Approved Suite of Probation Practitioner Toolkits

Delivery Guidance for Probation Practitioners
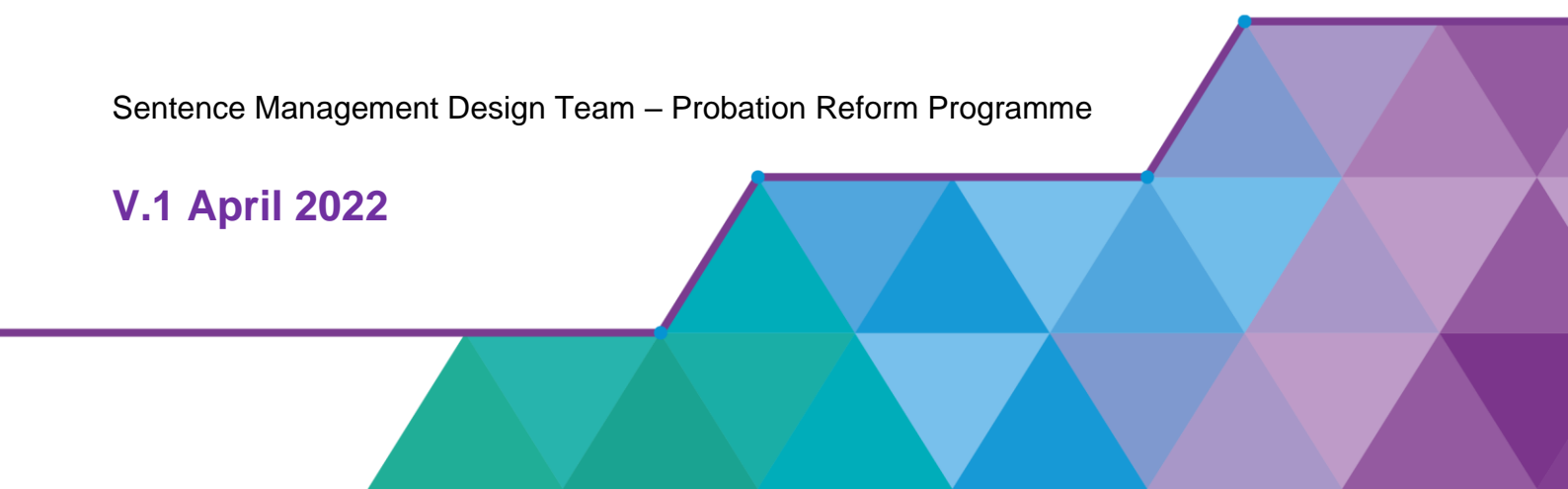
Contents

1. Introduction

This document provides Probation Practitioners ('PPs') with overarching 'suite level' delivery guidance to provide support when using toolkit materials from the Approved Suite of Probation Practitioner Toolkits ('ASPPT') with People on Probation ('PoP').

There is recently updated/added ASPPT guidance available on EQuiP in the form of:

> - **'Toolkits Quick Look Guide for Probation Practitioners V4 April 2022'**
> - '**ASPPT Information of Heads of Operations and Interventions V4 April 2022**'
> - '**ASPPT FAQ Guide V1 April 2022'**

These documents can be accessed on EQuiP via the following link : Approved Toolkits.

There is a **ASPPT Briefing Video** for practitioners which will be available before the end of April 2022 (once available a link will be uploaded onto the Toolkit Process Map within EQuiP).

Complementary to the above resources, this document focuses on offering guidance pertaining to the actual *delivery* of toolkits.

The content contained within this guidance is at 'suite' level and is not intended to replace individual delivery guidance found within each of the toolkit's manuals.

The topics covered in this guidance are included as a result of feedback from practitioners. This document will be periodically reviewed to ensure that it remains current and attends to the practical delivery queries practitioners require advice on. Should practitioners wish to provide feedback on the ASPPT or this guidance specifically, they are invited to make contact via the National Effective Intervention Panel Team's mailbox: NEIP@justice.gov.uk.

2. Selecting the right toolkit

Where to find information about toolkits

The **Effective Proposal Framework 'EPF' Tool** contains information on each of the approved toolkits and assists practitioners by generating intervention options that are suitable for the individual. More information can be found in EQuiP: Effective Proposal Framework (EPF).

The EPF login page can be found at: https://epf.linkspace.uk/login.

For a current list of all approved toolkits and a brief overview of what they are and who they are aimed at please refer to **Annex A**. Further information on the suite of toolkits is available on EQuiP via the following link Approved Toolkits.

Risk, Need and Responsivity

The principles of **'risk need and responsivity'** should always underpin all work undertaken with individuals and be applied to what is selected from the menu of potential interventions. Key considerations include:

➢ **What the evidence base tells us:**

Practitioners should ensure that the number/intensity of interventions corresponds to the level of risk and criminogenic need the individual is assessed as having, therefore, targeting more intensive interventions at people with higher levels of risk of reconviction and need.

➢ **Needs of the individual:**

It is also understood that practitioners must be responsive to people's unique and individual circumstances, strengths, and associated needs that arise from this. It is these core principles of '**risk, need and responsivity'** that should underpin the work that is undertaken with individuals.

Deciding which toolkit to use

This will be dependent upon:

- Sentence type and length
- What other interventions are used
- The individual's assessed strengths, risks and/or needs

The sentence type and length will influence what is possible to deliver both in respect of **'what'** can be offered and **'how much'** (the intensity). Decisions on intensity and/or length of intervention should always be driven by the assessment of risk and need within the boundary of the sentence type and length.

