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On 29th November 2004 John Monckton was stabbed and murdered in his home. His wife was also stabbed and was close to death but recovered, thanks to their 9 year old daughter who managed to call the police. Their murderers posed as delivery men, and after their arrest it soon became clear that they were both on statutory orders to the Probation Service.

The murder received detailed coverage in the media, as did Hanson and White's Court appearances. The gruesome nature of the murders and the victims status probably made the story newsworthy, but so did the Probation Services management of the two men. After their trial, conviction and sentence the Home Secretary announced that an independent review of the cases would be carried out by Her Majesties Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).

The report team was headed by Andrew Bridges and was published in February of this year (2006). It arrives at five main findings, and makes recommendations on each of them.

- Firstly it found that the Probation Service was not "doing the job properly" to minimise the offender's risk of harm, and enforce statutory orders properly.
- Secondly, it found a lack of clarity about the assumption of lead responsibility for managing the cases.
- Thirdly, it found that the Parole Boards decision to release Hanson was not revised in the light of his changed circumstances.
- Fourthly it found that the quality of the Probation Services risk of harm work needed to be better; it criticised the lack of risk-related targets nationally, and the organisation of staff into specialist teams within the London Probation Area. This arrangement offered some advantages, but ultimately made for a fragmented experience of supervision, and localised the expertise in managing risk in one discrete area of the organisation.
- Lastly it recommended that the Inspectorate be involved in "exceptional" Serious Further Offences, just as it had in this one – in doing so it acknowledges that such situations will arise from time to time.

Damien Hanson was 23 at the time of the murder. His first criminal conviction for indecent assault was at the age of 12, and he then appeared regularly for offences of theft, violence and burglary until the age of 17 when he received a 12 year sentence for attempted murder and conspiracy to rob. It was whilst on licence for this offence that he killed John Monckton.

The Inspectorates report scrutinised the granting of Hanson's parole, and the management of that licence, and found fault at all stages. Hanson's first application was in 2003, when his Probation Officer supported release, citing

the attitudinal change he had made from accredited programmes whilst in custody, Puzzlingly, a Risk of Harm assessment completed shortly after the PAR assessed him as an intermediate risk of harm, despite an OGRS score of 91%. The timing of the full assessment is odd (too late to inform the PAR) as is the conclusion. The Parole Board were less accepting of his progress, and his application was turned down. Throughout Hanson's management by both the Parole Board and the LPA an over-reliance on dynamic factors and a relative disregard of static factors is criticised.

Before his next parole application Hanson completed "CALM" (an anger reduction programme) and again made good progress in understanding and controlling his anger. However here the Inspectorate report makes an extremely pertinent point for practice; Hanson's past (and subsequent) offences were not committed when he lost control, rather he employed violence as a strategy to get what he wanted. Such instrumental *violence* is particularly difficult to work with, in contrast to *expressive violence* which occurs as a result of the offender's emotional state. Unhelpfully, his OASys was completed subsequent to the PAR, and its quality was poor (e.g. his stated risk was to known persons, and his sexual assault at the age of 12 was dismissed as a "one-off") One consequence of this assessment was that Hanson's case was never referred to MAPPA.

Parole was granted to Hanson from 27th August on the condition that he live at the Basildon Hostel, and refrain from entering the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, where his previous victim lived. The first problem arose when Basildon declined Hanson's referral. The case manager responded by finding an alternative hostel run by a voluntary organisation in London without returning the matter to the Parole Board. Hanson's licence was made out to "reside as directed", and so his residence in Lambeth did not technically contravene any conditions, even if elsewhere the Parole Board had clearly stated their support for the Essex hostel. This strikes the reader as a practice that is easy to find fault with in hindsight, yet without which release of prisoners will be hindered (and as the report notes, the legality of stopping release on parole once granted is questionable). One of the most newsworthy errors was the instruction to report on release to an office in the very borough he was forbidden from entering. Whilst at the hostel Hanson's supervision plan and the level of contact with his (new) supervisor were poor. In short the Inspectorate sums up Hanson's management on release as "the opposite of good Offender Management". He had been at the hostel some two months when John Monckton was killed.

Elliott White's criminal convictions started much later than Hanson's, and were all drug related. Between the ages of 20 and 23 he had received a prison sentence and a Community Rehabilitation Order for variously possessing and supplying heroin and cocaine. A Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) was imposed in August 2004 for breaching the CRO, and it was the management of this order that revealed a succession of errors and omissions. It got off to a bad start, given that the CRO had ended in breach 9 months in, and the breach had been left in limbo for several months (the inspectorate report notes a gap of four months when there was no contact between LPA

and White). The report expresses the opinion that this mis-management would have led to White having had a “weak understanding” of supervision, and a “low regard for the importance of complying”. If the start of the DTTO was bad, its management was to get worse. There was no proper supervision plan, record keeping was poor, and communication was inadequate between case manager, programme provider and testing provider. Enforcement fell well short of national standards where there were missed appointments and where there should have been 32 drug tests, only 11 were noted on the file.

The report gives a detailed analysis of the both individuals case management, but does also define organisational deficiencies. The structure of the LPA, with its four functional teams is deemed to have made discontinuities in management inevitable - upon release from custody Hanson was transferred to another case manager. The report also identifies the strain on the organisation due to under-staffing as pertinent. Hanson received no visits from his Home Probation Officer between his first Parole application and release (budget problems had lead to restrictions on prison visiting). Hanson’s case manager received insufficient supervision, but their SPO was managing two teams at the time. In White’s case the drug testing was arranged separately from his drug treatment, and the report paints a picture of complex and fragmented partnership arrangements that did not work in harmony or share information. It acknowledges that the administration of the DTTO and its information systems were inadequate.

The Inspectorate uses the term “collective failure” to describe the flawed practice of all those involved in Hanson and White’s management, and acknowledges “considerable organisational constraints” The reaction to the Inspectorates report is shaped by the wider landscape. The Inspectorate’s report on the Monckton case has come at a time when there are a number of appalling crimes committed by offenders being supervised by the Probation Service. Cases such as Anthony Rice (who murdered whilst on Parole in Hampshire), the torture rape and murder of Mary-Anne Leneghan (all the perpetrators were on community sentences to LPA) and Robert Symons (murdered by a burglar on a community sentence to the LPA). Alan Travis of the Guardian (29th March) commented that “this cluster of high-profile probation failures is in danger of turning into a modern-day dangerous dogs crisis” (presumably meaning that it could trigger a legislative response that is precipitous and ill thought out). And that was from our most sympathetic audience – even he was clear that the problem was the “quality of risk assessment and the monitoring and tracking procedures that apply in high risk cases”.

As for the Daily Mail, the Mail Comment section on 15th March 2006 was appalled that no individuals involved in the Monckton case were disciplined as a result of the report, stating “public safety depends on probation and parole officials who seem bereft of any common sense”. There does seem to be a consensus in some quarters that practitioner’s errors have been scrutinised in extraordinary detail, in contrast to the organisations difficulties. As John Harding points out in his letter to the Guardian on 5th April 2006, “it is regretful that the Chief Inspector’s report on the Monckton killing ignores the staffing

issues. The lessons are clear: good risk assessment and release planning of offenders must be predicated on a skilled workforce, sufficiently resourced and robust to meet the challenge of supervising dangerous offenders”

An Independent Review of a Serious Further Offence Case: Damien Hanson and Elliot White, 2006, by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation. London: HMSO.

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