

Press Statement

23 December 2014

Embargo – Immediate

Probation Board Northern Ireland faces huge budget cuts and job losses in the New Year

The Probation Board of Northern Ireland has been told it faces a 12% budget cut in 2015. This is in addition to the in-year budget cuts of 2014. As a result jobs are at risk for a board that already has an 18% shortfall in front line staff.

Ian Lawrence, Napo General Secretary, said: “this is a huge budget cut that will leave the Board no option but cut back on staff. It is short sighted as it will take the focus away from rehabilitation and reducing re-offending in the long term and more money will be spent housing prisoners instead of effective community supervision.”

The impact the cuts will have on workloads have yet to be realised but is anticipated that there will be a reduction in the hours spent face to face with offenders and more emphasis will be placed on the expensive and overcrowded prison service. It is also expected to have a direct impact on multi agency work which is key to effectively managing complex cases such as sex offenders. The cuts will fundamentally change how probation services are delivered in Northern Ireland.

Ian Lawrence added: “cutting front line staff will increase workloads and undermine public protection which is one of the key roles of probation. If the government invested in effective rehabilitation then the savings could be made through the reduced levels of reoffending”.

Napo believes further cuts to the service will impact on public safety. Without effective rehabilitation there will be more re-offending and more victims.