MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACHES FOR EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT OF OFFENDERS

*Dr. Will Hughes**

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This paper is a supplement to the second of two lectures provided to UNAFEI in 2022, for its 177th International Senior Seminar. Here I consider multi-stakeholder approaches to tackling reoffending, and for delivering effective supervision and support for offenders. I start by offering an explanation of what a multi-stakeholder approach is, before moving on to explain why they are essential in developing effective responses to crime. I give some examples of multi-stakeholder approaches, drawn largely from England and Wales, and explain how these operate in practice. The discussions are orientated around the work of the probation service. This reflects my background and the fact that the probation service plays a key role in linking other organizations together. I finish by offering some overall reflections on the challenges and opportunities presented by multi-stakeholder work.

II. WHAT IS A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH?

Some distinguished observers have suggested that in modern societies, perhaps especially those with a cultural emphasis on individualism, our inter-dependence and common interests can easily be obscured (Durkheim, 1972). As a consequence, shared social goals and problems, which have an impact on everyone, can often be allocated to specific agencies, at the cost of wider responsibility and collective action. It is from this starting point that I would like to stress the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches to reducing crime.

To digress from the topic of crime for a moment, let us think of our mental and physical health. This is an especially pertinent global theme given the coronavirus pandemic. Health can easily be understood as primarily a concern for medical practitioners. We request the help of highly trained professional medics when we become ill, or when we are injured, and hope that they can make us well. However, our health is also dependent on much broader factors: clean water, sanitation, nutrition, education to develop knowledge regarding lifestyle choices, social contact, good housing and motivation, are all essential in promoting and sustaining good physical and mental health. Lots of people and organizations are involved in the promotion of good health, and equally, we all have a stake, or an interest in it. In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, we have witnessed the importance of collective and diverse responses across the globe, to manage not only the virus itself, but also the social, psychological and economic effects. Medical staff have been required to provide care for people who are seriously ill, volunteers have provided food and support for people isolating, governments and local health services have provided education about how to reduce the risk of infection, schools have switched to on-line learning, on-line personalities emerged to help keep us fit and entertained, and there is a collective responsibility to adopt measures such as social distancing and mask wearing.

Like health promotion, crime reduction requires an integrated approach involving different people and agencies. However, responsibility for preventing reoffending has, in many societies, been understood as primarily the duty of criminal justice agencies. A multi-stakeholder approach is a recognition that tackling social concerns, like crime, requires different groups of people with a shared interest in a set of outcomes, where effectiveness is dependent on diverse expertise and contributions. While this may seem straightforward,

* Senior Lecturer in Criminology, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom.

it involves many challenges. Some of these will be discussed in this paper.

The term "interagency work" is used to refer to the practice of different agencies and groups working together. While interagency work has a long history within probation and other criminal justice agencies, some commentators have suggested that partnership work between criminal justice agencies and with others services, is part of a growing trend (Robinson and McNeill, 2017)

III. FACTORS RELATED TO OFFENDING AND REOFFENDING

Offending behaviour is complex and related to an extremely diverse range of social and personal factors, which will vary according to the individual concerned, and the category of their offending. As a starting point, the Offender Assessment System (OASYs), which is used to assess offenders by probation and prison staff in England and Wales, encourages consideration of the following as possible issues related to offending:

- *Thinking patterns and beliefs*
  Research indicates that people who are at high risk of offending tend to have difficulties in problem solving, understanding consequences, understanding the perspectives of others, and have a tendency to act impulsively. They may demonstrate rigid thinking styles and exhibit poor temper control.

- *Employment circumstances*
  There is not a clear evidence base indicating that unemployment causes crime. However, finding meaningful employment seems to help people to desist from criminal activity. Securing work is also important in establishing a positive non-offending identity, which is itself important in avoiding crime.

- *Lifestyle and peer associations*
  Regular activities might bring the individual into situations which present opportunities for offending. The individual's social network may be engaged in regular criminal behaviour or encourage anti-social attitudes. There is substantial evidence that peer associations can play an important role in sustaining offending behaviour, and that changes in associates can promote a crime-free lifestyle.

- *Accommodation*
  Temporary accommodation, homelessness or unsuitable accommodation can be linked to offending and prevent individuals from engaging with support services. As with employment, it is hard to gather clear evidence that lack of secure accommodation causes crime directly, but there is lots of evidence to suggest that having secure and appropriate accommodation is important in helping people to desist.

