



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Action Plan Submitted: 13th February 2025

A Response to: A thematic inspection of the recruitment, training, and retention of frontline probation practitioners.

Report Published: 16th January 2025

INTRODUCTION

HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and HM Inspectorate of Probation for England and Wales are independent inspectorates which provide scrutiny of the conditions for, and treatment of prisoners and offenders. They report their findings for prisons, Young Offender Institutions, and effectiveness of the work of probation, and youth offending services across England and Wales to Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). In response to the report HMPPS / MoJ are required to draft a robust and timely action plan to address the recommendations. The action plan confirms whether recommendations are agreed, partly agreed, or not agreed (see categorisations below). Where a recommendation is agreed or partly agreed, the action plans provide specific steps and actions to address these. Actions are clear, measurable, achievable, and relevant with the owner and timescale of each step clearly identified. Action plans are sent to HMIP and published on the GOV.UK website. Progress against the implementation and delivery of the action plans will also be monitored and reported on.

Term	Definition	Additional comment
Agreed	All of the recommendation is agreed with, can be achieved and is affordable.	The response should clearly explain how the recommendation will be achieved along with timescales. Actions should be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) as possible. Actions should be specific enough to be tracked for progress.
Partly Agreed	Only part of the recommendation is agreed with, is achievable, affordable and will be implemented. This might be because we cannot implement the whole recommendation because of commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.	The response must state clearly which part of the recommendation will be implemented along with SMART actions and tracked for progress. There must be an explanation of why we cannot fully agree the recommendation - this must state clearly whether this is due to commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.
Not Agreed	The recommendation is not agreed and will not be implemented. This might be because of commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.	The response must clearly state the reasons why we have chosen this option. There must be an explanation of why we cannot agree the recommendation - this must state clearly whether this is due to commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.



ACTION PLAN: A thematic inspection of the recruitment, training, and retention of frontline probation practitioners.

1. Rec No	2. Recommendation	3. Agreed/ Partly Agreed/ Not Agreed	4. Response Action Taken/Planned	5. Responsible Owner	6. Target Date
Ministry of Justice should:					
1	Ensure that probation practitioners' pay and benefits adequately reflect the responsibilities of the role and are sufficiently competitive to attract and retain staff.	Partly Agreed	<p>This action is partly agreed. Whilst the principle of pay and roles being competitive is accepted and supported, we must operate within departmental affordability constraints and within the parameters of the Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance.</p> <p>The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) will complete annual pay benchmarking of appropriate roles and conduct a review of pay, updating the pay scales as appropriate following collective bargaining with Probation's recognised trade unions.</p> <p>MoJ will continue to utilise the competency-based pay framework, updating where appropriate.</p> <p>MoJ will continue to review additional workplace benefits and employee schemes to maximise the value of non-pay related incentives.</p>	Deputy Director Pay, Reward, Pensions and Job Evaluation	<p>September 2025 and annual review</p> <p>April 2025 and annual review</p> <p>September 2025 and annual review</p>



2	Work with HMPPS to evaluate recruitment processes, to understand disproportionality of outcomes at each stage of the recruitment process.	Agreed	<p>The Ministry of Justice Occupational Psychology Centre of Expertise (MoJ People & Capability) has made changes to the recruitment process for probation roles to ensure fairness and inclusion. Evaluations of the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) process in 2023 and 2024 led to updates in application questions, introduction of a new values-based assessment, and changes to the online assessment centre. These changes have been found to be fair and compliant with the Equality Act 2010 for all protected characteristic groups. For other frontline probation roles, standards were revised, where required, based on evaluations in November 2024. Ongoing monitoring and evaluations will continue to ensure fairness. Over the next 12 months the evaluation of recruitment processes will be extended to capture all frontline probation practitioners and identify improvements that can be made to the assessment exercises in order to allow us to track if there are disparities in outcomes. These findings will be shared and used to inform future assessment solutions.</p> <p>HMPPS/MoJ will continue to use the results from candidate and assessor feedback survey questionnaires to inform improvements to the recruitment process.</p>	Deputy Director Resourcing, Selection, Onboarding (MoJ People Group) and Group Head Probation Resourcing, Transformation and Projects (MoJ People Group)	<p>March 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p>
3	Work with HMPPS to evaluate PQiP recruitment campaigns by cohort, to	Agreed	MoJ Recruitment Marketing and Communications will evaluate the efficacy of Probation recruitment campaigns and work with cross-functional teams across HMPPS (including Resourcing, Operations and MoJ Digital), to (where needed) re-define objectives, audiences, campaign	Deputy Director Resourcing, Selection, Onboarding	March 2026



