

Proposal for the future arrangements for the leadership and monitoring of diversity throughout Thames Valley Probation.

1. Experience so far:-

- 1.1 During the first three years of Thames Valley Probation, the Chief Officer sought to act as champion of the diversity thread. He convened an area wide group that he had chaired prior to amalgamation; he sat on, and chaired – the LCJB diversity strategy group; he established the LGBT group, and annually met with the co-ordinators of the three staff groups. The area wide group included board members. The group posed questions of the organisation, produced the area's first Race Equality Scheme, produced some materials around racially motivated offenders, supported the Black and Asian programme pilot, monitored complaints and unpaid work beneficiaries, and reviewed a range of policies. Staff membership was self selective on the whole, but there was lack of wider ownership in the organisation, and a lack of any executive to take matters forward. Training for middle managers was established as a priority.
- 1.2 The second three years involved the Board Chair and then a Board Member, chairing the Board Diversity Forum. This involved the director of HR as the diversity champion within the senior management team, and an operational assistant director. The Forum included other board members, members of the three staff groups, and convenors of several subgroups: race, faith, disability and sexuality. There was overlap but a lack of clarity about these groups and their accountability and function. There remained poor organisational ownership. In due course, attendance at the Forum was very poor, little business was executed, and again the lack of a diversity manager seemed critical, despite the best efforts and commitment of senior managers. The main achievements of this period focused upon disability. The disability subgroup was convened effectively by the HR manager and the disability equality scheme, two ticks accreditation and a grant to carry out adjustments was achieved.
- 1.3 Subsequently until now the disability group has become a network. Only the disability staff group has sustained significant momentum – though focused on a small number of vocal members. The faith subgroup has been sustained by a committed senior manager who has developed proposals for a community chaplaincy. The HR director duly revised the Race Equality Scheme and ensured formal legal compliance, but with relatively little consultation. The director of offender management has sought to champion other diversity issues, especially around racially motivated offending and the use of interpreters, and has latterly had a half-time middle manager to operate as a diversity manager to take these pieces of work forward. He has also replaced the Chief Officer on the LCJB diversity group. Senior managers arranged for several staff to attend the Oxfordshire Gay Pride event. A regional drive to establish consistent diversity reporting and monitoring failed to produce progress on monitoring service delivery proportionality.

2. New proposed structure:-

- 2.1 It is proposed to establish a senior management/board "Diversity Monitoring Group". This would be chaired by the Chief Officer, with the director of OM leading on operational/service delivery and the HR director leading on staff related issues. Three identified board members would also attend. The other attendees of the group would be the diversity manager, a representative of the Information Unit, and hopefully the diversity manager of the LCJB.

2.2 The function/terms of reference/parameters of the Group would incorporate:

- keeper of the equality schemes
- championship of the diversity agenda – in business planning, partnerships, contracts, SLAs, etc
- responsibility for the diversity “seam” through operation and staffing arrangements
- monitors of impact assessments
- advice on organisational and training priorities
- establishment of a diversity performance framework
- community engagement
- annual meetings with relevant staff groups, via the Chief Officer and lead board member

The group would meet quarterly and have PA support – probably via the HR director. It will not have any subgroups, but will monitor the work of the directors.

2.3 The first meeting of the group would establish:

- terms of reference
- impact assessment format
- stock take of current activity
- review current data available
- identify required data set

The group will not define policy, but will monitor its impact.

2.4 Staff related activity: Much of the diversity “seam” within staff/HR activity should be mainstreamed in existing policies, procedures and structures. This will need some critical self examination before further structures or processes are proposed, and existing available data will need review. The disability network is already linked directly to the HR manager. Support will be through the director’s PA. Routine contact with staff support groups (see 2.6) will be through HR.

2.5 Operational/service delivery activity: The director of offender management will sponsor a “Diversity in Service Delivery” group. Each assistant director will identify a manager to represent their operational arena and to act as a champion of diversity issues. Support for this group will be from the director’s PA. The current diversity manager will formally convene the group on the director’s behalf. She will also act as the link to the ongoing faith/multi faith group, which continues to operate through an assistant director.

2.6 In principle, there continue to be three staff support groups:

- disabled staff
- LGBT staff
- black staff

These groups will continue to be encouraged and formally recognised by management, with some financial support and right to meet at reasonable intervals in work time. The Chief Officer or board lead member will offer to meet with each group annually, but other contact will be through the HR director/manager.

3. Review:

It is proposed that these arrangements be reviewed at the end of the 2008 calendar year, and that at least a half time diversity manager post is retained in the business planning until March 09.

Gerry Marshall
Chief Officer