- *Family relationships*
  Some types of offending may be associated with trauma experienced in childhood, limited family support or difficulty coping with responsibilities for children or others. Developing appropriate coping strategies to manage past trauma is important for many individuals. There may be issues of domestic violence, either as a victim or a perpetrator. Providing support to victims to enable them to leave abusive relationships requires a range of agencies.

- *Substance use*
  Illegal drug use is often associated with other lifestyle factors which increase the likelihood of crime. Some estimates suggest that a substantial proportion of property crime and shop theft are committed by people trying to maintain drug addictions.

- *Alcohol misuse*
  While for the vast majority of people, alcohol does not lead to criminal activity, many individuals involved in the criminal justice system will have demonstrated problems with alcohol consumption, or their previous offending may have taken place while under the influence of alcohol.

- *Attitudes*
  Research suggests, perhaps unsurprisingly, that those with pro-criminal attitudes are at a higher risk

of reoffending. Examples include justifications for crime or emphasis on the lack of harm caused by past offending. For domestic abuse perpetrators there are likely to be negative attitudes towards women and beliefs associated with male entitlement. Attitudes may also refer to the level of motivation to address offending behaviour and engage with support.

The above is not by any means an exhaustive list of the possible factors associated with reoffending. Mental health difficulties are another important theme. While mental illness is not usually associated with criminality or violence, there may be some instances where it plays a role (Peay, 2017). There is an increasing recognition that biological factors can play a role in offending (Raine, 2013), despite reluctance among some criminologists to engage with these types of explanations. While there are important ethical considerations, there has been use of medical intervention for some groups of offenders (Grubin, 2010).

The range of factors associated with criminality means that success in preventing reoffending and supporting offenders is dependent on targeting a broad range of needs. This is all the more important as many factors will be interrelated. For example, in the UK, there is a significant association between drug dependency, particularly heroin, and homelessness. Sustaining accommodation while drug dependent is likely to be problematic. It will be equally challenging to attempt to address drug use when an individual does not have a suitable home. There are also significant overlaps between both these issues and poor mental health. Effective rehabilitation is therefore dependent on addressing several factors, in an integrated way.

Addressing complex and multifaceted problems requires a range of agencies with different resources and expertise. In many instances, different agencies will already work with the same people. For example, individuals subject to probation supervision will often be engaged with benefits services and employment agencies, as well as local health professionals and children's services. However, the actions of each agency are not always coordinated, leading to a fragmented and sometimes repetitive experience for those in receipt of services (Holt, 2000). There may also be assumptions that some issues are being addressed by other agencies, when in reality they are not being given attention at all.

In addition to the *need* for a multi-agency approach, on the basis of effectiveness, it is worth stressing that diverse agencies have a shared interest in reducing reoffending. As well as the overall social costs of crime, reoffending disrupts the impact of other interventions, thereby reducing their effectiveness.

IV. INTERAGENCY WORK WITHIN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

In England and Wales, the criminal justice system is made up of five separate organizations. These are listed below along with a brief summary of their key roles.

- Police
  -enforcement of law
  -public protection
  -gathering evidence for prosecution
  -arrest and detention for public safety
  -community work including crime prevention advice and work with schools

- Crown prosecution service
  -review cases referred by the police and decide if prosecution is warranted on the basis of:
  i) The likelihood of achieving a prosecution
  ii) Is prosecution in the public interest?
  -prosecute cases, in court, on behalf of the police

- Courts
  -hear trials in the event of not guilty pleas
  -impose sentences
  -deal with breaches of community sentences
  -hear reviews of progress for some individuals subject to community sentences

- Prisons
  -hold prisoners on remand awaiting court appearance
  -keep serving prisoners for the length of time imposed by courts, humanely and safely
  -manage internal discipline
  -plan for release
  -facilitate interventions to rehabilitate and reduce the likelihood of reoffending

- Probation
  -assists the court with sentencing through the provision of written and oral reports
  -supervision and assessment of people subject to community sentences and following release from
   prison.
  -enforcement action to return people to court or prison following non-compliance or increased risk
  -ensures the delivery of appropriate interventions, based on offence-related needs and sentence.

Each agency has a distinct set of duties, but effectiveness in reducing reoffending requires coordination. For example, the probation service works with courts to give advice about the most effective sentences for reducing reoffending. Courts can also request reviews of progress for those subject to community sentences. In these instances, the sentencer can play a role in sustaining the motivation of the offender. The prison service and probation service will need to work closely together to plan for release and consider interventions. Information is shared between police and other agencies where there is the need for increased surveillance.

