



HM Prison &  
Probation Service

# Probation Workforce Strategy

(2023-2025)

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# Introduction



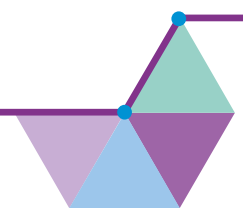
**The Government's Beating Crime Plan demonstrates that probation continues to sit at the heart of its ambitions to strengthen the Criminal Justice System. As a vital part of HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice, we are a fundamental service contributing to our Outcome Delivery Plan outcomes, reducing reoffending and protecting the public.**

Amy Rees, HMPPS  
Director General Chief  
Executive Officer.

The Probation Workforce Programme has taken the opportunity to review our Probation Workforce Strategy, reflecting on the considerable progress that has been made in achieving our commitments, including the recruitment of 2525 trainee Probation Officers from 2020 to 2022. Through direct communication and by looking at the results of the People Survey, we have openly learnt from the challenges and listened to our valued workforce about their experiences and views on the strategy's ongoing focus. We have heard their concerns about the current workload pressures and the considerable level of changes being imposed on how they conduct their work. In turn, we have refreshed the strategy to reflect how we will continue to work together to achieve our shared objectives, whilst minimising the pressures and where possible, creating more efficient systems and procedures that allow our workforce to focus on the important work they do.

Since this strategy was first published in 2020, the Probation Service has been unified, providing the opportunity for us to deliver a single, consistent service with a focus on excellent practice. We have welcomed a considerable number of new colleagues and value the breadth of skills and experience they have brought. We recognise that integration at such scale takes time, and we continue in our efforts to embed a shared culture, where we are open to learn and seek continuous improvement in everything we do, ensuring that everyone feels a sense of belonging and understands their vital contribution to our strategic objectives.

We appreciate that COVID-19 continues to impact on our workforce, both professionally and personally. As the risks associated with the pandemic thankfully diminish, the unprecedented experiences of the past two-and-a-half years have not disappeared. Our workforce responded exceptionally to the challenges of COVID-19 and we are working to ensure that the innovation and learning from our delivery during this time are captured and integrated into future work.



We continue to prioritise our approach to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB), and have taken the opportunity of refreshing this strategy to work closely with our EDIB leads and networks to ensure that EDIB not only has its own specific commitment but that it is also embedded in the delivery of every commitment going forward. We will also continue to prioritise progressing commitments that seek to increase the diversity of our workforce and are committed to supporting our existing staff from ethnic minority backgrounds, as reflected in the progress of the Race Action Programme.

This strategy is for every single member of our probation workforce, regardless of role or grade, and sets out our ongoing commitments to enable them to be their best by investing in their wellbeing, continuing professional development and experience of the Probation Service as a rewarding place to work. We have shown that we have listened and responded in this refreshed strategy, by addressing their most pressing concerns, such as those relating to pay and reward, in the updated commitments.

The implementation of this refreshed strategy will have a particular focus on the impact and ultimate benefits for our workforce. We must ensure that it adds value and makes a real difference to them, and in turn people on probation, victims and the wider public. We will demonstrate an open learning culture by taking a dynamic approach to its evaluation, further updating it where necessary, to ensure it aligns with the changes happening across HMPPS and in wider society.

The Probation Workforce Programme is deeply rooted in transformation for the workforce and as the programme comes to an end in 2025, having worked towards achieving its objectives, we will continue to collaborate with colleagues across the Probation Service and HMPPS more broadly. This will ensure that the strategy provides a foundation to support the transition to business as usual and contributes to the long-term stability of the Probation Service in the future, with the workforce at the heart of everything we do.

# Why do we need a strategy?

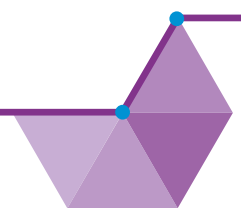
**Given that this is a Probation Workforce Strategy, the remainder of this document will be directed at the probation workforce, emphasising what it means for you and your work.**

An overarching Probation Workforce Strategy helps us to create a shared vision for the future direction of our workforce, and to articulate it clearly to all those who are involved in bringing it to life, as well as our stakeholders, and the wider public.

Having a strategy in place means we know what we need to do and how we need to go about doing it, in order to address the challenges our workforce faces over the next three years, whilst providing a solid foundation for the future. It is then through more detailed action plans at both national and regional levels that the strategy is implemented, the commitments are delivered, the overarching strategic objectives are collectively achieved, and the benefits truly felt by the workforce.

