

# The new national voice of probation leadership

**The Probation Chiefs Association (PCA) — an independent and national body representing the professional views of the probation leadership in England and Wales — was officially set up on 31 July.**

The role of the association is to champion probation in a very complex, challenging and often critical environment. The PCA, with the 42 chief officers and chief executives comprising the Council, led by a small Executive, provides the platform and forum for an authentic, leadership voice of probation.

While it is neither a political, campaigning, lobbying organisation, nor a trade union, as an independent professional body it does share some common aims and priorities with the unions:

- promoting the importance of community penalties
- securing increased public confidence
- concern about capacity

The PCA fills a vacuum that has existed since its forerunner, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation (ACOP) ceased to be in 2001, when probation became part of the National Probation Service. The formation of the new association is opportune,



coinciding with probation's role within the new delivery agency that requires closer working with prisons.

Many people in probation are fearful that it is a takeover. I don't believe this to be the intention. I believe passionately that this is no time for probation to give up on itself or to feel that it is being taken over.

We have many allies, the courts being an obvious one, and in the months and years

ahead it will be crucial that we play to our strengths.

In view of the PCA focus on contributing to the development of not just probation but criminal justice policy and practice more widely, we are keen to address members of staff who may doubt the association's importance and relevance to them.

It's often said that the public don't understand what we do. We have to take our share of responsibility for

this. The association will do everything we can to build alliances and strengthen probation's profile nationally and reinforce the worthwhile work done locally.

To ensure that the knowledge and expertise the PCA imparts is firmly rooted in probation's operational experience and practice, a number of portfolio leads have been established. These range from approved premises, diversity and prisons to public protection, resources, and sentencing and sentencer liaison. The probation chief leads are supported by assistant chief officers and other senior managers.

**David Scott, PCA Chair and Chief Officer, London Probation**



The PCA executive. L to r: John Budd, Suffolk, Sue Hall, West Yorkshire, David Scott, London, Steve Collett, Cheshire and Karen Page, Surrey.

## NDSN Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Awareness Training Seminar

**Thursday 2 October**

Venue: Nottinghamshire Area Probation Service Offices  
Marina Road, Nottingham NG7 1TP  
10am for a 10.30am start to 3.30pm.  
Lunch Provided

The National Disabled Staff Network is arranging an Awareness Training Seminar in Nottingham for any member of the Probation Service or CAF/CASS who is dyslexic, dyspraxic or affected by any other neuro-diverse condition. Current NDSN members are eligible and also potential members who wish to join the NDSN. The Seminar is also open to Regional Co-ordinators who will be supporting their members.

We have engaged an expert speaker on dyslexia, Carol Leather from Independent Dyslexia Consultants, to give focus and information on the day but the primary aim of the seminar is to provide support to people attending.

**Please e-mail Maria Lenn maria.lenn@london.probation.gsi.gov.uk by 20 September if you would like to apply for a place. Numbers are limited to 26. Tel: 020 7740 8556**

## Creating a Scandal – Prison abolition and the Policy Agenda

**In July I had the good fortune to be able to attend, on behalf of Campaigning Committee, the twelfth Icopa Conference, hosted by the Howard League. The aims of the conference are to develop the case for prison abolition and to rethink penal policy.**

There was a glittering array of well known academic speakers, ex-prisoners, abolitionists and activists, many drawn from overseas. They included some textbook heroes of mine like Professors Thomas Mattiesen, Joe Sim and Phil Scraton.

The packed programme consisted of daily plenaries and breakout sessions whose range of topics easily satisfied the most ambitious abolitionist's appetite. The three that appealed to me were: Media images of offenders, a comparative analysis of race, class and gender in Germany & the USA; Violence, Victims and Values, led by the 'maverick' psychiatrist, Bob Johnson; and the somewhat fiercely titled Suffering and the double-edged sword of the psy-sciences.

For me one of the most poignant moments

over the 3 days was the posthumous tribute to the life of the tireless prison campaigner Pauline Campbell, who had been due to be one of the speakers at the Conference. A Prison Justice Day Demo was organised for the 10 August at HMP Styal in her memory.

What I found striking from listening and speaking to many of the well-briefed participants was just how active, well-organised and resourced the abolitionist movement is. I felt very much the hesitant penal reformer posing a question on how Probation voices, outside of Napo, had been too easily politically subverted by the media's need for ever harsher sentences and 'law and order' politics.

It was a very worthwhile, disturbing, challenging and restorative conference on the long-term goal of penal abolition and some of the viable, sub-utopian strategies for getting there. In the meantime, is it too much to ask for a moratorium of prison building?

**Mike Guilfoyle  
National Campaigning Committee**

