

**To: Napo members in Probation (England and Wales)**

**The following update on pay has been agreed as a Joint Trade Union Bulletin (see below for more specific news from Napo)**



## **PROBATION PAY NEGOTIATIONS**

Pay negotiations between Napo, UNISON, GMB SCOOP and senior probation service management have been taking place over the course of June and July. As we anticipated, the discussions have been especially challenging set against the background of the Government's punitive public sector pay remit.

The unions pay claim was for a Multi-Year-Pay deal for the Probation Service effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. Among other things this will need to deliver a significant increase in the value of pay points, an end to pay band overlaps and the creation of a salary structure that addresses the huge pay gap between our members and workers in comparable public-facing professions outside of the Probation Service.

We have been told by the Probation Minister, the Director General and senior management, that improving probation pay is also a top priority, and that they are committed to delivering such a deal.

Yesterday Napo and UNISON's respective negotiating committees considered a full progress report and provided democratic oversight of the progress made in the talks so far. The view of both committees was that while progress has undoubtedly been made, the parties are still some way apart from finalising a pay offer that unions would feel able to recommend to their members. At talks today the feedback from yesterday's meetings of the Napo and UNISON Negotiating Committees was relayed to the employer. There are plans for the unions and employer to continue negotiations next week. GMB reps have also considered the progress and are committed to providing a single consistent response with NAPO and Unison.

### **Next steps**

As has always been the case, the Joint Trade Union side will seek to exhaust the negotiating process to try and achieve an offer that we can recommend, but the employer has been left in no doubt that if necessary we will return to test the strong mandate from our members that caused Napo and UNISON to lodge a joint trade dispute earlier this year.

While we are not in that position yet, we are mindful of the growing anger across many sister trade unions over public sector pay policy. This has seen a number of unions commence industrial action or plan for ballots over the coming weeks. The unions, will be monitoring the situation carefully and more news will be provided to members as soon as possible. GMB are also considering progress and are committed to a consistent response with NAPO and Unison.

### **Outrage over Parole Board changes**

Last week Napo were told of changes to the Parole Board process whereby it is intended that there will now be singular intervention by the Secretary of State for Justice. This means that Probation practitioners will no longer be required to make recommendations in their reports to a Parole Board.

It's clear from the feedback from Napo members that there is widespread outrage and disgust at these plans. It is a further significant assault on the integrity and professionalism of Probation staff by planning to deny them the long-held ability to make their own independent, expert recommendations on progression and release to the Parole Board.

It is clear, in fact openly stated in the communications we have seen, that this is a decision which rests at ministerial level. That this is being justified by the Deputy Prime Minister on the same day as a Parole Board decision which has generated media interest, smacks of political opportunism by a senior member of a wholly discredited and dying Government. After this week's events it remains to be seen whether those involved will still be in place to own the coming problems.

It is all too apparent that this is a politically motivated decision intended to further subsume our professional identity within the Civil Service. The contemptuous, and frankly cowardly, manner the employer has pretended to engage in a consultation period best counted in days has not gone unnoticed. The logical conclusion we draw from this is that there is at least some basic level of recognition that these plans are riddled through with contradictions and flaws that are all too apparent to even the most basic level of scrutiny by the briefest glance. These are so severe and glaring that it calls into question whether those responsible have any relevant experience or expertise in this crucial area of practice, certainly the risks to public posed by this less than half-baked plan suggests not.

We cannot find any evidence in the Government's recent 'Root and Branch Review' of the Parole Board to support this drastic, fundamental change of practice, or even any mention that this as a potential outcome of this process. This suggests to us that these proposals are an opportunistic and malicious attempt to silence an independent voice in the criminal justice system, imposing the diktats and whims of career politicians on our members through the suffocating conformity of the Civil Service.

The Joint Trade Unions will be communicating our concerns to the relevant Minister and Senior Officials and demanding that this ill thought out proposal is abandoned before any damage can be done.

### **Interventions: Consultation on the Target Operating Model**

This week Napo hosted 2 briefings for staff affected by the proposed target operating model (TOM). Tania Bassett National Official and Carole Doherty National Vice Chair chose to hold two separate briefings at this stage as the model impacts staff in the DSOU very differently to those in the rest of the programmes staffing group.

We are currently in week 6 of the 8 week consultation period. So whilst not yet able to share proposals with members it was vital that Napo heard how members are feeling about the prospect of change, encourage people to read the TOM and get professional input on what the TOM might mean for practice both in programmes and the wider organisation.

Tania and Carole would like to thank those that attended (approximately 80 members in total) it was really informative and we can use members comments in the remaining consultation period. We will be holding another set of briefings in about 3 weeks so please keep an eye out for emails.

### **Pushback against Probation Staff Cuts**

On 31 May, just prior to the Jubilee bank holidays, our members in the Probation Service were written to by the Prime Minister informing them of the Government's intention to 'roll back the state' and reduce the number of civil servants.

The message was obviously unwelcome, and the timing of the letter was frankly atrocious. Hard working probation staff, delivering above and beyond, often understaffed and definitely underpaid, went off for their extended weekend with the threat to their jobs hanging over their heads.

In our initial discussions with Director General Amy Rees and the MoJ Chief People Officer Mark Adam, we have heard that departments, including the Ministry of Justice, have now submitted projections to the Cabinet Office setting out options to achieve cuts of 20%, 30% and 40% of headcount. Whilst consultation has been promised with the Probation trade unions we have demanded sight of what has been proposed.

Our view is that any suggestion that the Operating Model for the reunified Probation Service could be delivered via 20%, 30% or even 40% cuts to establishment levels is frankly absurd. Hence our request to the Minister which will be picked up

The Service is in the process of a very necessary increase in headcount to rebuild probation from the ruins of the disastrous Transforming Rehabilitation reforms pushed through by your predecessors.

Hence our request to the new Minister (believed to be Tom Pursglove MP) that they confirm that they confirm that they are not expecting the Probation Service to make

any cuts to staffing or interrupt the projected workforce growth for which the service has received funding from the last CSR settlement.

### **Smarter Working ...? Doesn't sound like it**

Many members have contacted us to express their concern over the premature communications from Senior Probation management and Regional Directors of the employers intention to see 80% of staff returning to workplaces on a permanent basis.

Under any circumstances this can at best be described as an unrealistic ambition and at worst, plainly stupid. It seems to have been lost in some quarters that COVID is on the rise again and that pandering to the 'get back to work' agenda of another discredited Minister presents a fresh and potentially deadly risk to staff.

Our members have also been quick to point out that there are few workplaces where there are sufficient desks for staff to work from, and that the prospect of being forced to undertake all work from an office irrespective of the tasks required is counter intuitive in terms of the efficient use of time and the impact on well-being. As worrying is the fact that many members have reported that they may simply not be able to afford travelling to a workplace for 5 days a week due to increases in their fuel and household costs.

Formal consultation is to get underway soon but members should be aware that Napo and our sister unions will be challenging these proposals which, because of the way they have been communicated have caused unnecessary concern amongst our members.

More news on all of the above will follow as soon as possible.