

## NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE TELLS MOJ TO PAUSE RE-LETTING CRC CONTRACTS

The National Audit Office (NAO) has delivered a damning assessment of Transforming Rehabilitation and told the Ministry of Justice that it must pause and reflect before continuing with the process to re-let the CRC contracts from December 2020.

It is worth reproducing in full the NAO's conclusions and recommendations, published on Friday 1 March 2019:

*'The Ministry of Justice set itself up to fail in how it approached the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms. Its rushed implementation introduced significant risks that its chosen commercial approach left it badly placed to manage. The consequences of these decisions are far reaching. CRCs have underinvested in probation services, which have suffered as a result. There is little evidence of hoped-for innovation and many of the early operational issues, such as friction between the NPS and CRCs, persist. Although the number of re-offenders has reduced, the average number of re-offences they commit has increased significantly. Transforming Rehabilitation has achieved poor value for money for the taxpayer.'*

*The Ministry has chosen to end the CRC contracts in 2020, 14 months early, but this comes at a cost. When added to previous, unsuccessful, efforts to stabilise the CRCs, the Ministry will pay at least £467 million more than it was required to do so under the original contracts.'*

*The Ministry has consulted on the next generation of contracts...but it has limited time to procure the new contracts, and in persisting with the split between the NPS and CRCs, it will still need to manage posed by the interfaces between these organisations and the wider system.'*

In light of these devastating criticisms, the NAO recommends that the MOJ should:

1. Pause and reflect on its proposed approach [to re-let the CRC contracts and continue with the NPS/CRC split] to provide assurance that this is both deliverable and consistent with its strategic aims for probation
2. In parallel, work with the Reducing Reoffending Board to publish a cross government strategy that spells out how it will work with other bodies to reduce re-offending
3. Develop a detailed plan for managing the wind-down period of the existing [CRC] contracts



National Audit Office

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## WILL THE MOJ LISTEN?

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The NAO report puts real pressure on the Justice Secretary to pause the process to re-let the CRC contracts and take stock of whether it is realistic to try to continue with TR in the way that the Ministry of Justice has proposed. The NAO criticisms and recommendations mean that the MOJ's plans to soldier on with the discredited TR model into the future now look increasingly unrealistic.

It is time for David Gauke to do the right thing and cancel the plans set out in 'Strengthening Probation, Building Confidence' and go back to the drawing board with the Probation Service to work with UNISON, and others, to put probation back on its feet. TR has failed and it will never work in the future.

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## UNISON'S RESCUE PLAN FOR PROBATION

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UNISON's Let's Fix Probation Campaign is calling for the following clear and sensible objectives:

- The CRCs brought back into public ownership
- Probation Reunification
- The re-creation of Local Probation Services, as public sector bodies/employers
- All CRC and NPS work/staff in England to be transferred into the new Local Probation Services
- Local democratic accountability and funding for the new Local Probation Services via the offices of Police and Crime Commissioners and/or Elected Mayors
- The work of NPS Wales and the Wales CRC to be combined in a new unified, delivery organisation, or organisations, following an all Wales consultation on appropriate boundaries
- The reform of Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) to protect the integrity and independence of Probation and to devolve political control of Probation from Ministers to local level
- A guarantee of no compulsory redundancies for staff in NPS and CRCs and the protection of pay and conditions, including pensions, via a national collective agreement with the employers.
- Funding from the Treasury to provide for the reconstruction of Probation in recognition of the failure of the TR experiment, including money for pay reform and harmonisation across the probation service

## JOIN UNISON

UNISON's campaign to fix probation is having an impact. We are working with our sister probation unions and a wide range of probation stakeholders to ask the MOJ to halt the second privatisation of the CRCs. Now the NAO has said the same. If you are not already in a trade union and want to be part of a union which is campaigning for a better future for probation, both for CRC and NPS staff, join UNISON now.

**CALL FREE ON 0800 171 2193 OR VISIT [WWW.JOINUNISON.ORG](http://WWW.JOINUNISON.ORG)**

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