

Press release: Justice Secretary outlines future vision for probation

- Government is strengthening offender supervision in existing CRC contracts and investing an extra £22 million each year to improve through-the-gate support
- CRC and NPS areas to be aligned – improving joint working and strengthening ties with key partners, including the third sector, local authorities and PCCs
- Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) contracts will end two years early in 2020, with plans to work with the market to design new and improved contracts.

A [consultation document](#) published today outlines the Ministry of Justice's intention to strengthen the supervision of offenders and increase confidence in community sentences.

It builds on the recent publication of our female offender and employment and education strategies, to demonstrate the department's commitment to tackling reoffending by: investing in community provision; strengthening alternatives to short custodial sentences; and boosting rehabilitation and prospects for offenders.

Probation relies heavily on joint working with a range of agencies and today's consultation outlines plans to create a more integrated and collaborative system, by improving partnerships with PCCs and the third sector.

In the future, CRC and NPS areas will be aligned, with ten new probation regions in England, simplifying and strengthening ties with key local partners and creating opportunities to co-commission rehabilitation services with PCCs.

Reforms to probation in 2015, known as 'Transforming Rehabilitation', were challenging, ambitious and have led to 40,000 extra offenders a year receiving support and supervision on release – a positive change for public safety.

This additional monitoring has been carried out by newly formed, 'Community Rehabilitation Companies' (CRCs) who manage low and medium-risk offenders, and the publicly funded National Probation Service (NPS), who manage higher-risk offenders.

While CRCs have reduced the overall number of people reoffending, it is clear that probation providers have faced significant challenges. Unforeseen changes in the types of offenders coming to the courts and the sentences they receive have substantially reduced CRC income and affected the quality of frontline services.

That is why the consultation document sets out urgent action being taken to

address existing issues with CRC contracts. This includes ending current CRC contracts early in 2020, improving supervision and through-the-gate support in the meantime, and using the lessons learnt so far to put in place improved services in the future, with more effective commercial arrangements.

Secretary of State, David Gauke said:

I am determined to have a probation service that protects the public, commands the confidence of the courts and ultimately reduces reoffending.

So we are taking decisive action now to improve the delivery of probation services in England and Wales.

We want to see less reliance on ineffective short prison terms, and in order to achieve this courts must have confidence that probation services will deliver tough community sentences – sentences that punish, but also help those who commit crime to turn their lives around and stop offending.

I am confident that the proposals set out in this consultation will play a major role in helping us to achieve this aim.

To improve services in the next two years, the Ministry of Justice is investing an additional £22 million a year in through-the-gate support for offenders when they leave prison, as part of wider changes to contracts to stabilise CRC delivery until the end of 2020 and allow CRCs to continue to deliver the level of service required.

The Ministry of Justice will also work with London and Greater Manchester to co-design future services in those areas as part of existing devolution arrangements.

In addition, the devolved responsibilities of the Welsh Government and existing arrangements in Wales make the delivery of probation services fundamentally different to England.

To reflect this, the consultation sets out proposals to bring the supervision of all offenders in Wales into the NPS and explore how wider partners can help to improve rehabilitative support for offenders, by better joining up with health, housing and other local services.

Alongside the structural and contractual changes, a new professional register will be introduced, helping staff to move between roles and develop their careers. The consultation also seeks views on improving the training and development of staff.

The consultation will seek to gather views and expertise from a range of potential providers, including the voluntary sector, as well as other stakeholders, and will inform the future delivery of probation services in England and Wales.