

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

RADIO 4

TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4" – "*TRANSFORMING REHABILITATION: AT WHAT COST?*"

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

TRANSMISSION: Tuesday 4th October 2016 2000 – 2040
REPEAT: Sunday 9th October 2016 1700 - 1740

REPORTER: Melanie Abbott
PRODUCER: Ruth Evans
EDITOR: Gail Champion

PROGRAMME NUMBER: PMR640/16VQ5999

THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

“FILE ON 4”

Transmission: Tuesday 4th October 2016

Repeat: Sunday 9th October 2016

Producer: Ruth Evans

Reporter: Melanie Abbott

Editor: Gail Champion

EXTRACT FROM NEWS REPORT

NEWSREADER: Plans to ask private companies to carry out probation for the majority of ex-offenders.

NEWSREADER 2: It'll be the biggest shake-up for a hundred years in the way released prisoners are supervised and monitored.

ABBOTT: It was billed as a rehabilitation revolution – getting private companies in to do some of the work of the Probation Service. They would shake things up, bring in new ideas to stop criminals reoffending - the rate's been stubbornly stuck at the same level for years. So, two years on, how well is this radical overhaul working? We investigate if instead of making a safer society, these changes are putting more people at risk.

MARSHALL: This was a murder and it was the murder of my son. This isn't just one person is to blame, it's a whole system has gone wrong.

ABBOTT: The staff at the centre of this, the offenders and victims tell us they think the Probation Service itself is in need of rehabilitation.

ABBOTT: Later that day Conner texted, like he did every day, saying he'd arrived at the caravan park where he was staying with young friends with a baby. When the baby cried during the night, Conner couldn't sleep so decided to go for a stroll.

ABBOTT: Conner had been walking back to the caravan and he was attacked from behind with a metal pole. Obviously Conner hadn't been able to defend himself. Not only had they beaten him, they'd robbed him, they'd taken some of his belongings off him. And then the worst bit for me was that Conner was found completely stripped and naked, and I just couldn't get my head around that, and I just thought that was the biggest degrading thing for Conner - to be found in such a horrible, horrible way - it's just unthinkable.

ABBOTT: Early the next day, Nadine was woken by two police officers at her home in Barry.

MARSHALL: I could just tell on the, you know, the look on their face, it was quite serious. The next thing, we were at the hospital. They brought him past on a bed and it was just the most horrific, horrible thing you could ever see. Conner was on the bed with a neck brace on, his mouth was completely swollen, it was so swollen that his lip was touching his nose. There was breathing tubes, a huge gaping wound in his eye. You could see a footprint on his forehead, and yet I remember holding his hand and his hands were perfect, there was not a mark on them. I remember the policeman saying that whatever had happened wasn't Conner's fault, because there were no defence marks on him, there was nothing but that he was just covered in these footprints all over his body.

ABBOTT: Conner died four days later. Nadine shows me a photograph she gave the media of Conner, who was 18, to show his shocking injuries. It's an image she can't erase from her mind. Conner was the innocent victim of an unprovoked attack by a man staying just a short distance away on the same caravan park. What Nadine's discovered about him couples her grief with anger.

MARSHALL: To find out more about David Braddon has been equally as upsetting to know what's happened to Conner. We know that David Braddon lived a very chaotic lifestyle. He was known to police and multi agencies, social services, Probation Services for a long, long time. At the time he attacked Conner, he was actually supposedly being supervised under two supervision orders for violence, alcohol and drug abuse.

ABBOTT: Specifically possessing cocaine, producing cannabis and assaulting a police officer. David Braddon admitted Conner's murder, saying he mistook him for someone else. He was being monitored by staff at the new Community Rehabilitation Company - or CRC - for Wales. It's owned by Working Links - one of the new private firms brought into the Probation Service. The company prepared what's called a serious further offence report to analyse what happened – this is routine if someone on probation commits a murder or another serious crime. Could Nadine see the report? No.

MARSHALL: That's when I started the campaign of emails and letters across the country to whoever would answer, and everybody initially was very, very reluctant.

ABBOTT: Eventually there was a visit from Wales CRC and Ministry of Justice representatives.

MARSHALL: And it very much felt like they were sort of the big boys and they were very, very corporate, very, very reluctant to give us any information, full of condolences, full of sympathy, but I was determined. I insisted that I wanted to see the summary and I was told that I could see the summary, but only on a laptop, to which I agreed, had a look, and I then said that I was going to take a photograph of it. The laptop was slapped shut and we were told in no uncertain terms was I to have a hard copy. This was, you know, a murder and it was the murder of my son, but that wasn't going to be the end of it for me.

