After an exciting awards ceremony, Kate Taylor, winner of the Offender Management category was named as the overall winner of the Probation Awards 2014. Michael Spurr, CEO of NOMS chose Kate from the category finalists saying: “Her chief executive has said Kate is an exceptional offender manager and I agree. She provides practical support, motivation and belief that change can happen which has made a real difference to people’s lives.”

After accepting the award to a standing ovation, Kate said: “I’m absolutely gobsmacked. I’m delighted to accept this award but there is a whole team behind me in Merseyside in Probation and Police.”

Thanks to Kate's dedication, many offenders have been motivated to make positive changes in their lives.”

Judging panel
Category winners

Probation Champion of the Year 2014

Category winners

Diversity and Equality
Kate Jones
Probation Officer
West Yorkshire

Innovation
Nicola Cusick
Resident Services Officer
Greater Manchester

Interventions
Paul Mellish
Housing Development Manager
London

Offender Management
Kate Taylor
Probation Officer
Merseyside

Public Protection
Laura Adams
Offender Manager
Essex

Victim Services
Nichola Whitehouse-Strudwick
Victim Contact Team Coordinator
Merseyside

Working in Partnership
Danielle Mannix
Housing Liaison Officer
Essex

Team of the Year
Swindon Five Wards Project
Wiltshire

Lifetime Achievement
David Forbes
Research Manager
London

Judging Panel

CHAIR
Sarah Payne
Director of NOMS in Wales

STANDING JUDGES
Angela Cossins
Deputy Director, South West & South Central
Linda Hennigan
Chief Executive, Bedfordshire Probation Trust
Jo Mead
Chief Executive, Derbyshire Probation Trust
John Scott
Deputy Director of Probation
Culture changing campaigner

This award recognises those who advocate and champion diversity and equality, an area where Kate Jones stands out.

Kate’s work on improving the understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues, has had a massive impact on individuals, but also the Trust’s culture and practice.

As the coordinator of the Trust’s LGBT employee group, Kate created a Gay-Straight Alliance aimed at sharing information, helping colleagues to engage in promotional activities, and supporting events like Leeds Pride.

But Kate’s work isn’t just limited to probation. As well as developing links to local organisations with similar issues such as Touchstone, Kate has also organised drop-in roadshows with DVD screenings designed to provoke a challenging discussion around diversity.

Achieving all this alongside her full time job as a Probation Officer, Kate, with her commitment, vision and energy, is truly inspirational.

Such a positive, imaginative individual, Kate has raised the profile of probation in West Yorkshire

Judging panel
Neil Tooley
Senior Probation Officer, Hertfordshire Probation

Neil’s work with challenging and isolated elderly and long term offenders sets him out as someone who consistently goes the distance, offering aftercare beyond the end date of many of the cases he supervises. Whether it’s working in the area of high risk sexual offending or mental health issues, or just being a supportive colleague, Neil has a natural ability to ensure that service needs are tailored to the individual. His use of specialist knowledge and risk management to inform and educate others has seen Neil attend care plan approach meetings and negotiate with care services to achieve the right result. Neil’s tireless effort portrays a man who is both inspirational and a role model to all.

Jill Watkin
ICT & Information Technical Support Officer, Merseyside Probation

When her colleagues have difficulties with Assistive Technology, Jill’s knowledge and expertise allow her to find effective solutions. Jill’s unique understanding of the issues that her colleagues face means that she is respected not only as an expert in her field but as a person that will challenge any obstacle to improving the work experience. Praised both by her colleagues and by external organisations at all levels, Jill has demonstrated commitment above and beyond her everyday work. A measure of the difference Jill has made to the working lives of disabled ICT users can be heard in their own words: “She’s our IT saviour, and our champion.”

“Neil has done extraordinary work with challenging individuals”
Judging panel

“Jill’s determination and ‘can do’ attitude is a great example to all”
Judging panel
Innovation winner

Architect of confidence

This award recognises those who have delivered innovation with a measurable and beneficial impact. Nicola Cusick’s groundbreaking work has done exactly that.

Working for Greater Manchester Probation Trust for nearly ten years, Nicola has been active in developing interactive courses to support probation groups and hostel residents.

Recognising a need for the residents to develop independent living skills, Nicola devised an interactive course called Trusted Tenants. This aimed to show Registered Social landlords that participants can manage a budget, maintain a home, and look after their property.

The course is practical, teaching problem solving techniques, and uses real life scenarios faced by someone in their first tenancy.

Following a successful pilot, it is now being delivered under licence to a number of partnership agencies and customers.

