NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Reoffending is costing society approximately £18bn per year and remains stubbornly high - of all offenders convicted in 2018 for indictable offences, 81% had at least one previous conviction or caution. Having a job and a home on release are key factors in preventing this however many prisoners lack these when they leave the prison gate and no single department can tackle this alone. We are pleased to share news of the publication of a National Partnership Agreement between the Ministry of Justice, its executive agency Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service, and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The Ministry of Justice is investing an additional £22m a year to ensure that CRCs deliver an enhanced Through the Gate service to offenders leaving prison to support them with accommodation and debt issues as well as ensure they receive bank accounts and identification. This partnership agreement sets out how they work alongside DWP prison work coaches help prisoners to get their CVs written, interview preparation done and job hunting underway so they are better able to get a job and hit the ground running when they are released.

For those not able to find employment on release, Universal Credit (UC) enables people to lift themselves and their children out of poverty. UC claimants spend more time looking for work, move into work quicker, are more likely to be in work, spend more time in work and earn more than their counterparts on Jobseekers Allowance. We know that those who engage with a work coach while in prison get a UC payment faster so the earlier we get people speaking to Jobcentre staff and getting themselves ready for work, the better. Given they make such a difference to offenders, it is therefore important that we do all we can to support the work of these dedicated public servants.

This partnership agreement builds on that existing support and will provide a framework for our departments’ joint relationship to enable us to better support offenders to make the most of UC and the opportunities it provides to move into employment. The implementation of this partnership agreement will be supported by a regular cross departmental board that looks to support services joining up locally in prisons and probation areas across the country.

We will also be communicating to interested stakeholders to make them aware of this significant step in our joint work to improve the support prison leavers receive and ultimately help reduce reoffending and increase levels of employment.

Robert Buckland QC MP

WILL QUINCE MP