

Annex B

Research Activity – Review of the Year 2019-20

Issue

This paper provides Management Committee with a review of the progress and activity of the research programme for 2019/20.

Timing

Routine.

Recommendation

The Management Committee is invited to **note** the content of this paper.

Background

The Research Governance Group (RGG) was established in 2018 to oversee the research agenda and work related to the published Research Framework.

The RGG has committed to providing the Management Committee with an annual progress report on activity related to the research agenda.

Research Governance Group

The RGG meets formally twice a year and meetings took place in May 2019 and November 2019. The first meeting of the current reporting year took place in April 2020. Notes for all of these meetings are available on SharePoint.

The current membership is:

- Martin Jones, RGG Chair
- Mary McMurran, Member Representative
- Cassie Williams, Representative from RADAR Group
- Mike Maguire, External Academic Adviser
- Faith Geary, Chief Operating Officer
- Angela Colyer, Head of Policy
- Glenn Gathercole, Lead for Policy and Research
- Kate Ward, Policy and Research Manager

Professor Mike Maguire joined the RGG in November 2019 and provides external scrutiny and advice. Mike is Professor in Criminology at the University of South Wales and is a member of the British Society of Criminology; the Howard League for Penal Reform; and the Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice. He also sits on the MoJ Correctional Services Advice and Accreditation Panel (CSAAP).



Following the workshop at the Management Committee awayday in November 2019, the RGG considered the feedback on how the Board was approaching research, identifying the value added, and considering future priority areas. A separate paper has been prepared for the Management Committee to consider.

Link to Practice

Following the restructure of the Secretariat into functional hubs, the research work now sits within the Policy Hub, which will support a closer link between research findings and policy and practice development, and RADAR.

As an example of this, findings from existing research have been carefully reviewed when developing member guidance on topics such as Young Adults, and Restorative Justice. Engagement with the sources of such research has further enhanced the integrity and credibility of these pieces of guidance.

Cassie Williams, the project lead for RADAR, also sits on the RGG and provides updates on the progress of the initiatives taken forward under the RADAR umbrella. This supports the principle of research informing practice, for example the research undertaken by Nicola Padfield which looked at the barriers to release and made various observations regarding parole decision letters. RADAR is keen to take findings from other research to inform its work.

Findings from a study into *Understanding the Process of Psychological Risk Assessment: Exploring the Experiences of Psychologists, Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoners and Parole Board Members* fed into revised guidance and will support the development of training on this topic.

The dissertation from the small-scale study on two-member MCA panels undertaken by a psychology student at Coventry University (supervised by Parole Board member Joanne Lackenby) was received. The findings from the study were fed into the determinate recall project as part of the development work. The dissertation has also been provided to the Guidance Project group in terms of any points that may inform future MCA guidance. Two other small-scale studies due to be carried out by students at Coventry University were not taken forward, as the students left the programme.

The evaluations of previous pilots/studies into paper assessments undertaken as part of the Fair for the Future Project (which was established to respond to the *Osborn* judgment), as well as findings from *an exploratory study of Parole Board decision-making in the release of recalled determinate sentence prisoners* (by Parole Board member Sue Power) were also fed into the determinate recall project.

The Research lead and several members (Ronno Griffiths, Sian Flynn, Hedd Emrys-Vine, Kevin Green) engaged in scoping exercises to collect information on the experience of Welsh speaking prisoners and parole as part of the Welsh Regional Taskforce (*Tasglu*). This involved talking to Local Delivery Units in Wales, talking to local legal representatives, working with the Regional Parole Forum and prison OMUs, and participating in workshops at HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal. The *Tasglu* also ran a three-month pilot to understand the demand for parole decisions to be provided in Welsh.

This all helped to develop pilots to test options on supporting prisoners where their first or preferred language is Welsh. These were not formal research studies, rather exploratory pieces of work that have supported the development of guidance for members and put in place workable arrangements to support Welsh speaking prisoners at parole hearings. Member guidance should be ready for the formal Governance approval process in late July 2020.

The research lead and members (Lucy Gampell, Anne Kiernan) contributed to a study by Southampton University on *Supporting Families in the Resettlement of People Serving IPPs*, which included policy round table meetings, practitioner consultations and launch events. The Board has responded by developing a leaflet for families and friends which is due to be published in July 2020. Information on the impact of the IPP sentence on families has also been written for members, which will assist when considering applications for family members to observe parole hearings.

As part of this family focused initiative, the research lead attended a Probation Institute Research Conference on the impact on families and friends of people in prison which has further informed the development of the family leaflet. The Probation Institute publish Probation Quarterly, and Martin Jones (Chair of RGG) was invited to write an article on the Board's operations under COVID-19 restrictions for the June 2020 edition. In the autumn edition, the Board will be providing an article on the family leaflet.

