



HM Inspectorate of Probation

Service User Engagement Strategy
2019-2022

Foreword

It is clear to me, from observing our inspections and speaking to practitioners and others, that we need to give a stronger voice to those who are supervised by the services we inspect. A fundamental part of our assessment of the quality of services involves judging providers on how well they consult and engage with those they supervise on the way that services are configured. Service users need the opportunity to say what works for them and feel like they are an active participant in their own development and recovery, not just a passive recipient of the services that are designed to help them achieve that. But we need to go further than that. I want the Inspectorate itself to be a truly inclusive organisation that seeks and responds to the knowledge and experience that those who are supervised can offer. We can achieve this in a number of ways.

We will involve service users much more in our inspectorate activity. In our second cycle of inspections our inspectors will now be interviewing service users as well as probation staff as they scrutinise the quality of supervision at all of the local services we inspect. We will also speak to user councils where they exist.

We will further extend the way we involve service users in our work as we develop our programme of inspection to respond to the new probation design. We will involve those with lived experience in the development of that approach.

We will also involve service users and/or ex-service users in our thematic inspections and research projects. There are various ways in which we can achieve this and we will consider the best approach on a case-by-case basis. This will add a powerful dimension to these influential pieces of work.

We will review our recruitment procedures, removing any barriers to the employment of those with lived experience of the criminal justice system. This will add a richness of knowledge and experience that will complement the substantial learned experience that exists in our current staff group.

Service users are experts in their own lives. We need to recognise this in all that we do.

We are an organisation that believes in an individual's ability to change. They should be given every opportunity to do so. I believe the Inspectorate can play a key role in facilitating this.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Justin Russell

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

1. What is service user involvement?

Clinks (2016)¹ define service user involvement as follows:

'Service user involvement is where an organisation involves service users in the planning, management, delivery or evaluation of the services that it provides'.

In terms of co-production, Bovaird and Loeffler (2013)² offer the following definition:

'Professionals and citizens making better use of each other's assets, resources, and contributions, to achieve better outcomes and/or improve efficiency'.

Co-production emphasises that it takes both professionals and service users to produce outcomes, by each using the benefits of the other's capabilities.

Clinks (2016) identify two main benefits of actively involving service users in the review and development of services:

- (i) getting first-hand experiences of service users is beneficial for providers; 'involving them in your work brings unique insights'
- (ii) benefits are noted for the individuals themselves, as their active involvement and participation is believed to contribute to positive change by helping with their desistance and increasing confidence, as well as improving their skills by providing wider opportunities for training and employment.

Service users should also be at the heart of how independent inspectorates do their job. The third principle of inspection, which all criminal justice inspectorates have signed up to³, states that:

'Inspection should have a clear focus on the experience of those for whom the service is provided, as well as on internal management arrangements'.

Revolving Doors Agency (2016) adapted Arnstein's 1969 'ladder of participation' (see Figure 1) which sets out a range of service user involvement from 'no control', up to 'full control'.

The Inspectorate has set itself the challenge to move from treating service users as passive consumers of its inspections to providing them with more input into the way we carry out our business. In order to achieve this, we have tested each of our strategic objectives against the ladder of participation.

¹ Clinks. (2016). *A guide to service user involvement and co-production*. London: Clinks.

² Bovaird, T. and Loeffler, E. (2013). 'The Role of Coproduction for Better Health and Wellbeing' in Loeffler, E., Power, G., Bovaird, T. and Hine-Hughes, F. (eds.) *Coproduction of Health and Wellbeing in Scotland*. Governance International.

³ Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2019). Joint Inspection Business Plan 2019-21.

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/cjji-programme-2019-20-consultation.pdf

Figure 1: The ladder of participation



2. Our inspection approach

In April 2018 we introduced a new programme of inspection. The standards that underpin our new way of inspecting are based on established models and frameworks, and are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. We consulted extensively on our suggested ways of working and built a common view among providers of what high quality probation services should look like.

A key element of those standards is the extent to which inspected bodies involve and respond to the needs of service users. Our inspectors therefore already rate every probation and youth offending service on how well they proactively engage service users in the assessment, planning and delivery of their support and supervision and these assessments then contribute to the overall rating that each service is given. For youth settings this approach includes engagement with family members or primary carers. We consider this to be a fundamental part of our inspection approach and so will continue to make these judgements.

We monitored the application of our new probation approach during the first year of inspection and carried out a comprehensive review as we neared the end of the cycle. In March 2019, we consulted on several adaptations to our approach which we proposed to apply to our next cycle of inspections starting 2019-2020. One significant new commitment was to engage with service users directly as part of our inspections.

We have also produced a comprehensive Research and Analysis bulletin which explores the benefits and challenges of engaging with service users in the review and improvement of

probation services, as well as identifying a number of key enablers for the successful delivery of this activity.⁴

Background

This is not an untested approach for the Inspectorate. Historically, we have attempted multiple ways of taking the views of service users during inspections. These include surveys, speaking to probation service user groups, and commissioning expert organisations to arrange service user focus groups to gather feedback. These approaches have not, however, been continued or mainstreamed into our current adult inspection approaches.

There are two main reasons service user involvement did not become fully embedded:

- a) the number of people involved through various research methods did not provide a representative sample from which we can draw conclusive results
- b) the methods often led to poor engagement from (adult) service users, which provided very little useful information for the inspection team.

