

Probation Recovery – a joint message from Amy Rees and the Executive Director Team and Probation Trade Unions

Probation Recovery

Firstly, a huge thank you for all you are doing to assist us with our organisational recovery. We continue to be grateful to you all for the incredible work you do each day and for all the contributions everyone has made to be able to recover services so far.

Our Recovery Plan

As you will be aware, we shared our updated recovery plan with you via your senior leaders on the 10th March. We want to ensure that everyone fully understands the principles upon which our plan has been developed and to provide reassurance of expectations relating to our recovery. We want to reassure you that we are keen that services recover as and when they can, but in a way which keeps you all, your families, people on probation and probation partners as safe as possible.

Our recovery plan sets out the timelines when we aim to be able to lift the national pauses on services we introduced. Our plan is aligned with Welsh Government plans and the UK Government's National Roadmap and uses the same key dates. However, we want to reiterate this does not signal a return to 'business as usual' immediate or otherwise in the way that we have previously done this. There will be a number of stages for us to work through together to recover services. We will continue to assess how we deliver our services throughout the coming months and potentially beyond, recognising that this might include some continued restrictions to the way we work, along with the continuation of some new ways of working which have proved successful as part of our Covid response over the past year.

The principles of our plan – a reminder

Your health and safety and that of people on probation remains our overarching priority in everything we do.

Our Probation Recovery Plan is designed to be agile and responsive to any changes announced in the government's National Roadmap, as well as advice from Health and Safety and Public Health colleagues, and so uses the terminology of 'not-before' dates rather than mandating when things will happen.

It is based on the principle of lifting the national pauses, to once again allow your senior leaders to take decisions about what happens and when at a local level, based on the local circumstances in individual regions. Delivery will not automatically revert to how this has been delivered previously or to the levels being delivered previously. Consideration will be given to what can be done and when and the Exceptional Delivery Model process will guide this. We recognise that progress will be different in each region and we support this. We are clear that decisions to move forward should be taken when appropriate and safe to do so.

Until we are clear what the longer-term recovery looks like for the wider community, we recognise that there will be an on-going need to deliver our services differently. While social distancing and the wearing of face coverings and other requirements remain in place, we will have limited capacity and therefore adjustments will be required to the way in which we deliver aspects of our work. There is no expectation that delivery levels will return to where they were pre-Covid while such restrictions still apply.

Working closely with our Trade Union colleagues

To support our recovery since January 2021 we have produced weekly Position Statements, agreed with trade union colleagues nationally, which set out the caveats and expectations around the increase and or re-introduction of each area of delivery for the coming week. We will continue to do this so that you all understand the expectation of what services will look like when initially re-introduced.

Discussions with trade unions at a national level have informed the Probation Recovery Plan. However, discussions with trade unions at a local level are also key to local delivery. Not only is there a legal duty for local discussions, there is strong recognition that such discussions will help support this delivery.

Conversations with national trade unions continue to take place about the recovery of services as we move forward. For example, we are currently considering the caveats which will be required to safely lift the national pause on Home Visits for critical cases being undertaken by staff in YOT / YOS teams, as well as Home Visits carried out jointly with Police colleagues, as from 12th April and then the longer-term plan of lifting the national pause on Home Visits more broadly from 17th May, with an initial focus on priority cases. We have already established the need for an individual risk assessment to be carried out for anybody who will undertake a Home Visit to support the recovery of this service and we are considering what other caveats may be required before lifting this pause. When discussions are complete we will ensure these are shared.

Keeping you up to date

In order to ensure you all receive up to date information about recovery, we continue to update your senior leaders, regularly publish the Recovery Bulletin, provide Recovery Updates in the Probation News Bulletin and also participate in live all staff events. However, we would welcome other suggestions of how we can actively communicate with you all on recovery moving forward. Please send any suggestions you may have via: ProbationRecoveryProgramme@justice.gov.uk