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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Can probation be rehabilitated?

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Email: g.j.robinson@sheffield.ac.uk**Abstract**

This article is based on the 24th annual Bill McWilliams memorial lecture which was delivered at the Institute of Criminology in Cambridge on 9 June 2022. Coinciding with the first anniversary of the unification of probation services in England and Wales, the lecture considered the recent past, present and potential future of the service through the lens of a central concept in probation work: namely, rehabilitation. Three ways of understanding this concept are considered: rehabilitation as restoration; rehabilitation as a process of building back better; and looking-glass rehabilitation. It is argued that each perspective suggests a different orientation to, and a different set of issues and questions about, probation's future and the work that is needed to help the unified service move on from a traumatic recent past.

KEYWORDS

McWilliams, organisational trauma, probation, rehabilitation, Transforming Rehabilitation (TR), unification

1 | INTRODUCTION

As we approach the first anniversary of the unification of the probation service in England and Wales (Beard, 2021), I want to offer some thoughts and reflections on the theoretical question of whether probation can be rehabilitated. We are of course much more accustomed to thinking about the rehabilitation of individuals who are subject to probation, but what happens when we take this familiar concept and apply it at the organisational level? Does it shed any light on the

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current situation, the process of change, or the challenges that lie ahead? I think – and hope – that it does.

But perhaps first I should address the reason why I have chosen to pose this particular question. I do not consider it controversial to be suggesting that probation has been damaged by the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) reforms which split the service in 2014 (Robinson, 2016a). Harry Annison (2019) has rightly referred to TR as a ‘policy disaster’ and there is no shortage of reports which confirm that this is indeed the case (for a review, see Beard (2019)). No one, it seems, now stands by the splitting of the service into two constituent parts¹ as a good idea. Dame Glenys Stacey, who occupied the role of Chief Inspector of Probation between 2016 and 2019 arguably put the final nail in the TR coffin when she described the split as ‘fundamentally flawed’ in her last annual report (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2019, p.3).

The primary focus of the (now) many official reports which have examined the impacts of the TR reforms has been the outputs and/or outcomes of probation work and the resounding failure to deliver the enhanced, more effective services that were promised. However, I think there has been deeper and less tangible damage: both outwardly in respect of probation’s reputation and standing in the criminal justice and wider social fields; but also inwardly, or internally, within the service itself (Robinson, 2021). Building on my own and others’ research, I will suggest that probation should be understood as a *post-traumatic organisation*. With this diagnosis as a starting point, it follows that recovery (or rehabilitation) will not – and cannot – happen overnight. As the current Chief Inspector of Probation, Justin Russell, has said a number of times, unification is no quick fix or ‘magic bullet’ that will make everything instantly better; but it is a positive step in the right direction, signalling a degree of hope for the future (e.g., HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2020).

In this article my aim is to provide some food for thought on the subject of what it might mean for probation to be ‘rehabilitated’. I will address this question with reference to three ways of thinking about that concept.² First, I will consider the idea of rehabilitation as *restoration*: that is, a process of returning to a former or original state. Second, I will consider a different orientation – one which emphasises improvement and *building back better*. Finally, I will consider the notion of *rehabilitation through the looking glass*, which comes from Shadd Maruna’s work (Maruna, 2001; Maruna et al., 2011). This focuses our attention on rehabilitation as a social and relational process. It concerns the recognition of positive change on the part of significant others, and the impact of that reflection on the subject.

2 | REHABILITATION AS RESTORATION

One of the biggest debates in respect of the concept of rehabilitation in the criminal justice field is about whether it is best or most usefully conceived as a process of going back to a former state or condition, or whether it is better not to look back, particularly if that prior state is not conducive to a positive future (e.g., Rotman, 1990). For example, if the roots of a person’s offending are to be found in their social or economic circumstances, why would we want to ‘restore’ them to those same circumstances, knowing they are criminogenic?

