



# THE AWARDS ISSUE



**UK EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2011**

The BQF's UK Excellence Awards are the most rigorous business award scheme in the UK, giving national recognition to organisations that have excelled using the EFQM Excellence Model.

Over the next 17 pages, we honour this year's winners and finalists, beginning with our **Gold Medal for Excellence** winners, an award given for sustained excellence over a number of years.

Next, we profile the six winners and finalists of our **UK Excellence Awards**, an honour that is one of the highest accolades an organisation in the UK can achieve.

Then on page 20 we introduce you to the 2011 **Lean Six Sigma Award** winners. These are organisations that have used Six Sigma to deliver excellent results to customers.

To round up our winners, on page 22 we take a look at the latest recipients of **BQF Achievement Awards**, an accolade that celebrates organisations that have an innovative approach to business.

And to end our awards coverage, we take a look at the role of our Assessors. How does the assessment process work, and what do those who do it gain from the experience?



## PROBATION NATION

The Probation Trusts of England & Wales are a complex collection of 35 independent organisations. Their pursuit of continuous improvement has landed them the BQF's top award

By Andrew Littlefield

**W**e know that winning a UK Excellence Award can have a positive effect on a company's financial results (see page 4 for further details.) But there are other, less tangible, benefits as well, especially for those recipients in the public, rather than private, sector. Here a win can not only help raise morale, increase visibility and improve public perception, especially in times of economic and social uncertainty, but can also serve as confirmation that an organisation is heading along the right path to achieving and sustaining excellence. The winners of this year's BQF Gold Medal for Excellence – the Probation Trusts of England and Wales – were certainly delighted to receive the British Quality Foundation's highest accolade, rightly seeing it as a strong vindication of their ongoing pursuit of excellence in all aspects

of probation management and supply. Shortly after the award was announced *UK Excellence* spoke to Sue Hall, Chair of the Probation Chiefs Association (PCA), and Sebert Cox OBE, Chair of the Probation Association (PA), and found both of them to be in understandably buoyant mood. Sebert told us, "The award will be a huge boost. It will make a public statement for probation, saying that it's an organisation that pays close attention to its methods of working and its need for continuous improvement. It will also encourage the Trusts to strive for even greater excellence." Or as Sue put it, "At a time of big changes for probation it's great to have the endorsement of an organisation such as the British Quality Foundation. The award underlines that we're doing a good job and are achieving excellence."

Between them, the PCA and PA represent the professional interests of staff and



**BACKGROUND**

The Probation Trusts oversee offenders on licence and community services



**“If you haven’t got a good organisation that supports its staff then I don’t think the staff can perform”**

Sue Hall, Chair of the Probation Chiefs Association

managers working for the 35 different Probation Trusts in England and Wales (Northern Ireland and Scotland have their own systems). The trusts are independent of one another, although Sue Hall clarified that “There’s a lot of dialogue between trusts about ‘What have you used? How have you done this?’ and a lot of benchmarking that goes on in relation to results. The PCA tries to help trusts to network with each other about areas of good practice.” When it comes to development and excellence, the PA plays a similar advisory role, as Seberty Cox explained – “As far as possible we try to promote and encourage the organisations themselves to acknowledge things like EFQM, and I know a number of trusts are operating along Lean Six Sigma lines.”

**INCREASING NUMBERS**

All told, the trusts supervise a caseload of some 247,000 offenders. To put things in perspective, at present the prison population amounts to around 86,000 people. Sue told us that “Roughly two thirds of the people we supervise are on Community Order. Our ultimate aim is to re-integrate them back into society, and mostly importantly, protect the public. We also supervise people who’ve come out of prison on licence – if they’re an adult offender who has served more than a 12 month sentence – and if they break the terms of their licence they can be returned to prison.”

“The principal aim in all this is reducing re-offending,” added Seberty Cox. “It’s very timely given what we have recently seen across various big towns and cities up and down the country in relation to the disturbances. We’re going to see an increased number of people coming in our direction, and as a responsible authority we will want to ensure that we are seen to be providing proper punishment, as well as rehabilitating offenders in the community. Not everybody going before the courts is going to end up in prison, which is obviously a good thing, as prison should be reserved for those who are most dangerous and for whom there are no alternative solutions.”

Such work can be very demanding for the staff on the ground delivering the service, and requires a great deal of skill and commitment. Sue Hall elaborated that, “If you haven’t got a good organisation that supports its staff then I don’t think the staff can perform. You need to make partnerships in the community and have good communications with local people.



**The Community Payback scheme benefits the UK by over 5 million hours of community service**

The excellence process makes you look at how well you do all of those things – and I think if you do all of those things well, you’re more likely to be effective in the work that you do.”

Seberty Cox concurs: “The PA, together with the PCA and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), work to ensure that the highest quality of professional training is provided across the board. In order for our members to do their job effectively there has to be range of training available for the people who actually do the work.”

In terms of pursuing excellence, both Sue and Seberty pointed to a process of change that began in the Probation Services more than a decade ago, and which has only intensified with the recent change of Government. Seberty Cox: “Probation is moving now in a direction where Government very much expects us to compete for services that have traditionally been provided by the Probation Service. It’s already been announced that probation will be competing for one of its main services – Community Payback, otherwise known as unpaid work – against some private sector organisations.

“So we need to ensure that our organisations are every bit as fit as any private sector body, to be able to compete and win in any competition. It’s very much about striving for excellence and being enterprising.”

**USING RESOURCES**

In conclusion, Sue Hall remarked that, “The current economic environment means we’re all having to look at how we can be leaner and use our resources which is obviously very challenging, and that’s in the context of the riots of 2011 and the huge influx of work that will mean for us as people go through the criminal justice system. What I would say for the public sector is that we tend to rise to the occasion. When there’s a challenge like that it sometimes brings out the best in people. You’ll have found Probation Officers staying up all night with the courts, you’ll have seen us doing reports at very short notice as people have been going through the courts, and all of that reflects the value of probation.”

**GOLD MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE**

This award, the BQF’s highest honour, is given for outstanding, continued commitment to sustained excellence over a number of years