Nicola’s commitment to this project shows that she not only goes the extra mile, she leads the way with her enthusiasm.

Nicola’s exceptional work with challenging offender groups is second to none

Judging panel

Nicola Cusick
Resident Services Officer
Greater Manchester Probation

View the other category finalists profiles
Innovation shortlisted finalists

When Luke took on the role of process manager for working with offenders and using the Targets for Effective Change toolkit, he had the vision to create an updated electronic library so that offender managers could easily access workbooks, work sheets and desistance information, quickly.

Luke also recognised that the allocation of cases within the Barnsley Local Delivery Unit was not effective, so he devised a new allocation model for reducing the time wasted between sentence and first appointment with an officer, resulting in improved continuity for offenders. This has now been rolled out across the whole of South Yorkshire.

Luke is a probation officer who is always looking for a more efficient way of working in everything that he does.

With drug and alcohol users less likely to attend a probation office, Kate, working in conjunction with Portsmouth User Self Help group, set up a drop in service for Integrated Offender Management offenders. Kate attends the weekly sessions, hosted in the easy to access city library every week, and she has organised and developed a programme of activities, ranging from counselling and health services, to bike repair and creative art.

Kate's excellent engagement qualities have been vital in forging strong links with the Heart of Portsmouth Boxing Academy. The skills that offenders learn enable them to build their self confidence, making positive changes to both lifestyle and attitude, and importantly, reducing their risk of reoffending.

“Luke’s commitment and work on the frontline supports the whole trust”  
Judging panel

“Kate’s organisational and networking skills really impress”  
Judging panel
Foundation for change

This award recognises those who deliver high quality interventions, and it is here that Paul Mellish makes a noticeable difference.

Combining his first rate networking skills with a strong commercial approach, Paul has become a driving force in securing housing solutions across all of London’s 32 boroughs. With his extensive knowledge and expertise, Paul has created a solid platform for offender managers to provide better housing support and to help reduce reoffending.

Whether piloting a new debt and financial advice service with partner, Step Change, or securing external funding to help offenders get private accommodation after leaving approved premises, Paul’s belief that everyone deserves a second chance underlines the commitment and energy he has to help offenders turn their lives around.

A resolute, creative, and tireless worker, Paul is a credit to the profession.

“Paul has made a significant impact with his expertise and knowledge”

Judging panel
Matthew Ashworth
Probation Officer, West Yorkshire Probation

Matt has set about tackling the previously high rates of burglary in Leeds with a tailored blueprint for probation work. Taking a flexible and creative approach he has seized the opportunity to target 18 to 21 year old burglars. Using Restorative Justice as part of a group programme called Rebrand Blueprint, Matt has shown offenders that the impact they have on someone’s life is much more than just taking something. Through the programme offenders focus on re-writing their future in terms other than one of crime. And the approach is proving effective: Thanks to Matt’s exceptional work, the burglary rate has fallen in Leeds. As one offender put it: “It’s made all the difference . . . I’ve changed my life and I never thought I would.”

Sharon Reddy
Team Manager (Accommodation Unit), Merseyside Probation

Sharon has an absolute commitment to improving housing solutions for offenders. Recognising that social housing applications often take longer than the three to six months offenders can stay in approved premises, Sharon acted decisively creating the ‘move on’ plan and developing Housing High Priority Panels to take a multi-agency approach to housing high-risk offenders. In parallel, Sharon pioneered a bond assurance scheme to assist offenders seeking accommodation with private landlords and also developed a pre tenancy pack to help those who may not have lived independently before. Sharon’s kindness, empathy and determination to help the most difficult people to place make her a strong force for change.

“Matthew’s collaborative abilities are clearly evident”
Judging panel

“Sharon has a variety of skills essential to getting the best results”
Judging panel
Kate has overcome significant barriers by sheer force of personality to make a huge difference to people’s lives.

Judging panel

A seasoned mentor

This award recognises those who go the extra mile to deliver services working directly with offenders, an area where Kate Taylor impresses.

Since joining the Violent Offender Management Unit in 2010, Kate has mentored and assisted offenders to obtain vocational qualifications that have led directly to employment. Her success is due in no small part to her tenacity and passion for finding the most suitable future employment for offenders.

So when one offender talked about his interest in cookery, Kate arranged him an interview with a catering academy. When he failed, Kate sourced money to buy him a suit and took him to a second interview. Thanks to Kate’s confidence, his natural flair soon shone through as he went on to win Regional Young Chef of the Year, be nominated as National Young Chef of the Year and secure a full time position in a Michelin Star Restaurant.

