

Presentation

Leadership and Management of Services

The workshop will discuss how to lead adaptive change and manage technical changes; how to develop effective leaders, managers and leadership teams; how to ensure sustainability; combat corruption and political pressure.

Leadership is the ability to see the need for change and the ability to make it happen. In the field of criminal justice it is vital that we leaders employ strong values because they provide the moral authority and structural framework for leadership. I believe that in order to lead there are three essential tasks;

1. Set direction.
2. Engage people.
3. Deliver results.

In working with people who have offended it is vital that leaders of criminal justice are accountable, honest and have integrity. In this presentation I will set out my views on the importance of strong leadership in criminal justice and will also give you details of a change project I led to develop a community alternative to short prison sentences.

Northern Ireland is on the island of Ireland but administratively is part of the United Kingdom. Statistics show that it is one of the safest places to live in Europe but statistics do not always equate with how people actually feel about crime in their immediate communities. Nor do they in any way lessen the responsibility on us to reduce the heavy financial and emotional costs that crime imposes on our society or economy and most importantly on our citizens who become victims.

It is important as leaders that we create the conditions necessary for children to grow up in supportive families with good role models, at home and in the community. We need to promote health and wellbeing, particularly mental health. We need to promote good education attainment, especially in literacy and numeracy, and support disadvantaged individuals in developing skills, sustaining employment and accessing housing. Above all we need to build a coordinated approach with other government agencies to tackle poverty and disadvantage. This is the best way to ensure sustainability, combat corruption and political pressure.

The justice system working on its own cannot tackle such issues. The Programme for Government framework in Northern Ireland is a new approach which focuses on the major societal outcomes that the Northern Ireland Executive wants to achieve and provides a basis for all sectors to contribute to the development of plans and actions. It is an approach which reflects international advice and well established practice. The key elements of the approach are;

- A focus on outcomes (these are things with which people can identify such as a reduction in reoffending, living longer and healthier lives or getting good jobs) which are designed to stay in place for a generation rather than a short period.
- Indicators which show the change we want to bring about.
- Measures that let us know we are succeeding.
- A focus on shifting what happens in people's lives such as jobs, education and health, not about how things are delivered.

- A focus on impact rather than the amount of money spent or the number of programmes to be introduced.
- An opportunity for government to work with the private sector and the voluntary and community sectors to tackle the biggest challenges in our society.

Outcome 7 of the Programme for Government is that we have a safe community where we respect the law and each other. This outcome is about creating safe environments and giving people the confidence they need to live productively and well. It is supported by an efficient and effective justice system in which individual and collective rights are supported and disputes are resolved fairly and swiftly- without corruption or political pressure. In Northern Ireland, we have defined a safe community as one where paramilitary groups and criminal gangs cannot assert their influence.

Therefore the government can help achieve this outcome by leading efforts to increase safety and respect;

- Creating the social conditions that reduce the risk of criminal behaviour, intervening early, engaging with young people and getting the right help at important times in their lives.
- Tackling poverty and disadvantage and reducing the negative impacts of alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Ensuring that mutual understanding is increased and fear and mistrust is reduced among people of different ages, identities and backgrounds.
- Increase in respect for diversity will create communities in which people feel included and safe.
- Providing a fresh start for communities affected by criminal gangs and paramilitaries; helping them to build a future that is characterised by freedom from the threat of violence and intimidation.
- Driving forward reforms and initiatives to prevent offending and reoffending; focusing especially on early interventions and providing greater opportunities for young people.

It is one of these initiatives; the Enhanced Combination Order, that I wish to talk to you about today.

In May 2015 the Lord Chief Justice asked the organisation I work for, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, to consider a more demanding community sentence as an alternative to short prison sentences of less than twelve months. He noted that 88% of prison sentences imposed in Northern Ireland were for one year or less. He also noted that research had demonstrated that short prison sentences were not effective in stopping offending behaviour given that there was little that could be done in practical terms to rehabilitate offenders during a short prison stay. Data showed that 51% of people released following a short prison sentence in Northern Ireland were reconvicted within twelve months.