Practitioners will often work with individuals that have multiple assessed needs that might be met either in full or in part by one or more of the main menu[1] interventions (Accredited Programmes 'AcP', Structured Interventions 'SIs' or Commissioned Rehabilitative Services 'CRS'). The practitioner will use their professional judgement to decide what is required to ensure appropriate prioritisation and sequencing of intervention work.

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[1] Under the Unified Probation Model there is promotion of an HMPPS-approved **'Main Menu'** of offers designed to support change work delivery under Programme Requirements, RARs and Licence. This includes Accredited Programmes, Structured Interventions, Commissioned Rehabilitative Services and Approved Toolkits. Where practitioners appropriately select offers from this main menu and deliver the interventions as intended, they can be reassured that the offer satisfies Requirement criteria's *and* the offer has been endorsed for use by HMPPS.

Individuals might also have assessed needs that could be addressed by more than one toolkit. Where this is the case, guidance for each intervention and the EPF Tool should be consulted to ensure the correct intervention type and specific intervention is offered, and in what sequence. This is important both in respect of policy pertaining to specific cohorts (e.g. young adults with maturity needs, people convicted of sexual offences and domestic abuse etc) but most crucially to ensure the individual's specific needs have been fully considered in selecting what is offered.

Having a good understanding of the range of main menu interventions available and how they can be used as 'standalone' offers or in various combinations will be helpful to decide how an individual's needs can most appropriately be met.

The **Interventions Overview Guidance for Unified Probation Model June 2021** document available on EQuiP via the following link Approved Toolkits is a helpful resource for practitioners to support some of these considerations.

3. Toolkits with other interventions & using more than one toolkit

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Toolkits can be used to **prepare for /consolidate learning** and **complement** other interventions.	Toolkits are **not** to be used **instead of other** indicated, suitable interventions.
A toolkit can be used **in conjunction** with **another approved toolkit,** where appropriate to the person's needs.	Materials contained within toolkits should not be delivered to an individual if they do not meet the suitability criteria for that particular toolkit.

Where this is deemed suitable and complementary, toolkits can be used with other interventions. Practitioners should consult the guidance for each intervention and the EPF Tool to ensure the correct intervention is being considered and offered.

Toolkits should not be delivered instead of an AcP or SIs where someone is eligible, suitable and these interventions are available. Likewise, consideration should be given to referral to CRS provision to meet needs not attended to by AcP and SIs.

Toolkits, for some people, may have a role to play in helping practitioners deliver 1:1 work to prepare for engagement in another form of intervention or to address outstanding needs after another intervention has been completed.

Some toolkits may also be used with other approved toolkits from the suite. This might be after other priority need area work is completed using the indicated toolkit for the individual's risk and need. If having completed delivery from another approved toolkit, an additional exercise/s from a different toolkit/s would provide a further opportunity to develop or reinforce skills for change, this can be considered.

Therefore, in addition to having the capacity to be delivered as a standalone intervention (whereby only needs pertaining to the toolkit have been identified and the individual is not eligible or suitable for alternative intervention delivery), toolkits may play a role for some individuals to support additional change work.

Practitioners should use their judgement to determine when the best time to sequence the use of the toolkit is during a participant's sentence.

4. Pre-delivery considerations

Preparing to deliver a toolkit

It is essential that probation practitioners familiarise themselves with delivery guidance and session content ahead of commencing delivery of toolkits to people on probation.

Certain toolkits may require practitioners to attend/engage with specific training and/or briefings before they are able to use them. Other toolkits might assume knowledge and experience sufficient for delivery has been gained through achievement of a professional qualification grade and the completion of associated learning and development expected by that role (for example Probation Officer and/or Probation Service Officer).

The CPD role packs (located here on the Probation Hub) are a useful guide to all of the learning and development that is relevant to your role. It is an expectation that new staff members complete the mandatory learning upon commencement of their role, and existing staff should discuss with their line manager whether it would be beneficial for them to complete the required learning. Both existing and new staff should look through the desirable learning as there may be learning products which could be helpful when delivering toolkits.

Practitioners must always ensure they refer to the delivery criteria contained within the individual toolkit they are delivering.

Practitioners should refer to the toolkit manuals on EQuiP available via the following link: Approved Toolkits for full details of any pre-delivery requirements.

Preparing to work together

As with all information in this document, it is not intended to replace content contained within individual toolkits, which should always be followed.

Some toolkits will incorporate guidance and 'getting started/getting going' type exercises that are intended to help build the working relationship between practitioners and the individual they are working with. This section provides some overall guidance that can supplement and complement the process of building a professional collaborative working relationship, which will support toolkit delivery.

Key considerations:

- Barriers to engagement

- Expectations of practitioner

- Hopes and expectations of person on probation

- Develop an agreed approach

If a toolkit is likely to be used during the sentence, practitioners should make the person on probation aware of this as early as possible to engage them in discussion about what to expect and potential benefits of this work. EQuiP contains a PoP leaflet which might be helpful to share to structure a conversation about what toolkits are. This is available via Approved Toolkits.

It can be helpful before starting a toolkit to talk about some of the sorts of things that both the practitioner and the participant want and need to have a successful working relationship. This might include being ready to work and focus, trying their best, completing out of session work, being as open as the individual can be, sharing feedback etc. It is important the focus of such a conversation is balanced regarding what the practitioner wants from the individual but also what the individual needs from the practitioner. The aim is to collaborate and develop a form of 'working contract'- this could even be written down and signed up to by both parties. It is important to ensure the contract is reviewed, which provides an opportunity to 'check in' together on how the work is going and make any tweaks as required.

Having a conversation of this nature is an additional opportunity to ask the individual about what works best for them when learning and developing skills. The practitioner can then consider how they will attend to these factors as part of any responsivity adaptations they will make.

