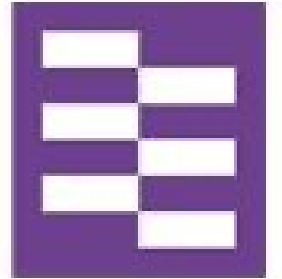


Probation Practitioners' Experiences of Managing High Risk Individuals on Probation Within the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway

Probation
Service



Mersey Care
NHS Trust



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Coming Up...

- Introduction to the collaboration with NHS Mersey Care and the Probation Service.
- The Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) Pathway.
- The Psychologically Informed Consultation Service (PICS).
- Completed research projects.
- Current and future research.

The Collaboration...

- Began in 2014 during studying for my PhD at the University of Liverpool.
- Initially was just a flexible Research Assistant based role.
- Over the years, became a more formal agreement and now classed as the Research Consultant within their service.
- For the past 3 years, had a PhD student also working with the service.
- Numerous funded research projects.

The OPD Pathway

- Jointly commissioned by the Department of Health and the National Offender Management Service (now Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service) in 2011.
- Commissions treatment and support services nationally for people with 'personality disorder', whose complex mental health problems are linked to their serious offending.
- Aims to reduce risk of serious reoffending and improve mental health within high-risk, high-harm individuals with personality disorder.

The Psychologically Informed Consultation Service

- Commissioned by the OPD pathway in 2013 within the Merseyside and Cheshire Probation Service.
- Offers Probation Practitioners (PPs) the option of accessing a consultation and a case formulation based on an individual within their case load.
- Aids a psychological understanding of the individual and his or her risk and identifies appropriate pathways meeting the needs of the individual.
- Aims to develop a more psychologically informed workforce and improve the professional relationship between the PP and individual on probation.

Completed Research Projects

Project 1: Evaluation of the PICS

- A large qualitative study.
- 4 focus groups with 23 PPs involved from Merseyside.
- Discussed their views and experiences of the PICS.

Table 1. Major themes and subthemes.

Major themes	Subthemes
Validation of thoughts, feelings and practice	Validation Reassurance Instilling confidence in role Relational process
Professional support	An objective viewpoint/perspective Educational experience A focus on risk Promoting better working relationships with offenders
A personal touch	Emotional support Enabling reflection Providing a safe space
Room for improvement	Lengthy waiting times Wanting more Added pressure

Blinkhorn et al. (2021)

- Funded by the OPD Strategy Recovery and Restoration fund (grant value £10,125).
- Qualitative study – 9 PPs interviewed who use the PICS.
- Asked questions about workload, support, unmet needs, the PICS, risk management etc.

Table 1. Group experiential themes and subthemes.

Group experiential themes	Group experiential subthemes
Unmet support needs	Lack of mental health care Little help for PoP Impersonal organisational management
Problematic working environments	Poor work–life balance Uncomfortable in own home Difficulty assessing and managing risk
An emotionally distressing time	Loss Anxiety Isolation – a vicious cycle
The use of the PICS	Helpful and supportive Mixed views on online consultations Room for improvement
A silver lining	Use of technology a blessing Productive hybrid working Teamwork

Blinkhorn et al. (2023)

Project 3: PICS Practitioners' Experiences

- Qualitative study – 7 PICS practitioners interviewed.
- Explored the emotional impact that PICS Practitioners experience during the consultation and formulation process.

Groome et al. (2024)

Table 1: Themes identified regarding the emotional impact conducting consultations and formulations have on PICS practitioners.

Themes	Subthemes
Changes within PICS impacted practitioners' experiences of the role	Remote working both helped and hindered the working lives of PICS Practitioners. Elements of the role that PICS Practitioners enjoyed, now removed.
Advantages and disadvantages to being a removed service	Advantages of the ability to offer an impartial view as a result of not working directly with the PoP. Risk and responsibility associated with not working directly with the PoP caused strain on the PICS Practitioners.
High workload having negative impact on consultation and formulation process	Job Diversity taking time away from consultation and formulation process. PP Workload impacting PICS Practitioner. Management referred cases being viewed as a hindrance and an unproductive use of time.
Emotional impact of the role	Emotions experienced. Emotions expressed towards PP. Good emotional support from management.
An overall sense of gratitude for the role and appreciating its purpose.	An acknowledgement of the importance of PICS Practitioner role. Collaborative process between the PP and PICS Practitioner. Reports of job satisfaction.

Project 4: Evaluation Measure for the PICS

- Funded by the NHS and Probation Service (grant value: £17,500).
- We created our own validated questionnaire to assess the PICS.
- Items created from the first qualitative study (Blinkhorn et al., 2021).
- Involves 15 items on a 5-point Likert scale.
- We had 150 PPs complete it after they had received a PICS consultation.

Project 4 Continued...

- Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed a 3-factor model:
- Professional support (.90).
 - The ways in which the consultation would be of practical use in professional situations. A sample item is “The consultation will be helpful in my working relationships with the offender.”
- Personal reflection (.79).
 - The ways in which the consultation promoted or supported their professional development and reflections. A sample item is “The consultation enabled me to reflect on important issues.”
- Practicalities (.82).
 - The practical pros and cons of the consultation. A sample item is “I had to wait a long time for the consultation.”

Blinkhorn et al. (2024)

Current Research Projects

PPs Using the PICS and Formulations

Study 1 [Led by Eve]

- Mixed methods using an online survey.
- Survey will include the 15-item feedback tool and some open questions focused on the formulation.
- To compare how PPs' experiences of the PICS link to if/how they use the formulations and generally how well they are received.
- Will also be a way to further validate the 15-item feedback tool.

Study 2 [Led by Victoria]

- Qualitative by interviewing PPs about the formulation aspect of the PICS.
- To find out how they react to them, how they are perceived, how valuable they think they are, if it affects their way of working, and whether pathway recommendations are followed up etc.

- Funded by the NHS and Probation Service (grant value £15,000).
- Working with the National Autistic Society.
- To create a document for PPs to help them work with individuals presenting with ASD (like the pre-existing practitioner guide for personality difficulties).

- **Step 1:** To co-create a draft of the document.
- **Step 2:** Organise a focus group to discuss the draft to obtain comments/thoughts.
- **Step 3:** Make final edits back on focus group feedback.
- **Step 4:** Publish to probation.

Future Research

- To evaluate the ASD document produced and highlight ways to improve it if necessary.
- To review the use of formulations from the current studies and perhaps revise when and how they are delivered.
- To create some training events to improve the knowledge and understanding PPs have on PD and also ASD combined with PD.
- Anything else that the commissioners ask for!

Thank you!
Any Questions? 😊

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