Policy and legal developments have recognized that tackling reoffending requires appropriate coordination between the component parts of the criminal justice system and have attempted to make them work together more systematically (Ministry of Justice, 2013). However, different agencies within the criminal justice system have not worked consistently in an integrated or joined up way, to the extent that arguably they do not act as a system at all (Cavadino et al., 2020). Ongoing differences in organizational priorities and organizational cultures create ongoing tensions. The sheer size and complexity of the different agencies led to the separation of different parts into separate government departments. In 2007, a new Ministry of Justice was created which has responsibility for courts, prison, and probation services, while the police and Crown Prosecution services have remained within the Home Office.

V. INTERAGENCY WORK OUTSIDE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

As well as effective coordination within the criminal justice system, effectiveness in reducing offending is dependent on working with agencies beyond criminal justice. Many of the following agencies might be involved in helping people to avoid reoffending:

- Employment services
- Substance abuse services
- Mental health services
- Schools and education providers
- Housing providers
- Charities
- Employers
- Local community agencies

Working with diverse agencies is evidently helpful in meeting offender needs but as with work between criminal justice agencies, there are key challenges. Managing confidentiality requirements, differences in priorities and organizational cultures, sustaining communication and maintaining records are a few.

VI. INTERAGENCY WORK IN PRACTICE

The following identifies some specific examples of frameworks of interagency work, reflecting a multi-stakeholder approach.

A. Multi-agency Public Protection Panels

These panels were created to improve the management of offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to others; especially those with histories of violent and sexual offending. Key agencies are the police and probation, but other agencies such as child protection services, mental health teams and accommodation providers may be involved. Regular meetings take place to discuss individuals of concern. Information can be shared, plans can be agreed upon and resources allocated. Decisions may be made to increase surveillance, provide suitable accommodation, or provide medical and mental health interventions, or in some instance there can be agreement to detain or arrest. An evaluation by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2021) suggested that there is evidence that multi-agency public protection arrangements have led to a reduction in offending among groups subject to their supervision, although express caution in attributing a clear causal relationship. The evaluation identified several factors as being critical in effectiveness. These include victim liaison, good communication between agencies, provision of appropriate housing, and responsiveness to deteriorating or changing circumstances.

B. Integrated Offender Management Teams

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) teams were introduced to improve the management of individuals who are identified as engaging in large quantities of crime. They were premised on the belief that a relatively small number of individuals account for a significant proportion of overall offences. It logically follows that successful interventions with this group will have a significant impact on crime levels overall. Typically, offending patterns of the individuals targeted by IOM teams are likely to involve property crime associated with drug dependency (Canton and Dominey, 2018). Unlike offenders managed by multi-agency public protection panels, offences committed by this group are not of the most serious nature, but nevertheless do have a social impact, which is intensified by the frequency with which they occur.

IOM teams consist of partnerships between the police and probation (Wong, 2013). They aim to provide intensive interventions to individuals identified as prolific offenders, including rehabilitative work and surveillance.

There is some indication from research that the approach adopted by IOM teams has an impact on reducing the offending of targeted groups (Dawson et al., 2011). However, there are significant difficulties in measuring impact because there is evidence that many individuals who commit high levels of crime only do so temporarily, stopping before any criminal justice intervention is made. Attributing reduced offending to IOM interventions is therefore not straightforward. Related to this, it has also been stressed by some academics that identifying a specific group of prolific offenders is very difficult. There is evidence that offending is not as concentrated within a specific group of individuals as the IOM model assumes. Instead, offending is much more distributed across the population than official crime rates imply (Hagell and Newburn, 1994)

C. Youth Offending Teams

One of the most explicit attempts to establish a multi-stakeholder and interagency approach to tackling reoffending can be found in youth offending teams. Youth justice has been the site of competing pressures. Recent decades have witnessed an increasing punitiveness towards young people, but there has been a recognition of the need for a response to young offenders that is orientated towards their welfare. Youth offending teams are required to include representation from probation, local education, the police, children's care services and health services. They will assess and intervene in the lives of young people following arrest, sometimes without prosecution taking place, where there is an emerging pattern of offending. They will also work with young people subject to community sentences and provide sentencing advice to youth courts, which unlike adult courts, are not open to the public. However, there have been attempts to make the processes within youth courts more accessible to interested parties such as the offender's family and victims. Staff are typically seconded from their own agencies to youth offending teams, and retain their own professional roles and identities. There are therefore limits to the integration of different people in meeting

the needs of young people. There has also been criticism based on the separation between youth offending teams on the one hand and more generalized provision for non-offending young people on the other (Cavadino et al., 2020)

