

5<sup>th</sup> March 2019

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The Rt Hon David Gauke MP  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London SW1H 9AJ

Dear Secretary of State,

## **PROBATION REFORM**

Further to our letter of 11<sup>th</sup> January and your response of 8<sup>th</sup> February, the undersigned organisations took the opportunity to meet together last week, to share our respective views on the future of Probation. This was a very constructive exchange of ideas and arising from this we are developing a series of agreed principles that we would be pleased to share with you shortly.

Meanwhile the NAO report has now been published and to quote “With limited time to procure the new contracts, the Ministry should pause and reflect on whether its proposed approach is both deliverable and consistent with its strategic aims for the probation system, and in doing so it should consider how it will respond to the risks set out in this report. ....”. Our organisations and we are sure many others with whom we work closely, now urge – on grounds of public safety, value for money, and the integrity of a professional probation service - that you should pause to reconsider the “proposed approach” for re-letting the contracts. We strongly agree that the focus on professional development of the workforce and in operating models is critical, as is the requirement to raise both public confidence and the confidence of sentencers. We note with renewed concern the disappointing impact of the current arrangements on short term prisoners released under the new licence arrangements and suggest that this can be addressed by the abolition of short-term sentences together with rebuilding a well-resourced probation service.

As in our earlier representation to you, we are keen to offer solutions in respect of what is an increasingly unsatisfactory situation. We welcome the proposal by NAO for “a cross-government strategy .....to reduce reoffending”. Our concerns, together with our breadth of knowledge and experience across the sector might serve to assist and inform your thinking in respect of future plans for Probation and reducing reoffending. We will write again shortly but equally we would be very pleased to meet with you and share our thoughts with you.



Yours sincerely

*Helen M Schofield*

Helen Schofield – Acting Chief Executive – Probation Institute, on behalf of

Ian Lawrence – General Secretary - Napo

Ben Priestley – National Officer for Police and Justice UNISON

Frances Crook – Chief Executive – Howard League

Phil Bowen – Director – Centre for Justice Innovation

Richard Garside – Director – Centre for Crime and Justice Studies

Maris Stratulis - National Director - BASW England and John McGovern -  
General Secretary - SWU/BASW.