

13 July 2009

Reducing Re-offending: Changes to the local reducing re-offending landscape

Summary

The Policing and Crime Bill contains proposals that will change the nature of the relationship between the Probation Service and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships.

Representatives from the Probation Association will attend the meeting to deliver a presentation to the Safer Communities Board about the Probation Association, their view of the future of the Probation Service and developing a closer relationship with local authorities.

The proposed changes to the Probation Service and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships were recently discussed at a workshop at the LGA Annual Conference.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note and comment on the activity to date on this issue.

Action

LGA officers to reflect Board's views in any further work on this issue.

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Background

1. Responsibility and accountability mechanisms for reducing re-offending at the local level are set to undergo some changes as a result to proposals in the Policing and Crime Bill currently before parliament.

The Policing and Crime Bill proposes to;

- place a statutory duty upon Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in England (CDRPs) and Community Safety Partnership in Wales (CSPs) to be responsible for reducing re-offending; and
 - make the Probation Service become 'responsible authorities' i.e. full partners around the CDRP and CSP table.
2. Under these clauses, CDRPs and CSPs will have an extended remit to reduce re-offending rates within their area as the Bill extends the existing duties of the responsible authorities to include formulating and implementing a strategy to reduce re-offending in their area.
 3. Under the proposed changes, the Probation Service will have the same level of responsibility as Local Authorities, the Police, Police Authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities and Primary Care Trusts for crime and disorder within a given locality. Currently probation boards and trusts are not responsible authorities but are required to co-operate with those persons and bodies who are.

What does this mean for local authorities?

4. The proposed changes present local partners with the opportunity to work more strategically with the Probation Service at the local level rather than through the current arrangements of a centrally controlled process managed by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
5. The changes could also help with closer working and greater alignment of objectives between Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs), CDRPs/CSPs and Local Strategic Partnerships. The Probation Service are members of both the LCJB and CDRP/CSP partnership structures which could allow for the development of coordinated approaches to local and regional crime and disorder issues.
6. Local authorities could also benefit from the sharing of information collected by the Probation Service that will allow the more effective targeting of intervention and rehabilitation services to those people and communities that need support.
7. Probation boards and trusts are accountable to 10 Directors of Offender Management (DOMs) who report to the Chief Operating Officer on the NOMS Board. DOMs are accountable for the local performance and delivery of end-to-

end offender management through the delivery of services that meet national and local priorities.

The LGA Position

8. The LGA welcomes the proposals to make the Probation Service statutory partners on CDRPs/CSPs as it increases local flexibility in the range of options that can be used to address re-offending and social exclusion. It also formalises existing practice as demonstrated in Leicestershire and Bolton.
9. The relationship in two-tier areas may have to be carefully managed to ensure that the Probation Service is appropriately represented at the district level CDRPs/CSPs. Through discussions with LGA officials, NOMS are aware of this issue and have proposed that district level CDRPs/CSPs will have representation from an empowered senior Probation Officer rather than the Regional Offender Manager or Chief Probation Officer.
10. The accountability of DOMs to national and local priorities may be a potential tension that could affect performance at the local level. The LGA is clear local needs must not be overlooked by DOMs in their attempt to achieve national performance targets.
11. Changing the statutory duty of CDRPs/CSPs to include reducing re-offending may require some additional resource but this has not been quantified at the national or local level. Expanding the partnership should not incur costs for local authorities as it is expected that the change in statutory duty will bring efficiency savings due to smarter partnership working and a renewed focus on how resources are used. However, the LGA will be monitoring this situation to ensure that no new burdens are placed upon local authorities.

The Probation Association

12. Representatives from the Probation Association will be addressing the Board at the 13 July meeting to discuss the Probation Association, the future of the Probation Service and how this will affect local authorities.
13. The Probation Association is funded by subscription from its members who are the probation boards and trusts in England and Wales. The Probation Association represents and supports all members of probation boards/trusts and develops policy through consultation and involvement of members in reference groups.

Financial Implications

14. There is no additional funding available from the centre to support the new statutory duty for reducing re-offending. It is expected that local authorities will meet any additional costs from existing budgets.

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Implications for Wales

15. The bill jointly applies to England and Wales.

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