

# Press release: New plans for probation in Wales announced by UK Government

- Supervision of all offenders in Wales will be brought together into the National Probation Service (NPS), to better reflect the needs of communities in Wales.
- Changes will strengthen the supervision of offenders and increase public confidence in community sentences.
- CRC contracts will end two years early in 2020, with plans to work with the market to design new and improved contracts for rehabilitation services

Widespread reforms to the way probation is delivered in Wales have been announced by the UK Government, to strengthen the supervision of offenders and increase confidence in community sentences.

A consultation document published today outlines the Ministry of Justice's intention to use flexibilities in the existing devolution settlement to bring the supervision of all offenders in Wales into NPS Wales – so a single organisation is responsible for managing all offenders taking a holistic and unified approach to probation.

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' who manage low and medium-risk offenders, and the publicly funded NPS, who manage higher-risk offenders.

Existing arrangements mean that the make-up and delivery of probation services in Wales is already different to England, with prison and probation services overseen entirely by HMPPS Wales – paving the way for changes to the current system.

Criminal justice in Wales is a reserved matter and the responsibility of the UK Government. However, other agencies such as healthcare, education and social services are devolved, and we will continue to work closely with these key organisations.

To reflect this, today's 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 the third sector.

The new model will support greater integration with these key services – building on the positive work that is already happening through the All Wales Criminal Justice Board.

Probation partners in Wales have already come together collaboratively to join up the delivery of rehabilitation and resettlement services, which provides a unique opportunity to build on these positive partnerships and improve the offering of services across the country.

**Justice Secretary David Gauke said:**

I want a probation service in Wales that not only keeps the public safe but one that fundamentally reduces reoffending, by giving offenders the support they need to contribute positively to the community and turn their lives around.

This is an exciting opportunity to create a probation service in Wales that brings together vital services and strengthens existing partnerships.

We want to see a greater emphasis on community sentences, and less reliance on short custodial sentences, so they are only used as a last resort – but to do this we must have a probation service that commands the confidence of the courts.

I am confident the steps we are outlining today will build on the positive progress in Wales and improve rehabilitation – so we can ultimately cut the cost of reoffending.

**Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

The plans announced today underline the UK Government's firm commitment to cutting reoffending with the support of an effective, stable probation service.

We want to see offenders in Wales successfully rehabilitated so they turn away from crime and make a positive contribution to society.

We now want to engage with a wide range of stakeholders across Wales to seek views on these proposals, listen to the experiences and suggestions of others, and to work with the Welsh Government to refine our plans for improving probation services across the nation.

While CRCs have reduced the overall number of people reoffending, it is clear that private 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 today's consultation document sets out urgent action that will be taken to address these issues – ending the current CRC contracts early in 2020, improving supervision and through-the-gate support in the meantime, and using lessons learnt so far to put in place improved services with more effective commercial arrangements.

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.

### **Notes to editors:**

- There are currently 21 CRCs: one in Wales and 20 in England.
- There are seven NPS regions: six in England and one in Wales.
- Under the new proposals ten new probation regions will be created in England. Each will contain one CRC and one NPS area and be overseen by one HMPPS leader.
- Under current arrangements, the National Probation Service (NPS) manages higher-risk offenders, with the CRCs managing low and medium-risk offenders.
- Criminal justice powers are not devolved, however the Welsh Government are responsible for aspects of the probation service such as health, education and social services.
- The consultation will last for eight weeks and the findings will be used to inform future delivery of probation.