D. Working with Volunteers and the Community

There is an ongoing and growing role being given to volunteers in the provision of support for offenders. It is worth noting here that the probation service itself emerged through the work of committed volunteers. Internationally, volunteers from the local community continue to make varying contributions to support work with offenders. This has clear value as it can facilitate support within the daily lives of offenders, often without the hostility sometimes directed at professional staff. The roles given to volunteers are most typically mentoring, day to day encouragement, and support with specific problems like completing forms and attending appointments. Perhaps a particularly interesting provision is through the organization "Circles UK", which has taken inspiration from voluntary arrangements developed in Canada. Circles UK recruits volunteers to help prevent reoffending among those convicted of sexual offences. Several volunteers are attached to a person who has been convicted of a sexual offence, who is referred to as the "core member". The core member is encouraged to take lead responsibility for managing their own risk. The "circle" of volunteers will help to reduce isolation, find suitable accommodation, and develop prosocial leisure activities, with the ultimate aim of reducing reoffending and its associated harms (Nellis, 2009).

There are many other local examples of good practice with organizations providing training for people in the local community. At the university where I teach in North London, we engage with "Bridging the Gap"; a local organization which recruits volunteers from our criminology students to work with offenders in the local area, who would benefit from mentoring and social contact. The organization provides training to volunteers on issues such as boundaries, risk and motivational skills. Mentors are then matched with a mentee who they will then meet over the course of the following months. Activities can include simple social contact, help with applications, or discussion of current anxieties and problems. There are often positive reports from mentors and mentees of this programmes. As well as the support provided to past offenders, this scheme benefits students in developing an understanding of people experiencing difficulties, and particularly helps those who aspire to work in the criminal justice sector.

There is a need for a more systematic evaluation of mentoring and volunteering schemes. They are open to criticism on the basis that volunteers are likely to lack the training, support and experience of professional staff, or more cynically that voluntary arrangements are seen as a means of reducing state expenditure. That noted, there is enormous value in engaging people from the local community in supporting offenders. As well as the direct support provided, these schemes have the potential to reduce the stigma and exclusion that many ex-offenders experience.

E. The Offender as a Partner: The Most Obvious Stakeholder

When discussing the different groups who have an interest or a "stake" in preventing reoffending, the individual at the centre of interventions is often overlooked. As discussed in the previous lecture, people with histories of offending do not usually want to continue committing offences. However, many face challenges in their lifestyles, problem-solving skills, habits and social circumstances, which make avoiding further offending difficult. There is considerable evidence that treating offenders as partners, where they are actively engaged in creating plans to avoid further offending and develop positive lives, can significantly enhance effectiveness (Hughes, 2012; Rex, 2012). In practice this means working *with* offenders, rather than delivering interventions *to* them. This is not a straightforward task, since some ex-offenders will have short-term goals that may not appear directly relevant in reducing reoffending and many display hostility towards criminal justice staff (Hughes, 2012; 2014). However, recognizing their individual aspirations, as well as their qualities and strengths can significantly enhance motivation to work with the professionals and volunteers involved in providing interventions and support (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2006; Burnett, Baker and Roberts, 2007).

Working *with* offenders and engaging them in their supervision requires staff and volunteers to be attentive to developing professional relationships based on trust. Several factors are relevant in supporting this, which include: personal warmth, consistency, sincerity and fairness. Where there is a positive relationship established, many offenders report that they are willing to accept a directive approach from their supervisors and hear clear criticisms (Hughes 2012).

Working with the families and the social network of offenders is a related area which has been underdeveloped. Typically, criminal justice or professional agencies spend limited amounts of time with the offenders they supervise. People who are closely connected to offenders and involved in their day to day lives are likely to be more influential in the decisions they make. This is an area of practice that warrants further exploration.

VII. THE OFFENDER MANAGEMENT MODEL

The term "offender management" gained significance within a review of prison and probation services, commissioned by the Home Office in the United Kingdom in 2001. The report which followed highlighted the fragmented experience of those subject to criminal justice sanctions, associated with poor planning and poor communication between agencies (Carter, 2004). The review called for the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), which would provide continuity in how sentences were delivered and experienced. The model has the notion of interagency delivery at its core, with probation officers acting as "offender managers", whose key role is to assess need, plan interventions, facilitate the provision of services from a range of agencies and take enforcement action when necessary (National Offender Management Service, 2006). This requires a detailed knowledge of services available, skill in working with a range of agencies and individuals (Dominey, 2016) and skill in motivational work to sustain engagement on the part of the offender.

