

NEWS UPDATE

MAY 2009 | A MONTHLY DIGEST FOR PROBATION BOARDS AND TRUSTS

NOMS WORKS WITH PA TO EMBED TRUST FREEDOMS AND FLEXIBILITIES AND ANSWER MEMBERS' CONCERNS

NOMS ran a workshop on May 8 to discuss the proposals in the Association's February 2009 report *Probation Trust Freedoms and Business Flexibilities: a mechanism for driving forward public sector reform in probation* (for a copy please email lhogan@probationassociation.co.uk). The outputs of the workshop will be presented to the Probation Trusts Programme Board (PTPB) on May 27 and a final report shared with boards and trusts. This report will signal clearly what is, and is not, possible, with indicative timescales, and with a supporting narrative so that boards and trusts have the fullest information about context and intentions.

The theme of the workshop was using flexibilities to empower trusts. There was an explicit message that trusts must be enabled to run their own businesses, with "critical few" constraints and maximum possible freedoms and flexibilities. The Probation Trusts Programme will produce "an enabling series of measures" to make this happen. This was a very encouraging meeting and we have invited Bill McHugh, of the Trusts Programme, to the June Council meeting where issues can be explored in more detail. I have also met with Yvonne Thomas, the Programme Director and DOM for Wales, and we agree I will write to her formally with a summary of members' concerns and



Christine Lawrie

questions so that she can combine answers and comments into one document that can be shared with you. In the meantime, I will be replying to those chairs who posed particular questions in advance of the April PTPB.

MERGED BOARDS COULD FACE HUGE PENSION COSTS

The Probation Association has written to all Probation Secretaries, Chairs, Chiefs and Heads of HR to advise them over pension issues relating to board mergers. In the letter, Chas Dowden, Employment Relations, Pay and Policies Manager, explained that any costs arising from a merger would fall on the new employer. This could potentially result in large payments to the Local Government Pension

Scheme provider in respect of members of staff transferred from the previous county-based scheme.

NOMS is not currently offering to underwrite these costs.

The PA is strongly recommending that boards and trusts considering merger seek professional advice on this issue.

* For further information please contact cdowden@probationassociation.co.uk

NEW LEADERSHIP ROLE FOR BOARDS

New legal requirements to engage with local authorities in the production of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) provide opportunities to secure new funding streams and strengthen the position of probation.

Boards and trusts have the chance to lead the development of partnership arrangements which would assist local authorities target crime hot spots and support various joint strategic objectives (e.g. protecting vulnerable children, etc.). The Association has been forging links with the Local Government Association to drive this agenda forward. The PA has provided

evidence about Integrated Offender Management (combining Prolific and Priority Offender work with the LAA agenda) to the All Party Parliamentary Local Government Group.

Outcomes will be fed into an LGA conference on June 16 *Reducing Re-offending - 4 Beacons*, at which PA Chair Alan Wooderson has been invited to speak.

“Local partnership work could generate funding for joint initiatives and put probation in the driving seat in terms of intelligence-led crime reduction planning,” said Ian Fox, Policy Development Manager for the PA.

CONTRACTORS UNDER SCRUTINY

The Probation Association is surveying members over the performance of facilities management contractors, following assurances from NOMS.

The NOMS Property Board, of which the PA is a member, has been told of various improvements concerning clearance of backlogs and general timeliness since December 2008.

To establish whether experiences locally reflect this, Governance Services Manager Mike Caldwell is asking for feedback on mcaldwell@probationassociation.co.uk.

OFFICE DIARY

- 6 May PA Audit Committee
Governance Services Manager: Probation Qualification Framework (PQF) meeting
- 7 May *Employment Relations, Pay and Policies Manager:* Management of change meeting with unions
Chief Executive: Meeting with Jonathan Ledger, General Secretary, NAPO
- 8 May *Chief Executive:* Trust Flexibilities Workshop
- 13 May *Governance Services Manager:* Probation Qualification Framework (PQF) meeting
- 14 May *Chair and Chief Executive:* Meeting with Magistrates' Association
- 15 May *Governance Services Manager:* Dorset Board event
- 19 May *Employment Relations, Pay and Policies Manager:* Standing Committee for Chief Officer Grades (SCCOG) Joint Working Group
- 20 May *Governance Services Manager:* Probation Qualification Framework (PQF) Project Board
- 21 May PA Board meeting
Chief Executive: Meeting with Michael Spurr (NOMS)
Governance Services Manager: NOMS Finance Group
- 28 May *Employment Relations, Pay and Policies Manager:* NOMS union consultation
- 29 May *PR and Communications Manager:* Local Crime: Community Sentence (LCCS) National Steering Group

TRAINING DAY

Positive responses have been received from those who attended a Board Member Governance Training Day at the Probation Association offices, on April 24. The event, led by Governance Services Manager Mike Caldwell, dealt with issues including finance, audit and managing risk, effectiveness and being a trust.

Contributors included: Sebert Cox, Chair of Durham Probation Board; Pauline Swash-Wallbank, Director of Finance, Facilities and ICT, London Probation Area; and Joyce Drummond-Hill, Head of Audit & Corporate Assurance, NOMS.