A Probation Workforce Strategy also enables us to align with the overarching direction of HMPPS (set out in the HMPPS Business Strategy) and the Ministry of Justice (set out in the Outcome Delivery Plan), whilst making connections between the work that is happening across the Probation Service to support our workforce, such as Prioritising Probation and our focus on developing our approach as a Learning Organisation. We are well connected with existing strategies impacting our workforce, such as Target Operating Model Implementation and Recruitment & Retention. We intend to bring all workforce-related strategies together as we move towards business as usual, providing further clarity and efficiency for us all.

Ultimately, when we deliver against the things we have said we are going to do, this will allow our workforce to feel happy, supported and respected at work. This will in turn mean that they are able to focus on the important and life changing work that we do in probation – supporting and improving the lives of people on probation, victims and the communities that we serve.



# Our objectives

**Making clear what our objectives are as part of a strategy gives us all a chance to contribute to achieving them and delivering our vision for a strengthened, innovative and professional probation workforce, which leads the criminal justice system, protects the public and reduces re-offending now and into the future.**

In evaluating the earlier Probation Workforce Strategy, we have spoken directly to you, our workforce, people with lived experience of probation and victims' teams to make sure that our Probation Workforce Strategy objectives continue to drive the right activities, thinking and behaviours. This allows us to deliver excellent practice and services, whilst addressing the biggest challenges you face.

You have told us that our existing objectives are the right ones, that they matter to you and reflect your work priorities. We have worked to develop associated strategic benefits, so that we can check that the strategy is implemented in a way that makes a positive difference to your work. We will tell you more about our strategic benefits later in this document.

Whilst a number of the original commitments aligned to the objectives have been achieved (see 'what we have achieved' section that follows), you have said that the remaining ones need to change in order to accurately demonstrate the future focus of your work, and you will see that we have updated the commitments in response.

The objectives of our Probation Workforce Strategy are not just the responsibility of individual staff, teams or those in certain roles to achieve (whether on the frontline, in the community, custodial settings or in central/supporting teams). We all need to live these objectives, make them part of our professional lives and our approach to working in probation. We must embed them in whatever ways we can (e.g., in staff inductions, business plans, learning and development activities, etc) to ensure that together, we achieve them.

As outlined in our introduction, the Probation Workforce Strategy will only truly succeed if we keep Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at the heart of what we do. We have conducted equality analyses on our Probation Workforce Strategy and the work that we are doing within our Probation Workforce Programme. We will continue to monitor and update these to make sure we continue to do everything we can to include and support everyone and respond to their needs.

# Objective 1: Promoting wellbeing for everyone

**If we want to deliver excellent practice and make real change in people's lives and for the communities we serve, then it's critical that we feel good when we're at work (physically and mentally) and that we feel included, respected, like we belong and with a manageable and stable workload. We hope that a continued focus on wellbeing ensures that you feel rewarded and supported with high job satisfaction and retention. We each have an individual responsibility to take care of ourselves, but also to look out for and support others whether that's someone we work with or someone we support through the work we do.**

## What we have achieved so far:

- Implemented a Wellbeing Action Plan. This includes the rollout of Mental Health Allies and making sure regions have dedicated wellbeing leads, champions and a supporting framework to make things better.
- Provided additional psychological wellbeing support to staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

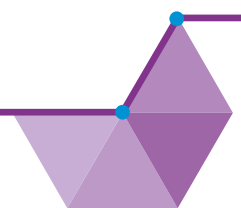
## Our ongoing commitments:

### 1. Deliver four initiatives through the Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2022-2024) focused on improving staff mental health and resilience by March 2023. This includes work to:

- Explore opportunities to increase awareness of the support available and identify gaps in staff support.
- Promote engagement with and share learning from the MoJ Wellbeing Pulse Survey.
- Evaluate and share learning from the HMPPS pilots to support carers and staff experiencing menopause.
- Continue to develop the Mental Health Allies structure, review findings and set development plans.

