

Napo Official Briefing on Future of Probation as at 2nd May 2019

We have established that the MOJ has informed the market that it is looking at all options for probation going forward. This includes the possibility of rolling out the Wales model everywhere. However, nothing has been decided at this point and we will have to wait for a statement by Ministers and their formal response to the consultation paper that we now expect to be published in the middle of May.

Over the last few days, we have seen some irresponsible and poorly informed communications from one of the largest private providers and we are reliant on members keeping us informed of any statements being sent out by CRCs as the MOJ seemingly has no central over what their contractors say to staff.

We understand from the MOJ that the market has given a mixed response to the various options under consideration (as listed below) including some saying that they are not interested in any future contractual arrangements other than TR Mark 2.

In the meantime, Napo Officers and Officials will continue to engage with CRCs on issues such as pay and operational/ collective bargaining matters on a business as usual basis. We will also be drawing up transition papers to highlight the pros and cons of each potential option for the future provision of services and will be priming our contacts in the press and political circles.

What are the options?

1. TR Mark 2. This would see new contract package areas being drawn up to match the intended 10 divisions of the NPS. These CPAs would then be sold off in a similar way to TR. Our 8 reasons to reunify Probation give you an outline of the key issues that we are asking members to raise with MP's but also more local concerns. I.e. DTV CRC will not exist if TR Mk2 goes ahead yet it is the only mutual and certainly not the worst performing CRC.
2. Welsh model. Clearly, this would be a massive step in the right direction for our campaign to reunify probation. It is not without its pitfalls such as the so far untested transition risks and could be seen as leaving behind comrades in Interventions and Programmes, but it would at least give us good grounds for pushing our campaign for full reunification, as well as giving us an opportunity to press again for pay parity. It is estimated that between 250-300 staff will move into the NPS Wales from KSS CRC when the transfer of Offender Management work is completed by December this year.
3. Total reunification - private sector. If we get a new Prime Minister and/or Justice Secretary then there is a real risk that they would seek to privatise the whole of Probation. While this is the least likely option, we must factor it into our planning. Our main objective would be to highlight the failure of CRC's to deliver the most basic of probation services and lobby politicians on the basis that private providers simply cannot be trusted to hold high and very high risk cases.
4. Total reunification - public. Clearly, this is the major objective of our campaign and one we will continue to fight for. The Wales model (if it were to be the preferred option for Government) would give us a real head start, but we can still hold some hope on the possibility of the Minister accepting that a total rethink is the best option. However, any reunification would still require us to push for the NPS to have local accountability and budgets as well as our claim that Probation should be removed from the civil service and given back its former independence.

We had anticipated that a decision would have emerged by now but it is clear that more analysis is being undertaken and yesterday's announcement that Rory Stewart has been promoted to the Cabinet has obviously also been a factor in the delay. We currently await news of his successor.