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## **The Role and Purpose of Probation Hostels: Voices from the Inside**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the role and purpose of Probation Approved hostels from the perspective of residents and hostel staff. Findings are drawn from a case study into the operation of a Probation Approved hostel and the experiences of those people either working or residing within the hostel.

The fieldwork was conducted over twenty-one months, including the period that the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was introduced. In conjunction with participant observation within the hostel, comprising informal conversations and interviews, forty-one semi-structured interviews were undertaken with residents (24) and staff (17), and twelve Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee meetings (MARACs) were observed.

Key findings are that different levels of staff in the hostel and residents have different opinions regarding the purpose of hostels. From the talk of respondents it is suggested that the differences can be accounted for by the levels of work undertaken by respondents. The significance of this is that some staff groups do not understand the work of their colleagues, and that residents do not appreciate the purpose of the residency in a hostel.

Key words: Probation, hostel, Approved Premises, offenders, purpose, public protection.

# **The Role and Purpose of Probation Hostels:**

## **Voices from the Inside**

### **Introduction**

Probation Approved Premises (hereafter referred to by their earlier and informal moniker; hostels) are a small, but vital part of the wider work of the probation service in which high risk offenders are provided semi-secure accommodation either on release from prison (as part of release license conditions) or on bail. Currently 100 hostels cater for a wide range of offenders including both male and female offenders, sexual, drug and violent offenders (HMI Probation *et al.* 2008). This paper explores what people either working or residing in a probation hostel understand the purpose of work in hostels to be.

### **Background**

Recently there has been a wealth of national and regional activity around the provision of probation hostels: this has included a number of inspections and reviews such as the Home Office report *Factors Associated with Effective Practice in Approved Premises* in 2004, the *Approved Premises Service Reviews and Not Locked Up but Subject to Rules* inquiry, both in 2007, and the later Joint Inspection *Probation Hostels: Control, Help or Manage?* in 2008. Within these the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service (NOMS, 2006) have attempted to explicitly refocus the role and practice of probation hostels in England and Wales, bringing them in line with the wider offender management model introduced through NOMS. This model sets out a framework in which offender managers work with offenders as they progress through the criminal justice system (NOMS, 2006). As part of this movement

towards an end-to-end management system aspects of probation work undertaken in hostels which focus on containing the risks of offenders in terms of public protection have increasingly been prioritised (Kemshall and Wood, 2007). However, this emphasis is a relatively recent development in the history of hostels and of probation work more generally. Thus, in order to contextualise the views of people either working or residing in hostels regarding their work, it is necessary to provide a brief review of the changing work and structure of the probation hostel system and consider how this reflects upon the changing core function/s of hostels. It is this latter element which is explored through the perspectives of front-line staff and residents in the findings and discussion section of the paper. To inform this consideration research which reports on the views of hostel staff or residents is specifically explored in the following section: however, it is notable that there is a dearth of material in this field.

#### *Probation Hostels: A System in Flux?*

Like the probation service more generally, hostels developed under the auspices of the Temperance Society around the turn of the twentieth century when they were used to provide vocational training and shelter for young offenders (under 21 years) being released from prison (Weston, 1987). This basic supportive function was sustained into the 1970s, despite the move into adult provision following the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, which prohibited young offenders being placed on probation. They also weathered the Morison Committee (1962) which stated that they were unconvinced that there was a need for hostels.

The main changes in structure and function started in the 1970s. Hostels were brought under the management of the probation and after care services instead of voluntary

organisations through the Criminal Justice Act 1972 (Home Office, 1972). In 1973 however, hostels were not only brought further into the remit of probation through the Powers of Criminal Courts Act, which empowered probation committees to both provide and maintain probation hostels, bail hostels and other establishments, but they were allowed to do so specifically for the purposes of rehabilitating offenders (Weston, 1987). Later in this period, however, the use of hostels as alternatives to custody started to be viewed as a partial solution to the pressures resulting from crises in the penal system and shortages of financial resources (Home Office, 1972).

Thus, the focus of hostel work could be seen to be shifting from earlier practice and through this period developed new priorities that shaped the modern system. The uncertainty about the purpose of hostels has been criticised, especially as the aims may appear to be contradictory; veering between providing immediate aid and assistance, containing 'problem' offenders and rehabilitation (Burnett *et al.*, 2007; Haxby, 1978). These conflicting pressures characterised hostel work through the 1980s and into the 1990s, during which hostel places were increasingly used for high risk serious offenders being released from prison, rather than for bailees (Haines and Morgan, 2007).