### 2. Design, develop and implement a Workforce Planning System (WPS) that provides the Probation Service with an integrated, accurate and consistent way to precisely model our workforce requirements. This will ensure that we have the right people, in the right place, at the right time, to manage workloads effectively, support wellbeing and enable excellence in probation practice. This includes work to:

- Deliver an updated Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) this year following engagement with Trade Unions, which will include updated allocated points which better reflects the workload (January 2023).
- Put in place a clear governance structure and change function to support all workforce planning decisions and manage the impact of changes (March 2023).
- Deliver an activity weightings database that includes tasks and activities undertaken by our workforce, as well as timings, to enable accurate resource modelling (June 2024).
- Put in place an improved IT solution – making better use of existing IT systems where we need to – to support, connect and integrate the different teams, components, data sources and existing systems that make up the Workforce Planning System, ensuring WPS is efficient and sustainable (December 2024).



## Objective 2: Attracting and retaining talented people

**Talent is born out of the diverse life experiences, journeys, insights and perspectives of our workforce and future workforce. We want probation to be a rich, diverse, inclusive and fulfilling place to work where our workforce is passionate and committed and represents the diverse communities and people we serve. We all play a role in achieving this through our interactions with others and we must challenge ourselves to think about our own contributions to holding onto and attracting talented people.**

### What we have achieved so far:

- Updated our Recruitment and Retention strategy to ensure we can respond to changes in our operational environment and expand the focus on the overall principle of recruiting staff and reducing attrition.
- By January 2021 we recruited 1007 trainee Probation Officers. This increased to 1518 for the year 2021/2022.
- Reviewed the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) including new qualification routes to create a long-term strategy for the future of the PQiP.
- Introduced a new joiner induction framework to improve the experience of new starters including a buddy system along with peer coaching and support.
- Made it easier for our staff to become trainee Probation Officers by introducing new internal recruitment routes and programmes, for example, Probation Services Officer (PSO) progression with or without a degree and making part-time routes available.

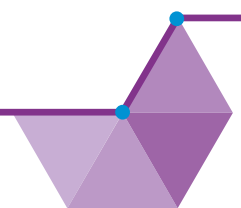
- Negotiated and agreed a multi-year reform and pay deal with Trade Unions, and then with their memberships at ballot. This provides certainty for staff regarding pay for three years (22/23-24/25), introduces necessary reforms to the pay structure and competency-based pay progression to replace legacy arrangements that were in contravention of civil service pay rules.

### Our ongoing commitments:

3. **Further increase probation staff this year through the recruitment of 1,500 new Probation Officers, to be in training by the end of March 2023.**
4. **Following the PQiP review, continue to implement the recommendations, including to design and implement new academic curriculum and develop a new vocational assessment in conjunction with Skills for Justice (in place for the March 2023 PQiP cohort).**



- 5. Ensure that the Competency-Based pay progression Framework (CBF), linked to pay progression for all Probation Service staff from 1 April 2022, is operating effectively, fairly and efficiently for all Probation Service staff.**
  
- 6. Continue to work with People Group to improve understanding and application of the Probation Job Evaluation process and ensure that there is greater transparency with outcomes, by March 2023. This includes work to:**
  - Establish a system of governance to support job evaluation and provide strategic oversight.
  - Establish a system of regular updates on job evaluation to the organisation, staff and Trade Unions.
  - Utilise the intranet to create dedicated pages and resources on job evaluation.
  - Draft an e-learning package to prepare job description developers effectively.
  - Train additional panel members from within probation regions to improve knowledge and panel member availability and diversity.



## Objective 3: Support and develop our people

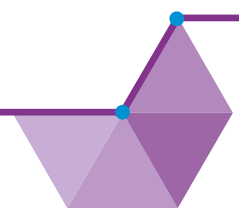
**The skills, expertise, life experiences and journeys of our workforce are unique, and they are critical in helping us to deliver excellent practice and services. We have been transforming our model for learning and development and we will continue to support, develop and make available opportunities for growth for our workforce. We need to ensure our workforce has time and space to be able to access opportunities for growth, regardless of career stage, role or development needs/aspirations.**

### What we have achieved so far:

- Transformed probation's model for learning and development, including creating a specialist design team (the Design Faculty) and significantly increasing the capacity of the delivery team (Learning Services). The model adopts a learner-centred approach to the design of learning, informed by the evidence and subject matter experts and embeds evaluation and quality assurance throughout all products.
- To date, the model has developed several different learning packages including Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision (SEEDS2) and Safeguarding, as well as digital products such as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).
- Improved the coordination of learning for probation staff through a Probation Learning Coordination panel, a forum that brings together learning partners from across HMPPS to collaborate, share resources & best practice and coordinate the development and delivery of learning for the Probation Service.
- Following a successful trial year, we launched the Competency-Based pay Framework (CBF) on the 1 April 2022. CBF will support staff moving through their band pay points by capturing the breadth and quality of work being delivered.
- Launched a framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), including a learning curriculum framework for all staff in the Probation Service.
- Set out the current mandatory, required and desirable learning for each role. Enabling staff to access the relevant learning for their current and future roles. We will continue to develop this against the new learning curriculum framework.
- Established the Advisory Panel for Probation Learning (APPL) to bring together expertise and innovative thinking from across the Criminal Justice System.

