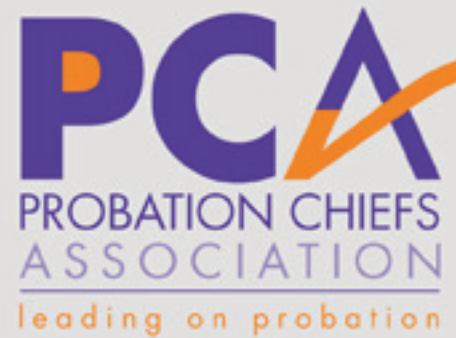


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PRESS RELEASE

## **THE SENSIBLE, BALANCED AND HUMANE WAY FORWARD**

### **The Probation Chiefs Association's response to the Justice Reinvestment Report**

The Probation Chiefs Association welcomes without reservation the broad thrust of this highly impressive Report produced by the Justice Committee and hopes that whatever political administration emerges from the 2010 General Election, it will embrace the concept of Justice Reinvestment.

This is not simply because it espouses a sensible and humane way of rehabilitating offenders but because it is directly in the interests of the victims of crime – ultimately resulting in fewer victims and safer, stronger local communities.

We endorse the need for long-term continuity in planning, cross-party consensus and a reduction in the use of custody that should not be diverted by media pressure. And we agree that there must be a comprehensive and integrated strategy to reform with emphasis on community based services involving local partnerships and a range of government departments other than the MoJ and Home Office. This overall approach should be built on and reflect policies and practices that are evidence based and not driven for short-term political gain.

The Report highlights “a self defeating over-politicisation of criminal justice policy” which we believe is at the core of society's difficulties in responding to crime.

Not only does it undermine public confidence in the work of the criminal justice agencies but leads inexorably to talking up prison as the only way to deal with offenders.

This in turn delivers the worst of all worlds – a vastly expensive and highly wasteful and inefficient attempt to protect the public from crime and anti-social behaviour. In the end it is the most vulnerable members of local communities who pay the costs of such an expensive policy failure.

The Justice Committee has correctly identified and is rightly concerned about probation's lack of direct representation at the most senior levels of the National Offender Manager Service and the impact this lack of advocacy has on criminal justice policy and the service's funding – we look forward to this being rectified. But the report also highlights probation's potential.

Probation is one service that has contact with offenders at all points in the criminal justice system, and therefore with all criminal justice agencies, and through the bulk of our work in the community we have forged strong links with non-criminal justice agencies.

The Justice Committee should be praised for highlighting the role of these non-criminal justice agencies, particularly the local authorities, for contributing to what the report refers to as prehabilitation and well as rehabilitation – that is helping troubled and troublesome families and their communities deal with their challenges and problems without recourse to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Many of the building blocks are in place: local strategic partnerships, local criminal justice boards and local performance frameworks that require agencies at local authority level to tackle crime and re-offending.

What is now needed is a flexible strategic framework free of overly bureaucratic control and interference and supported by the movement of resources from prisons to communities.

We along with our local partners and with the engagement of local communities can effectively identify how and why crime and re-offending take place within local communities. If the collective response is based on what works in reducing the seriousness and frequency of crime, then we can truly begin to reinvest those resources currently wasted in locking people up.

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