



Helping the Ministry of Justice succeed in training thousands of newly qualified probation officers

The challenge

Reoffending accounts for around 80% of all recorded crime and costs the UK economy £18 billion each year.

Source: gov.uk

In July 2020, the government set HM Prison and Probation Service targets to recruit additional Probation Officers to help cut crime, reduce reoffending and protect the public.

To become fully qualified, newly appointed Probation Officers are required by statute to successfully complete the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP).

Whilst completing their training, trainee Probation Officers are supported by Practice Tutor Assessors (PTAs) who are experienced Probation Officers and qualified assessors. PTAs undertake the role of mentor and assessor enabling trainees to develop their academic knowledge and practical skills to enable successful completion of PQiP.

To fully support the increase in the number of Probation Officers required, HMPPS also needed to attract, recruit, train and qualify new PTAs from their workforce.

The solution

In order to achieve these challenging recruitment targets, Skills for Justice's accredited training centre was identified as the ideal partner to provide support. We delivered assessor training and qualifications for newly appointed PTAs and helped them successfully achieve the Training Assessment and Quality Assurance Level 3 Award within a 12 month period.

Working in close collaboration with the Probation Service, we created a full end to end learner journey from induction and registration to successful achievement of the Level 3 Assessor Award. This involved workshops, regular meetings with a dedicated assessor, and a countersigning service to allow trainee PTAs to play a full part in the day to day operations.

All PTAs completing the Level 3 Assessor Award are qualified to carry out assessment of occupational competence in the workplace.



The approach

Trainee PTA cohorts were facilitated by one of our qualified assessors.



Our assessors were available throughout the learning journey for advice, guidance and motivation to support the trainees with completing the qualification.



Individual assessment plans were developed with each trainee assessor to meet their individual requirements, needs and learning styles.

The knowledge unit was delivered alongside practical learning to ensure that the trainee PTAs understood the underpinning theory and knowledge of assessment practice and how this aligns with its practical application in the workplace.

Our assessors used a combination of different assessment methods to make a decision about an individual's occupational competence. Our assessors used their experience and expertise to select the right assessment method for the competences being assessed. This ensures the trainee PTAs aren't overburdened and streamlines assessment process for everyone concerned without compromising quality outcomes.

All assessment decisions made by trainee PTAs were countersigned by one of our qualified, occupationally competent countersigners until the trainee was qualified. The Probation Service also provided the trainees with a mentor who supported, advised and observed outside of the formal qualification assessments.

Trainee PTAs were required to submit a portfolio containing evidence of their planning, evidence gathering, assessment and feedback activities with their trainee probation officers together with their reflective accounts, and a record of Continuous Professional Development activities undertaken during their qualification. Trainees completing the qualification received a certificate from the Awarding Body SFJ Awards, confirming they had reached the required standard.

HMPPS was provided with monthly status reports outlining progression rates of trainees and highlighting any issues.

Outcomes

Between August 2020 and April 2023, the following outcomes were achieved:

- 225 New trainee PTAs registered on programme

To facilitate completion of the Level 3 qualification Skills for Justice:

- Delivered over 100 induction sessions and workshops.
- Reviewed and countersigned nearly *13,000 evidence submissions for the PQiP qualification
- Carried out almost *1,300 on-line assessor / learner reviews.
- Assessed and quality assured around 1,500 packages of evidence for the Assessor qualification.
- Enabled 158 newly qualified Practice Tutor Assessors (PTAs) to be deployed across probation regions.

*based on average monthly figures

Increase in the number of Probation Officers

Skills for Justice / The Workforce Development Trust's contracted delivery of TAQA Level 3 to current Probation staff has enabled the Probation Service to increase the number of recruits to the PQiP Programme and has contributed to the overall uplift in Probation Officer numbers in recent years.

- 3550 – September 2020*
- 4288 – September 2021
- 4371 – September 2022
- 4413 – March 2023

This is an overall increase of 863 staff to the end of March, with further intakes taking place throughout 2023.

*band 4 PO in post



Nushrat Sayeed-Hussain (Probation Qualifications Assurance Manager, HMPPS) said:

"Skills for Justice / The Workforce Development Trust have provided a good service in the training, assessment and quality assurance of all new Practice Tutor Assessors, since June 2020. The provision of service has included taking a collaborative approach with the Probation Service to ensure that business needs are met efficiently and effectively."

Skills for Justice are the leading authority in workforce and organisational development in the justice sector. As an SFJ Awards accredited training centre, we deliver a range of Ofqual regulated qualifications relating to assessment, learning and quality assurance.

To find out more about Skills for Justice please visit skillsforjustice.org.uk or contact Anne Mackintosh anne.mackintosh@wdtrust.org.uk

X @skills_justice

in skills-for-justice