



14th March 2025

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING!

HMPPS has finally admitted that there is a deep and serious crisis in the Probation Service that bears out everything we have been saying in our Operation Protect campaign, launched back in June 2023.

On the basis of information provided to the unions under confidential cover, and which we are not able to disclose at present, HMPPS now accepts that it is thousands of staff short of the workforce it needs to meet existing sentence management demand.

This public acknowledgment of the depth and seriousness of the crisis only relates to sentence management, we expect to receive more information soon about other areas of probation delivery. Until we receive this further information, we don't know whether the situation is going to be very different outside of sentence management. What we do know is that our members in other areas of probation delivery are struggling with their own workload pressures.

TOTALLY UNMANAGEABLE WORKLOADS

So now it's official - sentence management staff have been expected to work for years to deliver totally unmanageable workloads. This obviously did not start yesterday.

It is no wonder that staff are suffering burn-out, work related stress and ill-health. And no surprise that successive HMIP reports have identified weakness in the Probation Service's ability to provide its statutory services.

We note that HMPPS has listened to our Operation Protect Campaign and now accepts what our members and the unions have been saying for years – that there is a workload crisis in Probation and something needs to be done about it!

WHAT WE ARE CALLING FOR

Given just how extreme the workload crisis really is, the unions are now calling for the following:

- An immediate and complete end of Post Sentence Supervision, via emergency legislation if necessary
- A preview of the business case being made by HMPPS to the Spending Review to reassure our members that serious new money is being sought as part of a probation rescue package
- That employer acknowledges that the WMT is no longer an accurate reflection of workloads as it does not count the full extent of work undertaken and should not be used as such.
- Agreement on the total number of cases that can be held at any given time by a practitioner - to be jointly reviewed on a quarterly basis
- The suspension of capability proceedings against staff where excessive workload is a factor
- The suspension of all Sickness Absence Management proceedings against staff and the application of total management discretion
- An immediate review of the current nationally agreed overtime arrangements with a view to an indefinite extension.
- An immediate review of the Prioritisation Framework with all Probation Regions moving to 'Red' status
- Urgent agreement between HMPPS and the trade unions on a new Demand Management Strategy to support all staff in making decisions on prioritising work on individual caseloads.
- A moratorium on the introduction of any new work anywhere in the Probation Service pending agreement to a rescue package for the service
- Performance targets to take second place to staff welfare
- Negotiation on the role of AI in contributing to the easement of the capacity crisis and the need for a collective agreement to cover the same

PROBATION SAFE IN HMPPS HANDS?

HMPPS, and before it NOMS, has been responsible for running probation ever since Chris Grayling first centralised delivery with the creation of the National Probation Service in 2014. Nearly 11 years on, and the probation workloads crisis is the worst that it has ever been. We therefore call on the Government to deliver on its manifesto promise to review the governance of probation as a matter of urgency.

MEMBER BRIEFINGS

As part of the joint unions' on-going Operation Protect Campaign we are planning urgent on-line meetings for members to come together to discuss the deepening workloads crisis and what we want doing about it. Please look out for details of these meetings.



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