ABBOTT: She stepped up her campaign, started a petition, phoned everyone she could think of and eight months later got a copy of the full report - as far as we know, the first to have done so. It revealed failures about the supervision of Braddon.

MARSHALL: No risk assessment, no passing of information, so that information was just slipping through the fingers and it was just an awful lot of lack of accountability.

ABBOTT: Was he turning up for his appointments?

MARSHALL: No, he wasn't. He'd turn up for possibly one and then he wouldn't turn up for another one or two, three consecutive ones. In all, he's missed over eight appointments with no records of those appointments being chased. This isn't just one person is to blame – it's a whole system has gone wrong.

ABBOTT: That summary was three pages long and said there could have been a more targeted and proactive approach. But the second, full report was markedly different. For starters, more than twenty pages long. But perhaps most worryingly, it said David Braddon's supervision was unworkable and he should have been sent back to court.

MARSHALL: If you saw them both separately, you wouldn't recognise them really as talking about the same incident. The summary was really cleverly written in the way that the language was used; it was almost played down, watered down, whereas the full report was very, very damning.

ABBOTT: We asked Working Links why the two reports differed, why David Braddon was allowed to miss eight appointments, and why it was so difficult for the Marshall family to find the truth. We were told they wouldn't go into the specifics of the case, but they did say their deepest sympathies are with Conner's family and that serious further offences are taken extremely seriously and investigated. They added that all decisions in the case were made and supervised by fully qualified probation workers. They say Conner's death wasn't predictable or preventable. Working Links is one of eight private businesses brought into the Probation Service – a big change introduced by the coalition Government called Transforming Rehabilitation. Between them, those private firms run the new Community Rehabilitation Companies - or CRCs - covering 21 areas around England and Wales, doing some of the work carried out by what used to be called Probation Trusts.

ABBOTT cont: They deal with low to medium risk offenders. And a newly formed National Probation Service takes on higher risk criminals. These huge changes were controversial, with probation officers staging strikes in the two years before their introduction in 2014.

CHANTLER: My main concern was the notion of splitting the service into two around the issue of risk.

ABBOTT: That's David Chantler. Back in 2013, he sat on what was called the Ministerial Sounding Board for these radical reforms. He was also the Chief Executive of West Mercia Probation Trust.

CHANTLER: It's not that I've got any sort of sentimental attachment to the Probation Service not being split - for instance, I'd be very happy with a specialist women's service - but to take risk, that most difficult and changing function as the thing about which to split the service, with individuals constantly moving backwards and forwards according to what level of risk they posed, seemed to me to be fundamentally wrong.

ABBOTT: You did voice concerns, did you?

CHANTLER: When the service was split in the first instance, that's the day I took early retirement. I wanted to underline that it wasn't privatisation as such that stuck in my throat, it was the old judgement of Solomon thing - I would much rather they had kept the service together and privatised the whole lot, rather than splitting it into two. Risk is the wrong thing to use, and it's because it's dynamic - it changes. So you can decide one day on one court appearance that somebody poses a low or medium risk but then, because their circumstances change, the risk they pose changes and you can handle that within a comprehensive Probation Service and switch resources and switch what you're doing to control somebody. If you've got to move them from one organisation to another, it becomes a far more complex, time consuming, expensive process. That's why risk is the wrong thing to use.

ABBOTT: How well is risk being managed and then monitored by staff working for the new companies? And how easy is it to transfer anyone considered high risk back to the National Probation Service? Probation officers we've spoken to have voiced concerns. Their words are spoken by actors, as talking to the media endangers their jobs.

PROBATION OFFICER: We're managing quite significant, risky individuals, who we're battling on a daily basis to either manage or escalate cases to high risk and get the resources and the support in place to manage them effectively. Unless there's a serious offence involved – ie they've put someone in hospital – the NPS won't look at it. And sometimes you can see a pattern of behaviour – an escalation in controlling and abusive behaviours – and you can go in and evidence it, and they just don't want to know.

PROBATION OFFICER 2: There's a real sense of fear, I'd say, among staff, you know, about something going wrong, because you can't practically oversee that kind of caseload in the way in which you would like to. Cases are being passed from pillar to post and you've not got the knowledge if a case has been transferred to you, and that's when things get missed and aren't done properly.

