



HM Prison & Probation Service

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Dear Ian and Katie

DISPUTE – OFFENDER MANAGEMENT IN CUSTODY (OMIC)

I agreed to write to you following our meeting on 27 August where we discussed the concerns you have with the OMiC model that led you to register a formal dispute.

Firstly, I wanted to thank you and your team for what was a very constructive and open meeting which provided an opportunity to discuss the issues you have raised. I wanted to summarise those issues in this letter and trust that this is the first step to finding resolution to these issues.

Consultation

We believe that we have consulted with NAPO extensively both on a formal basis (in 2017 and 2018) and via regular meetings and invitations to engagement and digital showcase events that we have undertaken. However, as you will know phase 2 of the project, case management, is being managed locally by DIBs so I will remind NPS Divisional Directors that their JCC meetings should include an update and discussion about OMiC to ensure that your representatives are fully sighted.

The OMiC design sought to address the fundamental issues raised in the HMI Prison Offender Management Inspection (POMI) 3rd Aggregate Annual Report 2013 which set out the obstacles to prisons and probation of delivering OM in the manner originally envisaged. The report recognised that the custodial phase of the sentence was not delivering effective OM; and that the ambition of the OM model to provide continuity to the offender, via an engaged community Offender Manager, was not being realised. We reviewed the current model and developed the OMiC model with staff from both prison and probation. We consulted with over 500 practitioners across the system during the design stage. Now in the implementation phase, the positive outcomes we are expecting from OMiC for the whole prison and probation system are:

- Improvements in **safety** and further development of **rehabilitative cultures**
- More **engaged, hopeful and settled prisoners**
- Improved **quality of offender management**: better quality assessment and sentence planning co-ordination, progression AND more and **better services** (121 supervision and OPD)

- **Improved coordination and strategic integration of services and interventions that are responsive to the needs of the population**
- **Improved collaboration between functions in the prison**
- **Better trained and more engaged staff**
- **Improved transition** between custody and licence period
- More **effective and efficient administration** through standardisation – EQUIP will support staff in understanding the complex policies and statutory duties
- Improvements in **digital services**

Staffing levels

I want to assure you that we are committed to ensuring that probation staff working in prisons and the community are well supported and have acceptable workloads. Therefore, we conducted a rigorous assurance process for OMiC implementation which included review of community and prison staffing with NPS Divisional Directors and Prison Group Directors, followed by Executive Directors' sign off.

This process concluded that there are approximately twenty prisons where the case support model will initially have to be in place. In these prisons, as a guide, NPS POMs, will not manage more than eighty cases. They will be supported by a similar number of prison staff as probation staff vacancies which will mean there should be no excessive workloads for staff working in these sites. It is worth bearing in mind that the custodial cases have the additional control of being in custody but also with more support being immediately on hand for both prisoners and staff.

In three of the twenty prisons we will have to operate a bespoke community hub model, which allows for a reduced number of cases to be transferred to the POMs in the Offender Management Units. These cases will be managed by community based probation staff, operating as Prison Offender Managers, utilising NPS locations where there are more staff than required. The probation staff based in these Hubs will manage selected determinate and indeterminate sentenced prisoners serving long term custodial sentences of over 5 years (and in many cases much longer than this). Whilst the caseload expectations in these community hubs will be comparatively high, the expected contact and assessments required, will be significantly less. The probation staff based in the hubs will be expected to contribute to the management of the sentence and be involved with post programme reviews and OASys completions. However, it is worth noting that the OMiC model sees a reduction in the OASys review periods. A number of the prisoners managed by the hub will be involved in offending behaviour work or accessing other services, all of which will be delivered within the establishment. There will be an expectation of contact with prisoners, with the acknowledgement that some of this will be remote and all the work will be supported by prison staff completing much of the face to face work.

This is a short term solution to the current staff shortage issues; once the NPS are able to provide the required number of staff to establishments, we will revert to the OMiC model, as described in the Operating Model. Whilst I recognise that this brings some workarounds and some additional work during the implementation phase, because we have to go live with the whole OMiC model across the closed male estate at the same time, there is a very low number of the total number of the 92 prisons I am content that this is the best way forward. I am also confident that the arrangements both through the wider OMiC implementation and specifically in these three prisons will provide prisoners with better offender management than the current model.

In addition to this, there has been much work to realise the intention of supporting staff within OMiC. For probation officers working in custody this will be delivered by SPOs providing them with supervision, ensuring that their prison staff colleagues are well trained (as set out in the OMiC training strategy) and that they access the CPD in the community as well as induction and training for working in custody covering topics such as anti-corruption, NOMIS, and OPD.

SPO Workloads

The primary purpose of the OMiC changes to case management is to improve the quality of offender management delivery in prisons. One important way we will deliver this is through the introduction of at least one SPO in every prison. In order for the SPO to be fully embedded in the prison they will be line managed in the Governor's line (by either the Governor or Deputy Governor) with a dotted line for continuous professional development and support to the NPS in the community.