In 1995 the Home Office first defined the purpose of hostels *in the National Standards for the Supervision of Offenders in the Community*:

...to provide an enhanced level of supervision to enable certain bailees and offenders to remain under supervision in the community.

(Home Office, 1995: 4)

The role hostels play in the criminal justice system was emphasised, with the focus shifting from offenders and how probation officers can help them to the community and what the hostel can do in terms of providing protection. This is reflective of new concerns surrounding probation's role in risk management and public protection (Burnett *et al.* 2007).

Moving into the new century, further developments were informed by a disappointing review of effective probation schemes. Consequently, probation management (including the hostel system) was centralised within the newly established National Probation Service (developed in 2001: Raynor and Vanstone, 2007). Such moves illustrated the trend to draw probation in line with the rest of the criminal justice system, leading to the development of NOMS (National Offender Management Service) in 2004. NOMS was heralded as a radical new way of managing offenders through an integrated prison and probation service on the back of Carter's review of the correctional services and his finding that offenders' experiences of the criminal justice system were disjointed (Carter, 2003; Home Office, 2004c). Despite the ongoing challenges associated with the development and running of this organisation (*cf.* NAPO, 2005; National Audit Office, 2009) the growing pre-occupation with public protection through risk management was consolidated.

#### *The Current Status of Probation Hostels*

The official role of hostels is to support public protection work through effective offender management (HMI Probation *et al.* 2008). Hostels have developed a specialism in dealing with high risk cases: offenders considered to be highly likely to re-offend or of causing serious harm if they do re-offend. Through enhanced

supervision and a residential monitoring and life-skills regime targeted at these offenders, hostels are intended to support Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) (NPD, 2005a). This illustrates the position of hostels as integral to the offender management model for those offenders assessed as requiring enhanced levels of supervision and offence work (HMI Probation *et al.* 2008).

The latest national strategy, implemented in 2007, said little on the purpose of hostels other than to emphasise the role that they play within the offender management model in terms of implementing risk management plans and monitoring compliance with these (Ministry of Justice, 2007). The previous national strategy in 2005 gave more detail on the role and purpose of hostels in terms of providing:

[...] enhanced supervision as a contribution to the management of offenders who pose a significant Risk of Harm to the public. Admissions criteria and referral processes need to reflect this focus on public protection. The delivery of enhanced supervision encompasses security, staffing arrangements, restrictive measures and rehabilitative components.

(NPD, 2005b: 1)

Thus, it is evident that hostel work focuses on containing and reducing the risks offenders pose in terms of re-offending and causing serious harm, again emphasising public protection. However, the tensions inherent within probation between offender rehabilitation and reintegration on one hand, and risk management through surveillance and supervision on the other are still reflected in the 2005 National Standards, which state the “clear objective to punish offenders and reduce re-

offending.” (NPD, 2005b: 4). This has since been developed through the publication of the offender management model (NOMS, 2006) and the 2007 National Standards (Ministry of Justice, 2007). It is this focus on public protection and risk management which Kemshall and Wood (2007) believe has moved the whole probation service away from care and welfare.

Recently the National Probation Directorate (NPD) has produced a number of documents outlining the specifics of how hostel work supports public protection. These include: surveillance and monitoring of offenders; assessment of offenders; delivery of accredited programmes and other interventions, for example, one-to-one work, pro-social modelling and motivational interviewing; and provision of services including employment services, life skills, health and education (NPD, 2005c). Cherry and Cheston (2006) draw upon these documents to discuss the practice of hostels, fearing that surveillance and monitoring work may over-shadow other functions, particularly rehabilitative practices. This, again, highlights the tensions inherent in modern probation and hostel work.

The full nature of the impact of recent changes on frontline staff has yet to be adequately determined. Burnett *et al.* (2007) argue that probation practitioners are increasingly seeing their role as one of surveillance and enforcement (for example through breach procedures) with punishment becoming a fundamental element of probation work. Additionally, a small study of senior probation officers by Farrow (2004) reported that recent repositioning of probation in the context of NOMS and the development of the public protection agenda was initially met with confusion and concern, suggesting that the impact of such changes has been to worsen tensions rather

than to refocus the service. Farrow found that her respondents were dissatisfied with the lack of discretion afforded to them and the increasingly bureaucratic and performance driven environment that they found themselves working within. While they accepted their broader social role as protectors of the public, they disliked the manner in which they had been forced to turn away from individual, rehabilitative relationships with offenders in their care. Ironically, it was this individual relationship between case worker and offender that NOMS was designed to foster through the offender management model and the role of offender managers (Home Office, 2004a).