When we begin to think about returning to a prior state, we are inevitably drawn into the territory of nostalgia for the past. As Mawby & Worrall (2013, p.146) have pointed out, nostalgia has always been part of probation’s occupational culture: everyone in the probation world has a ‘golden age’ and it is often the point in time at which they joined the service; so there are many

'golden ages' to be found. But as they go on to explain, and Anne Worrall has elucidated elsewhere, nostalgia can be viewed as a constructive strategy:

a way of organising and controlling the present and the future – identifying what things were 'good' about the past and should be held on to, what things are best forgotten ... and what unstoppable changes have to be faced up to. (Worrall, 2016, p.351)

This I think helps us to think about the possibilities and limits of 'restoration' in respect of probation. It prompts us to ask not: 'when was the golden age and why can't we go back there?', but rather: 'what should we try to hold onto or recapture from the past?', and (importantly): 'to what extent is that possible today'?

There cannot be many in the probation world who would object to the restoration of a *unified* probation service, or indeed a probation service returning to its roots in the public sector, although we should not minimise the pain involved in yet another upheaval for the service's staff.³ However, it is important not to overidentify with the idea of 'restoring the past' here. When we think about the unification of probation services, it is tempting to see this as an act of pure restoration: that is, literally putting back together the pieces that were split apart by TR, akin to putting Humpty Dumpty back together. However, this is not in fact the case.

First, recall that both parts of the service that operated under the TR model (the National Probation Service and the 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs)) were newly created on 1 June 2014, following the dissolution of the 35 former probation trusts. Post-unification, the service has not returned to the former structure of trusts: rather, it now constitutes twelve probation regions, which do not have the same status as the old trusts, and are fewer in number. Second, while it may appear that staff employed by the 21 CRCs created by TR have been *restored* to the public sector, this is only the case for those whose employment pre-dated the TR reforms, who had experienced a transition from a probation trust to a CRC. This is only a proportion of the CRC staff who have now moved into the unified service, since a proportion will have been recruited post-TR. Third, despite a lingering discourse centred on the 'return of CRC staff to the NPS', this interpretation of events is problematic on several counts. Not only did *both* parts of the TR structure (NPS and CRCs) cease operation in June 2021, such that *all* staff in fact transitioned to a new organisation, but (as already noted) many of the staff employed by the CRCs were recruited after the service was split, such that they cannot be said to be *returning* in any meaningful way to a prior arrangement or structure. But perhaps more importantly, it is unhelpful to imagine the NPS as a continuing but expanded structure, because of the risk that this creates a dynamic whereby former CRC staff feel that they are 'moving in' to the territory of others, and where they may – rightly or wrongly – feel unwelcome. It is for this reason that the Inspectorate of Probation has underlined the message that we should not liken what happened on 26 June 2021 as either a process of *re-unification*, or of *restoring* CRC staff to the NPS (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a), and why both the CRCs and the NPS are referred to as 'legacy' organisations. Thus, the old labels have been very deliberately rejected and the unified organisation is simply to be known as *The Probation Service for England & Wales* (e.g., HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2022).

So, the notion of restoration has its limits here. It is arguably more apt to deploy the analogy of family formation in the wake of a divorce.⁴ What we are seeing is not the remarriage of the same parties over again, but instead the creation of a new 'blended family'; a configuration that is not

the same as before, and which will likely be experienced differently by the various members of the reconstituted family.

There is also the fact, again noted by the Inspectorate, that today's probation service is fully embedded in HM Prison and Probation Service, an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, itself a government department:

This is the fourth major structural reorganisation probation has gone through in 20 years. In the longer arc of history, it marks the final step from probation being an entirely locally run and funded service to being an entirely national one, with probation staff now all government civil servants. (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021b)

As such, the service has been manoeuvred into a place where it has not been before, and that place is far from the relatively autonomous structures of the past, when it was considered more important for probation to be embedded in and answerable to the communities it served (Bottoms, 2008; Burke et al., 2018; Priestley & Vanstone, 2019). That today's probation staff (in common with those employed by the NPS during the TR years) are part of a civil service is I think one of the least discussed aspects of organisational change, and we are yet, I think, to fully understand the consequences of this. We may think that there is no way back from this state of affairs: to return to Anne Worrall's wise words, not all our wishes might be 'possible today'. But that being said, who thought or predicted that unification was possible, some three or four years ago? Perhaps one 'impossibility' has already happened.