With admirable commitment and an ability to motivate, Kate has put the Violent Offender Management Unit on the map.

“Kate has overcome significant barriers by sheer force of personality to make a huge difference to people’s lives.”

Judging panel

View the other category finalists profiles
The extra care and dedication that Karen puts into every task has earned her the admiration of her peers and numerous thank you notes from offenders that she has worked with.

One repeat offender, who had a drug habit stretching over 20 years, was referred by Karen to a Health Trainer about his personal issues, and this contributed to a drug free, positive outcome for him, before finding full time employment.

Karen also epitomises what it is to be a team player, making time for her colleagues, supporting students, sharing her experience, and championing new programmes and initiatives.

Karen is a caring professional who is able to make a lasting difference to people’s lives.

Determined and pragmatic, Yvette has an enviable ability to build a rapport with offenders using motivational interview techniques to gather as much information as possible to assess and manage reoffending risks.

Yvette’s in-depth knowledge and experience provides valuable support for her colleagues, helping them to recognise the warning signs and manage offenders accordingly.

Yvette is fluid communicator who is always capable of explaining exactly what she expects. Even if she has to adopt a tough approach when dealing with offenders, she has their full respect.

From handling complex cases to engaging with high risk offenders, Yvette excels. Her insight, commitment to working with partners and external agencies, and her above and beyond attitude, mark her out as someone who makes a real difference.

Karen is a team player and a champion of new initiatives

Judging panel

Yvette is an excellent example of going above and beyond

Judging panel
Public Protection winner

Born to reform

This award recognises those individuals who work with particularly difficult and sometimes dangerous offenders, or in any area of work with a focus on public protection. Laura Adams does just that.

Since joining probation in February 2013, Laura has proved time and time again that she has a natural aptitude for her work. With a diverse occupational background, from working as a trainee assistant manager to various roles in the Armed Forces, and then completing a degree in social work, Laura has brought all of these skills to probation. She is a persistent and demanding individual. By building strong relationships with child protection, social services and the Vulnerable Adults team, Laura’s work with High Risk offenders has been nothing short of inspirational. With a selfless, committed attitude, Laura, in a short space of time, is a perfect example of someone who can absorb the best of probation, and take it forward.

Laura has quickly established herself with her excellent professional judgement and persistence

Judging panel
When Nicola was deployed to Swansea’s Cockett police station in July 2013, it was the beginning of a successful period of building strong and trusting relationships with other agencies and colleagues. Her work alongside the police in the public protection hub has resulted in better communication when managing high profile, high risk cases, something that reinforces a united, collaborative approach. Nicola’s in-depth knowledge of the various types of offender behaviour has played a key role in making a difference to protecting the public. Keen to improve the way that information is shared, and with an ability to always find the best solution, Nicola is a credit to the Probation Service.

Known for his calm and efficient manner, Alan’s work on extremely complex and high risk cases has been key to minimising risk to the public. Alan always adopts the quickest and most effective approach when considering the accommodation needs of MAPPA level 3 offenders. His work with other agencies, such as the police Jigsaw team, has seen Alan recognised as a supportive presence when assessing public protection issues. Whether working with the police Counter Terrorism Command Unit and London’s specialist Extremism Team, or just visiting offenders in prison to assess disability needs, Alan’s knowledge and expertise of London’s Approved Premises for often difficult and challenging individuals, is second to none.

“Nicola embodies the best of partnership working”
Judging panel

“Alan is an expert on Approved Premises in London”
Judging panel
Victim Services winner

Passionate people’s champion

This award is made for the most impressive work in delivering services directly to victims. It’s here that Nichola Whitehouse-Strudwick delivers.

Whether meeting with the Witness Care Unit, the police, or the Crown Court, Nichola has demonstrated great tenacity in providing victims with the service they deserve. Nichola’s work with the Victim Contact Scheme and the changes she has made, has seen a significant rise in the number of people taking up this important service. Recognised for her common sense and problem solving approach, Nichola is hugely valued by her colleagues, not least for her commitment to teamwork and the positive working environment that she promotes. Helpful, organised, innovative and meticulous, with a passion for victim services, Nichola has had a real impact, benefitting both victims and her colleagues.

"Nichola has demonstrated an outstanding contribution to improving services to victims"
Judging panel

Nichola Whitehouse-Strudwick
Victim Contact Co-Coordinator
Merseyside Probation
By taking a proactive approach to Restorative Justice, Susan has been a leading influence in promoting its development across Wales.

