

Probation and After-Care Service

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Dear Deputy Ward

The Government Plan

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide further details about the post of the Portuguese Offender Worker and the request for funding to continue with it. In the interests of clarity it might be useful to provide details under relevant headings.

Background

The post was initially created in 2002 and funded from the Substance Misuse and Crime Strategy, subsequently known as the Building a Safer Society (BASS) Strategy. The intention was to appoint a Probation Officer who could speak Portuguese and therefore converse with clients in their own language and understand the Portuguese/Madeiran culture.

The post provides equal opportunities for the Portuguese community involved in the criminal justice system to access support and interventions that can address their offending behaviour. The worker supervises offenders in the community who are subject to Probation Orders but also maintains contact with prisoners both during and after their prison sentence. It has also been possible to offer a service to clients who wish to contact the worker on a voluntary basis for advice. This has been a welcome initiative that can help to prevent clients offending.

The post holder also works with the families and victims of offenders as well as providing reports, assessments and advice to the Courts, Parish Hall Enquiries, Prison Early Release Panels and the Assistant Minister for Home Affairs in matters of deportations.

Work is undertaken with offenders on both an individual and group basis. A significant part of the role involves representing the Service in public protection forums such as the Jersey Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (JMAPP) and the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) which deal with high risk offenders and victims respectively. The post holder also plays an integral part in attending meetings at HMP La Moye to manage the safe reintegration of released prisoners.

The Portuguese Offender Worker has an active and important role in safeguarding work and will attend child protection meetings. The ability to converse in the same language in these challenging forums is invaluable and provides a measure of dignity and equality.

Funding

The BASS Strategy paid for half of the post with the Probation Service paying the remaining half. The Probation Service was not previously permitted to request permanent funding for this post because it was considered to have been already funded. A 2008 Audit Report had recommended that the funding should be transferred to the Probation Service although this was not implemented.

The funding for the BASS Strategy is due to finish at the end of 2019 which has necessitated the Probation Service seeking to maintain its existing funding. Without this, the Service would be unable to afford this post unless it made other cuts to front line services.

Meeting Strategic Priorities and Departmental Objectives

There is a clear alignment with the Island's Common Strategic Priorities as documented in the Government Plan and in the Future Jersey document:

- Putting children first. The post holder works intensively with families including children of Portuguese heritage who have offended. A vital part of the work includes supervising clients where there are significant child safeguarding concerns. This involves working with other agencies such as the Police and the Children's Service. The post holder will focus on trying to divert children away from formal criminal justice systems wherever possible. This is in line with best practice and the recommendations of the Youth Justice Review 2018.
- Improving the health and well-being of islanders. This is undertaken in several ways: encouraging more responsible and pro-social lifestyles that reduce offending including reduced levels of substance misuse.
- The post is consistent with maintaining Jersey's international reputation. The work of the post holder has been recognised by the Director of Caritas in Lisbon and the Portuguese and Madeiran communities. The worker plays a significant role in attempting to nurture an inclusive and diverse society- a key priority for government.
- The work undertaken by the post-holder makes a significant contribution to the Future Jersey vision of reducing crime.

In addition the role is aligned with the key departmental objectives of:

- Providing an accurate and timely information service to the Courts, Prisons and Parish Hall Enquiries
- Providing a supervision service which assists people in making a positive change in their lives which reduce offending
- To assist in the protection of the public from further offending.

Accountability

The post holder is supervised on a monthly basis by a Team Manager who monitors individual performance. The Service is accountable to the Probation Board. The current Probation Officer who is in this post has worked for the Service for 10 years.

It is typical for the post holder to manage a caseload of between twenty and thirty clients with the majority of those being Portuguese speakers. On average the worker will complete between forty and fifty reports for the Courts and the Assistant Minister for Home Affairs (in deportation cases). Additionally, regular written submissions are made to colleagues at HMP La Moye in respect of sentence planning and assessments are also undertaken for Panels considering Conditional Early Release.

A placement undertaken with the Madeiran Probation Service has ensured that the post holder has an effective working relationship with that agency. This allows for effective information sharing in the event of offenders being deported back to Madeira. This liaison can be important in making a contribution to public safety.


The monitoring of the role has been able to demonstrate some impressive results. In 2018 the post holder was part of a team of Probation Officers who achieved the following results:

- 66% of clients reduced their risk of reconviction (as measured by a validated assessment measure)
- 100% of clients reported being treated fairly and with respect
- 97% of clients expressed satisfaction with the work of the Service
- 90% of clients felt that their risk of reoffending had reduced by the end of their Probation Order.

Conclusion

The post of the Portuguese Offender Worker has demonstrated success over many years in terms of making a positive contribution to the Island. It has provided diversity and inclusion to the work of the Service. Not only has the role assisted clients in reducing their risk of reconviction, significant work has also been undertaken in the areas of public protection and safeguarding. It is my opinion that it is imperative this post is continued.

In order to do so, the request has been made for £ 35,100 per annum. This represents 50% of the total cost of the post. The other 50 % will continue to be paid by the Probation Service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mike Cutland', written in a cursive style.

Mike Cutland
Chief Probation Officer