



HM Prison & Probation Service

Ian Lawrence, NAPO General Secretary
Ben Priestley, UNISON National Officer
George Georgiou, GMB SCOOP

Amy Rees
Director General of Probation and Wales
HM Prison and Probation Service
102 Petty France
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19th June 2020

Dear / Annwyl Ian, Ben and George,

Consultation on Probation Roadmap to Recovery and commitment to trade union engagement

As you know, last month the Government shared its plans and approach for emergence from the COVID 19 lockdown in England. Wales has also announced its plans. In writing to you at this juncture, I wanted to formally acknowledge and thank you for the significant contribution that your unions have made in our successful response to this emergency situation so far and to recognise the importance of maintaining this progress and engagement throughout the next phases or recovery.

Recently, we commenced our agreed 14 day consultation and engagement process on recovery as part of the Probation Roadmap that has been shared with you. I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate and reassure you that our recovery planning will maintain the primacy of safety, with preservation of life our first objective, and that we will proceed slowly and cautiously and in line with the advice of Public Health. At all points in the coming weeks, each stage will be discussed fully with you and your views sought before we progress. Just as we have involved you closely in all the arrangements, considerations and safety assessments for lockdown, so we will continue to do so as we move to the next phase and successive phases.

Progress in delivering more services will be measured and incremental and we will be mindful that these may need to be reversed, and restrictions re-imposed, in the event of a future concerning rise in the infection rate. The key foundations of our plan will be to ensure that symptomatic staff and service users self-isolate at the earliest sign of symptoms; the application of social distancing, respiratory hygiene and hand-washing; the provision of sufficient PPE for staff and service users where it is necessary and the availability of testing for all Probation staff and service users. We will also continue to ensure that Diversity and Inclusion underpins our work and in doing so, we will ensure that the needs of all our staff and service users are considered throughout.

The Roadmap explains that our decisions will be guided at every stage by the following objectives:

Protect health: To continue to protect our staff, the public, and service users by minimising deaths and hospitalisations, and protecting the NHS from significant outbreaks.

Maintain public protection and rehabilitation: To ensure we continue to deliver our core functions, particularly focusing resources on our highest risk service users.

Provide sufficient capacity: Ensuring that we have enough resources to respond to court orders and sufficient capacity to meet overall demand, as well as sufficient staffing and resource to meet potential backlogs.

We will work to the following principles:

1. We will take a cautious approach to changes that relax our contingency measures in probation work, ensuring that this is only done when we are confident it is safe to do so.
2. Unless in exceptional circumstances, we will give staff at least two weeks' notice before any significant relaxation of current measures comes into effect, so that there is time to prepare.
3. We will ensure we are working to deliver the best possible probation services we can in the specific operating circumstances we are working in
4. We will ensure that probation recovery is planned in a coordinated way with other parts of the Criminal Justice System.

As you know, I have been clear with Executive Directors and Heads of Delivery that there will be no immediate changes to the current exceptional delivery models that are in place. We know that coronavirus (Covid-19) is going to be with us for a considerable time to come. We will plan carefully for what the easing of restrictions will mean in practice, and such moves will be tailored to local circumstances. I want you and your members to feel assured that you will be fully involved and consulted throughout. In this respect, and if helpful to this assurance, I would welcome us agreeing a further joint statement which would set out our commitment to the recovery planning and reaffirm our principles of engagement.

In respect of facility and project time, I wanted to confirm that at a National Level, it is agreed that exceptionally for the duration of the COVID recovery planning phase sufficient project time (additional to current facility time) will be made available to those elected National Officials who you wish to nominate to support this important work. I understand that you are making your nominations and requests for this time to Francis Stuart, Head of Employee Relations, who will write out to the relevant managers on my behalf. This project time is provided on the understanding that this will enable you to better structure your representation to engage fully with this important work and be aligned to what will be challenging timescales which continue to reflect the operational urgency and unique circumstances that we are all working under. This allocation will be reviewed every three months. At a local level, I will be writing out to Directors to ask that they also provide sufficient additional local trade union facility time to local trade union representatives to ensure that full engagement is able to take place on local COVID recovery plans and safe systems of work.

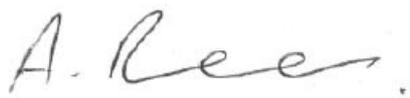
We know that this pandemic is being experienced differently across the NPS. Some local delivery units have been heavily impacted including the tragic loss of life, whilst others are yet to see any confirmed cases. We also know that in the coming weeks this position may change. We may see infections rise and fall and may also see more localised outbreaks. We will therefore need to work both nationally and locally in respect of the decisions we take regarding the level of restrictions required. As we move forwards, the level of contact service users receive may vary at different times, and will vary between different delivery units.

In summary, our focus remains the same as at the start of the pandemic, which is to keep people safe. We will move forwards but only when we are confident it is safe and the circumstances locally mean we are ready to do so.

I remain extremely appreciative and grateful for the collaborative and supportive approach that NAPO, UNISON and GMB SCOOP colleagues have taken throughout this emergency and continue to take at a National and local level. I know that this has brought its pressures and challenges.

I remain clear that our constructive joint working remains essential to us successfully progressing through each phase of the COVID pandemic.

Yours sincerely / Yn gywir

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Rees".

Amy Rees

Director General of Probation and Wales, HM Prison and Probation Service

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol y Gwasanaeth Prawf a Chymru, Gwasanaeth Carchardai a Phrawf EM