From the above brief review it is evident that hostel work has indeed been a system in flux and within which the core functions of hostels has varied greatly over time. This paper explores how these shifting priorities may be reflected in the views of people working or residing in a probation hostel in terms of the role of hostels and the work undertaken within them. These findings are drawn from a larger study exploring the day-to-day experiences of sex offenders residing in a probation hostel and staff working with them. This study considered not only staff and resident perceptions of the hostel, their work and each other, but also resident grouping, use of space and use of denial.

## **Method**

A single case study approach was used to explore the day-to-day reality of hostel accommodation for people charged or convicted of sexual offences, through examining the experiences of those involved (all residents, including those who were either charged or convicted of offences that were not sexual, and staff). Within this approach a range of methods were used iteratively in order to develop the project and

to further explore preliminary findings whilst data was still being collected. Three concurrent phases of fieldwork were thus undertaken which included coupling in-depth interviews with observational techniques. This marriage of methods encouraged participants to speak openly about their experiences, the challenges they face and their support needs (Johnson, 2002; Lee, 1993).

Phase one involved observing the management of the hostel and the behaviours and interactions of residents. Observations took place on fifty seven occasions of between three and fourteen hours each over twenty-one months. The time of the observations varied between weekdays and weekends, and time of day and night. The observations included informal conversations with residents and staff which were opportunistic in nature and supplemented the interviews in phase three.

Phase two involved observing the process of risk management decisions within Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committees (MARAC) over 12 months. MARAC is the local name for level 2 and 3 Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels (MAPPP: which were combined in MARACs and are bounded by the geographical remit of the probation area). These meetings were held every month, in which medium-high risk and higher offenders either being released or already residing in the community were discussed. Additional MAPPP were scheduled if a very high risk offender needed to be discussed in this forum but could not wait to be brought to the monthly MARAC. Representatives were routinely present from probation, police, and Housing Services with the occasional presence of other agencies such as social services, mental health services and the Youth Offending Team. Detailed notes of the meetings were taken. Individual conversations with the MARAC members was not permitted.

The early themes that emerged from phases one and two informed the topic areas for the phase three interview work. Formal interviews started five months after the commencement of the observation phases. Forty-one interviews were completed with residents (24: 23 male and 1 female) and staff (17: 15 male and 2 female). All staff and residents were given the opportunity for an interview. These gender splits are reflective of the ratio in the hostel as a whole. Of the staff, most who took part in interviews were residential services officers (RSO: not probation trained and undertook daily front-line duties in the hostel): 8 RSO, 3 relief RSO, 5 probation services officers (PSO) and 1 senior probation officer. Of the residents, because of the focus on sex offenders 21 of the respondents were convicted or charged with sexual offences, this is a slight over-representation of the sex offender population. Many more staff and residents were involved in the observation phase of the work and readily engaged in informal conversations about the research topic.

In writing the field notes, all participants, local areas and the hostel were anonymised and ascribed code names. Hostel staff members are identified by S and then a number, while residents are identified by an R. Where comments have been made within a MARAC the number of the MARAC (1-12) is given and the member identified.

## **Findings**

Residents and staff members of the case hostel were asked what they thought the purpose of the hostel was in practice. They often found it difficult to think beyond their individual role in the hostel, resulting in respondents extrapolating from their personal experiences and opinions and casting this on to the wider hostel system. It

was notable that residential staff members in particular rarely questioned the work that they undertook.

Primarily, three main foci of work in probation hostels were identified by respondents: rehabilitation and reintegration; supervision and control of residents; and, risk management and public protection. The activities undertaken by both staff and residents in the pursuit of these aims varied little, although greater emphasis was placed on different aspects of hostel work. It was notable that respondents saw these areas as distinct to each other; they did not identify public protection or risk management as being a unifying discourse in which other work fitted. Thus, the perceptions and opinions of respondents did not reflect recent changes in hostel work and positioning within probation. Respondents' understanding of the work undertaken within probation hostels is discussed in respect to these three primary foci.

#### *Rehabilitation and Reintegration*

The majority of staff representatives stated that they thought a large part of the role of hostels, if not the sole purpose, is the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community. This was reflected in conversations about specific offenders, which emphasised the processes which work towards rehabilitation and reintegration. Most commonly referred to was the way in which hostel accommodation and regimes could assist high risk offenders to comply with offence-based work.

