

PROBATION - NPS and CRC

PAY UPDATE

March 2016

PROBATION PAY 2015-2016: OVERDUE INCREMENTS TO BE PAID

Formal agreement is expected to be reached at this week's meeting of the National Negotiating Council (NNC) that the long overdue 2015-16 contractual pay increment will be paid to all NPS staff in March 2016. This was due on 1st April 2015 and the payment will be retrospective. The NPS will be writing to all CRC's informing them of the requirement to do the same.

Napo have been demanding payment of the overdue contractual progression for staff not yet at their pay maximum for several months, as we told members in our pay update shortly before Christmas (N18/2015).

We are still seeking a discussion about the joint pay claim that we submitted in the autumn and will issue further news on this as soon as it becomes available.

Napo demand urgent longer term pay negotiations

At the NNC, Napo will be demanding that the Employers' Side provide a timetable for comprehensive negotiations around future pay reform and restructuring, coupled with provision of the necessary data to allow for both sides to model alternative pay structures. .

To cost any possible awards and to explore possible improvements to the current pay structure, both sides need accurate information about existing pay and progression rates. It is the clearest indictment of the pre-TR split that the NPS hasn't yet been able to provide comprehensive or accurate information about what their staff are currently paid, let alone estimate the impact on the CRC's who are still covered by the outcomes of NNC pay negotiations. Napo believes this lack of basic organisation is contributing to the delay in starting meaningful negotiations.

Pay getting more complicated – the job evaluation scheme is not helping

Napo recognises that pay issues are intrinsically interwoven into the current difficulties around grading and job roles which are emerging as part of the E3 reforms. We also recognise similar pressures around grade boundaries, and related pay and training issues in the CRCs. We are committed to negotiations in the interests of obtaining career security and a fairer, more progressive and sustainable pay structure for members across both arms of the probation service.

The embarrassing lack of flexibility evidenced in the recent NPS job evaluation outcomes of the AP Managers and Area Managers both at Band 6, (after which NOMS stated that this was "unimplementable" because AP Area Managers could not line manage people at the same grade) shows the mess that the NPS are in. They cannot seriously expect staff to be more flexible when they show such rigidity and continue to refuse to enter meaningful negotiation about possible ways around these issues with Napo. Meanwhile, Napo will be making representations around all of the recent JE outcomes and has written urgently to NOMS.

This lack of flexibility is also undermining the credibility of the whole job evaluation process. Napo believe that this problem also shows how the current pay bands for probation staff are well , past their 'sell by' date and unfit for purpose. Despite the Governments continuing Pay Freeze, other parts of the public sector have modernised their models whilst NOMS focuses upon organisational reform (E3). Consequently, the impasse on pay progression has further illustrated that probation pay rates are too long, unfair and uncompetitive.

Members will be only too aware of how the roles that different grades undertake have grown closer together. The probation job evaluation scheme also fails to account for staff working alongside colleagues from the Courts and Prison services, with an increasing suspicion that comparative risks and responsibilities are relatively underscored and therefore undervalued.

Expensive solutions are cheaper in the long run

Because the pay situation is complicated and there are no easy, obvious solutions, does not mean that the Employers can ignore the problem or, even worse, defend the status quo. The longer the problems go unchallenged the more expensive they will become to put right, and the more unfair they become, the more negative impact they will have on the recruitment and retention of probation professionals at all levels.

Accordingly Napo believes that enough is enough. If the Employers' cannot or will not negotiate then we will have to enter into a formal dispute and make this a direct problem for Government Ministers. .

What could a solution involve?

The lack of available data from the NPS and CRC's means that Napo is trying to make progress in something of a vacuum; which is delaying the possibility of conducting any serious pay modelling. However, by looking at reward mechanisms such as those found in Cafcass and other areas of the public sector, where pay reform has taken place despite the central pay policy restrictions, we can see what kind of remedies might be possible, even within especially tight funding options.

Likely options as part of pay reform could include:

- More (but shorter) e.g. 3 point pay ranges, with the potential for reintroducing 'spot' ranges which properly recognise individual experience and qualifications .
- Revised grade boundaries that properly reflect newer ways of working, managing and spheres of responsibility / levels of risk.
- A Reformed job evaluation scheme combining the fair assessment of probation jobs with benchmarking against civil service roles.
- A salary review exercise, incorporating all allowances and an assessment of pensionable pay, again benchmarked against other civil service jobs in the NPS and recognising the new market for experienced Offender Managers in CRCs.

In return for our engagement and to move the pay progression issue forward, Napo would expect the following protections:

- A possible buy-out of the current contractual right to progress to existing band maxima.
- Consolidated pay increases for all during transition.
- No so called 'performance pay', (including the discredited 'relative' system used in other parts of NOMS).
- All pay to be pensionable in accordance with scheme principles.
- Extended pay protection in the event of regrading.

Your views matter

These are areas for discussion at this stage and are by no means exhaustive, but it is increasingly clear that the existing probation pay model cannot deliver parity with other roles in the Civil Service and will never deliver quicker pay progression.

Napo will continue to both inform members of any progress, and consult members about your views on these complex issues, through our continuing engagement in the E3 programme via branches, networks and direct consultation. Meanwhile, feedback about this Briefing via your Napo Branch (drogers@napo.org.uk) would be welcomed, especially as we start to consider how a pay claim should look for 2016 and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Lawrence	Dean Rogers	Chris Winters	Yvonne Pattison
General Secretary	Assistant General Secretary	National Co-Chairs	

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