The practitioner's role as the person who both delivers 1:1 work and manages the Order or Licence more broadly can often require balance. Building a trusting and collaborative therapeutic relationship in which to deliver 1:1 change work might feel at odds with being required to make decisions regarding risk management and enforcement. Participants understanding the 'hats' that practitioners need to wear can be really important to ensuring the working relationship is not damaged when, if required, the practitioner needs to hold them to account.

It can be helpful to explain the practitioner's role using a coaching analogy. Many people have experienced or will be familiar with the role a coach has (this could be a life coach, sports coach, employment/education coach/mentor etc). Essentially, a coach supports individuals, they want them to achieve their full potential and will motivate them, monitor progress against goals, whilst providing praise and reinforcement. A good coach will help support an individual when things are difficult as well as celebrate their successes. However, a good coach will also hold individuals to account by encouraging them to work hard and sometimes push them out of their comfort zones to be the best they can be. A good coach might call out attitudes and behaviours that are not aligned with agreed goals and may need to be the ones to uphold rules, issue warnings and sometimes even follow up by activating negative consequences. In this way, the role of the probation practitioner can be like a coach. Understanding this can go some way to support the participant to appreciate that whilst the goal is to achieve a collaborative and supportive working relationship, the practitioner might sometimes need to also hold them to account and challenge them in order to provide the best sort of support.

5. Delivering Toolkits

Delivery Skills

The skills required to deliver toolkits are transferable from work probation practitioners do every day with all cases.

It is likely many toolkit exercises will be recognisable to practitioners but may have been updated to ensure the way in which they are delivered has changed to reflect the current literature and evidence base. As practitioners deliver materials from the suite of toolkits, exercises and delivery approaches will become more familiar and it is anticipated that practitioner confidence in engaging people on probation with the content will grow.

The **Choices and Changes** resource pack provides an extensive overview of skills and techniques that should be used to support toolkit delivery. Whilst the examples contained in it relate to supporting the development of maturity (which is the focus of Choices and Changes) the explanations and examples are relevant across all toolkit delivery. See **Choices and Changes-a resource pack supporting young adult men** Appendix 3 and 4 from page 120 onwards available on EQuiP via the following link Approved Toolkits.

This section provides a brief overview, serving as a recap to practitioners of some of the skills and techniques that will support delivery of all approved toolkits.

Motivational Interviewing ('MI') remains a core skill required when delivering toolkit materials to participants *(Miller, W.R, & Rollnick, S. 2013)*. There are 4 techniques that form the concept of MI which should be used in combination when working with individuals;

- ✓ **Express Empathy**
- ✓ **Develop Discrepancy**
- ✓ **Roll with Resistance**
- ✓ **Support Self Efficacy**

A motivational delivery style is essential when working with individuals to support them to make changes. There are four motivational skills referred to as 'OARS' which stand for **Open Questioning, Affirmation, Reflection and Summarising** *(Miller, W.R, & Rollnick, S. 2013)* and are described below.

Open Questions prompt and invite responses that go beyond a 'yes or no' response that might be elicited from asking a closed question. Where toolkits suggest processing questions within an exercise, practitioners will notice these usually begin with or contain the words- **Why, Where, What, When and How** (known as the 5 WHs). An open question, although it might ask the same thing as a closed question, can support a participant to think more in-depth and share more information with the practitioner. An example of why open questions are considered more motivational is illustrated by the following example question;

'Do you want to make changes?' (likely would prompt a yes or no answer)

'What might some of the benefits be for you, if you made changes?' (this question embeds the assumption that change can be positive, establishes the individual's motivation and could provide/draw out detail as to what it is the participant wants to be different in their life. This style of question can also promote self-efficiency by encouraging the individual to think about what they want for themselves and what impact making changes could have.)

Affirmation if referring to the word's definition, is about confirming something to be true. When working with individuals to deliver toolkit materials, it is a means of showing interest and encouragement for what someone is sharing. Reflective listening in of itself can support affirmation as it can show an individual they have been listened to and understood and their contributions have been appreciated. Positive affirmation, sometimes shared via providing specific praise, can be really motivational and helps indicate to a participant that they are doing something positive and encourages that to continue.

Reflection requires the practitioner to be engaged in reflective listening. This is about ensuring that the participant is heard, to understand what they are saying and not just listening for the practitioner's opportunity to speak and ask another question. If demonstrating reflective listening, often this will see a practitioner reflecting back what they have understood the participant to have said, along with their perception of understanding and meaning. Not only does this show the participant they have been listened to, but that the practitioner is seeking to show genuine interest and empathy in understanding them and importantly is not making assumptions/jumping to conclusions. Additionally, reflective listening can be helpful to probe and explore unspoken or hinted at inferences, used to support the technique of rolling with resistance and also, where required, to unconfrontationally develop discrepancies by enabling the participant to 'hear back' and reflect on what they have said.

Summarising content and/or discussion points is helpful when working with individuals for a range of reasons. A summary can be used to take stock and recap material covered before moving on, provided as a recap from a previous exercise or session, emphasise key learning points and can also be used to check the participants understanding/allow time for clarification of what has been covered. Summaries can be provided by the practitioner or elicited from the participant using open questioning techniques.

Getting ready to deliver sessions

There are a number of things that will be helpful to support practitioners ahead of delivering a toolkit session. This section provides a summary of some of the key activities and considerations that are useful for practitioners to consider before meeting with a participant to deliver a toolkit session.

Reading the session aims and preparing all additional materials required will ensure the practitioner feels ready and prepared. This will include, where relevant, checking and watching any video links the session includes use of, printing out/preparing worksheets, flipcharts or other materials required etc. Practitioners should consider any responsivity needs of the individual they are working with and where possible ensure any changes to how exercises are delivered are planned for ahead of time (see section below on Flexible and Responsive Toolkit Delivery). Consider if taking a short break in the session will assist with the participant's concentration and support their learning experience. This does not

have to be a long break but might be a short 'comfort break' or a quick 'brain break'. Breaks can always be taken flexibly and responsively, although it is also helpful to think about when a good place to take a break might be and share this with the participant at the start of the session.

