Written evidence from a Probation Officer (TRH0099)

Statement in relation to the impact of TR on the probation service and the current situation regarding delivery of front line services and the difficulties facing staff in their day to day duties (Jan 18)

A view from a Probation Officer of over twenty five years....“There is no doubt, that across the CJS, the decision to split probation through the TR process has been deeply damaging in terms of public protection, reducing offending, victim safety and the quality of service to our cases, the Courts and within probation itself”

**Staff Morale** has been shattered by TR. Within the Trust organisation there was a feeling of togetherness, common purpose and working effectively for our customers. The split across the organisation was forced upon us with no logic or reason or any efforts to listen to or win over staff. The NPS is a top down “this is the way you do it” bou a racy with no effort to engage practitioners who know the job and the people we work with. Staff are moved locations against their will and morale in many offices is extremely low. Many staff are over stretched and the relentless of dealing with high risk offenders had a major impact on their emotional and physical health. Many experienced staff have had enough and left. Within the CRC even more exacerbated cuts and changes have been experienced. Delivery to cases and the Courts is poor and staff are upset and hurt that they can no longer do the job they want to do and at the standard they previously did.

**Operational effectiveness** has been destroyed by the TR process and is significantly poorer than was delivered by the Trusts. Most Trusts had a wide range of services &

Statement in relation to the impact of TR on the probation service and the current situation regarding delivery of front line services and the difficulties facing staff in their day to day duties (Jan 18)

“There is no doubt, that across the piste, that the decision to split probation through the TR process has been deeply damaging in terms of public protection, reducing offending, victim safety and the quality of service to our cases, the Courts and within probation itself”

**Staff Morale** has been shattered by TR. Within the Trust organisation there was a feeling of togetherness, common purpose and working effectively for our customers. The split between organisation was forced upon us with no logic or reason or any efforts to listen to or win over staff. The NPS is a top down “this is the way you do it” bou a racy with no effort to engage practitioners who know the job and the people we work with. Staff are moved locations against their will and morale in many over stretched and stressed front line team is dire. Many experienced staff have had enough and left. Within the CRC even more exacerbated cuts and changes have been experienced. Delivery to cases and the Courts is poor and staff are upset and hurt that they can no longer do the job they want to do and the standard they previously did.
Operational effectiveness has been destroyed by the TR process and is significantly poorer than was delivered by the Trusts. Most Trusts had a wide range of services & specialism’s (eg drug/ alcohol, accommodation, volunteers/ mentors, links to voluntary agencies, etc) in house. These were split by TR; many have now been lost and many do not operate or function as they did. Just two examples; 1/ [Name of area redacted] Women’s centre’s has no funding and is threatened with closure. 2/ the call centre system operated in the CRC for calls and letters is not working and is not fit for purpose. Front line staff are not able to deliver the generic services to cases and hence effective offender engagement and rehabilitation has been compromised. The level of service provision is much lower than pre TR.

Public safety has been compromised by TR as there is not the joined up or direct lines of communication or working together, that previously existed. Courts, CRC/ NPS staff front line staff, other agencies and victims are frustrated and annoyed that the split of functions has fundamentally undone the high standard of service previously and proudly delivered by staff.

Relationship with the judiciary has been compromised in two fundamental ways. The CRC fail regularly to provide adequate or required information to the Courts. This has impacted on the confidence of the Courts to make community based sentences. Secondly, HMPPS have driven the use of proper pre sentence reports down to a point where little information is known on the day. This impacts on both NPS & CRC, in terms of suitability of sentences and time spent at the start of Orders undertaking assessments and referrals rather than addressing offending behaviour.

Relationships with Clients has been significantly impacted on by TR mostly in a negative way. The constant changes being made in the NPS has resulted in clients moving supervisor far more often than is reasonable and more importantly it is damaging to building relationships. This is especially poor in terms of service delivery to long term prisoners. In the CRC, excessively large caseloads have an obvious impact. Further open plan offices are unsuitable for many clients and their officers to discuss sensitive issues. As importantly, the amount of documents & assessments required to be produced takes up valuable time & energy that could be directed into assisting and working with cases.

ICT, Whilst probation has struggled for many years with poor IT the splitting into two organisations was championed as an opportunity to improve this. CRC staff struggle with the IT they currently operate but the main issue has been within the NPS. The NPS moved to SOP in January 2017 and the system has been unfit for purpose. The basic right of staff to be paid and paid correctly has been breached month after months and a year later is still not fixed. Some staff have suffered extreme financial hardship & even this month we have examples of new staff not being paid.

Though the Gate (TTG) has been a complete and utter failure. The service to prisoners leaving custody has been almost non existence and far inferior to the service provided pre TR by Trusts often working cooperatively and in partnership with local authorities. The volume of high risk offenders leaving custody as no fixed abode is a disgrace and creates
enormous pressure on staff as well as putting the public at risk as (high risk) homeless clients have little option but to offend to eat or obtain money to live. This is probably the biggest “lie” of TR.

Overall most staff would see TR as a failure for everyone in the CJS. Staff are committed and proud of what they do and want change to enable them to do the job they joined probation to do. After 3.5 years the tide has not turned for the better and the outlook remains bleak if we remain on the same path.