	understand links between marketing and selection, and completion outcomes and longer-term retention.		<p>and candidate experience, and evaluation approach to ensure we are maximising our reach and impact for the probation audience. This process will consider a range of organisational and audience factors including candidate skills required, current and future job roles, salaries, regions, demographics, attitudes and behaviours of candidates and existing IT systems and technology. Where able, we will consider the further use of technology to support our audience understanding and delivery of the campaign and candidate experience.</p> <p>HMPPS Workforce and Capability have been working with the MoJ data analytics team to collate and interrogate the data relating to attrition rates of PQiP learners. We continue to refine this data to elicit as much detail as possible regarding the characteristics of leavers. This data is reported through the PQiP Assurance sub-committee and will be used to determine if there are protected groups who are disproportionately represented in the data and if any Programme changes are required to support these groups.</p>	<p>(MoJ People Group) and Head of Recruitment Marketing (MoJ Communications Directorate)</p> <p>Deputy Director Workforce & Capability, Transforming Delivery Directorate</p>	March 2026
His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:					
4	Following consultation, provide regions with user friendly	Partly Agreed	This recommendation is partly agreed as the Workforce Planning Tool is essential to improving Single Operating Platform (SOP) data quality and meeting central Human Resource (HR) and finance data reporting needs across HMPPS (covering business units across prisons,		



workforce planning tools which provide a consistent national approach to understanding local staffing profiles and adequately support workforce planning.	<p>probation, and headquarters). As such, there is limited flexibility or capacity to make considerable changes to the approach for Probation alone.</p> <p>Activity has been undertaken to enable the SOP HR and Payroll system to hold PQiP and Probation Service Officers under separate job titles, which will allow for segmentation of data. This will enable individual functions to review how they can utilise this functionality to support workforce planning.</p> <p>Monthly meetings between HMPPS Central Operations Support (COS), HMPPS Workforce Modelling and regional teams have been introduced to improve the tool. This has resulted in quarterly training events and the introduction of a Questions and Answers forum alongside the provision of improved guidance as to how to complete the Workforce Planning Tool, including instructional videos.</p> <p>HMPPS Central Operations Support (COS) will engage with probation regions to better understand where they find challenges with workforce planning more generally and the extent to which their needs are being met by the resources provided by the centre in this area.</p> <p>Engagement meetings will continue, with a focus on the issues raised within the thematic inspection, to drive continuous improvements to data quality and the</p>	<p>Deputy Director HMPPS HR Business Partners</p> <p>Head of HMPPS Workforce Modelling and Deputy Director Probation Operations Directorate/COS</p> <p>Deputy Director Probation Operations Directorate/COS</p> <p>Head of HMPPS Workforce Modelling</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>August 2025</p> <p>August 2025</p>
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			<p>Workforce Planning Tool. The ongoing quarterly training will also focus on highlighting the importance of the tool and how it supports local, regional, and national workforce planning.</p> <p>The timeliness of reporting of updates to regions will be improved so that the national data aligns more closely with the latest data the regions hold. This approach will be subject to ongoing review through monthly meetings which will support ongoing enhancements to both the data quality and developing a shared understanding of its use for national and regional purposes.</p>	<p>and Deputy Director Probation Operations Directorate/COS</p> <p>Head of HMPPS Workforce Modelling</p>	<p>August 2025</p>
5	<p>Ensure that candidates are supported to disclose all health-related needs and other information which may impact on their placements and ensure that this information is consistently supplied to operational</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>MoJ People Group and HMPPS will continue to support candidate disclosure of health-related needs and other information which may impact on their placements, through the pre-employment declaration and consent statements on the Occupational Health pre-employment health questionnaire.</p> <p>MoJ People Group and HMPPS will review the process by which information is supplied to operational managers, to ensure that all the available information is supplied to managers in readiness for each candidate commencing employment.</p>	<p>Deputy Director Shared Services & HR Services and Deputy Director, HMPPS HR Business Partners</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>May 2025</p>