It can be helpful for the practitioner to remind themselves of what work was covered in the previous session by reviewing the session aims and also the session notes entered onto nDelius. If the toolkit material is being delivered sequentially it can be useful to look ahead at the next session, to give a sense of what you will be covering next - this can be signposted and shared with the participant so they can see how the sessions are building on each other.

Practitioners should think about how to start the session. It is important to give time to see how the participant is feeling but ensure there is structure to this, so the time together does not become taken up discussing issues that are not relevant to the session aims. Sometimes participants will come to sessions distracted and it is important to give time and space to talk anything through. In some circumstances, the practitioner may decide not to run the planned session. Where the session can still go ahead, setting clear timings and boundaries about what is discussed, when and for how long can help to manage expectations, especially when working with more talkative participants or indeed those who might use the start of a session to distract from undertaking any work from the toolkit. A 'check in' exercise is used in many of the toolkits as a way to start the session, checking in on how the participant is and providing an opportunity to summarise and review learning since the last session.

When looking at the material the practitioner will be delivering, it can help them to feel more prepared if they think through some of the questions they might ask - considering how to frame these to the needs of the individual that they will be working with. The practitioner might find it helpful to think through the sorts of answers and learning points they are hoping to cover. This is not about asking leading questions or seeking the 'right' answer but if the individual is getting stuck it helps to have thought through how else a question could be reframed or an alternative example used, to support understanding.

It can be helpful to consider the content of the particular toolkit session with a view to looking out for anything that might be challenging or provocative for the participant or perhaps might see them rehearse anti-social attitudes which the practitioner then would want to pick up on. Taking some time ahead of delivery to think through responses can help practitioners to feel more confident going into a session, especially where there are concerns about how the participant might respond. This also means the practitioner is less likely to feel 'thrown' or 'on the spot' if they have given some space to think this through ahead of time.

Delivering toolkits using blended supervision

This section provides some additional considerations for practitioners who are considering the use of some remote delivery of toolkit sessions as part of a blended supervision approach.

The '**Blended Supervision Staff Guidance**' notes that there is some positive evidence in relation to the effectiveness of remotely delivered change work, with some people finding it easier to open up over the phone rather than in person. However, the guidance states that the evidence base is relatively small, with limited validation. The guidance asserts that practitioners should use in person contact to assess the individual's needs to ascertain

whether it is better to engage in change work in person or remotely. Therefore, whilst guidance enables toolkits (and other change work/RAR delivery) to be undertaken through a mix of face to face and remote contact, it makes clear the expectation is that toolkits should not be delivered solely via remote contact.

For more information see Blended Supervision Staff Guidance available on EQuiP via the following link: Blended Supervision

If deciding remote access is suitable for an individual, the practitioner then needs to fully consider how they intend to actually deliver the toolkit in a way that is responsive to the needs of the participant.

The following responsivity considerations (which are not exhaustive) are some of the key things to consider in incorporating any remote delivery of toolkit work:

➢ **Access to technology**

Participants will need to have access to a phone or computer with sufficiently stable signal/WiFi connection. Practitioners will need to ensure remote contact does not infringe any licence or other Order which might limit or prohibit certain activity.

➢ **Home environment**

Practitioners need to assure themselves they know who else might be in the house and what potential impacts remote delivery of toolkit material could have in deciding if it is safe and appropriate.

Safeguarding must be considered as the main priority in making decisions in respect of remote delivery. Some participants might reside with their victim or with someone they pose a risk to or indeed who poses a risk to them. It is vital full assessments to inform considerations are undertaken in deciding if any potential risks can be effectively managed throughout remote delivery and thereafter.

➢ **Appropriate sessions for remote delivery**

The practitioner not only needs to consider if remote delivery is an appropriate form of contact for an individual but also if the content and nature of a toolkit is appropriate and adaptable to remote delivery.

For some participants, in some circumstances, there are benefits to remote delivery, but there are also some key differences and challenges to consider. It may be difficult for the practitioner to gauge how a participant is feeling, this is especially challenging where they are unable to see them on a camera and lack visual cues. Therefore, practitioners will need to ensure that they are monitoring how the participant is coping and engaging with material and respond appropriately. For this reason, undertaking particularly emotional and/or potential triggering work does not always lend itself well to remote delivery methods.

The way in which exercises are completed will require careful planning, for example 'how will worksheets be shared, completed and stored?' and 'how will active exercises be undertaken?' are just some key considerations ahead of toolkit delivery.

Flexible and responsive toolkit delivery

This section looks at the importance of delivering toolkit materials in a flexible and responsive way to best meet the needs of the participant. All toolkits support practitioners to employ their skills and judgement to achieve this. Many of the toolkits share hints and tips within the individual delivery manuals, signposting opportunities and ideas to support responsive delivery.

The intention is that all toolkit materials should be delivered responsively. This means the aims and objectives of exercises should always be upheld but adaptions to the way something is delivered should be considered to help individuals better engage and to support their learning. Practitioners are encouraged to make required changes to delivery in order to be responsive to the individual they are working with. This might, for example, be about changing how an exercise is delivered by:

- doing a skills demonstration rather than talking about it,
- using a flipchart to record responses on behalf of the participant instead of them completing a worksheet,
- using symbols or drawings instead of words and/or changing the examples used to make scenarios more culturally accessible/relevant to the individual.

