

Manifesto ‘Asks’ for an Incoming Government

Napo is a non-politically affiliated trade union and professional association representing 8000 members in probation services and CAFCASS in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This paper highlights our key political objectives for an incoming government. Our aim is to seek out the views of the political parties and their Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPC’s) on the issues that matter for Napo members.

The “Transforming Rehabilitation Programme” implemented over the last 18 months has had a significant impact on members in probation. This has included changes in job roles and working practices, increased workloads and changes to employers (in some areas there is a new threat of significant redundancies). In the meantime our members in CAFCASS have been directly impacted upon by changes in legal aid funding for family court cases, been moved to the Ministry of Justice and had significant changes to working locations and practices imposed upon them.

We are asking all parties to consider this document as part of their pre-election campaign but also as an indication of what Napo hopes to see from a new incoming government in the next five years. We strongly believe that the criminal justice system is in meltdown across the board and as such we want the new government to address these issues as a matter of urgency.

What Napo wants

- **To review all 21 Community Rehabilitation Company Contracts.**

Napo believes it is imperative that any incoming government is fully appraised of the contents of the 21 contracts that were signed on 18th December 2014. These are 7 to 10 year contracts that potentially bind the hands of the next three consecutive governments. Napo asks that they are urgently reviewed with a view to identifying what the termination clauses are and what powers the Secretary of State for Justice has under the “Golden Share” rule to bring under- performing CRC’s back into public ownership.

- **Review the Community Rehabilitation Companies operating models and service delivery.**

Trade Unions, Stakeholders and indeed the media have identified potential risks to public safety as a result of some of the operating models being implemented by the new providers. These, in our view pose significant risks to communities, staff and service users. We urgently call on the future government to review these models and assess the impact of any risks that may result from them. This could, if the issues are serious enough, lead to a Royal Commission into the outsourced probation services. We are also concerned that the probation providers may decide to exclude more difficult cases on the basis of profit, and as such minority groups such as women may be disproportionately affected by the change in provision.

- **Commit to a pay rise for staff in CAFCASS NPS and CRC's**

Probation staff have endured a 4-year pay freeze. We also ask the future government to commit to a full pay review to be implemented over the term of the government that would enable staff to secure easier progression through shortened payscales which better reflect their experience and expertise and which will start to address equal pay issues.

- **Reinstatement of "check off" for all staff working in the Ministry of Justice.**

The decision to end Check Off (the deduction of Union subscriptions from payroll) the day before purdah, was ill-timed and has damaged industrial relations within the Ministry. Access to trade unions is vital to sustain good working environments and productivity, and we urge the next government to reinstate this long standing practice.

- **Introduce a Licence to Practice**

Napo would like to see a full 'licence to practice' introduced to Probation services and for this to be held independently as is currently the situation with social workers.

- **Probation Qualification Framework and Access to training for all**

Napo wants all staff to have access to high quality training which is regulated to a national standard, and for the Probation Qualification Framework (PQF) to be opened up to all staff. Access to the PQF should also be available for existing Probation Service Officers to enable career progression.

- **Honour the agreed National Staff Transfer Agreement for Probation Staff and to ensure that CRC providers adhere to the agreement in full.**

This is particularly relevant to potential redundancies and the Enhanced Voluntary Redundancy scheme, Access to Local Government Pension for new starters and Trade Union recognition.

- **Urgently review the impact of The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) on access to justice. In particular those accessing family law and to review the impact on Family Court staff of increased numbers of litigants in person and workload.**

Mounting evidence suggests that the cuts to legal aid are having a disproportionate impact on women accessing legal advice and a detrimental effect on children involved.

- **Reverse the legal aid cuts to family law, civil law and employment law.**
- **A commitment to work with Probation and Family Court unions to improve service delivery, efficiency, value for money and public safety.**

Napo is committed to working effectively with an incoming government to ensure our members expertise and experiences are fully considered in future policy.

- **A long term commitment to develop a more holistic approach to Criminal Justice working between Probation, Family Courts, Prisons, Lawyers, Healthcare, Social services and the Police.**

Successive governments have sought to deal with the Criminal Justice in silos which has resulted in a fragmented system and a false economy. By working more holistically we believe a more effective way of working can be found that works for service users, staff, communities and the tax payer.



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