PBNI reviewed literature and research on intensive alternatives to custody, taken account of the unique characteristics of Northern Ireland. Two key factors informed our response;

- We should use existing legislation to avoid the inevitable delay associated with new legislation.
- We should focus on problem solving justice in line with the above mentioned Programme for Government and also with emerging research. Problem solving justice tackles offending behaviour by focusing on the root causes of offending rather than concentrating solely on dealing with those consequences.

Other features of successful programmes include;

- Provision of enhanced information for Judges.
- Community engagement.
- Collaboration between criminal justice agencies.
- Individualised justice matching offender need to statutory provision.
- Accountability and opportunity for judicial oversight.
- A focus on outcomes.

Problem solving justice provides a coherent and evidence-based approach to tackling offending and reoffending and assures victims that their views will be reflected in any system and policies that are adopted. Victims must be central to any work and to that end we wished to use restorative justice principles which have been demonstrated to reduce the frequency of reoffending and to increase the satisfaction of victims with the justice system. We were also aware that people with mental health problems are over-represented in the criminal justice system and that a consistent application of best practice and therapeutic intervention was required to provide effective treatment. We also recognise that 75% who successfully complete unpaid work or Community Service do not reoffend within twelve months. Finally, we were aware of the importance of working closely with the Police to target prolific offenders and they were an essential partner to work with.

I recommended the use of a management of change model and therefore used KOTTERS eight stage process.

Stage 1 – Create Urgency - We took account of available evidence to show that there was an urgent need for change. We requested support from stakeholders and colleagues to strengthen our argument.

Stage 2 – We created a powerful coalition by enlisting the support of the Lord Chief Justice, Minister of Justice, Chief Constable and other senior figures in criminal justice.

Stage 3 – We created a vision for change and provided information sessions for Judges, Barristers and Solicitors as well as PBNI staff. We established a multi-agency reference group and developed a communication strategy. We focused on rehabilitation, restorative practice, desistance and addressing victims' issues and also provided support on parenting/family issues and mental health.

Stage 4 – We communicated the vision by arranging face to face meetings as well as providing written documents and a communication strategy.

Stage 5 – We removed obstacles by embarking on genuine two-way communication with victim representatives and ensured that the element of co-design was present in the development of the model. We also engaged in face to face meetings with Judges who expressed reservations about the project.

Stage 6 – Was about creating short term wins. The Lord Chief Justice highlighted the opportunities provided from ECOs in several public speeches and agreed to participate in photographs and communications to support PBNI in its efforts. We got staff to provide inputs to DVDs and press releases and also met with journalists and editors.

Stage 7 – Was building on the change. At every reference group meeting we reported on what was going well and what needed improvement. We continued to take note of the views of stakeholders particularly victims organisations and introduced a new element by including the victims voice at the pre-sentence stage. We used the lessons learned to submit applications for other problem solving

initiatives including a problem solving domestic violence Court and a problem solving substance misuse Court.

Stage 8 – The eighth and final stage was to anchor changes in corporate culture. It is important to make continuous efforts to ensure that change is visible in every aspect of the organisation. We work closely with the Department of Justice to recognise the contribution of staff but also to highlight the benefit of ECOs to society as a whole. The results of the evaluation are available in an Irish Probation Journal article published in November 2017 (available at www.pbni.org.uk). In summary there was a 40% reduction in reoffending and a 10% reduction in the number of prison sentences imposed in the pilot areas. In addition, there were 12,000 hours of unpaid community work generated for the community. The evaluation report highlighted that the estimated cost of an ECO was £9k which is considerably less than the cost of a short prison sentence in Northern Ireland at £50k.

Conclusion

ECOs have been an effective response to the challenge to provide a community sentence that enjoys the confidence of Judges, victims and practitioners. They have provided a graduated response to offending and make use of a range of measures tailored to the needs of people who would have received a short prison sentence. Participants have received help to resolve personal and social problems underlying their offending behaviour. Victims have had their voices heard and a direct input to how community sentences are managed. The community has seen a reduction in reoffending and the tax payer has benefited from a more cost effective community sentence.

In closing, I believe that this project shows the importance of leadership in change management. Cultural change occurs when a transformational idea spreads to enough people that a massive paradigm shift occurs. As leaders we should put a picture of excellence in people's minds, we need enthusiasm and energy to make change happen and we should create a culture of excellence and innovation.

Managers focus on processes but leaders focus on outcomes.

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