people brought to the cells who are drunk have been arrested for violence or public disorder. When they've sobered up, they're asked to take part in a probation-run scheme to reduce their drinking. Alcohol treatment worker Drew Jagger.

**Drew Jagger, treatment worker:** I say to all my offenders when I first see them that there is no magic wand, there is no click of the fingers, nothing will happen overnight. A lot of them are very enthusiastic to, sort of, slam the book down and say, after today I'm not having a drop to drink. And I have to tell them to pull the reins in slightly, especially for the people who are physically dependent, because it's very dangerous just to stop drinking.

**Dave:** If I was drinking red wine I'd probably drink two bottles.

**Danny Shaw:** A day?

**Dave:** More of an evening, really. And my favourite drink at the time was Special Brew. I would probably drink 10, 12 cans.

**Danny Shaw:** This is Dave, a 37-year-old window cleaner who was referred to probation last year because of drink driving and other drink-related offences. He was consuming 250 units of alcohol a week.

**Dave:** I had some terrible withdrawal episodes on the occasions when I either ran out of money, or couldn't perhaps get to the off licence in time before the withdrawals kicked in.

**Danny Shaw:** Dave was given a six-month alcohol treatment order, which required regular contact with probation and treatment workers to reduce his drinking. He hasn't touched alcohol for more than a year. The best therapy he says is talking about his problem.

**Dave:** There's one thing that stands out to me that my alcohol treatment worker said to me. He just says, respect your addiction. Whenever a thought comes into my head, could I, you know, have a snidey drink here and there, that thought always comes into my head: respect your addiction. Because I know what will happen. For me it's a course of hopefully no alcohol for the rest of my life.

**Carrie Wale, Director of Interventions, Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust:** This is the room where we deliver complimentary therapies...

**Danny Shaw:** Among the less conventional treatments for offenders trying to cut their drinking are aromatherapy, acupuncture and hypnotherapy.

**Carrie Wale:** Here we've got some of the essential oils that we use. Lavender's obviously a very popular one...

**Danny Shaw:** Carrie Wale, director of interventions for Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust, told me the treatments help offenders relax and sleep better.

Some people might find it surprising that offenders are being given hypnotherapy and acupuncture.

**Carrie Wale:** Yes. But I think there's a growing acknowledgment even in the health service that complimentary therapies do actually work, and do compliment the more traditional ways of working with people.

**Danny Shaw:** Do you think it's a good use of the probation budget?

**Carrie Wale:** Absolutely, because it's very, very cost-effective.

**Danny Shaw:** Swimming and other leisure activities are also available under the probation scheme, which costs £2,000 per offender. Just over half complete the programme successfully, which in probation terms means there have been improvements in an offender's health, employability and offending behaviour. Staff believe the results are good given that offenders have such entrenched drinking habits. But the chief executive of the Probation Trust, Heather Munroe, says there are gaps in alcohol treatment provision in other probation areas that invested in programmes to tackle drug misuse.

**Heather Munro, Chief Executive, Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust:** As it is the case often with services, there is a bit of a postcode lottery with this. And it does depend very much on where local services decide to put their resources.

**Danny Shaw:** What do you think that's down to?

**Heather Munro:** There has been a focus on drug use, because a drug user will commit a lot of offences. And I think there hasn't perhaps been the realisation that alcohol has been such a factor in crime.

**Danny Shaw:** In Leicestershire at least that issue has now been acknowledged and is being addressed. But like every other probation area, Leicestershire is having to find budget savings over the next three years. Staff will be hoping that the cuts are not so deep that they threaten the pioneering work in alcohol treatment.

**James Naughtie, presenter:** Danny Shaw reporting.

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