*Case worker [field probation officer] argues that he [the offender] should stay in the hostel until he has done some offending work.*

*(MARAC 2)*

Statements of this nature were reiterated commonly in MARACs where the need for offence work was often coupled with life or employment skills training as part of reintegration plans:

*Case worker [field probation officer] wants him [the offender] to go on Enhanced Thinking Skills (ETS) education and training so he can make positive links.*

*(MARAC 4)*

Thus, residency in a hostel on release from prison before re-entering the community was often justified as helping offenders focus on programmes that they were required to undertake, but might fail to attend or engage with otherwise.

Hostel residency not only assisted engagement with programmes run externally, but subjected residents to rehabilitative and reintegrative schemes within the hostel. For example, permanent staff (probation, PSO and most RSO) routinely used pro-social modelling techniques within their day-to-day interactions with residents. Pro-social modelling is the use of praise by staff members when a resident has accomplished or achieved something, but also constructive censure if they have demonstrated inappropriate behaviour. Additionally, staff members are intended to be positive social role models for residents: being neat, punctual, polite, calm, conscientious and genuinely interested in helping residents (Loney *et al.*, 2000). However, residents and relief staff members (who had not undergone any training other than a single shadow shift) were not aware of the principles of pro-social modelling, or that the technique was being used in the hostel. This meant that work with residents was not consistent

and that residents did not always understand the significance and meaning behind their interactions with staff.

*Q: How do you use pro-social modelling techniques?*

*S3: What's that?*

*(S3 Relief RSO in interview)*

Relief RSO did not regard their personal role in terms other than purely functional. They described their role as to ensure that residents complied by the rules of the hostel and to be available to meet the daily needs of residents, irrespective of the overall purpose of hostels or probation. This may indicate that relief staff regarded themselves as working solely within the hostel, divorced from wider probation work and principles.

Despite the majority of staff members' commitment to, and emphasis on rehabilitation and reintegration, residents were much more sceptical:

*A new resident has entered the hostel. He says that it is badly run and cannot achieve rehabilitation. He says this is because it is run by the Home Office and that the regime is like prison.*

*(R81, adult sexual abuser, field notes 25/4:2)*

This scepticism may be because, unlike permanent staff, residents did not connect hostel residency to the external programmes that they attended and, like relief staff, were not aware of the reintegrative work undertaken within the hostel.

### *Supervision and Control*

For hostel staff and MARAC members the supervision of residents was intrinsic to their efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. Supervision was regarded as the most important aspect of work conducted within probation hostels. Representatives from the hostel management said that they ‘would admit high risk offenders into the hostel if there was no other address in the community that would provide the same level of supervision to them’ (S25, hostel probation officer, MARAC 4). This highlights the primary role of the hostel as a provider of high level supervision in the community. This perception was reiterated by staff numerous times, mainly within MARAC meetings. For example, S2 reported that R34 (a violent offender) was in the hostel to have ‘detailed observation of his behaviour.’ (S2, hostel manager, MARAC 8). Similarly, it was agreed that R14 (drug related offences) would be required to reside at the case hostel in order ‘for probation and police to monitor his behaviour, in particular his use of alcohol and heroin.’ (MARAC 8).

This connection between supervision and reintegration was especially evident within home leave decisions. This is when an offender applies for between one and three nights leave from the hostel to stay with family. Residents may only apply after they have been resident in the hostel for at least one month. Because all hostel residents were subject to MARAC, their first home leave applications were always discussed in that forum prior to agreement. The language used in these discussions referred to ‘testing’ residents as part of re-integration plans:

*S2 (hostel manager): Look, it would be worth considering a staged return [to the community]...here we can have a measure of control to manage....*

*Case worker (field probation officer): Test him out through home leaves, things like that?*

*(MARAC 9, referring to R64, violent child sexual abuser).*

Thus, the residential regime of hostels was used to ensure that residents could be safely reintegrated through providing short term, monitored returns to the community which could be managed by probation and police services. The residency requirement was also considered to be a testing period in itself: “hostel residency required as a testing period” (case worker, field probation officer, MARAC 10). The period of time in the hostel allowed staff to intensively monitor offenders’ attitudes and behaviour prior to reintegration and to supervise their progress from prison to the community.

