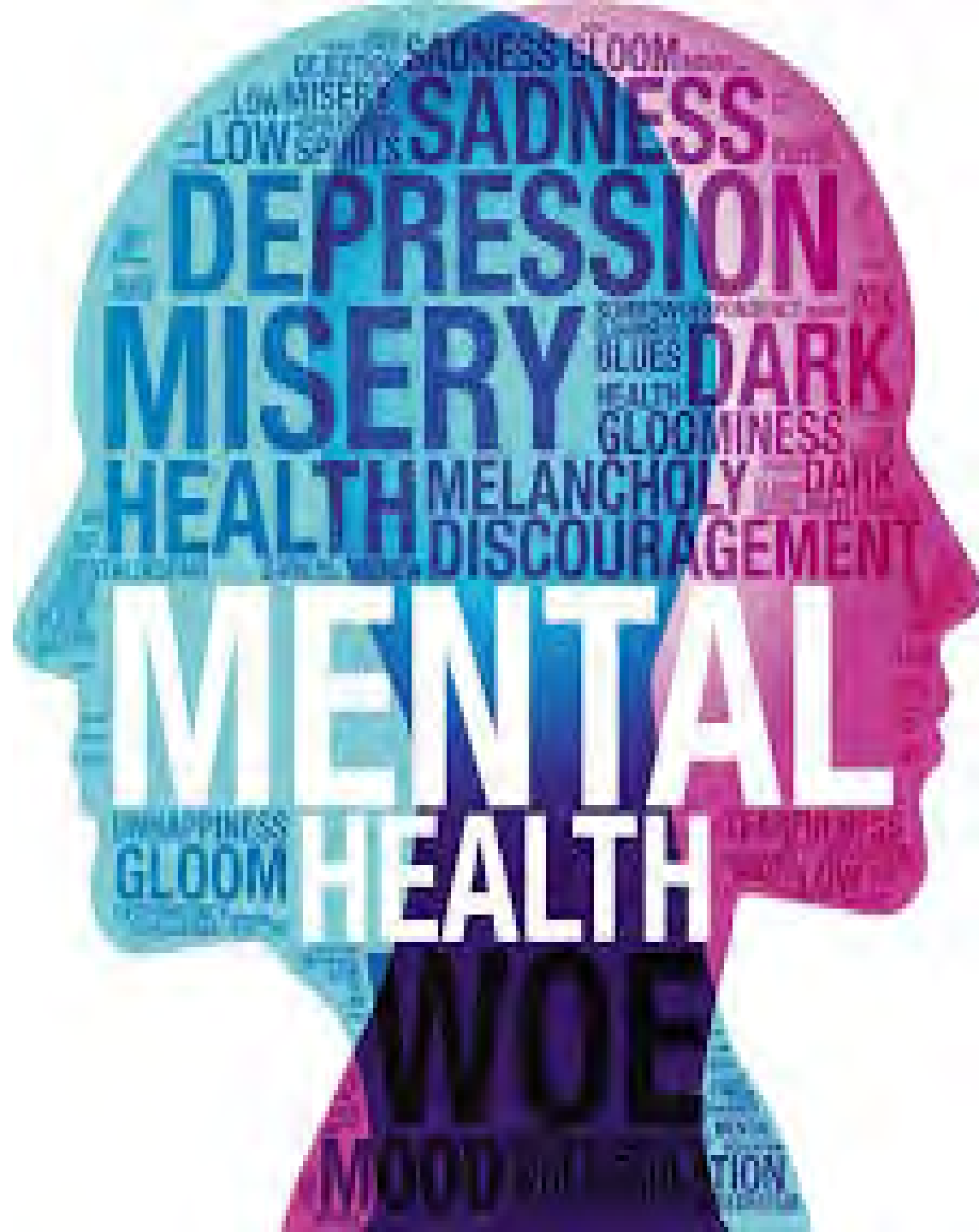


# STATE OF PLAY OF THE MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH IN THE PROBATION SERVICE OF MALTA

THERESA ATTARD  
FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST  
EMDR PRACTITIONER

DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION AND PAROLE  
MALTA





# Probation & Parole in Malta



## Early History

### British Colonial Period

- Malta's legal system, including probation and parole, has been significantly influenced by British colonial rule, which lasted from 1813 to 1964.
- During this period, British legal principles and practices were introduced, including those related to probation and parole.
- The Probation Act - introduced in 1957



# The Probation Act (1957)



- **The Probation Act** came at a time when many countries were rethinking their criminal justice policies in the post-World War II era, focusing more on rehabilitation and less on punitive measures.
- Aimed at modernizing Malta's judicial and correctional systems.

## **Purpose and Objectives:**

1. **Rehabilitation Focus:** Rehabilitation rather than punishing by placing individuals under probation, the law sought to reintegrate them into society as law-abiding citizens.
2. **Reduction of Recidivism:** Probation was intended to reduce the likelihood of reoffending by providing supervision and support.

# Key Provisions – Probation Act

**Probation Orders:** allowed courts to place offenders under the supervision of a probation officer instead of prison.

**Probation Officers:** established the role of probation officers - providing guidance and support to help offenders reintegrate into society.

**Conditions of Probation:** adherence to certain conditions, including regular reporting to a probation officer, attending psychological intervention sessions, finding employment and staying away from illegal substances.

**Breach of Probation:** back to court and sentenced for the original offence including imprisonment.



**PROBATION OF  
OFFENDERS ACT**

# The Restorative Justice Act (2012)



## Key aspects:

1. **Purpose and Principles:** emphasizes reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of offenders into society by addressing the needs of victims, hold offenders accountable in a constructive way.
2. **Facilitates communication:** between the victim and the offender through mediation.
3. **Victim Support:** victims given access to information and assistance in preparing for and participating in restorative justice sessions.
4. **Victims and perpetrators** both benefit from the mediation session.
5. **Introduction of Parole:** marked the introduction Parole. As a result, the Probation Services detached themselves from the Correctional Services Agency to become the Department of Probation and Parole.

# ANNUAL CRIME REPORT MALTA 2022

(Prof. Saviour Formosa,  
2022)

- **Decrease in Overall Crime Rate:** (5.4% decrease from previous year). Lowest crime rate in Malta over the past 15 years when adjusted for population growth with 14,133 reported crimes, translating to 28 crimes per 1,000 people.
- **Homicide:** remained stable - 1.7 per 100,000 people.
- **Reduction in Thefts:** In 2022, 4,612 thefts were reported, marking one of the lowest rates in the past 25 years.
- **Increases in Certain Crimes:**
  - **Domestic Violence:** 5% increase from 2021 to 2022, with psychological harm being a significant contributor.
  - **Computer-Related Crime:** 39% increase - particularly unauthorized access.
  - **Fraud:** substantial rise over the long term due to online scams.
  - **Drug-related crimes:** significant increase - 13.5% compared to previous years, involving substance abuse and trafficking.



# ANNUAL CRIME REPORT MALTA 2022 CONTINUED...

(Prof. Saviour Formosa,  
2022)

## Geographic Distribution of Crime:

- Most localities in Malta have crime rates close to the national average, with a few areas like **Floriana, Valletta, Bormla, and Zejtun** having slightly higher rates.



# Our Staff



In total = **33**

Director

Assistant Director

Administration: **4**

Principal Probation Officer **1**

Senior Probation Officers: **2**

Probation Officers: **21**

Forensic Psychologists: **2**

Forensic Psychology

Practitioner



# **DPP Government Department Malta 2022**

- **December 2022 - DPP supervised** - 943 active cases; community- based sanctions/court reports/parole board reports.
- **Parole Applications**  
57 parole application - 48 received their Parole licence.
- **Victims Support Act**  
Victims also have a say when it comes to offenders' application of parole. This is carried out via a concise report including recommendations to court.
  - 2022 - 173 victims – 50 reports.



