

## What we do

The Probation Service in Thames Valley works with offenders to cut crime, protect the public and ensure public safety and the proper punishment of offenders

The vast majority of people convicted of offences in England and Wales serve their sentences in the community.

The National Probation Service has a statutory obligation to supervise these offenders and ensure they complete their punishment within the timescales set by the courts.

Thames Valley is one of the 42 areas that make up the National Probation Service in England and Wales.

The stated aims of the service nationally are:

The protection of the public

A reduction in re-offending

The proper punishment of offenders

Ensuring offender awareness of the effects of crime on the victims of crime and the public

The rehabilitation of offenders.

The Probation Service in Thames Valley covers East and West Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, which equates to 2.1 million people.

Thames Valley Probation has more than 750 staff based in over 25 locations and spends about £25 million a year to carry out its work.

More than 8,000 reports are prepared for the courts each year and the service supervises more than 7,000 offenders sentenced to complete their punishment in the community.

The service also supervises more than 1,500 offenders released from prison each year. These offenders are 'on licence', which means they must comply with conditions set by the Parole Board, or face a return to prison.

It is important to dispel the myth that community sentences are soft options. They are a punishment

## For further information

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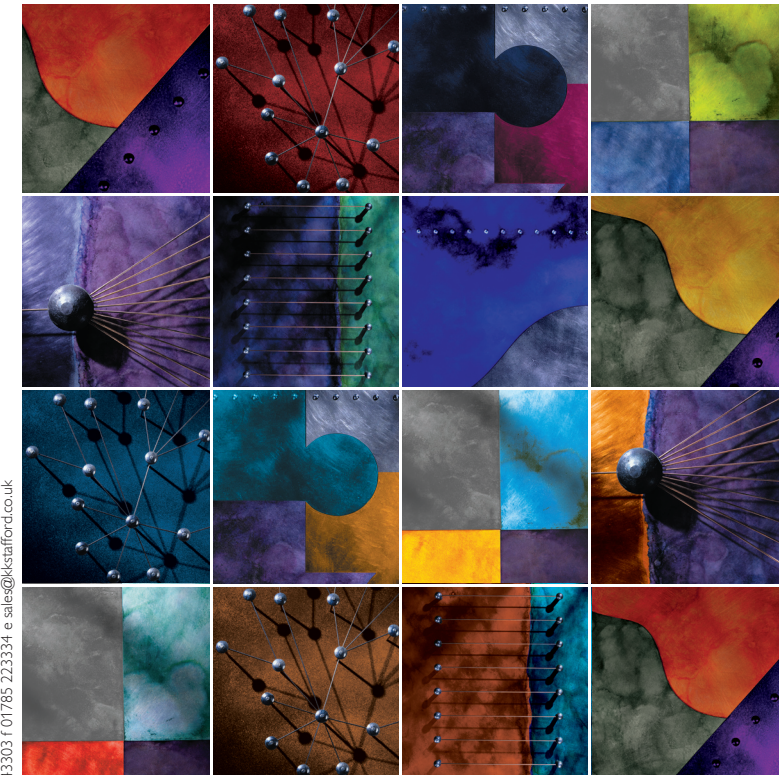
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## What is Probation?

An introduction to the work of

# Thames Valley Probation



Less re-offending, fewer victims

# Reducing re-offending in Thames Valley

Offenders are sentenced to a Community Order with one or more of the 12 Requirements that courts can impose.

The Requirements are:

- Unpaid Work (40-300 hours)
- Supervision
- Curfew
- Residence
- Drug Rehabilitation
- Specified Activity
- Prohibited Activity
- Exclusion
- Mental Health Treatment
- Alcohol Treatment
- Attendance Centre (not in Thames Valley) Programmes

The Probation Service's task is to match the offender to the right punishment, the sentence most likely to achieve the best results for society as a whole

The Probation Service oversees all of these Requirements. Part of offenders' punishment is to make them look at ways of changing their behaviour.

For instance, on an Unpaid Work Requirement, the offender must 'put back' something into the community from which he or she has taken.

On a Supervision Requirement, the offender will have to meet regularly with probation staff. They may also be ordered, under a Programme Requirement, to attend a lengthy offending behaviour programme.

A Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR) involves intensive rehabilitation work, plus random drug testing and structured meetings with probation staff.

Specified Activity would mean the offender had to work with our specialist employees on other issues, including housing, employment, training, numeracy and literacy.

We are answerable to the Ministry of Justice and work closely with the police, the courts and the prison service to make sure justice is delivered effectively. By doing this, we make a positive contribution to protecting the public.

## How we work

First and foremost, the Probation Service is part of this country's criminal justice system. As such, its job is to protect the public. We therefore take the lead in judging how much of a risk an offender is to society.

Public protection involves looking at how likely an offender is to commit further offences and also whether there is a risk of an offender causing harm to other people.

Qualified probation staff use a specialist tool, OASys (Offender Assessment System), to assess how dangerous an offender is and how likely it is that he/she will re-offend. This helps staff to plan an offender's supervision effectively, whether they are on a community sentence or on licence from prison.

It may be decided, for instance, that it would be best for a prisoner due to be released on licence to live in one of the Probation Service's Approved Premises (formerly known as hostels), where they will be supervised and monitored closely and must adhere to strict rules and behaviour.

Or it might be decided that an offender appearing in court would benefit from one of the Probation Service's many offending behaviour programmes. We would then advise the court (in a pre-sentence report) that attendance on a programme should be imposed as part of the offender's sentence.

The Probation Service, the Police and the Prison Service have a joint, statutory duty to convene Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for higher risk offenders.

These are panels of professionals, who bring together detailed information and expert analysis to examine the risks posed by serious violent or sexual offenders released into the community.

By working together, we can minimise the risk such people pose to society.



## The victim's perspective

The Probation Service has a Victim Liaison Unit, based in Reading, with victim liaison officers working across the Thames Valley.

Victims of sexual or violent offences, where the offender has been sentenced to 12 months or more in prison, can now receive information about the custodial process.

They may, if they wish, express any concerns they have about an offender's release which they would like to be taken into account when the Parole Board considers the conditions of release. We put these views forward on their behalf.

Victims often say they appreciate receiving information and having a chance to express their views.

The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act put victims' rights into legislation for the first time in the UK

## Working for the service

Most people will automatically think of probation officers and, of course, they make up a significant portion of our workforce but there are many other roles which make a vital contribution to our work.

Many staff are involved in administration, others work in human resources, in the courts, in prisons, approved premises (hostels), information technology, research, needs provision and training.

Many of our employees have come from different careers and bring a range of skills to the Probation Service. We run a comprehensive set of training programmes and also employ trainee probation officers who work towards their two-year diploma in probation studies, gaining a community justice degree and community justice NVQ.

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