Looking back across more than a century of evolution, there are many aspects of probation that would appear to be lost forever. Those entering the service in the 21st century will take for granted that fact that today's community order is a sentence of the court, and may be only dimly aware that its forerunner – the original *probation order* – started out as an alternative to a sanction: a voluntary agreement between the court, the probationer and a court-appointed probation officer. They may also think nothing of the fact that today's community order does not include among its pick'n mix requirements any that include the word 'probation'. From the purview of the present day, this is simply 'how things are', and the likelihood that these traditional aspects of 'probation' will ever be restored seems extremely remote. But that is not to say that we should abandon hopes of restoring other elements of probation's past.

Turning our attention to eminently possible acts of restoration, no doubt everyone in and around the probation field would have suggestions as to what elements from the past they might like to see return to present day practice. The list of possibilities is a very long one, but one such proposition is the reinstatement of the supervision requirement as an element of today's community order (Robinson & Dominey, 2019). As readers may recall, this was replaced back in 2014, in the context of the TR reforms, by the *Rehabilitation Activity Requirement*, or RAR. The RAR was introduced as a 'shell', consisting of a maximum number of days, to facilitate the delivery of flexible and innovative interventions in a fragmented and marketised context. But there is much evidence now to suggest that the RAR has not delivered on its promise and, worse still, that it has been confusing and opaque – for service users, for probation staff, and for sentencers (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2017). Now that probation services are integrated once more, there is no good reason to retain the RAR, and every reason to revert to the supervision requirement, which much more clearly communicates the centrality of the supervisory relationship to effective probation practice. This small act of restoration could do a huge amount of good, not least in helping the commissioners of probation services – sentencers, in other words – to understand that at its heart,

probation is still essentially a relational endeavour, and that it is this relationship – rather than a quantity of days or ‘activities’ – that continues to be the backbone of probation (e.g., Burnett & McNeill, 2005).

3 | ‘BUILDING BACK BETTER’

So it seems that the notion of rehabilitation as ‘restoration’ is somewhat helpful in thinking about probation’s future, but it only takes us so far. For many commentators on rehabilitation, it is much more constructive to think about this as a process of *improvement*; a more forward- than backward-looking orientation focused on growth and development. The US President Joe Biden calls this ‘building back better’,⁵ and the same phrase appears in the *Target Operating Model* for probation (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2021). Of course, building anything requires investment, and it is good to see that the chronic under-resourcing of probation in the last 20 years or so is finally turning around: in his most recent annual report, published in March 2022, the Chief Inspector sounds a note of optimism with regards to resourcing:

After many years of real terms cuts to probation investment, the service has seen a significant increase in resources with an uplift to £1.17 billion in 2020/2021 (equivalent to a 23 per cent real terms increase on 2018/2019). And there was welcome news in the Autumn Spending Review that these additional resources have been incorporated into the baseline budget of the service for the next three years. (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2022, p.10)

This of course needs to be sustained in the long term to make a real difference.

‘Building back better’ also suggests taking forward any examples of innovations developed in recent years that appear to have longer-term promise, whether under the structures of TR or the exceptional delivery model necessitated by the pandemic. As noted in the previous section, the RAR is not, in my view, such an example. However, others have argued that there are some relatively recent initiatives that merit consideration for probation practice going forward. For example, Andrew Fowler and his colleagues have offered valuable research and reflections on the operation (by some CRCs) of community hubs; and Jane Dominey and her colleagues have similarly explored the potential longer-term benefits of ‘blended supervision’, which developed out of necessity during the pandemic (Dominey et al., 2021; Fowler, Phillips & Albertson, 2022). In both cases though, and importantly, it has been noted that one size will not fit all (whether places, or people) – a suggestion that does not sit very comfortably alongside a *Target Operating Model* which emphasises standardisation.

