

Re-offending and Probation: policy positions re-evaluation

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

At its last Board meeting, the Board were asked to review the policy positions that were published in Going Straight (2005) to ensure they remain relevant in light of developments in the field of reducing re-offending and supporting councils' community safety teams in these areas. This report outlines the developed position in response to the comments and actions made by the Board.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation(s)

That the Board

- (a) Endorse the statement in Annex 2; and
- (b) Direct officers on the issue in paragraph 9 and 10.

Contact details

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Background

1. At the previous meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) members were asked to consider the LGA's policy positions on re-offending contained in the 2005 document *Going Straight*.
2. In discussion, the Board asked for understanding if local authorities are involved in the Home Office Prison Leavers project. As far as officers have been able to ascertain they are not, and the project is run by the Ministry of Justice.
3. Officers were asked to bring back a developed position following Members comments, as follows:
 - 3.1. the need to acknowledge recruitment and retention has worsened, particularly of probation officers.
 - 3.2. the need for mental health to be factored in, particularly in the drug and alcohol treatment section.
 - 3.3. Add gambling to the drugs and alcohol section.
 - 3.4. Add in the effect of neurodiversity on reoffending following the 2021 review into neurodiversity and the criminal justice system.
 - 3.5. The Home Office involvement of probation services with local authorities is different in different areas – could this be picked up as part of Community Safety Partnerships, or an area to look at in devolution?
 - 3.6. Explore what works internationally, such as Norway, around restorative justice and how local authorities are involved.
 - 3.7. Accommodation – where the probation service and the Ministry of Justice house people has an effect on the chance of reoffending (this is covered by the Community Accommodation Service (CAS) and falls under the LGA's Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board).

Proposal

4. The amended policy position statement is set out in Annex 2. This is based on the proposals in the paper and members' comments.
5. A general section added at the start reflects the points made by community safety practitioners when consulted earlier this year, as set out in the previous paper and points made by members (1 and 5).
6. The education and employment section has been reworded to reflect advice from colleagues in the LGA's workforce team that the LGA should not be telling councils what to do, but rather suggesting points to consider. The points themselves are not substantially different from those in the original document but reflect the changed financial climate since 2005.
7. The accommodation section has been re-worded to align with the LGA's broader ask on social housing in recognition of the key role social housing plays in reducing the risk of re-offending, as recommended in the original paper.
8. The third section is renamed Individual Support following the addition of gambling mental health and finance to the existing section on drugs and alcohol (see 3.2 - 4). The Family Support section remains unchanged.
9. Further guidance is sought from members on whether further work is needed around the provision of drug and alcohol treatment for ex-offenders and whether the Board should work with other LGA Boards to develop positions on the support to families of ex-offenders and approaches that deliver better early intervention and prevention to reduce offending and re-offending.
10. Further guidance is also sought from members as to whether officers should investigate what works internationally to reduce re-offending as this may require substantial research.

Implications for Wales

1. As part of the next stages of the review work officers will engage the WLGA to check what extent, if any, it would be helpful for the final positions agreed by the Board to reflect practice and circumstances in Wales.

Financial Implications

2. This work will be resourced from within the existing work programme for the Board.

Equalities implications

3. Re-offending and probation are policy areas which necessarily deal with vulnerable and often marginalised residents. Therefore, any equality implications will be considered throughout this re-evaluation.

Next steps

4. Members are asked to:
 - 4.1. endorse the updated policy positions and direct officers if further development is required.
 - 4.2. Consider whether the SSC workplan should be adapted to incorporate further officer work:
 - 4.2.1.1. around the provision of drug and alcohol treatment for ex-offenders.
 - 4.2.1.2. on what works internationally to reduce re-offending as this may require substantial research.
 - 4.2.1.3. with other LGA Boards to develop positions on the support to families of ex-offenders, and approaches that deliver better early intervention and prevention to reduce offending and re-offending.