The RGG provided comments to the Psychology & Programmes Department, HMP Isle of Wight on a small-scale study they undertook on Procedural Justice *How the Parole Board is Experienced by Men Serving Indeterminate Sentences for Sexual Offences*. Findings from this study are being fed into the current evaluation of remote parole hearings.

Member engagement in studies

Members contributed to the following studies by participating in one to one semi-structured telephone interviews or focus groups:

A review of the Case File Review (CFR) process as part of the National IPP Project and wider Psychology Services Strategy implemented within the East in order to explore stakeholders' views on the impact of this process on their work with men with an IPP sentence. Five members participated in telephone interviews - report due summer 2020.

A study of the recall of people serving indeterminate sentence for public protection. Nine members participated in a focus group - report due summer 2020.

Understanding the experience of the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) Sentence and Prisoner Progression. Eight members participated in telephone interviews – report due summer 2020.

Exploration of whether there is a difference between Parole decisions made by a single member compared to pairs of members at MCA stage. Eight members participated in two-member MCA panels – report provided.

How do Parole Board members (and judges) make decisions about perpetrators of domestic abuse (intimate partner violence)? Twenty members participated in telephone interviews - Chris Dyke, UCL, continues to undertake his evidence gathering as part of his PhD research study on domestic violence.

Members and staff supported the launch of study findings from the Griffin Society on women serving IPP sentences and the barriers to risk reduction, release and resettlement.

Networking and Other activity

The research lead hosted an RGG research table at the Member Conference Business Bazaar in July 2019. This was used to communicate some of the initiatives being developed, and to share some of the opportunities for members to engage in research studies.

Alongside the RGG table, the research lead had secured representatives from both the Howard League for Penal Reform and The Barrow Cadbury Trust (incorporating Transition to Adulthood T2A) to host tables, providing them with an opportunity to set out their research programmes and share findings from relevant studies.

The research lead continues to maintain links with the Chief Social Researcher, Head of Evidence, Engagement and Experimentation within the MoJ. This includes access to their work in developing relationships with funding organisations, access to the ESRC Strategy Advisory Network and their internal register of experts.

The research lead periodically meet with HMPPS teams involved with programmes development and evaluation (including CSAAP), evidence and service improvement, interventions, and psychology services.

The research lead contributed to a series of workshops run by HMPPS Women's Team to review their Centralised Case Supervision System for Restricted Status Women & Women with Complex Needs.

The research lead has recently joined HMPPS Effective Practice and Performance Research Forum. This is a quarterly meeting where HMPPS colleagues who are involved in research or effective practice come together with academics who have an interest in probation.

In early March, the RGG received a research summary report (more of a small-scale literature review) from the NPS on their study to examine reported/perceived disproportionality in parole outcomes for BAME prisoners, sponsored by Sonia Flynn and Martin Jones. The study is part of wider activity in response to the *Lammy* Review. The continuation of this study has been halted during the COVID-19 restrictions.

The RGG supported the proposals for a parole edition of *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* guest edited by Professor Gill McIvor and Professor Nicky Padfield. This will be published in late 2020 or early 2021.

Caroline Corby gave a presentation to the Prisons Research Centre at the Institute of Criminology in Cambridge. The talk set out some of the areas of research that the Board would welcome receiving applications for.

Management Committee may recall seeing in early March the advert for the campaign to recruit a student for the PhD study at Leeds University that the Board is supporting "*Exploring the potential of Natural Language Processing techniques in criminal justice agencies: An investigation of racial disparities in release decisions from the Parole Board*". A student has now been appointed and the Board is in discussion with arrangements for the study.

A member of the RGG gave a presentation about the Parole Board to students at Greenwich University undertaking their final year studying either BA Criminology or BSc Criminology & Criminal Psychology who were considering their placement options. The Board now has an agreement in place to offer two student placements which are due to commence in late 2020 or early 2021.

Research Applications

One of the functions of the RGG is to assess research applications received through its Research Framework.

The RGG acts as a consultee to the MoJ National Research Council (NRC) to offer views on research applications where there is a link to parole. There was only one research application peer review request during the reporting period. The RGG continues to receive monthly updates on applications considered, and final reports received (but not necessarily published).

The RGG is currently in discussions with academics from Sheffield Hallam University; Royal Holloway University of London; Bangor University; Justice & Prisons Consultancy; and the Parole Board for Scotland.

Glenn Gathercole
Lead for Policy and Research
July 2020