## Our ongoing commitments:

7. Review and enhance the Learning and Development Model by March 2023, continuing to embed this to enable a comprehensive and modernised learning offer for probation.
8. Support probation staff to engage with the learning offer more readily by continuously improving the organisation of probation learning on HMPPS's learning management system, My Learning, through 2023 and continuously improving this in the future.
9. Develop the internal professional register to be digitally integrated and hold details of the qualification status of probation qualified staff in core roles, information regarding their Continuing Professional Development, alongside probation professional standards, to launch from April 2023.



## Objective 4: Create a more diverse workplace where everyone feels included

**We are building an environment that creates diversity and promotes equality to help support a unified and purpose-driven culture for probation and those who we serve. We will tackle racism and other forms of discrimination where it exists in the service and we will ensure the workforce is equipped and supported to do the same.**

### What we have achieved so far:

- Delivered the first Probation Workforce EDIB Action Plan developed in collaboration with, and shaped by, employees from across probation. The action plan ensured that we achieved our key aims like ensuring the workforce better reflects the diversity of the communities we work with.
- Started and will continue to recruit people with lived experience through our Going Forward into Employment Scheme (GFIE) to ensure we learn and benefit from those with different and valuable life experiences.
- Continuing to use and develop the HMPPS Welsh Language Scheme to promote a bilingual culture within the workplace through actions such as bilingual recruitment processes, raising awareness of the right of staff to use the language and ensuring adequate numbers of Welsh speaking staff.
- Engaged with our workforce to develop a Cultural Vision and Code for Probation. This tool will help to embed an inclusive and diverse culture into all aspects of our workforce.

### Our ongoing commitments:

10. **Develop and implement a 12-month rolling Probation Service EDIB Action Plan to ensure that we continue to build an environment that creates diversity and promotes equality.**
11. **Throughout 2023-2025 we will continue to target individuals from underrepresented groups via new labour markets, marketing campaigns, and by diversifying the entry pathways. This includes work to:**
  - Analyse the most effective advertising approaches to attract under-represented groups.
  - Analyse the end-to-end recruitment process to identify areas where diverse candidates may be disadvantaged, after each PQiP campaign.
  - Scale up our recruitment of those with lived experience where appropriate and those with broad and varied life experience.
12. **Embed a more fair and inclusive approach to recruitment across the organisation. Through the Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2022-24 we will work with colleagues to review best practice in the MoJ Inclusive Recruitment Guidance. This includes work to understand where and when to use Expressions of Interest for roles, the use of Diverse Panel Workstreams and more support and learning opportunities for staff from ethnic minority backgrounds.**

## Objective 5: Fostering confident leaders who inspire and empower others

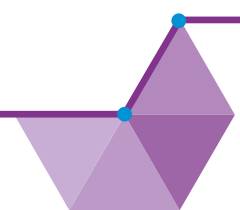
**Now more than ever we are reliant on innovative, confident and diverse leadership. Leadership is demonstrated at all levels, and we are committed to nurturing this. We do not need to be managers to be leaders, but all leaders must inspire, challenge and empower the people they work with to help us achieve the objectives of our Probation Workforce Strategy and deliver excellence.**

### What we have achieved so far:

- Published the Aspiring Leaders Toolkit to support those considering a move into leadership roles – the toolkit supports development, acknowledging and harnessing existing skills, helping to grow confidence on the leadership journey.
- Continued to host workshops and provide guidance for senior leaders, to help support them as they create an inclusive environment where difference is positively valued.
- Published the Managerial Role Review (MRR) which looked at how to improve the well-being, capacity and efficiency of Senior Probation Officers in Courts and Sentence Management.
- Continued to extend the developmental learning and development schedule for operational leadership in Approved Premises.

