

Press Statement

Embargo – 00:01 Monday 30th March 2015

Sodexo hits probation services with massive redundancies

On Friday 27th March 2015 Napo was informed that Sodexo, one of the private companies running 6 of the Community Rehabilitation Companies, will be making massive cuts to staff over the next 12 months. This is extremely worrying given the current staffing crisis in probation and the reasons behind them pose a significant risk to public safety.

We have been officially told that South Yorkshire and Cumbria/ Lancashire CRC's owned by Sodexo will be making significant redundancies over the next 6- 12 months.

Cumbria/Lancashire – a reduction of approx. 123 staff - 30%

South Yorkshire – reduction of 184.6 - 36%

Unofficially however, we are aware that an announcement will be made shortly, possibly Monday 30th March, that similar cuts will be made in Bedfordshire/Cambridgeshire/Northamptonshire of a reduction of 131 – 30%, as well as in Northumbria with a cut of 131 full time posts, again approximately 30%

We have also been told officially that Sodexo do not intend to honour the Enhanced Voluntary Redundancy (EVR) Scheme. This forms part of the agreed National Framework signed by the Ministry of Justice and the Trade Unions. The Secretary of State Chris Grayling gave all CRC's a lump sum of money that was underwritten by him so that they could pay staff EVR if they needed to reduce the workforce. Sodexo have said that they think this is too expensive and will not be honouring this agreement.

The posts at risk cover all grades of staff from admin, PSO's, PO's, middle managers and corporate services.

Ian Lawrence, Napo General Secretary said "we are angry and disappointed about this news. Probation staff have been through hell over the last 18 months dealing with Grayling's so called reforms and now many of them are facing redundancy and job insecurity. When we met with Sodexo earlier this year they told us there would be no reductions in workforce. The use of call centres and machines instead of highly skilled staff is downright dangerous and will put the public at risk."

The rationale for the reductions is linked to Sodexo's proposed operating model for service delivery. The key aspects of this are:

- Use of biometric reporting. This is a machine, similar to an ATM whereby offenders can report themselves in to Probation without having to see a supervising officer. This was piloted a few years ago in London and was universally criticised by stakeholders for undermining the professional relationship of offenders and probation staff which is proven to be key to effective risk management and rehabilitation.
- Low risk offenders can be supervised via call centres, again with no face to face contact. The majority of Serious Further Offences are committed by low-to-medium risk of harm cases. Clearly this method of "supervision" will not be effective at risk management or offer any form of rehabilitation.

Ends