

Making the Case for an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach to Probation: From Reformation to Transformation

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Summary: This paper, in exploring the relevance of strengths-based approaches to probation, argues that in moving towards a strengths-based methodology and away from a deficiency approach that problematises offenders, Probation Services can expect to maximise potential for promoting pro-social behaviours. This approach situates the offender in the position of ‘co-producer’ and active citizen working towards just outcomes, and asserts that Probation Services through their professional support staff are key partners in this co-production, and play a critical catalytic role in supporting offenders to move towards active citizenship. The work of thought leaders in the field of strengths-based work with marginalised cohorts – such as John McKnight – suggests that activating such active citizenship and co-production must ultimately involve connecting offenders with the very communities against whom they have committed an offence. This paper explores this restorative process, and how it can be applied alongside a strengths-based practice framework. Additionally the means by which probation work can extend beyond one-to-one client-oriented service to include community-building/social inclusion work is discussed.

Keywords: Offenders, strengths-based approach, learning conversations, asset mapping, motivation, social inclusion, community.