In relation to the rehabilitation of individuals, we often talk of the building of *human capital* – the development of the person’s capacities and skills – cognitive, social, employment (etc.) skills – to enable them to *move on* from their old life, rather than going back to it (e.g., McNeill & Whyte, 2007, ch. 8). So can probation be rehabilitated via the building of human capital? And if so, what would that mean?

The human capital of an organisation is, quite simply, its staff. There has been much talk in the official literature around probation about the ‘re-professionalisation’ of the service’s staff (e.g., see Tidmarsh, 2022). Meanwhile, there has been much less talk about the massive underinvestment in staff – and in probation more generally – over a sustained period of time, which has sown the seeds of today’s staffing crisis. Published statistics on probation staffing show that,

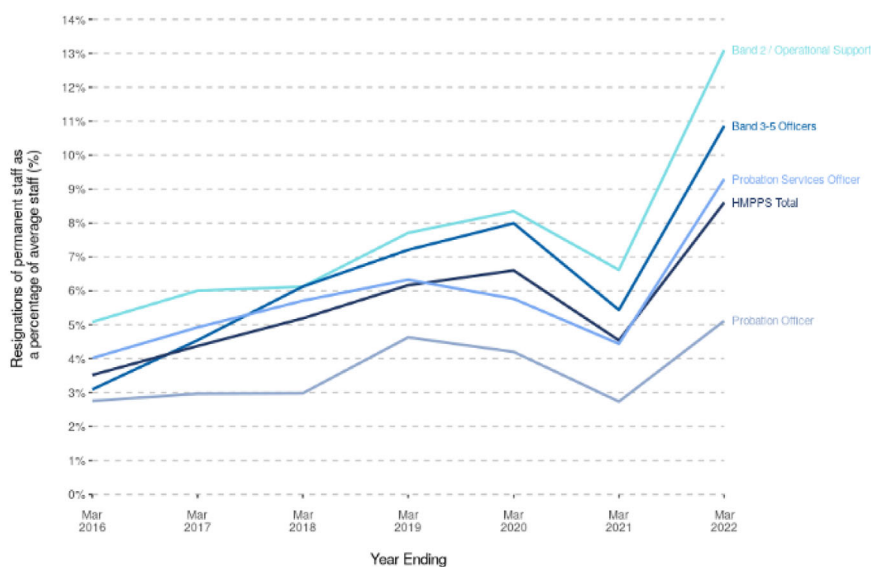


FIGURE 1 Annual resignation rates of permanent staff in key operational grades, from the 12 months to 31 March 2016 to the 12 months to 31 March 2022

Source: Ministry of Justice (2022, Figure 6).

since unification, all of the twelve probation regions have consistently and without exception had fewer staff than they require, with the biggest deficits being in London and the south of England (Ministry of Justice, 2022, PO recruitment annex, Table 2). And although numbers of trainee probation officers have been increasing, training takes time, and there is no direct equivalence between a newly-qualified officer and an experienced one who resigns after several years of service.

We have also seen resignation rates for frontline staff across HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) increase since March 2021, after the first year of the pandemic during which they fell, but were almost certainly artificially depressed due to the extraordinary social conditions at that time (see Figure 1). These statistics probably do not signify that HMPPS is exceptional, given what we know about employment patterns more generally in the wake of the pandemic (e.g., see Serenko, 2022), but they do indicate that the June 2020 announcement that probation services were to unify in the following year did not necessarily persuade anyone who was considering leaving their employment to stay on.

