

# People with Learning Disabilities and Autism in the Criminal Justice System

Leighe Rogers, Offender Manager  
Director Surrey & Sussex  
Probation Trust



“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”

Surrey &  
Sussex  
Probation Trust



# Background

- **Bradley report** - people in the criminal justice system with mental health and learning disability problems
- **Improving Health Supporting Justice** delivery plan
- **National Autism Strategy** - autism classed as a disability



“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”

Surrey &  
Sussex  
Probation Trust



# Criminal Justice Pathfinder What we plan to do

## To develop actions to :

- Reduce reoffending – both the number of people and the number of times they offend
- Improve access to Mental Health Services for offenders
- Improve access to Learning Disability Services for offenders or make sure services change to meet their needs



**“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”**

**Surrey &  
Sussex**  
Probation Trust



# What we plan to do

## Identify screen and assess

- Develop a single assessment tool for mental health, learning disability and/or substance misuse
- Ensure information from local police teams is passed onto the police stations to identify people earlier
- Ensure that information about disability is given to the court and to other people involved in the criminal justice system
- Set up alternatives to prison for offenders with mental health, substance misuse and learning disability needs
- Make sure that when people are found to have broken the law, the information on them follows them throughout the criminal justice pathway



**“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”**

**Surrey &  
Sussex**  
Probation Trust



# What we know about people with learning disabilities in the criminal justice system

Research in 2002 found that:

- 52% men & 71% women in prison had no qualifications compared with 15% of the general population
- 65% of prisoners had numeracy at or below level 1 (level expected of an 11 year old), compared with 13% of general population
- 65% of prisoners had reduced reading abilities compared to 23% of the non-prison population
- Most people do not need specialist services, but could benefit from people being more aware of their needs



**“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”**

**Surrey &  
Sussex**  
Probation Trust



# Brighton Magistrates Court - what we did

An assessment tool - The Learning Disability Short Questionnaire was first used for people who might have a learning disability in May 2010

Of the 41 forms:

- Possible Learning disability: 28
- Refused: 2
- No Learning disability: 11



**“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”**

**Surrey &  
Sussex**  
Probation Trust



# Key Findings

## POSITIVE

Better sentencing plans :

- identified reading & writing problems
- identified clients to refer
- some complete diversions from criminal justice system

## NEGATIVE

- people are embarrassed
- permission form too time consuming
- takes more than 10 minutes



**“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”**

**Surrey &  
Sussex**  
Probation Trust







# Thank You

## Questions



**“Inspiring public confidence  
by cutting crime”**

**Surrey &  
Sussex**  
Probation Trust