ABBOTT: This huge overhaul of the system coincided with another big change - mandatory supervision for people released from prison after serving less than a year. The aim was to cut the high level of reoffending by this group. It's brought an extra 50,000 people into the system. Dr Jake Phillips from Sheffield Hallam University has interviewed people working in the Probation Service, who told him these less serious offenders can still be very demanding.

PHILLIPS: People who pose a high risk of harm tend to be more stable, whilst people on a shorter sentence, they're low risk of harm to people, that's how they are assessed, so they're allocated to a CRC, but they still lead very chaotic lives.

ABBOTT: So how would that manifest itself?

PHILLIPS: People turning up in crisis. People turning up without an appointment at the office going, 'I've lost my housing,' or 'I'm on the verge of relapse,' or something like that, which then requires a firefighting response. You have to drop everything that you might have planned for that day.

ABBOTT: So presumably that is something that the Probation Service always has to contend with though?

PHILLIPS: It is, but again, because we've got this concentration of more chaotic people within CRCs, it's a bigger issue. That is inherent to probation practice absolutely, but the concentration of those kinds of people within CRC caseloads makes it more difficult. There is an assumption that low and medium risk offenders are less likely to commit serious further offences, but actually, if you look at the data, there's a significant risk of low and medium risk offenders committing a serious further offence. There's a risk that we forget that these people do still pose a risk.

ABBOTT: So they have to be very carefully monitored?

PHILLIPS: Yes.

ABBOTT: It's too early to say if this reorganisation's had any effect on reoffending rates. The latest figures published in July only go up to September 2014, and they show just over one in four criminals committed further offences. That figure's been fairly constant for more than a decade. The Ministry of Justice says we won't know if it's improved until 2017. But the reforms are coming under close scrutiny. I have a report here published in May by the Chief Inspector of Probation, Dame Glenys Stacey. It looks at whether the grand plan for transforming rehabilitation is delivering. And there are examples where prisoners were released without enough support and risk assessments weren't complete.

STACEY: We're seeing quite a mixed and troubling picture. But believe it or not, it is still early days. The changes are so substantial, so fundamental. I do think the next twelve months, you know, they're pivotal for this, and we do need to see it deliver well.

ABBOTT: If I can pick out some of the things in particular in your overall report, we had offenders that had been released without proper help, we had case assessments - disappointingly the report says nearly one in four contained significant questions marked 'not known', and often this information wasn't available. It seems to speak of a system that's broken, doesn't it?

STACEY: You're talking there about an inspection in the early part of this year. We're now into the autumn of 2016. We've been inspecting individual areas since then and there have been some improvements in some areas. But we are finding that these organisations are still focused on change management, on really establishing themselves, establishing their new organisations and their ways of working. It's not been as easy a transition, I think, as anyone in it had hoped.

ABBOTT: How many of these problems should have been foreseen?

STACEY: Well, this was a change that came in at remarkable speed. It really ...

ABBOTT: Too quickly, do you think?

STACEY: It was, it was certainly breathtaking, it was a breathtaking speed of delivery, but it was done. But inevitably, you know, with that there are bound to be teething problems, and there'll be a lot of issues left, if you like, for resolution at post-implementation, and that's what we're seeing now.

ABBOTT: The problem is some of these teething problems do end very sadly. We've talked to families who have lost loved ones, and they believe it's because the offenders weren't managed well, and indeed the serious further offence reviews do point to risk assessments not being done, supervision that was poor, they admit.

STACEY: So if we take a step back, the number of serious further offences that are being committed since the change, it's about the same as the number of serious offences before the change. You know, there are a quarter of a million people a year

DOAL: There was effectively a gagging order within the contract as well that means that you can't speak out to say that you don't think this policy will work or you can't bring them into disrepute in any shape or form. And being a women's project, we're here for the women, we're here to be their voice, and I don't think personally that an independent charity can sign up to that sort of thing and be gagged, because it's too important. You know, this is women's lives that we're dealing with and we want to be able to have that voice for them.

ABBOTT: The changes go against a landmark report published in 2007, which said women's centres were the most effective way to stop women reoffending. Baroness Corston wrote that report. She now wants to meet the new Justice Secretary, Liz Truss, to tell her what she told ministers at the outset of this change.