Residents were less positive than staff about how they were supervised in the hostel and what the underlying purpose of supervision was. Like staff members, most residents thought that the central function of the hostel was supervisory, but that this supervision was a control mechanism through which the resident was managed rather than supported:

*I came here from prison so that they could supervise me going back into the community, they don't want me to take any responsibility for my life, but I have to at some point, it is my life after all. They just want to control everything I do.[...] It's all about controlling us.*

*(Resident 3b, child sexual abuser, in interview)*

It was argued that this endeavour to control residents was evident in the way hostel staff interacted with residents:

*R57: It's all about power and control I'm sure.*

*Q: Do you really think so?*

*R57: Oh yes. You can tell straight away. I don't even know who they all are [the staff] and you can see it. They play games. Ignoring you, making you wait for everything. They don't respect us at all. That's what it is. They think they're Someone and we're just not.*

*(R57, GBH, field notes 31/10: 2)*

This discrepancy in views between hostel staff and MARAC members on one hand, and residents on the other may be explained by their relative positions within the hostel structure. Staff working with residents clearly saw their work in terms of supporting residents to change their lifestyles and thinking to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. Residents, however, tended to not understand this supportive role and regarded staff as intruding in to their privacy, which they often resented leading residents to attribute negative intentions towards the actions and attitudes of staff.

### *Risk Management and Public Protection*

Clearly, for staff working in the hostel and present at MARAC meetings, the purpose of supervising residents in the hostel was to assess and manage their level of risk to the public in terms of causing harm to a victim and their likelihood of re-offending. Residents were only admitted to the hostel after discussions regarding their static and dynamic risk factors. (Static factors are those which cannot be affected, such as age and pre-convictions. Dynamic factors are those which are constantly changing, such as mood, attitudes and stress levels.) In MARAC 7, S2 and S21 (the hostel management team) stated that 'in terms of the hostel, vacancy is managed on a risk

priority rather than a first come first served [basis]', highlighting the pre-eminence of risk factors in determining the targeting of hostel resources.

Once in the hostel, the monitoring and supervision that hostel staff related strongly to reintegration can be seen to link into assessments of risk. For example, hostel staff watched residents to see if their social networks were "risky or criminogenic" or if residents were frequenting places similar to previous offending sites (MARAC 1). In particular, the hostel setting allowed residents' dynamic risk factors to be monitored and fed into reintegration planning.

Despite this focus on risk, the role of the hostel in achieving public protection remained somewhat hidden. It was evident that concerns around managing and reducing risk underpinned the work of staff, which fits into the offender management model, NOMS and the ethos of public protection: however, these themes were rarely referred to by residents or hostel staff, who focussed on more concrete and detailed aspects of probation work. Thus, while it is objectively apparent that the work and role of hostels fits into the public protection discourse, staff did not identify this themselves. It was only within MARAC meetings that the significance of public protection as a unifying aim was explicitly referred to in conversations. It was frequently intimated that hostels are part of the probation service's armoury to ensure the public are protected from potentially dangerous offenders, with elements of rehabilitation, reintegration, risk management and supervision working towards this overarching aim rather than being independent aims in themselves. For example, in MARAC 1, when discussing R34 (attempted murder of his partner), issues relating to his static and dynamic risk factors (as informed by his hostel residency) were

considered with specific reference by his probation case worker and the MARAC chairman (senior probation officer) to how all past and potential victims could be protected.

Many residents agreed that hostel facilities were reserved for those offenders assessed as high risk, but did not link work on reducing risk to either reintegration or rehabilitation. Instead, they regarded hostels as primarily housing facilities for those offenders assessed as high risk and who lack suitable housing arrangements:

*Q: So, what do you think about [the hostel]?*

*R4: Well, you have to have 'em don't' you? I mean, you need places like this. I mean, when I came out of prison I had nowhere to go ... so ... I had to come here.*

*(Resident 4, CSA, in interview)*

This view was not necessarily in contradiction to the views of staff members as the risk levels of offenders were still considered the decisive factors in their admittance to the hostel. However, while staff argued that the need for semi-secure accommodation stemmed directly from the need to supervise offenders and to protect communities, residents did not connect the role of the hostel directly to probation work. Residents were aware of different facets of the role of probation, but regarded working practice in the hostel as moving away from these principles and ideals:

*Q: What do you think the purpose of the hostel is?*

*R8: That depends if you mean the service or the hostel. [...] I think the service really does work towards reducing re-offending; rehabilitation. They used to be a befriending organisation didn't they? That's what they started out as.*

*Q: What about the hostel? Are they the same?*

*R8: No, I don't think so. It's just accommodation.*

*R7: Yeah, we're both homeless. They just want to put us somewhere so we can do these courses.*

*(R7 and 8, child sexual abusers in interview)*

Again, residents echoed MARAC and staff members' views on the use of hostels to ensure residents comply with offence-based work, but they differed in their interpretation of the purpose of this. Residents viewed hostels as holding centres to ensure compliance rather than the inherent regime of hostels working towards reduction of risk, reintegration and public protection.