Research on why people leave probation is scarce, but one small-scale study by Walker, Anni-son & Beckett (2019) offers some important insights. They interviewed eight leavers, of whom five had worked in probation since before the TR reforms, and three had joined after TR implementation (one joining the NPS and two joining a CRC). These interviews – contextualised by a broad-based analysis of decades of neo-liberal policies impacting the probation service – led Walker and colleagues to argue that probation staff have for many years been labouring under worsening conditions that have amounted to *systemic workplace harm*:

deepening cuts, precarious working environments, and increasingly unmanageable caseloads inflict upon staff what we consider to be a pervasive form of systemic workplace harm, resulting in mental health issues, stress, and professional dissatisfaction

TABLE 1 Types and sources of organisational trauma

Type	Source	Example
Single devastating event	External	Attack on a workplace, loss of funding
Single devastating event	Internal	Suicide of leader, abusive behavior, insider embezzlement
Ongoing wounding	External	Threats or overt hostility directed at organization from community
Ongoing wounding	Internal	Abusive or destructive management practices
Empathic nature of the work	Internal	Unclear boundaries, over-identification with clients
Redemptive nature of the work	Internal	Internalized judgement, guilt, depression, despair

Source: Hormann & Vivian (2017, p.176).

... TR and the wider changes to probation appear to [have] cut deeper into the sense of disenchantment, alienation, and ontological insecurity experienced by those we interviewed. (Walker, Annison & Beckett, 2019, pp.113, 124)

Walker, Annison & Beckett suggest that TR exacerbated or intensified the experience of workplace harm for many, in some cases acting as a ‘tipping point’ in a longer process of struggle about whether to stay in the profession or leave. Writing at a time when it had been announced that the CRC contracts would be terminated two years early, they predicted that probation stood on the cusp of more turmoil, and that more change was ‘likely to prolong the issues and harms raised by the workers interviewed’ (Walker, Annison & Beckett, 2019, p.127). And, of course, they could not have seen Covid-19 looming on the horizon.

Reading Walker, Annison & Beckett’s research resonated quite strongly with me, as I had been conducting research with probation court teams at around the same time (e.g., Robinson, 2018, 2020) and had made some similar observations, albeit from quite a different vantage point. A key finding of that research was how insulated the court teams – employed by the NPS – were from what was going on in the field. One practitioner described the court team as a ‘respite niche’, and several of those I shadowed or interviewed expressed what I could only characterise as ‘survivor’s guilt’. This led me to suggest – a bit tentatively at that time – that probation could be characterised as a *post-traumatic organisation* (Hormann & Vivian, 2017; Robinson, 2020; Vivian & Hormann, 2013). And again, this was before Covid-19.

Table 1 shows types and sources of organisational trauma, as described by Hormann & Vivian, who are experts in this field. Looking at Table 1, it is not difficult to make a case for probation being impacted by all of the ‘types’ of trauma listed in the first column. For example, ‘ongoing wounding’ would seem to cover the types of workplace harms described by Walker and her colleagues, while the TR reforms appear to fit the description of both a ‘single devastating event’ and ‘ongoing wounding’, as does the Covid-19 pandemic, coming hot on its heels. And of course probation is also a classic case of work which is both empathic and redemptive – features that we see in the last two rows of Table 1 (e.g., see Mair & Burke, 2012). Thus, although the *specific* examples in Table 1’s third column are not all entirely pertinent in the probation context, we could quite easily substitute them with probation specific examples to make a clear case for probation as a victim of ongoing organisational trauma.

Trauma-informed rehabilitative practice is an area in which there is growing interest and expertise in the probation service, as a recent report by Petrillo & Bradley (2022) attests. Their recent report identifies six key principles of trauma-informed practice with individuals (Petrillo & Bradley, 2022, Figure 6), and a quick dive into the literature on responding to organisational

TABLE 2 Trauma-informed practice in different contexts

With individuals: 6 principles	In organisations: 4 principles
1 Safety	1 Ensure stability, safety and containment
2 Trustworthiness	2 Name and normalize the traumatic event
3 Collaboration	3 Integrate the trauma in affirming and meaningful ways
4 Empowerment	4 Move forward
5 Choice	
6 Inclusivity	
Petrillo & Bradley (2022)	Hormann & Vivian (2017)

trauma (Hormann & Vivian, 2017) suggests a four-step model with some clear parallels with Petrillo & Bradley’s principles (see Table 2). Although referring to different contexts, both identify steps involved in processes of healing and recovery.