CORSTON: I said there's only one thing you should do, and that is make sure that transforming rehabilitation does not apply to the women's centres. They could continue to be funded directly and left alone.

ABBOTT: What do you think has been the impact on women who come into contact with the criminal justice system, having lost some of the work of the women's centres?

CORSTON: I knew it would be a disaster because these women, they've been in prison and none of their offending behaviour has been dealt with, they are released back into the chaotic lives they were living before. A failure to keep appointments is the hallmark of their lifestyle, so being recalled is a given - it will happen. If you're told you've got to come at 10 o'clock next Thursday morning for an interview with a probation officer and you miss the bus or one of your children is ill and you don't go, that's a breach and breach means two weeks back in prison, because you're recalled. And then you're released again and so you're subject to another twelve months of probation conditions. I have been told by women's centres that they now know of women who have been breached and recalled several times. God knows what the cost is to the public purse and I don't think anybody stopped to ask what happens to the children.

ABBOTT: And that revolving door is the opposite of what Transforming Rehabilitation aims to achieve. Latest figures from October 2014 to March 2016 show that 67% of women serving sentences less than twelve months were recalled to prison compared with 11% of men. Because more people are now being put on probation you can't compare this with figures before the changes.

ACTUALITY OUTDOORS AT ANAWIM WOMEN'S CENTRE

DOAL: Now we're a little bit spread out on this site, so we first had just those four classrooms there. Obviously it's an old school ...

ABBOTT: Back at the Anawim Women's Centre, in a quiet room, I meet a woman we're calling Jo. With a painful looking black eye, she looks lost and vulnerable. Her story seems to reinforce what I'm told about women being overlooked in the new world of Transforming Rehabilitation. She's been in and out of prison for minor offences over the last decade since she began using drugs when she was 26.

JO: I've had a lot of short sentences. Anything between two weeks, four weeks, anything up to three months.

ABBOTT: What kind of offences were they?

JO: Mainly shoplifting. So, like, mainly meat and stuff like that. I was selling it to other people for the money for drugs. And when I'm not using, I don't do it, but you have to get the right support to not be able to – you know, to not use and it's just, it's difficult. Sometimes it's been a couple of days or a week, that's all I've stayed out and I've ... straight back in again. Because the short ... although you don't want a longer sentence and you don't want to do anything that requires a longer sentence, you're given these little short sentences and they're just not enough to rehabilitate you, and when you get out the probation is just too ... they're just so busy, they can't really provide you with the help you need and the support you require.

ABBOTT: She finished her most recent six week sentence last July, determined to break the cycle. She was keen to stick to her probation order, keep away from her old haunts. She had supported housing all lined up. But things went wrong the very first day.

JO: I actually had to tell the officers that I was due out that day. My actual landing officer didn't even know. And I kept saying to them, 'Well, you know, I'm actually supposed to be meeting somebody at two-to get the property,' and they're like, 'Okay, it doesn't matter. You'll get out, you'll get out,' and anyway, I didn't end up getting released until about 2 or 3 o'clock, so I couldn't get, physically get back to Birmingham in time to meet the lady to get the keys for the flat, because obviously she works office hours. Unfortunately, the only people I could stay with were offenders and users still. I went there planning to stay the one night and then go, and I'll be honest – I actually ended up using. I ended up staying two nights, but then I dragged myself away thinking no, this is no good, you can't end up like this again. But if, you know, I'd have been able to go straight to this housing, that wouldn't have happened and that's happened before and it happens with a lot of people. And you end up, because you've ended up there and you've started using, you stay there and you relapse and you end up offending again, like I did before. You're out, you're out for a week and you're back in.

ABBOTT: So had you been slightly weaker willed, it could've turned out differently?

JO: Yeah, very, very, yeah. Which it has done many times over the years.

ABBOTT: For you in the past.

JO: And it does for a lot of girls.

ABBOTT: The Community Rehabilitation Companies aren't responsible for prison release times. The Reducing Reoffending Partnership, which runs the CRC in the Midlands, says it offers a quality service to women in custody or in the community and has commissioned bespoke services for women. Baroness Corston, whose

ABBOTT cont: ground-breaking report back in 2007 recognised the importance of women's centres, now chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System. She's heard evidence from Joy Doal and others in a similar position with dismay.