Whilst each person is an individual, and responsivity will look different for everyone, there are some helpful guidance documents for practitioners to consider the needs of certain cohorts. These can be found on EQuiP, and practitioners can access information through completion of Learning and Development, for example, by completion of relevant E-Learning. The practitioner can utilise their knowledge and skills to consider specific responsivity factors and apply these to the delivery of a specific toolkit.

Cohort specific guidance may be particularly useful to consider when working with young adults - see **Probation Service Management of Young Adults Policy Framework** available on EQuiP via Young adults and supporting people with learning disability and learning challenges see **A Guide to Supporting People with LDC**. LDC

The materials delivered to participants need to be relevant to them. It is unlikely to support an individual's learning if the context of an exercise or examples used to highlight learning points have no reference or relevance to their own lives. Equally, the way in which exercises are delivered is important and practitioners will need to consider what works best to engage that person.

Flexible and responsive delivery is applicable to all toolkit participants. For some individuals this will be about how practitioners adapt exercises to meet the aims whilst delivering content in a meaningful and helpful way to support the individuals learning. For others, this might be about adapting the focus of material to speak to their experiences and manifestation of needs. For example, if delivering a multi-need toolkit like Stepping Stones, the practitioner could adapt examples to incorporate someone's experience of problematic gambling when delivering materials associated with that behaviour such as emotion management, financial management and consequential thinking exercises.

The examples used to highlight learning points are important and practitioners are encouraged to think about their knowledge of the individual they are working with and use examples that will best help them relate to the subject matter. It is important to consider a range of diversity needs including, but not limited to, the person's ethnicity, culture, age, gender and life experiences.

Some of the exercises within toolkits will have accompanying worksheets. Some participants may find this difficult to complete either within a session or as out of session work due to personal and/or environmental factors. Practitioners should always consider how they can support participants with such tasks. This might include some of the following examples:

- practitioners writing/recording responses on behalf of the participant,
- providing time after or before a session to complete a worksheet at the office,
- encouraging the participant to use of pictures or symbols instead of writing,
- changing a worksheet into a pictorial representation,
- the participant completing a video diary that they show the practitioner etc.

Delivering materials in a flexible and responsive way does still need to ensure that the learning points and aims are met as intended. This concept is often referred to in Accredited Programmes as 'responsivity with integrity'. This means that the aims and objectives and therefore intention of the materials are not changed to the point of being undermined. Rather, the experience of the participant is enhanced by making slight proportionate and justified adaptions to how exercises are delivered in the interests of being responsive to the individual.

Resources to support flexible and responsive delivery with specific cohorts

Where there are not cohort specific offers, for example, for knife crime offending or hate crime, this is because the current evidence base does not support the need for bespoke approaches or specific material.

This section explores the available resources that practitioners can draw on to support achieving flexible and responsive delivery to particular cohorts when non-offence specific and/or multi need toolkits are being used.

Toolkit materials that are either non-offence specific or target multi-needs can be utilised with individuals flexibly, irrespective of offence type so long as the suitability criteria is met. The skills and expertise of the practitioner enables them to deliver material responsively, adapting examples and focus to suit the particular criminogenic needs of the individual that they are working with.

EQuiP houses a range of practitioner 'how to' good practice guidance and resource packs known collectively as '**Probation Learning Products'**. These might include (but will not be limited to) good practice guidance and/or resource packs related to working with people with neurodiversity; working with young adults; guidance for working with Transgender people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds; how to use motivational interviewing; working with people who have committed sexual offences, knife crime, hate crime etc. Learning products may be particularly helpful to supplement the delivery of ASPPT material to support practitioners in taking account of appropriate responsivity considerations in both their approach and delivery of change work**.**

Working with toolkits in a flexible and responsive way as well as utilising Probation Learning Products to support delivery with specific cohorts, allows us to be evidence base led. It also avoids producing multiple materials for each and every offence type where they are unlikely to be effective.

6. Delivering toolkits with people maintaining their innocence

Unless otherwise stated within a specific toolkit's suitability criteria, toolkit materials can be used with people who maintain their innocence.

It is recommended to use the term 'maintaining innocence' rather than referring to participants as 'deniers'. This negates the risk of an individual feeling labelled as 'in denial' which often has negative connotations. Practitioners should reassure participants that they have no hidden agenda in terms of discussing specific details of offences or seeking to change their perspective and/or what they can share about the circumstances leading up to and of the offence for which they are convicted when delivery toolkit materials. Rather, practitioners should focus on what the individual is able to say and the responsibility they want to take for how their life is in the future.

Toolkits are strengths based and future focused so do not require the individual to admit responsibility for their conviction/s in order to engage. Toolkit work may need to glance back on the past to help someone understand themselves more fully, but they are primarily future focused and place emphasis on how the participant wants their life to be now and in the future. Where this is the case, the focus should be on the individuals experience of the conviction, what was going on in their lives generally around that time that might have contributed to allegations and the resulting conviction and looking forward and what this means for them for the future and the changes they might need to consider as a result of the conviction. Toolkit materials should not be used with the intention of moving participants from a position of maintaining innocence to admitting their offending behaviour; for some people denial and/or minimisation can be protective and important to their desistance journey[2]. Denial and/or minimisation might serve a purpose in terms of assisting people to maintain a positive self-image, regardless of having carried out an act they might see as shameful. In this respect denial or minimisation might actually be a protective factor for some individuals. It is therefore important practitioners do not use exercises within toolkits to try and seek to break this down or move participants perspective on the public responsibility they take for their offending.

A person may also wish to disclose responsibility for their offending, having accepted their responsibility for this. For some people this might come as a sense of relief to be able to articulate this. In these circumstances it may help them move on as the denial in of itself might have been a block to change. In these circumstances this should not be discouraged, and individuals should be supported to share what they feel able to.