While the National Offender Management Service has now been renamed HM Prison and Probation Service, the principles of offender management remain influential. The clear advantage of this model is that it allows for the coordination of services. However, there have been criticisms (Robinson and McNeill, 2017). The model assumes that other agencies will be willing to operate within a shared framework, where they may in reality have their own ways of working and their own priorities. Others have emphasized that contrary to the aim of establishing a single point of contact, the offender management model undermines the continuity and quality of the relationship between the probation officer and the offender, because he or she ends up being passed around between different agencies (Robinson, 2005). Similarly, the model reduces the role of criminal justice staff to administrators, undermining the therapeutic and rehabilitative elements of their work. Related to this, there is a perception that the development of the "offender management" role is associated with broader attempts to de-professionalize the work of probation officers, and further change the culture of the service. Anecdotally, many probation officers who I have worked with have referred to being frustrated that the kind of work that they joined the service to do, particularly support work with offenders, is increasingly being given to other agencies.

Some observers have stressed that while the concerns outlined above are risks associated with a multi-agency model, these are not inevitable and can be avoided. Holt (2000) outlined that good practice in this kind of integrated approach requires the probation officer to demonstrate continuous commitment to the offender, where they maintain regular contact, and help them to engage with each intervention and overcome obstacles. This is, however, dependent upon appropriate workloads.

VIII. INTERVENING EARLY AND WIDELY

The primary focus of this paper is on multi-stakeholder approaches to preventing reoffending, among those already convicted of offences. Broader interventions are largely beyond its scope. However, it is worthy of mention that only a very small proportion of crime actually leads to the involvement of agencies within the criminal justice system. Most crimes do not come to the attention of the police, fewer still lead to prosecutions and even fewer lead to the involvement of correctional agencies. Cavadino et al. (2020) have estimated that in England and Wales, fewer than one per cent of crimes lead to the involvement of criminal justice organizations. This means that criminal justice systems will, at best, have a very modest impact on overall crime levels. Reducing crime therefore requires a much broader provision of support services, which are not restricted to those who have already been convicted. There is evidence that early interventions targeted at children and young people at risk of future criminality can have a substantial impact, not just on

reducing criminality, but also in achieving improved outcomes on other measures such as health, educational performance and employment. Notable examples of such schemes are the Perry preschool programme and the Elmira project, both of which were delivered in the U.S. These involved partnerships between health workers, families and schools, where regular home visits were made by a range of professional agencies and additional early years schooling. The results of follow up surveys indicated decreases in arrests for children and parents, as well as lower rates of alcohol consumption, fewer sexual partners and better educational achievements (McAra and McVie, 2017)

In the UK, there was an effort to replicate the positive impact of early intervention through the introduction of Sure Start children's centres. These aimed to provide a holistic set of services for young families in deprived areas within one physical building. Evaluations suggested that these services did not have the impact that was hoped, but still had significant measurable effects across a range of outcomes (Belsky et al., 2007).

IX. AN OVERVIEW: CHALLENGES, OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

While I have emphasized the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, it is important to consider that work between agencies is often challenging, and in some instances not desirable.

Different agencies have distinct priorities and purposes, which is often reflected in language and organizational cultures. Even within the criminal justice system there are tensions between different parts. As examples, the probation service has historically been opposed to prison sentences, emphasising the harms they cause. There has been similar hostility or tensions with the police. While the probation service has generally understood its role as primarily concerned with rehabilitation, other agencies have been more explicitly focused on law enforcement, public protection, and punishment. However, there have been significant shifts that have aligned the probation service more closely with its partner agencies in the criminal justice system. While this may create greater consistency and efficiency, there is a risk that the needs and rights of the service user are not met, when several different agencies are involved in their supervision and control. The overall impact can be one of greater social exclusion and stigma, rather than inclusion and the development of a positive non-offending identity.

Work with non-criminal justice agencies also brings challenges. Agencies outside of the criminal justice system are likely to have priorities that are grounded in the well-being of the person in their care, which contrasts with criminal justice agencies who, in England and Wales at least, have a growing tendency to regard offenders as a source of risk to be managed, and where enforcement action is likely to be taken in the event of non-compliance. There may be reluctance on the part of some agencies to share information, if this is understood as against the interests of the person that is being supported.

Despite the challenges, there are growing examples of good practice. Multi-stakeholder work invariably requires clarity about roles, what will be shared, and the extent to which different agencies sustain autonomy. Where negotiations are undertaken in the context of respect, and recognition of difference, multi-stakeholder approaches are central in developing effective responses to reoffending.

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