



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

## **Spending Review representation**

### **Summary (maximum 200 words)**

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of probation services. We have found probation services under severe strain after many years of under-investment. We estimate real-term spending per person on probation fell almost 40 per cent (2003-2019).

Additional investment of over £150m per annum since then has been welcome, but funding must be sustained over the Spending Review period and incorporated into the Probation Service budget baseline going forwards. Investment will help to fill vacancies, reduce the average caseload per practitioner, and ensure individuals can access support services.

In addition, extra funding is required to address the very significant unmet needs, revealed by our recent inspections:

- Too many people on probation do not have stable housing, which is linked to higher recall rates to prison. We would welcome a national roll-out of the pilot scheme to improve accommodation for prison leavers.
- We have found a huge gap between the number of people on probation with a drugs problem and the proportion referred for treatment. Recent additional funding falls far short of the amount needed. People on probation should be prioritised for drug treatment and we endorse Dame Carol Black's call for additional ring-fenced funding to tackle drugs misuse.

### **Additional detail**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. HM Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell heads up the Inspectorate.

Probation services play a vital role in protecting the public and supporting people to move towards crime-free lives. At the end of March 2021, probation services supervised 224,174 individuals across England and Wales.

Probation services have been under-funded for many years. We estimate real-term spending for each person on probation fell almost 40 per cent from around £5,900 in 2003-2004 to around £3,550 in 2018-2019 (figures adjusted for inflation using 2020 real terms base). The impact of under-investment has been clear to see in our inspections, with many services under severe strain.

In June 2021, probation services were unified into a single, public-sector service. We welcomed this move but it is not a magic bullet – structural change needs to be backed by sustained investment for there to be true improvement.

We call on HM Treasury to fund the Probation Service properly so it can fulfil its role. Sustained funding will help senior leaders and managers to plan and implement a series of improvements. Funding will help to tackle vacancies, particularly in London and the South

East where rates have remained stubbornly high. Improved staffing will, in turn, mean probation practitioners will be responsible for managing fewer cases. Our research shows a clear correlation between caseload size and the quality of work done to protect the public and reduce reoffending. With more manageable caseloads, practitioners will have more time to supervise individuals and to conduct work that supports public protection such as exchanging information with agencies like the police and children's services or conducting home visits. Extra resources will also help to provide robust and ongoing training for new and existing practitioners.

Probation services must also be funded to cope with the impact of wider government initiatives. For example, the campaign to recruit 20,000 more police officers will lead to many more people coming before our courts. This will increase pressure on the Probation Service to provide information and advice to courts to support sentencing, and to supervise individuals serving community sentences and on release from prison.

More funding is needed to support (ex)offenders in the community. The Ministry of Justice's own figures show 11,435 people were released from prison into homelessness in 2018-2019, including more than 3,700 higher-risk individuals. A lack of stable housing is linked to higher recall rates of prison, which are more costly in the long run. The previous Spending Review funded five pilot sites to provide accommodation for prison leavers; we would welcome a national roll-out of this scheme. There is also a need for more spaces in Approved Premises, which support the resettlement of higher-risk offenders on release from prison. The Ministry of Justice announced 200 more beds in Approved Premises last year – while this is positive, it fails to meet demand. There is also a pressing need for more funding to speed up repairs/maintenance in Approved Premises, as beds are frequently and frustratingly lost because of damage/poor upkeep.

Many (ex)offenders have complex needs and these can contribute towards offending behaviour. Drug-related crime causes widespread misery and costs the public purse more than £9bn a year. We were disappointed to find poor-quality community-based drugs treatment and recovery work with people on probation (August 2021). We endorse Dame Carol Black's call for additional ring-fenced funding to tackle drugs misuse. We believe that people on probation should be prioritised for help; it is impossible to address other aspects of offending behaviour without addressing substance misuse first.

## **Conclusion**

According to the Ministry of Justice's figures (2019), the estimated economic and social cost of reoffending was £18.1 billion over a 12-month period. Greater investment in probation services will pay for itself several times over, as well as changing lives and creating fewer victims and safer communities.

We urge HM Treasury to fund the Probation Service properly. If probation services continue to be underfunded, this will lead to poorer outcomes for society – more people at risk, more victims, and more communities blighted by crime. Prioritising funding for probation services and associated services in the community will help to cut the cycle of reoffending and support individuals to move towards crime-free lives.