In our youth programme, however, we have continued our efforts to engage with children and young people, though with limited success. We send a text message to children and young people under the supervision of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) which asks them five questions about their experience of the YOT. Response rates have been poor and so feedback cannot always be referenced in our inspection reports. Initial reaction suggests that children and young people would be more likely to respond to e-mail or face to face interviews. We will address this in our review of our youth inspection approach in autumn 2019. Face to face interviews with young people themselves, conducted both in and out of custody, have been an important part of our recent review of resettlement services for children leaving YOIs and were a critical source of evidence for that report.

3. Review of inspection approach

Our review of the application of our new inspection programme mid 2018-2019 gave us the opportunity to reflect on our own levels of engagement with people who have lived experience of the criminal justice system. We recognise the gap in our engagement with service users (offenders or ex-offenders) in our inspection methodology but also in our stakeholder engagement.

We are keenly aware of how this might impact on the perceived credibility of our approach and of us as an organisation that is focused on the experience of service users.

Having been unsuccessful in fully embedding this approach into our inspection methodology in the past we commissioned Revolving Doors Agency in November 2018 to carry out a diagnostic for us to help guide our next steps. We approached this task with the following guiding principles in mind.

- A clear understanding of where service user involvement improves the work of HMI Probation.
- The development of a suitable approach through experimentation and testing of different approaches.

⁴ HM Inspectorate of Probation (2019). Service user involvement in the review and improvement of probation services. *Research & Analysis Bulletin 2019/3*.

- To develop a model of service user involvement that can inform our strategy and approach.
- Test approaches to the involvement of service users in adult and youth inspections – without being constrained by a need for representative samples.

4. Our strategy

We recognise that both service users and professionals - that is those with either lived and learned experience – can add value and knowledge to our Inspectorate activity.

- ‘Lived’ experience relates to the contribution provided by service users, and highlights that it is their own personal experiences, particularly of the criminal justice system, which enables them to offer a valuable perspective on probation services.
- ‘Learned’ experience relates to the contribution provided by staff, and emphasises that they have gained a detailed understanding of probation services through training and professional experience.

We also recognise the benefits that involving service users can have to their own wellbeing and recovery. It is a core part of the probation ethos to support the rehabilitation of service users and to provide better life chance for those individuals. We want to play our part in that.

We currently ensure there is sufficient learned experience in our Inspectorate staff through the employment of probation or youth justice professionals to our Inspector and Assistant Inspector roles. We keep knowledge current by bringing in Assistant Inspectors, in particular, on rolling secondments.

We need to now pay as much attention to securing and learning from lived experience, alongside that learned experience, as a core part of our business as usual.

We have considered the findings of Revolving Doors Agency’s diagnostic and propose we pursue the following three strategic objectives.

We will work with our staff and partners to develop a plan for delivering each of these objectives.

Strategic objective 1:

Seek advice from (ex-)service users on our developing inspection methodology

Historically, we have developed new inspection methodology by tapping into the expertise that we employ in-house, by seeking the direction and advice of external experts and through consultation with those we inspect and other key stakeholders. While service users have always been at liberty to respond to our public consultations on these activities, we have not deliberately sought their view. And yet, as recipients of the service we inspect, they could help guide us on what to look for and the questions we should ask, both of staff and service users.

We have begun a programme of work to revisit our probation inspection methodology in response to government announcements on the new design for probation services, which will come into effect in 2021. We have allocated a dedicated workstream to stakeholder engagement and communications and will ensure that we engage those with lived experience throughout our development process. We will identify different methods of

involvement at key stages throughout the process. We will engage partners in seeking service user and ex-service user input.

This approach will allow individuals with lived experience of probation (and potentially youth justice) to input to the development of our inspection approaches at a strategic level. We want to access as diverse and wide a group of people as possible so we can source a range of views about probation services.

Strategic objective 2:

Increase the involvement of service users in inspectorate activity

We have already committed to conduct telephone interviews with the service users whose cases we inspect and to meet with the service user councils as part of our second cycle of adult probation inspections beginning in September 2019.

We have also begun to consider how we involve service users in the thematics and research projects that we have planned. There is a continuum of approaches that we could employ from seeking advice through to the employment of peer researchers (the approach we applied with some success for the service user involvement research project). We will approach each project on a case-by case basis.

We will also consider the involvement of children and young people in our YOT inspections as part of our review of the youth programme later in 2019.

We will keep this activity under review but we are committed to investigate how we extend service user involvement in our new inspection programme for 2021-2022. There are different options we could pursue:

- seeking service user feedback through different means as part of our inspections so thinking about surveys, focus groups, suggestion boxes etc. We would need to consider how we put this information on an equal footing with other evidence sources to contribute to the ratings which we assign to services.
- embedding those with lived experience into the inspection teams themselves to interview service users and help interpret the evidence we gain from this.

Strategic objective 3:

Be a truly inclusive employer by opening our recruitment campaigns to those who have been through the criminal justice system themselves

We want to give ex-service users the chance to compete for vacant roles at the Inspectorate based on their skills and competencies. This would put those with lived experience on an equal footing to our other staff and they would bring their lived, as well as learned, experience to our inspections and wider Inspectorate activities.

We will be seeking help and advice from others who have achieved this aim, to guide us in how we can open up our employment opportunities. We will seek their help with defining a recruitment approach that would encourage those with lived experience to apply to work, or to seek a work placement at the Inspectorate. We will also look for their steer on how our induction programme, for all staff, can properly reflect the experience of the service user.