CORSTON: I think that the Transforming Rehabilitation programme has had an entirely negative effect on the work that was being done by women's centres on women offenders, because lots of women who came out of prison went into a women's centre in order to turn her life around. Many women's centres now do not take women from prison. They work now to keep women out of prison, which is in itself a great thing, but they would like to have been able to take women offenders as well and now they don't. And that for me is the great failure of TR.

ABBOTT: Do you think that women have been particularly adversely affected by the Transforming Rehabilitation changes?

CORSTON: Totally, totally. I think the focus has been on the fact that there are 80,000 men and only 4,000 women and they're an overlooked afterthought.

ABBOTT: It's not just women like Jo finding problems when they leave prison - something Transforming Rehabilitation is supposed to tackle. Another big change is Through the Gates - a new service to smooth an offender's path out of prison, helping with accommodation, financial advice, job opportunities - the basic building blocks of rehabilitation. This week, the Chief Inspector of Probation, Dame Glenys Stacey, gave another analysis on whether that's delivering. Her verdict:

STACEY: I think it's going poorly. We report in our Through the Gate report a number of cases where people are leaving with no accommodation at all. And of course that's inherently risky - for them and for the public at large. Through the Gate provision, helping that person through the prison gate into the community, it should, when it works well, enable the prisoner to move into sustainable accommodation, possibly employment training or further education, and also enable them to manage their finances. All of us need a roof over our heads, and an income of some sort. It's a pretty basic need. Without them you can pretty well guarantee reoffending.

ABBOTT: We wanted to go to one of these new rehabilitation companies to hear how things were or weren't working, but the Ministry of Justice wouldn't approve a visit.

ACTUALITY ON STREET

ABBOTT: The stories we've heard involve the private companies who have now taken over a large part of the Probation Service, but it's not just them who have had problems. I am now going to meet the father of a young man who is in prison for a double murder.

ACTUALITY – BUZZ AT DOOR

ROGERS: Hi.

ABBOTT: Mr Rogers.

ROGERS: Hi.

ABBOTT: Nice to meet you.

ROGERS: Nice to meet you.

ABBOTT: Peter Rogers tells me his son Brett, who's 23, started going off the rails in his early teens - taking drugs, getting in trouble for minor offences like criminal damage.

ROGERS; There was this big craze with mephedrone, I think they called it. and they sniff it up and it mucks their brain up, basically. That was a legal high basically, they was all taking it round there, you know, and smoking dope, skunk and all the rest of it, you know. So he was doing that when he was 15, 16. There was not much I could do about it, and that was what we thought was causing all the problems.

ABBOTT: By 2015, Brett was considered high risk after beating up his dad and breaking his eye socket. But when he came out on licence, his dad Peter not only forgave him but tried to help him. Brett was assigned to the National Probation Service and should have had a high level of supervision. But problems with basic arrangements emerged as soon as he was released. The first: where he should live. His licence conditions meant he couldn't stay with his dad, but he was found no other option.

ROGERS: I picked him up at the prison and I took him to a hotel in Harlow and he stayed that weekend there.

ABBOTT: And who was that arranged by?

ROGERS: That was arranged by me. We just had to drive round, because when they let him out of prison they don't ... that's it, you know - off you go. He stayed there for the weekend and then I think he went up to Probation, and then we found out well, there ain't no accommodation, so we went back to the hotel for about four or five days. You know, I can't afford to live in a hotel and so we spoke to his mum and she said, 'Yeah, he can come, he can come and live here.' She didn't want to see him on the street.

ABBOTT: Peter says his ex-partner was reluctant to take Brett and he also had misgivings, especially as his son had mental health problems. But he couldn't have foreseen how badly it would go wrong. Mother and son had been sharing a home for three months when Peter was called to the house.

ROGERS: I went round there and the whole place was cordoned off by police. I went in there after the ... before they cleaned up and, well yeah, it was like something out of a horror movie. There was about five knives used, some of them broke. I mean, if someone stabs someone and puts the knives in the bin, makes no attempt to hide any of their blood-ridden clothing and then sits outside and phones the police, that's not the actions of someone who knows what they're doing, is it really? It's not the actions of a normal person, is it? That should tell a story on its own really, shouldn't it, about his mental health?

ABBOTT: He was the one who actually called the police?

ROGERS: Yes, he sat there and called the police with blood all over his hands.

ABBOTT: Brett had murdered his mother, Gillian Philips, and her friend David Oakes. Peter says it's clear his son was struggling with his mental health issues and he's not convinced the Probation Service ever tackled this properly. A routine serious further offence report was prepared after the murders, but Peter hasn't seen the summary or the full review. Instead he's had a letter admitting the assessment and management of the risk Brett posed was insufficient, and they didn't look up his previous history.