# **Training & Mental Health Awareness**

- Probation staff routinely receive mental health awareness training through conferences, talks & workshops which are organised locally.
- Collaborate with Forensic Psychologists to assist them in managing their cases.
- Both Forensic Psychologists & Probation Officers are given annual training (both in-house & external):
  - substance abuse
  - mental health
  - victim support
  - domestic violence etc.





# The Psychology Unit



**2012**

The Psychology Unit was established.

## **The Role of Forensic Psychologists**

- To develop risk assessments.
- To provide effective supervision and support for probation and parole staff working with offenders.

**2013**

## **The Psychology Unit expanded its services**

- Provide therapeutic services to offenders aimed at reducing recidivism.
- Carry out assessments and interventions.
- Currently composed of 2 forensic psychologists and 1 forensic psychology practitioner.



## **Forensic Psychologists' Screening Tools**

1. Personality Disorders
2. ADHD
3. Intellectual Ability
4. Anger
5. Violence
6. Domestic Violence
7. Psychopathy
8. Sex Offending
9. Depression & Anxiety
10. PTSD



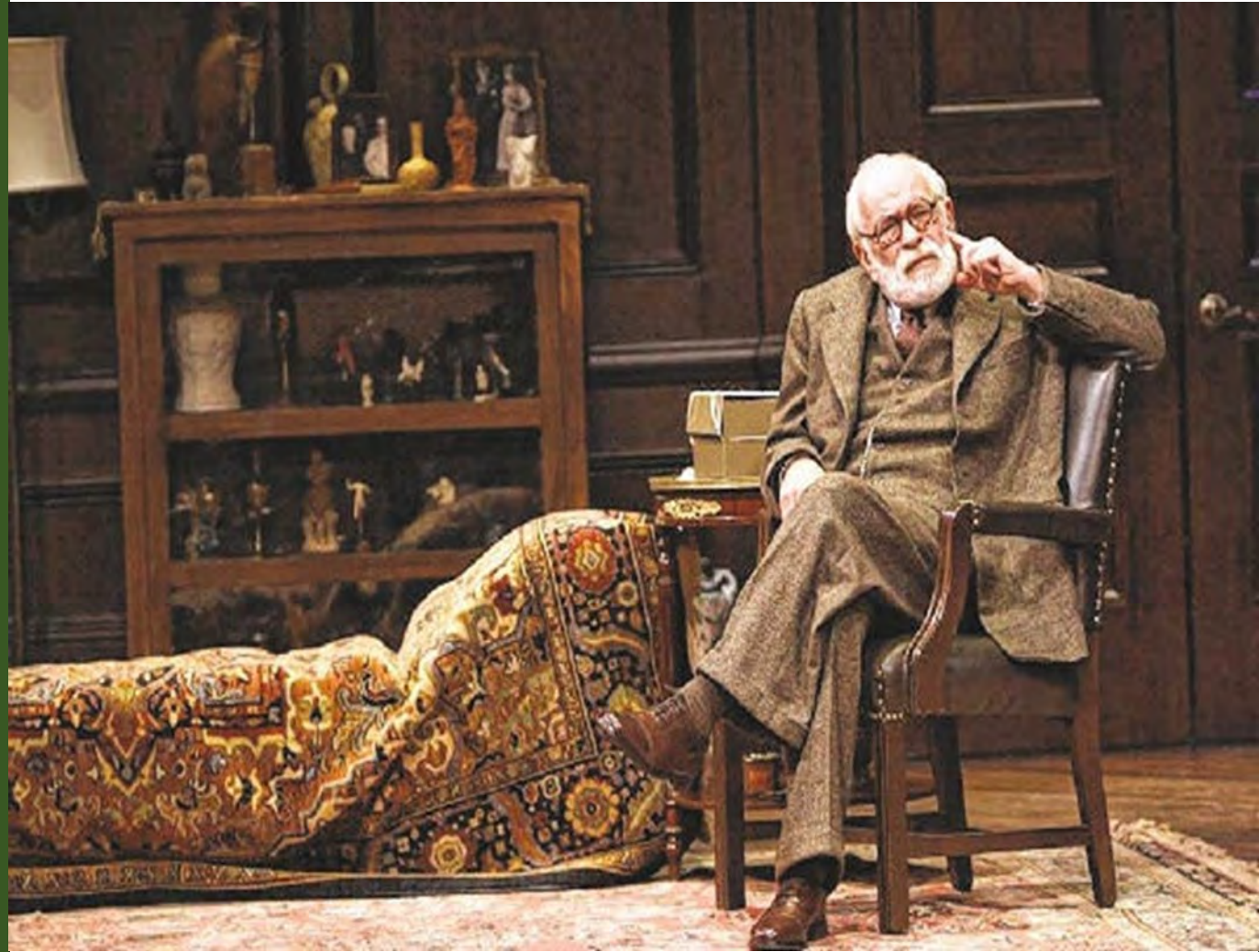


Andrews & Bonta (2007)



# Interventions addressing Mental Health Issues

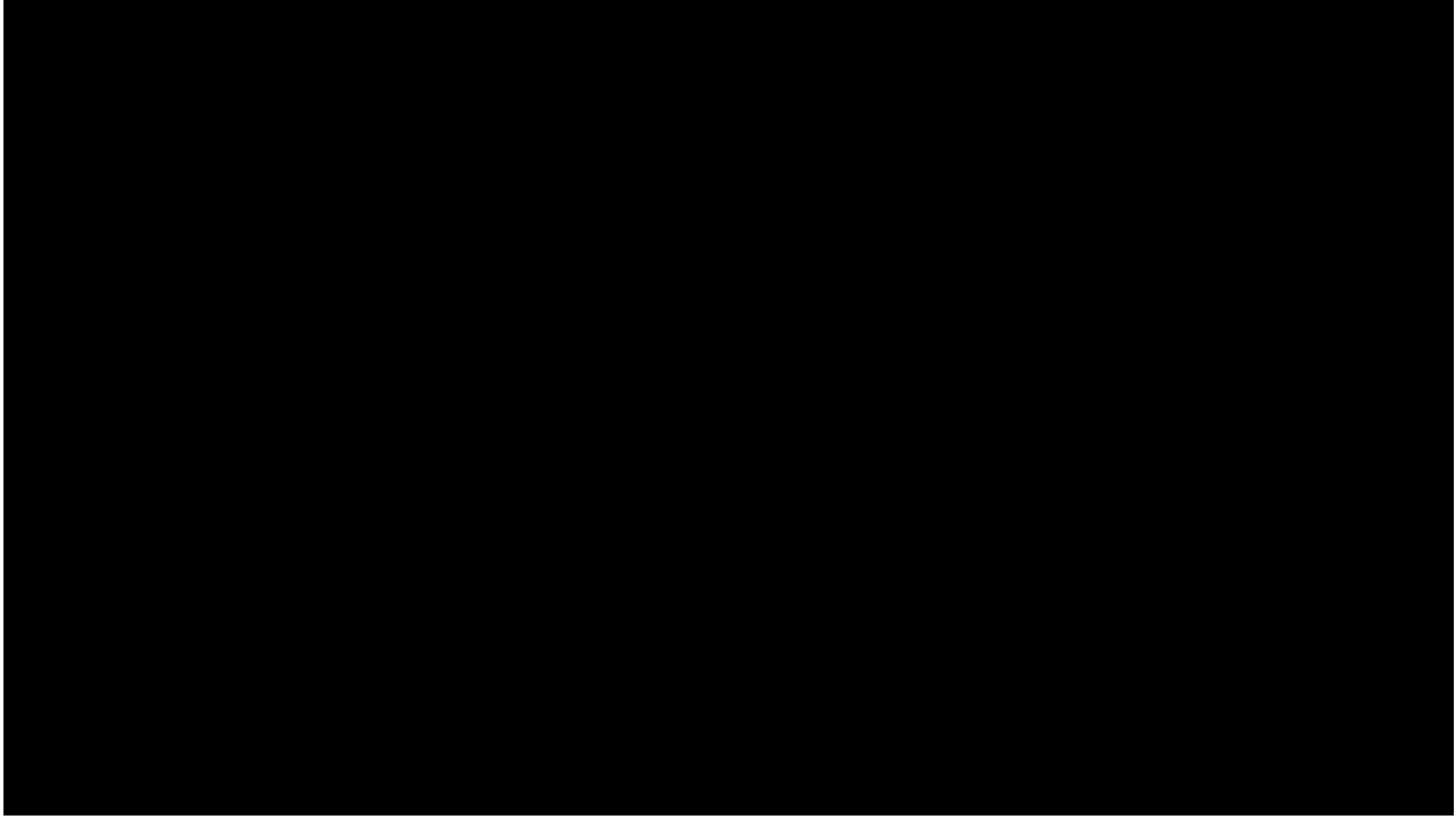
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT).
- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT).
- Gestalt Psychotherapy.
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR).