When delivering work with people who maintain their innocence, the individual might seek to 'assure' practitioners of their innocence. Sometimes this might manifest by minimising problems or playing down the extent of the changes that they need to make in their life. Practitioners should work with where each individual is at and explore their motivation for engaging in this material. For some people maintaining their innocence, it is very possible that privately they are experiencing feelings of shame and guilt and these might play a part in their reason for publicly denying offending behaviours. As noted, toolkits should not be

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[2] It is also acknowledged that for some people, denial should not be seen as protective. Not least where it is used to seek support and/or gain access to victims or situations to engage in offending behaviours.

used with the aim of participants admitting offence responsibility-this may never happen for a range of reasons and under no circumstances should a toolkit be used for this purpose. However, toolkit materials do seek to increase the responsibility and commitment an individual has for their life now and in the future by offering them the opportunity to learn some skills and techniques to support changes they wish to make to support achieving an offence free and fulfilling future life.

7. Use of digital clips

This section provides some guidance to assist practitioners to get the most out of digital clips where they are indicated for use in specific toolkits.

HMPPS have co-produced a large number of Complementary Digital Media (CDM) clips with experts-by-experience, to support the delivery of intervention sessions and promote learning consolidation between sessions. Some toolkits have utilised these internal clips as well as referring to externally produced clips. Where included, they seek to support achieving the aims of exercises by introducing topics to promote discussion and reinforce learning points. It is essential that practitioners are familiar with these clips prior to using them within sessions so that they can decide on the best way to play/utilise the clip for the participant.

CDM clips typically present a central character experiencing a challenge, introduce a skill, and present the character using the skill to resolve the challenge. Practitioners should use clips flexibly during sessions (e.g. pausing, replaying, etc) and allow participants to replay and discuss clips so they are properly understood. After playing clips, practitioners should generate discussion to elicit the personal relevance of content to the participant and then facilitate tasks (e.g. skills practices and worksheets) to help generalise learning. Some toolkits will include examples of questions that can be asked following the clip to move the exercise forward.

The following are helpful pointers for practitioners to follow when using CDM;

- ✓ Before playing clips, practitioners should acknowledge that participants may have viewed a clip previously (some clips are used in more than one intervention type). Emphasis that viewing clips on a repeated basis helps us to develop a clear understanding of the topics covered and to think about them in different ways.

- ✓ Practitioners should introduce each clip using a strength-based approach (as is required throughout the toolkit delivery - e.g. what do they already know about the topic?). The practitioner should consider what might help the participant process the new information and use this to help put the clip into context.

- ✓ Practitioners should be prepared to pause and/or replay parts of the clips to support the participants' learning.

- ✓ In the event the participant is resistant to the use of animations, practitioners should acknowledge that they may not match all people's

learning preferences. Encourage them to "look beyond the story" and think about the how the *ideas* in the clip can help them with changes they want to make. If the style of clips is a considerable barrier, consider exploring alternative delivery methods to convey the learning points (e.g. via flipcharts and storyboards).

✓ Practitioners should try not to let the discussion after the clip get bogged down with the story in the clip. In general, use the clip as a springboard to support learning and to develop insight into the skill/tool/concept and their own thinking and behaviour.

✓ Practitioners should explore the participants' experience of the clips and their interpretations of the messages within them (e.g. what did they notice or see going on?). Practitioners should make sure the participant understands how the skill/tool/concept works. Explore its relevance to them, using any available list of suggested questions flexibly - as a guide not as a script to be recited.

*Please note there is current guidance entitled '**Laptop use for delivery of general offending behaviour toolkits'** available for practitioners using work laptops to show CDM clips. This is on EQuiP via the following link* Skills for Relationships Toolkit (SRT) . *The guidance is relevant to all toolkit delivery where CDM clips are used. There will be an updated version of this guidance uploaded to EQuiP during May 2022, produced by the SRT team.*

8. Skills Practice

Benefits of skills practices

Practitioners might recognise some of the following content as being contained within toolkits including but not limited to First Steps to Change, Creating Positive Connections, Responsibly Aware and Moving On. This skills practice guidance was written for those toolkits and been adapted to include within this suite level guidance document.

Brains can develop new neural connections or pathways throughout our entire lives. This is what is meant by the term 'neuroplasticity' and it is by this process of adaption that our brains can overcome any impact of trauma through brain injury, psychological experiences and illness/disease. Various areas of the brain have the ability, by making new connections/pathways, to compensate and take over some functions. However, to best assist participants to make these new connections effectively they need to be stimulated through activity. Talking about skills is therefore unlikely to be as helpful as actually working with people to actively engage them in practising and rehearsing skill.

The more we are able to utilise a mix of delivery styles, which includes active methods such as skills practices, the more accessible the content and material is likely to be, and the more able we are to stimulate the brain in a way that encourages those new connections to form.

Toolkits have a range of exercises and activities ensuring crucial opportunities for participants to try out skills through skills practices. It is therefore key that opportunities to incorporate actual skills practices are taken and that skills are not just talked about but rehearsed and practiced.

What is a skills practice?

Any active presentation of a skill/s in real time can be considered to be a 'skills practice'. Participants might have heard the term 'role play' used to describe this kind of activity. Whilst it is important to use language that is helpful for the individual, sometimes the term 'role play' can create apprehension or anxiety if 'role play' is seen as having to act or play a part. In addition to the preferred term 'skills practice' some practitioners share that describing these activities as 'skills rehearsals' or just as 'rehearsals' can also help. Skills practices are not about acting, pretending or make believe, rather giving individuals a safe space to try out and rehearse new skills to build confidence, so they have the best chance of utilising them in real life successfully. It is therefore helpful to ensure practitioners have talked about what a skills practice is and seek to 'sell' the benefits before starting to deliver these. Such benefits include experiencing the skill and placing yourself into a scenario that represents something real and meaningful, so the individual develops the skill and importantly experiences using the skill. This experience-building also enhances memory - the more we do something and practice it the more able we are to recall and use that skill when required.

