**The impact of the words we use**

When writing a document or working with people, which is relevant to people within the criminal justice system, we must at all times be very aware of the language and terminology being used, and the impact that this may have. It is quite a common theme throughout society that we shouldn’t let words affect us, for instance the old saying, sticks and stones may break our bones but words will never hurt us.

However, we see the influence that words actually have, all around us on a daily basis, this can be witnessed through television, various social media platforms and daily interactions with other people, for example people being called scroungers for falling on hard times and accessing benefits they are entitled to or the messages of racist abuse used against footballers and others on Twitter

All words being used to describe an individual’s personal circumstance, should at all times be specific to their situation, always put the person first and never suggest they are only capable of one lifestyle. I would like us to look at how do we address an individual who has engaged with probation.

Service user, ex prisoner, ex offender, ex criminal and lived experience are all terms I’m sure we are familiar with when engaging with probation. The negative opinions towards these terms though, seems to outweigh the positive from talking to lots of people in our Probation Inquiry.

This is why we need to address the relevant Person in a way that enables the person to maintain their self-worth, self-esteem and dignity. When addressing an individual within the context and capacity of probation, the person and the role that is requested of them is all that is needed.

For instance a person on probation when no longer engaging with probation will then become a person.

There is no requirement or valid reason to continuously highlight a specific period in someone’s past, and this should be avoided at all costs.

The potential repercussions of individual labelling could be highly damaging when engaging with people experiencing rehabilitation.

Thank you for your time today and I look forward to sharing more from my lived experience later in this presentation.