# EMDR Therapy



- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) - psychotherapy that enables people to heal from the symptoms and emotional distress that are the result of disturbing life experiences.
- EMDR therapy shows that the mind can heal from psychological trauma much as the body recovers from physical trauma.
- EMDR therapy demonstrates that a similar sequence of events occurs with mental processes.
- The brain's information processing system naturally moves toward mental health. If the system is blocked or imbalanced by the impact of a disturbing event, the emotional wound festers and can cause intense suffering. Once the block is removed, healing resumes (Shapiro, 1989).
- Using the detailed protocols and procedures learned in EMDR therapy training sessions, clinicians help clients activate their natural healing processes.





# Interventions addressing Offending Behaviour



## Individual &/or Group Programmes

- Anger Management Programme (I-MAP) – individual/group.
- Cognitive Skills Programme (CSP) – individual/group.
- Sex Offender Intervention Programme – individual.



# The I-MAP

➤ Based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) & Mindfulness.

## **Key topics addressed in the I-MAP:**

- understanding anger
- recognizing triggers
- monitoring thoughts, regulating emotions & controlling actions
- improving communication skills
- cultivating relationships
- identifying & challenging unhealthy thinking styles
- applying all acquired tools & knowledge.



**ANGER  
MANAGEMENT**

# The CSP Programme

- A 'thinking skills' programme for offenders.
- Individual & group - between medium to high risk.
- *Serves to equip offenders with skills such as:*
  - **problem solving**
  - **consequential thinking**
  - **decision making**
  - **moral reasoning**
  - **perspective taking**
  - **emotional control**
- The CSP also supports offenders in developing their skills/goal setting & making plans to achieve these goals without resorting to offending.

# **CSP CORE MODULES**

## **Component 1:**

### **Self-control**

- Understanding decision making
- Setting future goals
- Managing emotions

## **Component 2:**

### **Problem Solving:**

- Frames of mind
- Core beliefs
- Identifying & describing problems & goals
- Thinking of options

## **Component 3:**

### **Positive relationships:**

- Relationships
- Perspective taking
- Communication
- Resolving conflict & negotiation skills

# The Community Based Sex- Offender Programme

## **The modules:**

- a core introductory module
- denial and resistance
- cognitive distortions and the offence cycle
- consent in sexual relations
- victim empathy
- affect management
- intimacy and relationship skills
- social competence and relapse and maintenance.