Often encouraging individuals to just have a go, try it out, 'see how it goes' and reassuring the participant as the practitioner that you will be working with them to support them every step of the way can go some way to reducing any concerns they might have.

It is important that the focus always remains on developing the skill being practiced. Skills practices rarely provide a solution to a complex problem or issue, and they should not try to. Skills practices provide an opportunity to practice small, transferrable skills which build upon each other. It is important that the individual understands that even when they practice inter-personal, thinking and problem-solving skills well, they cannot always positively influence situations especially involving other people. Practitioners should explain how individuals are only responsible for their own behaviour and cannot control how other people respond. By practicing skills to manage their own emotions, this can support them when things might not work out how they want them to. It is often helpful when undertaking skills practices to stop once the individual has practiced their skill rather than running skills practices beyond that point. However, by building up and enhancing how they use skills appropriately and effectively they give themselves the best opportunity to have better outcomes.

Considerations when delivering skills practices

Each toolkit will include information on running a skills practice session. Delivery manuals should always be referred to and the guidance followed. There is no universally agreed 'right way' to run a skills practice and each toolkit might adopt a slightly different approach in order to achieve similar outcomes. Therefore, the information in this section is intended to provide some overall principles for skills practices which will complement any specific instructions individual toolkits provide.

When finding a scenario to give some context to the skills practice it is important to encourage the participant (where appropriate) to choose something from their own life as the basis of the skills practice. This should be something current or future-focused, promoting how they want to be and deal with situations moving forward and not stuck in how they might have managed such situations in the past. Whilst it is fine to talk about how the

participant might have dealt with similar situations previously, focus on how they want it to be different now. It is also important to orientate skills practice in the here and now or in the future. The practice should be about the participant practising the skill now as their current and future-self. For this reason, scenarios should never usually be set in the past.

It is crucial that the participant has a successful experience of skills practices. Practitioners will need to ensure they pitch the skill at the right level and build on it from that. It can be helpful to demonstrate a skill to the participant - this is not about perfection but showing how the skills might look and sound using any relevant skills steps involved. Practitioners should not pretend to be the participant but hold the role of a non-associated person fictional person (within the scenario) for the purposes of demonstrating the skill.

It can be especially helpful for the participant to be encouraged to try out any new skills that they are developing in-between sessions. They can come back and share how it went, which provides an opportunity for further practice to re-rehearse or fine-tune skills and for the practitioner to provide feedback, praise and encouragement. It is imperative that this is only done in a safe and appropriate way which will not increase any risk of harm to themselves or others. For example, it would not be appropriate for a participant who remains in a domestically abusive relationship to try out skills of assertion with an abusive partner. However, it might be safe and appropriate for them to try out new skills in supervision, with someone they feel safe with, such as a friend or family member or with other professionals that they that might be involved with to express their needs/emotions.

Running a skills practice

Practitioners should refer to individual toolkit manuals for guidance on how to run the skills practice. The points below are generic considerations when delivery skills practices.

Skills practices should be responsive to the participant. The skills covered will be relevant to the session/exercise/block/module content as per toolkit delivery manual guidance.

For the majority of toolkits, where skills practices are run, they will loosely follow a similar format or pattern which is described below;

> **Set-up**

The practitioner will introduce the skill and ensure the participant has a clear understanding. A scenario will need to be developed to give context to the practice. This can be something current or in the future, even if hypothetical. It is a good idea for the practitioner to have some scenarios prepared as a backup should the participant be unable to identify something. The practitioner may need to provide a demonstration, especially if the skill is new to the participant.

> **Practice the skill**

The participant will be encouraged to have a go at practicing the selected skill. The practitioner should coach the participant to support them and may also need to hold a role,

so they have someone responding to them. The practice can be paused, advice given, sections repeated/tried again.

Practitioners may need to be ready to reduce or increase the difficulty level in response to how the individual is getting on. It is important that the participant completes a successful skills practice before moving on to other work or ending the session. This might mean running the practice a few times to develop confidence and give the participant the opportunity to incorporate any feedback they have identified, or the practitioner have provided.

> **Debrief**

The practitioner should encourage the participant to reflect on and discuss the skills practice. Asking what worked well and what they might do differently can be helpful questions to support the debrief. The practitioner should then offer their feedback ensuring plenty of specific praise and encouragement is given – even if it did not go so well, the individual gave it a go and can keep working to progress their confidence and competence when using that skill.

Feedback should include an initial positive/ strength observed from the skills practice, then move on to share feedback on points for development. It is important not to overload the participant with development points. Practitioners should ideally select one or two key things that they can work on when repeating the skills practice. Alongside observing how well they used the skill, and any relevant skills steps (if applicable), feedback can also include how able the participant was to use appropriate eye contact, body language and their use of language and tone of voice. Additional feedback points can be reserved and shared subsequently, if still observed, following additional practices.

Where there are a lot of development feedback points observed this might suggest the difficulty level of the skills practice should be reduced. The skills practice could also be broken down into smaller stages or steps if needed. Practitioners can model and/or demonstrate how the participant might use the skill as part of the debrief if this is appropriate to support them ahead of them giving the skill another try.

If appropriate and indicated within the toolkit being delivered, an out of session skills practice challenge can be given for the participant to go away and try the skills in a real situation if that is appropriate and safe to do so. They should be encouraged during the next session to share how it went. Practitioners can then pick this back up and re-rehearse the skill during the following session if required and appropriate to the toolkit being delivered.

