

Reasons for a Reunited Probation Service

Briefing number 8: The need for profit has driven out the third sector organisations vital for local support.

Prior to TR each probation trust was responsible for commissioning their own local partnerships such as care farms, women's centres and education. This led to a mixed level of commissioning across England and Wales with some trusts commissioning far more partnerships and therefore offering a more mixed market of suppliers. One of the aims of TR was to introduce a mixed market across the board of public, private and 3rd sector organisations. However, as outlined below, the need for profit has had the opposite effect.

- The NPS is now tied to the CRCs for commissioning partnership agencies rather than being able to go to providers directly. The CRCs, needing to make a profit, charge the NPS a higher rate for accessing these services than the partnership agencies themselves charge. As such the NPS has been largely priced out of service provision and referrals have dropped markedly.
- The 3rd sector themselves, all but the largest of charities, were priced out of TR from the beginning, so have no direct involvement in CRCs and instead rely on contracts for their services.
- However, due to the need for profit and money saving, CRCs have been forced to reduce their contracts. This means there is less provision than before TR and services are being lost due to a lack of funding.
- As a result of the profit and costs focus, there is less of a mixed market than before and in this aspect TR has completely failed its objective.

Questions you may wish to ask:

- What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that 3rd sector organisations are directly involved in probation provision and are given adequate funding to continue?
- What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the NPS has access to 3rd sector partnerships at a price it can afford?
- Does the Minister agree that the NPS should and must be able to commission locally to ensure that it has access to the right provisions for its local community needs and that this is best done by local management and not directed from the centre?
- Does the Minister agree that, in order to ensure local needs are met and access to provision is guaranteed, probation would be best run on a local area basis with local budgets so as to better engage communities and providers for a truly mixed market?

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