## **Discussion**

It was initially hypothesized that differences in opinions between individual staff and residents might stem from organisational and structural changes in the work of probation hostels and wider probation work. These differences were superficially prominent in the talk of respondents, which appeared to reflect the changing role of probation and probation hostels (highlighted earlier in the paper), as modern aims of NOMS and the offender management model are cast alongside traditional principles of probation. However, as NOMS was introduced and implemented through the fieldwork period there was no change in the views of staff. Significantly, all respondents implicitly set hostel work into the context of the offender management model in terms of their role in the transition between prison and the community and

there was some consensus that work undertaken in hostels involves assessment of risk, supervision and surveillance, rehabilitation and reintegration, control and management, accommodation and public protection. However, differences arose in the way in which staff members and residents described the relationship of these aspects of work to each other and the overall purpose of these activities.

Permanent probation trained staff (MARAC members, probation officers and PSO) understood hostel work to aim towards public protection through primarily risk management, with risk assessment, rehabilitation, reintegration, monitoring and supervision of offenders being the processes through which this is achieved. This contrasted sharply with the views of residential hostel staff who prioritised traditional goals of reintegration and rehabilitation within their reflections; focussing on support and supervision as key functions of hostel work.

The closer convergence of probation and PSO views with official guidance prioritising public protection and risk management (Home Office, 2004a; 2004b and NPD 2005a; 2005b; 2007) may be because of their training and the nature of their work, which enables officers to take a wider view of work in the hostel, as opposed to the narrower role of RSOs who ensure the daily welfare and management of residents. Notably, the role of probation officers and MARAC members requires them to work with a view to their contribution to the offender management model, so that their focus is outwards from the hostel. On the other hand, RSOs focus inwards on the minutiae of day-to-day work in the hostel and with residents, and so tended to talk about the role of the hostel in terms of the work that they undertake; thereby generalising to the hostel from their

personal role. In this respect they have a narrower view of the work undertaken in hostels than other staff respondents because they have a narrower focus to their work.

Residents largely agreed with RSO staff. Both groups emphasised the supervision of offenders and all that this entailed. Although residents preferred the term 'control' to 'supervision', it is clear that both refer to the same set of activities. Unlike staff, residents regarded the primary purpose of hostels as being supervision, without linking this to an overarching role of either public protection or reintegration. This focus may result from their position in the hostel. They are not privy to official guidance accompanying hostel work, and tend to regard those aspects of which they are most aware of as being indicative of the purpose of the hostel. In the hostel, residents are most aware of the supervision mechanisms; curfew, observation, signing in book, room searches, drug tests and so on. They are less aware of other aspects of probation work that do not directly act upon them, which may explain why residents have a narrower view of the purpose of hostel work than RSOs.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that public protection is mainly conceptualised as a unifying purpose: drawing together the united efforts of supervision, assessment, rehabilitation and risk management work; consequently, public protection is the focal aim of work undertaken in hostels. However, those operational staff working on the frontline with offenders (PSO, RSO and relief RSO) are more likely to regard their work in terms of specific sets of activity, rather than regarding their effort as contributing to the larger offender management model. Those staff that are slightly removed from the frontline (such as hostel management) or work across the hostel and other probation work (such

as the MARAC members) are more likely to view the work of the hostel in respect to its relationship to wider probation work through the offender management model. Significantly, the differing understandings do not mean that staff are not working effectively together, but rather that they do not always understand or appreciate the work of other groups. This was particularly evident when discussing pro-social modelling. Additionally residents were least aware of the work of hostels and thus were very negative and resistant of supportive practice with them.

From these findings it can be suggested that there may be benefits in providing more training to PSO and RSO level staff (including part-time staff), particularly relating to the broader role of hostels, the offender management model, their position within NOMS and the criminal justice system. This training should include an appreciation of the work and role of other people that they work alongside. This could enhance their understanding of the significance of their work and help ensure a consistent approach towards residents by all staff members. It is also suggested that explicitly engaging residents in rehabilitative and reintegrative processes that are explained to them may enable residents to be more reflective about the hostel and the work undertaken with them. For some residents, this may support their engagement, not only in specific offence-based or life-skills courses, but in the more intangible work of the hostel regime.

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