



**LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY  
BOARD**

**22<sup>nd</sup> MARCH 2024**

**LRSCSB UPDATE: NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE LLR  
DELIVERY UNIT**

**Background**

1. The Probation Service holds the statutory responsibility for advising sentencing courts and the Parole Board, managing those subject to community-based Orders, and supervising offenders on release from custody. Probation Staff are also located within Prisons. It is part of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), which sits within the Ministry of Justice. The Probation Service is organised Regionally, with the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Probation Delivery Unit (LLR PDU) sitting within the East Midlands Region.

**Notable developments and challenges:**

**Past Year**

2. Significant staffing and workload issues exist across the Probation Service nationally. This has been exacerbated in LLR as a result of particularly acute staffing shortages inherited into the local reunified Probation Service in 2021. The resultant issue of the high workloads and staff shortages has resulted in a serious issue of staff retention and long-term sickness absences relating to work stress. Recruitment has proved difficult both due to a diminishing pool of potential recruits, which is affecting many public sector organisations, and worsened locally by the opening of HMP Fosse Way which is taking away existing and potential Probation Service resources. As a result of all of the above, LLR PDU currently has 70% of its posts covered, although that is more acute for qualified Probation Officers, with their workloads currently sitting at between 120 – 150% of the expected level. Whilst there are now higher numbers of Trainees in the system, which are beginning to qualify, they are not having the positive impact hoped for due to more experienced staff leaving the Service, moving into prisons or gaining promotion.
3. As a result of the national issue of staffing shortages and excessive workloads, the Probation Service introduced a Probation Prioritisation Framework (PF) which designates the priorities and actions to be taken by any local Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) depending on the severity of their position. Red Status is

reserved for those PDUs in the worst situation, and at from May to end of December 2023, LLR PDU was in Red Status, the second time it had triggered this status in the past 9 months. Those priorities largely relate to concentrating resources on managing cases where there is domestic abuse, safeguarding and/or higher risk issues. It moved into Amber status, the next level down, largely due to increased staffing levels of unqualified officers moving the overall staffing levels upwards.

4. The development of the Phoenix Programme was a key partnership development in tackling Serious Violence in LLR in 2023. The Probation Service has played a significant role in developing the project and in its implementation since its commencement and into 2024.

### **Coming Year**

5. It will be the case that these pressures will continue for much of 2024, having an impact on the overall work of the Service. This situation is not helped by the current acute prison population situation, with prisoners having to be released early, often at very short notice, to create space. This not only adds to the work of the Probation Service which is required to supervise these individuals for longer periods, but also manage them in the community without the expected pre-release preparatory work. This is having a significant impact on the wider Criminal Justice System and Agencies which support prisoner release plans such as Mental health Services, DWP, Accommodation providers and substance misuse providers.
6. His Majesty's Inspectors of Probation (HMIP) are currently undertaking a national Thematic Inspection of the Probation Service's work with Young Adults, including Transition work. LLR was one of the areas chosen to be part of the Inspection fieldwork, during w/c 4<sup>th</sup> March. The final report will be published in September but early verbal feedback was given at the end of our Inspection week. This was largely positive, and once the report is published, there will be some interesting recommendations to work on in a systems-wide approach.

### **Key issues for partnership working or affecting partners**

7. The key issues are as follows:
  - Managing the implications of the early release of prisoners to ease prison overcrowding. All the indications are that these pressures will remain for most of 2024 if not beyond.
  - Joint work with relevant agencies on working with transition and young adults following HMIP's recommendations.

### **Issues in local areas**

8. None specific to LLR.

**Recommendations for the Board**

9. To note the contents of the Report.

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