### Our ongoing commitments:

13. Develop and roll out the programme “Leading you, Leading others, Leading the organisation”, to establish a diverse pipeline of new and existing leaders by identifying and detailing the definition of a leader and developing their leadership practices by March 2023.
14. Develop the culture and behaviours we want to embed as an organisation, through the development of a Learning Organisation approach which enables people to be at their best. Delivery has commenced with one region, with expansion to additional areas by June 2023.
15. Following completion of the Managerial Role Review (MRR) of the Senior Probation Officer (SPO) role in Sentence Management and Courts, we are taking forward a number of recommendations, including an increase in target staffing to allow SPO Administrative Support roles to be recruited. By July 2023 we will have completed an evaluation of the role to assess its value.



# How will we know we have succeeded?

We will know we have succeeded when we realise the benefits and they are felt by our workforce. Some benefits will take longer to realise than others and we are monitoring progress against all benefits, even those that will be realised over several years. As the Probation Workforce Programme draws to a close in 2025, we will communicate plans for continuing to embed our long-term benefits into 'business as usual', ensuring that change is sequenced in a manageable way. We will transparently track and measure our progress, to make sure our workforce can see and has confidence in what we are doing.

## What are the benefits?

Benefits are a good way of understanding the future vision for the Probation Service, for a strengthened, innovative and professional probation workforce, which leads the criminal justice system, protects the public and reduces re-offending now and into the future.

### The long-term benefits

#### **Benefit 1: A resilient workforce with good levels of wellbeing**

**What this means:** Staff are highly satisfied in their roles and working environment, there are high levels of attendance and low levels of attrition, morale is good, and staff can flex to effectively meet fluctuating demands across probation regions. There is a good work-life balance being experienced across all areas of the business, as well as greater social and team opportunities, leading to a greater sense of inclusion and belonging. Retention is high as the workforce trusts their organisation, feels rewarded and supported.

#### **Benefit 2: People are equipped to fulfil their roles and engage in professional development**

**What this means:** Staff access and receive effective learning and development opportunities to benefit them in their role as well as enabling them to grow and expand their knowledge, experience and potential, opening up further opportunities both laterally and upwards within the organisation. Staff have increased confidence in their own ability as well as more experience and skills to apply in the execution of their duties, enhancing levels of engagement and change with people on probation. The learning experience is considered world class by its workforce.

#### **Benefit 3: Optimal workforce levels and experience**

**What this means:** The organisation retains staff with high levels of professional probation experience in addition to attracting new entrants to the service who have opportunities to develop their experience. Knowledge and expertise are shared, enabling effective delivery across all functions of probation at any particular time. Workforce is recruited at the right levels and timings, feels engaged and motivated to deliver their role, and their deployment is targeted to maximise impact across delivery; providing sufficient resources in all delivery areas to maintain excellence, meet changes in demand and ensure workload remain consistently within an effective operating range. Recognition is acknowledged through the existence of a probation register, with confidence in stakeholders evidently high.

#### **Benefit 4: A diverse and skilled workforce able to effectively support the communities we serve**

**What this means:** Recruitment approach facilitates the workforce to be reflective of the diverse communities of people on probation, enabling better representation and engagement. Staff with protected characteristics, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, feel that their different needs are heard, understood, and addressed and their views and contributions to the work of Probation are valued and included to enrich the Probation Service. Authentic leadership means that staff have the right skills, learning and development, knowledge, and confidence to take account of diverse experience and needs in delivering services which effectively engage, motivate, and enable change for people on probation.

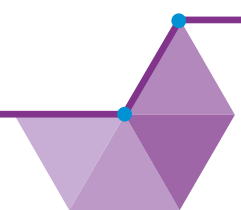
## **Our short to medium-term benefits**

- Increased numbers of staff to deliver the work required.
- Increased diversity in the workplace.
- Increased capability and competence of staff to meet operational needs (including people on probation).
- Improved ability to manage workload demands.
- Improved staff retention.
- Improvement in staff wellbeing, confidence and morale.
- Increased SPO wellbeing.
- Improved ability of SPOs (Sentence Management & Courts) to manage workload demands.

## **How we will measure our progress**

We, the Strategy and Improvement team within the wider Probation Workforce Programme have implemented a process to make sure our objectives, commitments and benefits are being achieved and are having the intended impact on our workforce. This process uses evidence, regional engagement, insight and data to better understand what works for our service. This also holds us to account at each stage and ensures that we have done what we said we would do.

We will also continue to prioritise hearing directly from you, our valued workforce, making best use of individuals' time. This will help make sure that the voices of our people remain at the heart of everything we do.





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