ROGERS: I think most people would assume that that was done automatically, otherwise what are Probation doing?

ABBOTT: So this shows here that the probation officer should have considered a drug testing condition when he left prison. So some quite serious failings and oversights here really. What do you make of those failings?

ROGERS: Well it seems, it seems that this is the sort of thing they do all the time, because this is such an obvious case of where you need to research into this boy a little bit and they haven't done it. It all seems to me that these things are not dealt with in depth. It would cost too much money, wouldn't it, you know, to be dealt with properly, but it may have saved someone's life.

ABBOTT: We asked the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for the National Probation Service, about the failings supervising Brett Rogers and his problems getting accommodation. They told us, 'Serious further offences such as this are rare, but each one is taken extremely seriously and investigated fully,' and they say they have taken forward the findings from this case. When Transforming Rehabilitation was conceived, roughly a third of the cases were expected to go to the national service, leaving the rest for the private companies. Probation officers say it's turned out more like 50/50 – that means high workloads made up of high risk cases. Criminologist Dr Jake Phillips, who's been researching the impact of these reforms, has been looking at what monitoring mainly high risk people means for the probation officers.

PHILLIPS: If you think about what the caseload used to look like compared to what it looks now, there is quite a significant difference. So, previously people would have a generic caseload, maybe 60 people on the caseload, which is still a lot, but they'd have a handful in prison, you'd have a handful of low risk people who were doing their community service, and then a handful of people who were very high risk and who needed lots of monitoring and surveillance and that kind of thing, which meant that probation officers were able to direct their resources much more accurately and specifically to the people who needed it. Now what practitioners have said to us is that they have 60 people on the caseload still, all of them are high risk, and they are having to work out who poses the highest risk amongst all those high risk people.

ABBOTT: So, if they are having to do a risk assessment, if you like, within the high risk people, how much extra pressure is that putting on them?

PHILLIPS: Well, that's putting a lot of pressure on them, because they are responsible for doing that risk assessment and they are not really being provided with the tools with which to do so, which then, if there were to be a serious further offence, it's going to come down on them. And I think they are feeling that - when they use words like, you know, it's relentless, it's urgent - one of our participants said there's no dilution in the cases, it's much more intense. Probation practitioners have always been worried about offenders committing serious further offences, but what they did talk about was how, now they have a caseload that's made up of more high risk people, the chances of that happening are higher, and so they'd go home for the weekend and then come back in on a Monday morning and would be, you know, check their emails, 'Oh phew, nothing's happened,' or, you know, going home on a Friday and thinking, 'I hope I've done enough to prevent that person from doing something over the weekend.'

ABBOTT: But under the old system there were always concerns raised then about caseloads and how probation officers were supported.

PHILLIPS: Yes, so this is nothing hugely new, but I think that there's the potential for the high risk nature of the work they're doing to exacerbate some of those shortcomings perhaps in the management of probation.

ABBOTT: We asked to speak to the Justice Secretary, Liz Truss, about all the concerns raised in this programme, but she wasn't available. In a statement, a spokesperson told us a comprehensive review of the Probation Service is being carried out and action will be taken to ensure these reforms reduce offending and cut crime. The Probation Inspectorate, which has followed this process for two years, says there are pockets of excellence and if the new system begins to work, benefits could follow, with reoffending finally reducing. But a series of critical reports from the Inspectorate have highlighted a raft of problems. The Service's performance over the next year will be crucial in deciding if rehabilitation really can be transformed.

ACTUALITY ON SEAFRONT

ABBOTT: In Wales, as Nadine Marshall visits the bench on the seafront placed in Conner's memory, she tells me the handling of his killer leaves her worried about these reforms.

MARSHALL: What became very clear was that the system is chaotic - completely overwhelmed staff which were completely inadequate in their ability to do a job, faced with the amount of caseloads that they had. So the lack of supervision was fundamentally flawed.

ABBOTT: How convinced are you that the reorganisation of the probation system and the private companies doing some of the work is now a viable option?

MARSHALL: I'm not at all convinced, having met with senior staff members and on the ground staff as well, I'm not at all convinced. It's a chaotic system that is really just sort of fire-fighting; it's not fit for purpose.

SIGNATURE TUNE