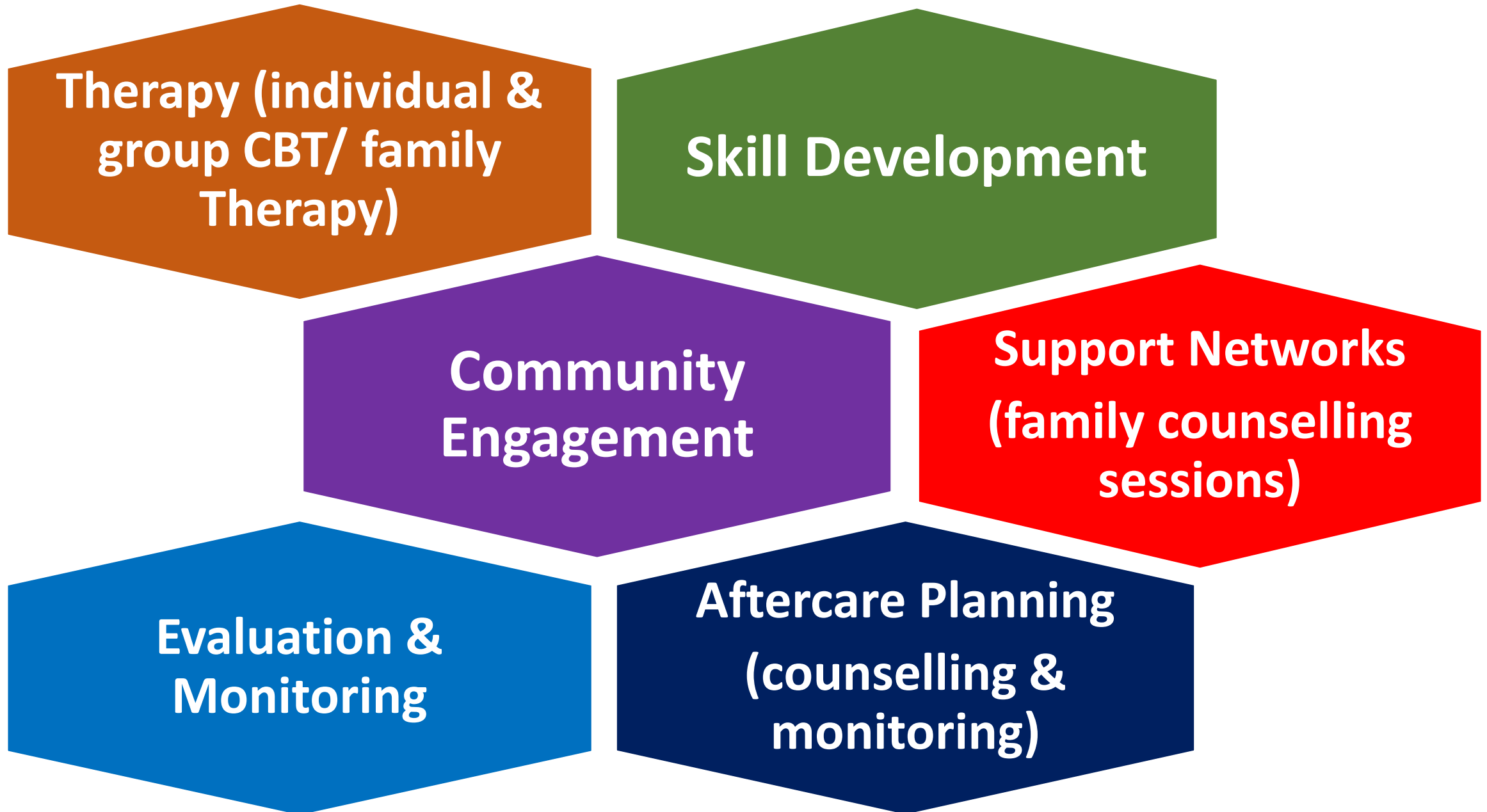


## Main Challenges & Future Plans



- Strengthening of existing services – expanding the unit/increasing human resources.
- Introducing the youth programme: **Back on Track Programme.**
- Designed to support young individuals with challenges such as, substance abuse and juvenile delinquency.
- **Focus:** providing holistic support & interventions to help youth reintegrate into society & make positive life choices without resorting to crime.

# Back on Track Youth Programme: Modules



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**THANK YOU!**