

## Case study – Probation Officer



I am a Probation Officer for the National Probation Service. I am responsible for assessing and managing the risk of individual offenders re-offending and the risk of harm posed by them.

My work is informed by the **Criminal Justice Act 1991**. This changed the emphasis in report writing for the Courts, who no longer wanted a 'social enquiry' and instead required a 'pre-sentence report'. This proposes the punishment that an offender needs to reflect the level of harm done by his/her crime. For the National Probation Service, this sees the move away from a social work approach to an increased emphasis as a law enforcement agency.

Under the **Criminal Justice Act 2003**, I am responsible for recommending a sentence that is tailored to both individual offender need and the requirements of the community for proper punishment, ensuring public protection.

During the process of compiling a report, I use risk assessment tools, such as the Offender Assessment System (OASys), so that my assessment is both accurate and benchmarked against legislative requirements. In this way public credibility and the confidence of sentencers is maintained.

The single **Community Order** replaced all previous adult community orders. It allows the Courts greater flexibility to tailor the sentence to the individual offender through the use of one or more requirements. A Community Order will include a minimum of one requirement and can be imposed for up to three years. Some combinations are a given, for example, a supervision requirement will always accompany a treatment requirement.

There are 12 requirements, subject to availability and suitability:

- Activity
- Alcohol treatment
- Attendance centre (if the offender is under 25 years old)
- Curfew
- Drug rehabilitation
- Exclusion
- Mental health treatment
- Prohibited activity
- Programme (accredited to demonstrate a reduction in offending behaviour)
- Residence
- Supervision
- Unpaid work

Once the offender is sentenced, my work is regulated through the **National Standards for the Management of Offenders, Standards Implementation Guidance 2007**. These standards integrate and replace the previous Probation Service National Standards and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Offender Management Standards. The Prison Service continues to function as a separate agency within the Ministry of Justice. It maintains its own suite of instructions and guidance, which is fully aligned with these standards. They make expectations explicit, clear and transparent to all parties.