

Terms and conditions

Q1. How long will existing terms and conditions remain in place?

All terms and conditions remain the same for existing staff unless they wish to renegotiate. No-one is compelled to move to new terms and conditions. Any future changes to terms would have to be agreed.

We wish to remain a competitive employer and for some individuals there may be benefits under future terms that they may wish to consider.

Pensions and benefits

Q2. Will new staff be able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)?

No. The LGPS is closed and we are not permitted to include new staff in the scheme. New employees will be offered a defined contribution pension arrangement. All existing staff will remain on the existing scheme unless they chose to move.

Q3. What are the benefits of the new scheme?

From April 2015, members of defined contribution pension arrangements such as 'The People's Pension' will have a much wider range of options available when choosing how to receive their benefits at retirement. For example, they will be able to take a one-off cash sum with 25% being paid tax free and the balance being subject to tax at marginal rates. In addition, in the event of death, it will be possible to pass benefits to a range of beneficiaries on a tax free basis.

The scheme also enables member contributions of between 3% and 8%. The company will match core contributions on a 1 to 1 basis i.e. if you contribute 4%, the company will match your contributions at 4%.

We cannot pretend that it's as good as a defined benefits scheme, but as defined contributions schemes go, it's very competitive.

You may also elect to pay Additional Voluntary Contributions in order to boost your pension savings. If you have any questions about your pension scheme, please seek advice from your HR manager.

Q4. What about auto enrolment?

New members of staff, who do not opt in to the pension scheme, will be automatically enrolled in the new scheme at contributions of 2%. This is now a legal requirement.

Redundancies and jobs

Q5. Are you going to make redundancies?

At the moment, we have more than enough work to do. Until we are in a position to know that there isn't enough work for everyone to do, we require everyone to carry on doing the great job that they do. So it's very much 'business as usual'. We currently have five CRCs with five different ways of doing things and more than five different sets of technologies. We are moving to a single system approach so there's lots of work to be done before we are in a position to know what the future structure looks like.

Q6. Will you offer VEDS?

It is our intention to offer some sort of enhanced voluntary scheme and we expect that to be available around about this time next year. We will, of course, go through normal consultation processes and it will be done in the way that everyone is familiar with. There may be special circumstances that mean we have to consider voluntary redundancies before then but that is likely to be very limited.

There may well be opportunities elsewhere in probation, pan CRC or with one of the partners. Interserve, for example, is growing all the time and there are likely to be opportunities. We would rather retain talent than make people redundant. Our approach is to treat people fairly and in a consultative manner.

Q7. Is the existing VEDS continuing?

There seems to be some confusion as to whether the current VEDS continues after March. The National Agreement (in paragraphs 11 & 16) sets out that the enhanced scheme currently available to those who were employed on 31st May 2014, only continues until 31st March 2015.

There is no obligation on providers to offer any enhanced scheme post 31st March. However, it is our intention to offer some sort of enhanced voluntary scheme and we expect that to be available around about this time next year. We will go through normal consultation process and it will be done in the way that everyone is familiar with.

Q8. What about people on contract?

We are looking to bring in some stability to the teams and understand 'business as usual' but we are also mindful that there is likely to be less staff in 12 months so we do not want to jeopardise permanent staff roles. This is a priority area under discussion at the moment.

If you have any specific enquiries about your current arrangements e.g. if you are on a contract, please liaise with your line manager in the first instance.

Q9. When will we know whether we have a job?

We appreciate that uncertainty is difficult and that you have been waiting a long time. The final timetable hasn't been agreed but we hope to be able to have all the necessary structures in place by this time next year, if not earlier.

Q10. What will the staff numbers look like in the future?

It is likely that there will be fewer staff but at this early stage, it's difficult to be precise. We are currently looking at the staff numbers provided by the MoJ during bidding and reconciling that with existing – bearing in mind there are lots of different arrangements in place e.g. contract staff, partnerships and secondments.

This 'true up' process, once completed, will then tell us how many people there are in post. Then we will look at the proposed model and resources required to deliver that. There will be some economies of scales and efficiencies and we will work with you to explore options.

There will be some pressure on non-front line posts but we cannot, at the moment, determine how that will play out. Our commitment to all of you is that we are intending to maximise our investment in front line service delivery.

Q11. Will you work with the unions?

There are good existing relationships with the Chief Executives in each CRC and we see those relationships continuing.

We value positive and constructive relations with the unions and believe our aspirations are the same. Our ambition is to look after people and provide a stimulating, flexible, competitive and successful work environment.

We will listen to all staff and the planned transformation programme events provide an opportunity to listen to staff.

We have conversations planned with the unions in February and are looking forward to a constructive relationship.

Q12. How do you see Corporate Services working given that there are five CRCs?

We understand that people in Corporate Services have been particularly concerned.

We didn't come with a pre-arranged plan or structure. We knew that there would be some areas of duplication and some of best practice.

There is a huge amount of work to be done in Corporate Services as part of the transformation programme. This will include governance processes, new business processes, supply chain arrangements, contract management etc. It's hugely complex but important to get right.

For example, we have completed an audit of systems and the security and accreditation status of each. The next step is to look at a series of recommendations/options with colleagues before deciding which approach is best.