	managers at the earliest opportunity.				
6	Ensure that appropriate face-to-face delivery methods are used to deliver training that relates to skills development, and that candidates are given sufficient opportunities to practise these skills in learning environments.	Partly Agreed	<p>This recommendation is partly agreed. We recognise the valuable role of in person face-to-face delivery methods, particularly for relational practice-based learning, however evidence supports the use of a mixed approach of delivery, including in person, alongside the use of technology for remote facilitated learning and e-learning. HMPPS will review the balance between e-learning and face to face delivery and will pilot at least one face-to-face delivery project. It is not possible to commit to increased use of face-to-face delivery methods until the pilot has concluded and an assessment of the impact has been undertaken, including costs.</p> <p>The Strategic Plan for Learning and Development will be finalised by March 2025, to set the strategic direction for learning and development for the organisation for the next three years.</p> <p>An internal review of Probation learning has been commissioned, to be led by the former Chief Inspector of HMI Probation. This review will include an examination of the role of e- learning and face to face delivery, and the balance between regional and national delivery models.</p> <p>At least one face-to-face learning delivery pilot project will be commenced by September 2025. As part of this pilot</p>	Deputy Director Workforce & Capability, Transforming Delivery Directorate	<p>March 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p> <p>November 2025</p>



			there will be a review/evaluation and cost benefit analysis to inform future delivery approaches.		
7	Strengthen mechanisms to ensure that training and development is followed up, to ensure that the learning is translated into practice.	Agreed	<p>Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision (SEEDS2) has a key focus on embedding reflective practice, supporting teams to develop person-centred engagement with people on probation, encouraging desistance and protecting the public. HMPPS will increase the number of Managers completing the SEEDS2 learning package from 66% to 90% completion.</p> <p>Reflective practice supervision standards require managers to ensure that practitioners embed learning into practice. Regions will undertake assurance activity regarding the completion of reflective practice supervision sessions.</p> <p>COS will complete the 'Strengthening the SPO Role' initiative workstreams, including developing a management oversight policy framework and reviewing business support functions. COS will work with regions to support implementation, maximise the expected capacity savings from the recommendations and enable SPOs to focus on development of practitioners and support translation of learning into practice.</p> <p>A working group, chaired by Deputy Director, Professional Registration Group, will undertake a gap analysis to</p>	<p>Deputy Director Workforce & Capability, Transforming Delivery Directorate</p> <p>Regional Probation Director - West Midlands</p> <p>Deputy Director Probation Operations Directorate/COS</p> <p>Deputy Director Professional</p>	<p>October 2025</p> <p>October 2025</p> <p>October 2025</p> <p>March 2026</p>



			explore what is additionally required to ensure learning is more effectively embedded. This analysis will inform an action plan with implementation subject to ongoing monitoring via working group meetings.	Registration Group	
8	Ensure that support and protection for NQOs are consistently delivered as intended.	Agreed	<p>The newly published national framework for Newly Qualified Officers (NQOs) expects Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) to include a reduction for all NQOs of 20% of contracted time for an increased period of nine months. These NQO reductions are now reviewed on a monthly basis by HMPPS Central Operations Support, as part of the Workload Measurement Tool Continuous Improvement Group to ensure the 20% is applied for the whole nine-month period. When COS find instances where the reductions have not been applied in accordance with the framework, further analysis will be undertaken and the findings reported to the regions in order for the required remedial action to be undertaken.</p> <p>HMPPS will review the implementation of the NQO framework by July 2025 as part of our wider PQiP evaluation work. Activities in scope are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying if benefits are being realised and making framework changes as required. • Consultation with Regional Probation Directors with particular focus on consistent delivery of the framework and whether it should be mandatory. 	<p>Deputy Director Probation Operations Directorate COS</p> <p>Deputy Director Workforce & Capability, Transforming Delivery Directorate</p>	<p>April 2025</p> <p>July 2025</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal governance routes to be considered regarding mandating the expectations within the framework. <p>Following the above review, Probation Regions will be required to establish processes to assure consistent delivery of the framework (as agreed).</p>	Regional Probation Director - West Midlands	October 2025
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Recommendations	
Agreed	5
Partly Agreed	3
Not Agreed	0
Total	8