The SPO will be a strategic partner for the Governor, will sit on the SMT, and will work closely with the Head of Offender Management Services who is a prison service manager and will provide additional support and capacity. This is clearly a departure from the current arrangements and to make sure that this will work as intended we have tested this extensively. Based on feedback from those involved in the testing, we have developed guidance to support this (which we have shared with you previously). The guidance sets out the expectations of the required level of oversight the Governor or Deputy Governor should have of the SPO, including HR processes and the application of the HR Single Operating Platform (SOP). It also provides guidance about the role of the NPS Head of Service and the level of contact required with the SPO and the Governor or Deputy Governor as part of the tripartite arrangements.

You raised the issue of the 1:14 ratio of SPOs to staff which is lower than that agreed for community teams. In many of the prisons the number of staff will be less than 14. Taking Midlands as an example, they have 17 prisons where 12 of the prisons require 1 SPO and 5 require 1.5 SPO. Out of the 12, 4 have less than 10 staff to manage, 6 less than 13 and 2 have 14 or 13.5 staff to manage. Out of the 5 prisons that require 1.5 SPOs, 3 will have 8 staff each and the other two they will have 9 or 10 staff. I trust that this example provides some reassurance to you about the workload. However, I recognise the valuable contribution that our part-time workers bring and am keen to further support this. There is review of the line management spans of control in the community and as discussed at the meeting, I committed to expanding this review to include those working in custody.

To further ensure that we are picking up the concerns of SPOs in custody, we agreed at the meeting to conduct a joint survey of SPOs. The OMiC team will be in touch with Katie Lomas to agree the questions shortly.

Privately Managed Prisons

High risk of harm cases will have Probation Officer oversight in privately managed prisons (PMPs) as they do in public sector prisons but they will apply the case support model to all cases. This provides a level of consistency between PMPs and public sector prisons.

A different staffing model is in place because PMPs already have well-resourced and highly performing Offender Management Units and we want to support and encourage this and minimise changes to staff in these units.

Continuity of offender manager

You raised a number of general concerns about the model including the issue of lack of continuity of offender manager which, in reality, is an issue in the current model. We recognise that the transition between custody and community is difficult but evidence suggests that this is a problem internationally and no jurisdiction has been able to resolve this successfully. However, because we know this we can focus particular attention on this time of change for the prisoner and make sure that they are as supported as they possibly can be.

The current system is not deliverable for those prisoners who are serving lengthy sentences and are accommodated a long way from home. For these individuals OMiC is the best solution, where we are able to provide individualised support and to undertake meaningful

sentence planning. This is more important now than previously in light of the fact that there is an increasing proportion of the prison population that are serving longer sentences. It will of course also mean that we are able to provide continuity for short term prisoners from the community.

Additional prison places

The 10,000 additional prison places that have recently been announced are additional places to current spaces and will be included in a revised prison estate strategy. These prisons will deliver the OMIC model and we recognise that additional resources will be needed for this.

Women in custody

We developed the bespoke offender management model for the women's estate in consultation with staff from prisons and probation, psychology and policy leads. The model builds on the excellent relationships already in place between women and staff and recognises the different needs of women and the challenges and opportunities in the women's estate.

In recognition of the differences, key work and case management will be fully integrated in the women's estate with complexity of need a key driver for deciding how we support the women. Based on evidence about the need to have clear boundaries with those with the most complex needs, one trained member of staff, a prison offender manager, will support these women.

This different approach has been taken in light of evidence which suggests that having one identified professional working with a high complex woman is the preferred method of engagement. The boundaries between what is key work and case management cannot be easily defined for high complex individuals. Many of the issues that are linked to a woman's complexity will often be underpinning, or relevant to, their offending behaviour which a prison offender manager is best placed to address and support them with. We fully expect that the good relationships prison officers already have with women in custody to continue and for the OMIC arrangements to further support the women.

We welcome your comments about the language currently used to describe particular groups of women and are happy to use the term 'women with complex needs' which we agree is more appropriate.

Reassurance about no redundancies

We also discussed staffing numbers under OMIC and the unified model and you raised the concern from your members of potential redundancies. There will be no redundancies as a consequence of either OMIC or the unification of probation. CRC staff will bring work with them and whilst there may be some changes to the work, there will be no redundancies.

In terms of OMIC it is worth remembering that many cases that are being transferred into prisons will be managed by probation officers with a significant number of PSOs having been removed from prisons in recent years and being redeployed elsewhere.

I hope this letter provides some clarity about some of the concerns you have raised. I recognise that you will need to discuss this letter further with the NEC and I look forward to hearing from you following this.

Yours sincerely



Sonia Crozier
Chief Probation Officer & Director Women
HM Prison and Probation Service