Practitioners should always provide meaningful feedback and use specific praise wherever possible to reinforce learning from skills practices and support the participant as they try out developing or learning new skills.

9. Promoting the use of active delivery methods

Skills practices form a big part of what is meant by an active delivery method but there are other opportunities when delivering toolkit materials to work in an active way.

There are benefits of doing this, where appropriate to the toolkit being delivered, at an early stage. If active methods are introduced and used throughout the toolkit, then the skills practice sessions will be less likely to be unfamiliar to the participant, which might support reducing any apprehension or resistance. Participants will already have an understanding of the benefits of active learning and will then hopefully see skills practices as an extension of this. Below are some ideas adapted from use in Accredited Programmes, Structured Interventions and Toolkits on how practitioners can introduce more active delivery techniques into their delivery, where this is appropriate.

Starting/ending sessions

The start of a toolkit session, depending on the specific toolkit, might start with a 'check-in' or a form of 'warm up' exercise. Equally, the end of session might round up with a 'check out' or 'session end/close' exercise.

These exercises can provide a great opportunity to introduce an active element. In some sessions, practitioners could start and/or end sessions with an active game or exercise. This should, where possible, be linked to the theme or aims of the session being delivered.

Active exercises don't always involve standing-up but where appropriate this can introduce a helpful burst of energy. Practitioners can be creative in introducing active techniques, a few examples might include asking the participant: "rather than telling me something you have done this week, show me; "how are you feeling today?"; "if it had a sound, what noise would that feeling make?".

The practitioner could gently throw a ball or beanbag between them and the participant (if safe and appropriate to do so). When the ball/beanbag is in their hand each of them will share something that they remember from the previous session, or a positive from today's session, or a good quality the participant has. The practitioner can also consider when checking in on how the use of a new skill is going, asking the participant to demonstrate how they used it (a mini skills practice) rather than simply talking about it or describing the event.

Brain breaks

Brain breaks are small tasks which allow space to have some time out from the intensity and focus of the material and re-energise in between exercises or tasks. Practitioners can be as creative as they want in being responsive to the individual they are working with. A brain break can be simple such as getting up and walking around, doing a few star jumps, talking about something off topic, trying to say a tongue twister, a co-ordination challenge such as patting your head whilst rubbing your stomach or a trying out a logic puzzle/ or riddle. Where use of mindfulness informed techniques has been introduced and are part of the toolkit being delivered, undertaking a short exercise to bring someone into the here and now could be used as a brain break.

Practitioners should ensure they build in opportunities, where appropriate, for 'brain breaks'. These do not always have to be active exercises, but where an increase in energy to support concentration is needed, this can help.

10.   Working through an interpreter to deliver toolkits

Toolkits can be delivered via the use of a language interpreter where this is required. The following section includes some hints and tips shared by practitioners who have used language translation services to engage individuals in toolkit delivery.

Where required, practitioners may wish to consider booking a slightly longer interpreter time slot to have a pre-brief with the interpreter, ahead of the participant attending, to talk through how best to approach the session.

If there is an opportunity to engage with a specific language services when booking to request continuity of an interpreter, this should always be considered (it is acknowledged this is not always possible).

Prior to delivering a toolkit session the practitioner might consider having a session with the participant and the interpreter to discuss how everyone might find it best to work together. Such a session could also be used as an additional opportunity to talk and think through any responsivity considerations that will be helpful when delivering materials.

Practitioners may need to allow more time to deliver a toolkit session when an interpreter is being used and also to ensure an adequate break is provided, if required.

Practitioners should consider how they can employ flexible and responsive delivery approaches to support participants where English is not their first language. This might include simplifying written work and considering the use of pictures and/or symbols when completing worksheets/written based work.

The National Effective Interventions Panel Team have engaged Language Services to work through how interpreters will be briefed about the use of toolkits and their aims so that they better understand the needs of practitioners when providing interpretation. As further good practice is established, this section will be updated.

References

Miller, W.R, & Rollnick, S (2013). Motivational Interviewing: Helping people change (3rd ed) New York: Guilford Press

Annex A- Approved Suite of Probation Practitioner Toolkits

As of 25th April 2022

Approved Suite of Probation Practitioner Toolkits

Toolkit Name	Needs Focus	Available Since	Available Via
Stepping Stones	General Offending	June 2021	EQuiP
New Me MOT	Graduates of Aligned Suite of Accredited Programmes	June 2021	EQuiP
Skills for Relationships Toolkit	IPV	June 2021	EQuiP
Choices and Changes	Maturity	June 2021	EQuiP
Maps for Change	Male Sexual Offending	June 2021	EQuiP
Constructive Conversations	Replaces Developing Dialogues for extremism	June 2021	Constructive Conversations is not available directly via EQuiP. Practitioners are to make contact with the relevant team (details on EQuiP) to discuss suitability and manual access.
Connection and Community: Chemsex (London Only)*	Sexual Offending	June 2021	Connection and Community: Chemsex is not available directly via EQuiP. Practitioners are to make contact with the relevant team (details on EQuiP) to discuss

			suitability and manual access.
Pathways to Change	Female Sexual Offending	October 2021	EQuiP
First Steps to Change (Women's Toolkit)	Multi-need	April 2022	EQuiP
Creating Positive Connections	Social Capital	April 2022	EQuiP
Responsibly Aware	Substance Misuse	April 2022	EQuiP
Moving On	Desistence Focused – Identity	April 2022*	EQuiP

* Connection and Community-Chemsex toolkit will be discussed at Accredited Programme Interventions and Strategy Board in April 22 for decision on continuation and format of materials as well as consideration of the availability of the agreed product nationally in the future.

*Moving On will have a 'soft launch' in London and North West regions. National rollout expected to be from August 2022.