In Hormann & Vivian’s (2017) work on facilitating recovery from organisation trauma, they emphasise that leaders are critical to helping organisations to heal:

leaders cannot always protect the organization from trauma; however, leaders can help prevent the organization from long-term traumatization. A leader’s approach may be a mitigating factor, promoting healing within the organizational culture, or it may exacerbate the negative impacts of the situation. (p.188)

Based on their experience as practitioners involved in facilitating the recovery of traumatised organisations, they go on to provide examples of leaders who ‘became champions’ of ‘organizational strengths’ as part of a process of recovery (p.188). This suggests that the rehabilitation of probation – and the idea of ‘building back better’ – might need to incorporate a collective narrative of *post-traumatic growth* that has been documented at the individual level with survivors of various kinds, including those who have experienced serious crime; serious illness; bereavement; war; and natural disasters (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Tedeschi et al., 2018; see also Van Ginneken, 2016). In the probation field, this is reminiscent of *strengths-based rehabilitation*, which focuses on a person’s resources, protective factors and future-oriented goals, rather than the more negatively framed risks and needs (e.g., Maruna & LeBel, 2003). But I suggest that a real challenge for the probation service’s present day leaders is the first step outlined by both Petrillo & Bradley and Hormann & Vivian (see Table 2), which is promoting a sense of safety. Promoting a sense of safety or what is often called ‘ontological security’ (Giddens, 1990; Walker, Annison & Beckett, 2019) among staff is going to be particularly difficult to achieve in an organisation which has been subject to change after change after change, and which has no substantial recent experience of either stability or dominion. Nor should we forget that the majority of the service’s current leaders have themselves been through an extremely challenging few years, and are not immune to the same experience of ontological insecurity (Millings, Burke & Robinson, 2019).

4 | REHABILITATION ‘THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS’

The last way of thinking about rehabilitation that I want to consider is one which I first encountered in Shadd Maruna’s classic study, *Making good*. As Maruna (2001) explains:

Until ex-offenders are formally and symbolically recognized as ‘success stories’, their conversion may remain suspect to significant others, and most importantly to themselves. (p.158)

This notion of ‘looking-glass rehabilitation’ denotes the reality of rehabilitation as a social process; ‘a construct that is negotiated through interaction between an individual and significant others’ (Maruna, 2001, p.158; see also Maruna et al., 2011). It is not just a case of achieving change or recovery, in other words; but also, crucially, of having that change certified or recognised in the wider community. For the individual, that recognition might be sought from close family, from employers, or through more formal channels such as the legal process of achieving a spent conviction when a certain amount of time has elapsed without further offending.

The current probation reform programme is very much centred on the objective of ‘building confidence’ in probation (Ministry of Justice, 2018, 2019). Inherent in that narrative is an acknowledgement of reputational damage caused by TR, which has stemmed in part from stakeholders’ uncertainty about the different responsibilities and competence of probation’s former constituent parts: the NPS and the CRCs. Probation exists in a criminal justice field with multiple stakeholders and partners (Morgan, 2003; Robinson, 2021), chief among whom in the Ministry of Justice’s eyes are sentencers and the public, in whom it says the probation system must ‘command confidence’ (Ministry of Justice, 2018, p.9). Once again, unification does not offer a ‘magic bullet’ as far as achieving that goes. For one thing, it has redrawn the geographical boundaries that demarcate probation areas (now known as regions) for the third time in less than 15 years. For some of the organisations with which probation works, this could build on existing confusion. Who must they deal with now? Thus, a major role for regional directors and their leadership teams will be to work on communicating what has changed, who and what probation is now, and why others should have confidence in yet another iteration of ‘probation’.

Accomplishing this with sentencers is not an inconsiderable challenge, but it should be feasible at a local, Probation Delivery Unit level,⁶ through the cultivation of consistent and trusting relationships and the sharing of information about how community sentences are being delivered and with what results. In principle, then, it can be accomplished through effective communicative activity, underpinned by sound evidence.⁷

Commanding the confidence of the public is, however, an altogether different challenge. It is well documented that the public has little understanding of probation – especially compared with other parts of the criminal justice system, which are far more visible to the public, whether through the wearing of a uniform (in the case of the police and prison staff) or through their regular depiction in dramas, documentaries, literature and movies (e.g., Roberts, 2002; Robinson, 2016b). And to the extent that probation is represented in the media, it has tended to be for less than positive reasons (e.g., Fitzgibbon, 2011; Hayes, 2013; Maruna, 2007).

