

THE WORK OF PROBATION OFFICERS

This section sets out the principal tasks and responsibilities of Probation Officers.

The Probation Service

As part of the Criminal Justice System, the Probation Service works to protect the public, promote community safety and prevent crime.

Although local Probation Areas may be organised differently to reflect the differences of the communities that they serve, they have the same responsibilities throughout the country. To ensure quality and consistency across the country, the Home Office sets National Standards for most probation tasks.

Probation Officers

Here are some of the tasks that Probation Officers undertake:

- Make assessment to advise Courts and others, especially about the risk posed by individual offenders. Probation Officers prepare written reports for Court known as Pre-Sentence Reports. The report will set out relevant personal information about the offender, an analysis of the offences, an assessment of risk and will, in most cases, make a proposal about the manner in which the offender should be sentenced. Some officers work at Court most of the time and represent the Probation Service as Liaison Officers.
- Manage and enforce Community Orders made by the Courts. Probation Officers have a responsibility to ensure that the Court's orders are carried out. In the course of a Probation Order, the officer will work to change the offender's behaviour in ways that make further offending less likely. This may involve, for instance, participation in group programmes (usually run by specially trained Probation Officers) which research has shown to influence behaviour in this way. Officers may also be involved in managing and enforcing Community Punishment Orders where offenders undertake unpaid work as a punishment for the benefit of the community.
- Work with prisoners during and after sentence to assist in their resettlement and to implement the requirements of their licence. Probation Officers assist in sentence management and make arrangements for release so that prisoners are settled in the community in a way that minimises the likelihood of their reoffending. Some Probation Officers work in prisons, in most of the Midlands Probation Areas. Most Probation Officers are expected to work in a prison at some stage in their career.
- Work, directly and with others, to change offenders' behaviour and to reduce the risk of harm. Officers work with offenders to change their attitudes and behaviour and also seek to address the needs that are linked with their offending. Although this is sometimes done directly by the Probation Officer, Probation Areas encourage their staff to make full use of other agencies, with some of whom the Area may be in partnership and who may be better placed to undertake the necessary work. The reduction of harm to the public is a primary responsibility of

Probation Officers at all times. Close liaison with other agencies is necessary to meet this responsibility and to help the agencies to work together in an effective and efficient manner

- Work, directly and with others, to reduce the impact of offences on their victims. Although much of this work is undertaken through liaison with other agencies, Probation Officers may be in contact with the victims of serious crimes to advise them about matters like the offender's expected date of release and to hear and act upon their concerns.
- Some Probation Officers manage hostels, where offenders reside on bail as a requirement of a Probation Order, or on licence.

Values

These tasks and responsibilities must be carried out effectively and efficiently. The Probation Service also affirms the importance of values that should guide its work in all circumstances. Probation Officers are committed to:

- treating all people fairly, openly and with respect
- a commitment to valuing diversity and acting in an anti-discriminatory way
- an uncompromising stance against the harm caused by crime
- a strong belief in the capacity of people to change
- the importance of taking personal responsibility for behaviour
- the necessity of learning from experience