Building the work she has done locally, Susan has also created an awareness package designed to inform staff about Restorative Justice, something that has helped to broaden understanding and increase awareness. As a Victim Services officer, Susan’s sensitive and engaging manner ensures that both the victim and offender receive the level of support and professionalism essential to a successful meeting.

Alongside internal promotion and education, Susan has used her role to liaise closely with police colleagues, helping to work collectively towards demonstrating a firm commitment to the reduction of reoffending. With drive, enthusiasm and passion, Susan is a true champion of Restorative Justice.

Appointed in 2011, Victoria’s determination to build strong relationships between Probation, the police and the families of victims, is plain to see.

When Victoria had to deal with a very difficult case, the abuse and threats she encountered tested her resilience. She dug deep, maintaining a professional attitude, ensuring that the family’s needs were met, resolving the issues and achieving the best result for all concerned. In this extremely difficult case, Victoria’s ability to empathise with the victim’s family with the required sensitivity and understanding was admirable. This, along with her risk management through MAPPA and the excellent work with offender management colleagues, undeniably makes Victoria an exceptional role model.
Exceptional networking expert

This award recognises those individuals excelling at delivering offender management services in partnership with one or more agencies, which is where Danielle Mannix exceeds.

With an extraordinary ability to network and develop contacts, Danielle has, in a short space of time, built working relationships with many agencies, including the local authority, the homeless support networks and supported housing panels.

Danielle goes to great lengths to source accommodation, and her mediation between these partners and the offender is crucial to the success she has in housing difficult and challenging people.

While working with HARP, a local homeless charity in Southend, Danielle has helped to improve the project, ensuring that offenders who might previously have slipped through the net are housed.

Meanwhile, in her spare time, she has even organised events and clothes collections for the charity.

With such a zest for partnership working, Danielle is an inspiration.

“Passionate and inspirational, Danielle clearly has the full respect of a wide range of partners”

Judging panel
Working with the Step Change training and education initiative since June 2012, and developing six Social Enterprise projects, John’s persuasive personality and enthusiasm sets him out as someone who is difficult to say no to.

His drive and tenacity in developing plans, bringing partners on board and getting funding, were key factors in the success of The Gatehouse café and restaurant, an enterprise that helps to train offenders to give them skills that they can take to new jobs in the community.

With more projects on the horizon, John’s flexible approach has directly influenced and created real employment for offenders. He is a champion of partnership working.

Looking to improve the outcomes for the cross-agency Integrated Offender Management team and the offenders they manage, Roy used his previous experience of similar projects to set up a community based, community delivered drop in centre.

In 2012, with support from partnerships including the police along with district and county councils, Roy established the About Turn Project in Gosport, successfully tackling the issues that were causing crime and reoffending in the area.

Using Gosport as the model, the scheme has expanded, with projects in Havant, Basingstoke, and a new one planned at Wecock Farm.

Roy is an outstanding partnership worker who has shown great initiative in building these projects from the ground up.

“**John has impressive energy and enthusiasm to deliver**”
Judging panel

“**Roy is an great example of diverse partnership work**”
Judging panel
Achieving considerable improvements in reducing reoffending, increasing public confidence, and ensuring better outcomes for the families of offenders are just some of the qualities that make the members of the Swindon Five Wards Project, our Team of the Year 2014, outstanding. After identifying the Five Wards as home to a significant number of Swindon’s offenders, the team developed the scheme to tackle reoffending as a multi-agency community initiative involving the police, the local authority, JobCentre Plus, Swindon Churches, and drug and alcohol service providers.

A community centre set up as the project’s first hub, has seen this coordinated approach help to reduce reoffending by 40 per cent. The team’s innovative work is a blueprint for the future, delivering from well within existing budgets and showing extraordinary dedication to going the extra mile.

“...something truly inspiring which has made a huge difference to those likely to reoffend”

Judging panel
David Forbes
Research Manager
London Probation

The embodiment of the Service

This award recognises an individual who has served probation with distinction for more than 25 years.

David began his career in 1972 with Kent Probation, and was still giving loyal and exceptional service over 40 years later for London Probation. From implementing major programmes around OASys, to developing a specific risk training course for all frontline probation staff, David's work has and continues, to change probation practice for the better. Bringing vast experience, knowledge and expertise to his role, David has always innovated, always improved and always been at the cutting edge of developments and quality practice. His exemplary work has improved risk management and had a truly great impact both on the lives of offenders and the careers of colleagues. His career is one of a truly excellent probation practitioner.

“David has been at the forefront of the profession throughout his 41 years”
Judging panel
All winners and finalists