Thus, the challenge of ‘commanding public confidence’ has been a perennial one, for a service that has always been somewhat hidden in shadow. Now that it is more fully embedded than ever before in the structures of government, it is perhaps more in the shadows than at any time in its past. If an important aspect of rehabilitation is the achievement of recognition on the part of significant others, then questions about communication, visibility and voice come to the fore (Robinson, 2021). There is a fundamental problem with the idea of *looking-glass rehabilitation* as far as probation is concerned: how can an organisation’s accomplishments or recovery be recognised, when it is so little seen or heard? As an organisation, and as a profession, probation needs strong, positive advocates to trumpet its achievements. Those advocates include the Probation Institute and Napo, but also the research community, who can play an important role in building

and disseminating knowledge about effective practice. But for those at the front line, I expect what is needed most of all is a period of stability: the time and the opportunity to settle into new roles, in new structures, with new colleagues, and to consolidate professional identities in a changed context; and to be recognised, first and foremost, *not* by the public, but by colleagues, by those responsible for managing the service, and by service users, as the primary assets of the service that they continue to be.

5 | CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article has been to consider the future of the probation service at a critical juncture in its history, a year after the unification of what were formerly (between 2014 and 2021) separate probation *services*. It has considered that future through the lens of a familiar concept in probation work, and specifically by looking at three different interpretations of that concept. What I hope this analysis has achieved is not a definitive answer to the question posed by the article – *can probation be rehabilitated?* – but rather an appreciation of both the complexity of the question, and the sorts of issues that are brought under the spotlight when we begin to think about different perspectives on ‘rehabilitation’. When we take rehabilitation to imply a process of *restoration*, our gaze is drawn to the past, where we must grapple with tensions between nostalgia and realism as we debate what might be worth salvaging or preserving from history. A perspective on rehabilitation which emphasises *building back better* encourages a more forward-looking orientation, drawing our attention to opportunities for growth and improvement and the resources available to make that possible. Finally, *looking-glass* rehabilitation encourages us to take a more outward-looking perspective, and to consider what needs to be done to bolster probation’s external standing with important stakeholders. Each perspective turns the gaze in a different direction, suggesting that in order to be fully rehabilitated, not only is there much to be done, but also that different types of work are needed, ideally conducted in parallel.

In her 2015 lecture in this series, Anne Worrall talked about ‘Grace under pressure’ and the role of courage in the future of probation work (Worrall, 2015). Seven years on, post-Covid and post-unification, that courage is needed perhaps more than ever. And as with any other rehabilitative effort, the rehabilitation of probation is a process which will take time, and which will require – in spades – all of the qualities we know to be associated with probation work at its best: among them, patience, optimism and dogged determination.

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ENDNOTES

¹The TR reforms facilitated the contracting out of probation services for low- and medium-risk offenders, creating 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies to that end, but also creating a (public sector) National Probation Service which was responsible for services to courts and the supervision of offenders assessed as high risk.

²There are several ways of thinking about the meaning of rehabilitation: for discussions see Burke, Collett & McNeill (2019); Raynor & Robinson (2009, ch. 1).

- ³Those who have been working in the service for 20 years are currently experiencing their fourth major organisational restructure.
- ⁴Leaving aside the fact that, for the majority of employees, TR constituted an *involuntary* divorce.
- ⁵See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build-back-better/> [Accessed 15 November 2022].
- ⁶Each of the twelve probation regions is made up of a number of Probation Delivery Units (PDUs). There are 108 PDUs across England and Wales (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2021, Annex C).
- ⁷A recent review by HM Inspectorate of Probation has shown that the TR years saw a drop in the capacity of probation services to invest in evaluating their own work, such that the evidence base has not been able to grow (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021c).

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