

Press release: Probation Champion and Prison Officer of the Year 2017 Awards

- Annual awards celebrate hard-working and dedicated staff from across HMPPS
- Ceremony follows creation of new frontline service HMPPS tasked with reforming offenders
- Government is investing £100 million to boost the frontline by an extra 2,500 staff

Prison and probation officers from across England and Wales are being celebrated for their contribution to reforming offenders and helping turn lives around.

The Probation Champion of the Year Awards and Prison Officer of the Year Awards are an opportunity to celebrate success, share best practice and shine a light on the great work being done by these staff to keep the public safe.

The annual awards are celebrated just months after the launch of [HM Prison and Probation Service \(HMPPS\)](#), a new frontline service that is focused on reforming offenders and cutting crime.

Prisons and Probation Minister Sam Gyimah said:

Our prison and probation officers work in a profession to be proud of, with responsibility for helping to keep the country safe and reforming offenders.

I regularly speak with staff and I am constantly struck by the commitment they show to changing lives and improving outcomes for offenders. It is vital that we celebrate them and mark out gratitude for the compassion and professionalism they show day in, day out.

I want staff to know that their work, experience and loyal service is valued. So many of them really are a shining example to the new recruits that are coming through the system.

Michael Spurr, Chief Executive of HMPPS, said:

I want to thank all staff working in probation and prisons for the amazing work they do on a daily basis.

Our nominees represent the best of a service where dedicated professionals go the extra mile everyday day to keep the public safe and to reduce reoffending.

These awards recognise work that so often goes unseen but is

vitaly important.

There are 8 categories in both the Prison Officer of the Year Awards and the Probation Champion of the Year Awards, which look to reward those with outstanding achievements in areas such as diversity, reducing reoffending and safer custody.

Gareth Key, from Gateshead, was given the overall title of Probation Champion of the Year on Wednesday. He was nominated by the father of an ex-offender who has now sadly passed away. The nomination was for treating their son with decency whilst helping them stay on the right path and steer him them out of trouble.

A member of staff at HMP High Down was awarded the title of Prison Officer of the Year at the annual awards. Iain Foskett, who has worked at HMP Highdown for 13 years, was nominated by his line manager for his commitment helping support staff at the prison, actively promoting positive relationships between staff and prisoners, and taking the time to mentor joiners.

The Prison Officer and Probation Champion of the Year Awards come at a time when we are expanding our workforce by recruiting 600 probation officers over the next 12 months and an additional 2,500 new prison officers by 2018.

The Probation Champion of the Year Awards took place on Wednesday 21 June and the Prison Officer of the Year Awards on 22 June.

This last year saw the highest level of new joiners (band 3-5 officers) since March 2010 and prison officer numbers have increased for the first time since March 2016:

- appointed 75 mentors for new starter prison officers to help them in their first few months in the job which we know can be a difficult time
- started targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need
- developed a new graduate scheme that will encourage people from a broader range of backgrounds to join the service
- launched a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the Prison Service after leaving the military
- introduced a pay increase for Band 3 Officers on Fair and Sustainable (F&S) terms at 31 difficult-to-recruit prisons
- prison officers have the opportunity to earn over £30,000 depending on location of prison and hours contract; plus public sector pension and other benefits
- creating 2,000 new senior promotion opportunities for valued and experienced prison officers to progress into
- substantial investment in marketing and targeted recruitment to generate even more interest in these valuable roles