A Corporate Service working group has been set up with colleagues from each of the CRCs to identify some of the immediate priorities. These will be considered by the Board (which includes the Chief Executives from each of the CRCs).

We believe that the people who do the job and understand the business are in the best position to take a view and we've got plenty of work for them to do for the foreseeable future.

Q13. How much consistency will there be across all five CRCs?

There will be consistency where it is needed e.g. in the modular approach to case management - that will be same across all five but we also want innovation and local responses in some areas. The key thing is consistency of model but with local delivery.

Q14. How will unpaid work look in the future?

There will be a role for unpaid work in the future but we will need to agree details. We recognise that a commercial balance will need to be in place.

Q15. What is your commitment to diversity?

We will always champion diversity. Whilst not specifically identified in our values, diversity is integral to the way we operate. With regards to diversity in our service delivery, we have identified minority groups that require additional resource in order to access services and we have built an additional level of resource for these groups into the core model. This applies for instance, to all women offenders and to offenders whose language is not English.

Training, progression and reward

Q16. What's the commitment to training?

We are committed to developing people and will provide the necessary training - it's about building on your strengths as well as acquiring new skills to deliver the model.

Q17. Will there be an opportunity for current probation service officers to qualify as probation officers, and particularly those who do not qualify for the current PQF fast track group because they don't have a relevant degree?

Our approach is to enable people to develop their skills while in post. We need people that are skilled, committed, enthusiastic, and want to do the jobs so we've got a big commitment to make sure that happens.

We are talking to the Probation Institute about the possibility of following the Probation Qualification Framework (PQF) route as well as exploring other avenues for professional advancement.

We haven't made any decisions and we will consult you on it. We want to make sure that there is proper secure future for probation professionals.

Q18. How will you reward performance?

We are looking at a number of aspects in relation to rewards, benefits and packages. While terms and conditions remain, we are also keen that good performance is rewarded. We will work with you to see what might be attractive and what we might be able to offer to staff in the context of their current packages.

IT

Q19. When will the new IT systems come in to place?

We know that legacy systems will be switched off at some point. The current timetable for that is the end of this year.

As systems and data need to be shared with other agencies, we are reliant on the MoJ to stick to their timescales to ensure that their technology is ready for our technology to talk to.

Transformation is a 12 - 18 month process. Implementation of the new case management system (CMS) will be phased with prototype development, testing, feedback and then piloting in the autumn before eventual roll out next spring.

The focus is on making sure that any change is very carefully managed so as to avoid risk at the front end service delivery.

Q20. What will the new systems allow?

We are investing heavily in new, specifically designed systems that allow a streamlined, mobile approach that allows flexibility of working. We want to reduce the amount of paperwork and time spent at a computer with an emphasis on access to data and the Directory of Services, knowledge sharing and learning.

The new CMS will be modular and linked to the model. It will be shared with, and input received from the CRCs. There will be a focus on more remote working and use of modern technology.

This might mean that different people work in different ways. There may be a range of devices made available and those devices would be selected or allocated on the basis of the type of work that's being done. For example, if you were a community payback supervisor you may want a tablet or if you are out on the road you might want an iPad. If you were sitting in the office you may want a more conventional modern laptop or desktop type device.

We will match the device to the requirement of the role and also on how people prefer to work.

Locations/Offices

Q21. Are you planning to close offices?

We are currently visiting every building to assess suitability and looking at options for new office space. There are a wide range of things to consider including existing leases, IT infrastructure, accessibility, cost, local transport links, partnership arrangements, staff travel times and options for co-location.

We hope to have some property options in the next couple of months. We will then discuss the options with your SMT.

It's important that any buildings must be fit for purpose under the new model.

In essence though, there will be fewer big expensive buildings, more local community hubs, and more mobile working.

Q22. Is there scope to move offices/CRCs?

If we can make people's work environment more sensible and helpful then yes. We hope that the ways of working and flexibility to move around will provide people with time to do the job rather than travelling to work.

We should ensure that all vacancies are shared between all CRCs and we'll look into that.

Partners and supply chain

Q23. We are currently working with multiple agencies, how does this fit with the new partnerships?

3SC has conducted a review of what is currently in place and in truth many organisations will remain as part of the supply chain. It is a complex landscape so we need to ensure we have got the most appropriate and best services in place.

Q24. How will you align local partners to deliver the services we need?

The role of 3SC is to performance manage contracted partners and to constantly refresh services. This will mean understanding changing requirements and knowing what services are out there. In addition, Interserve will be supporting and enriching our partners with capacity building etc.

Service users

Q25. How is Through The Gate (TTG) being managed?

We have already started working on this through a pan CRC working group, led by Kevin Lockyer.

Q26. What are you doing to inform service users?

At this time, there is nothing really to tell them. The service hasn't changed at point of delivery. At the appropriate time, service users will be informed of any necessary changes.

Communications and engagement

Q27. How will you keep staff updated during this transition period?

We aim to have an open and transparent communications – providing a range of ways to contact us and mechanisms to ask questions.

We are looking at how best to keep you informed of progress and we will look to use your existing communications channels.

We are also happy to run further telephone Q&As sessions if that's useful.

We will also provide communications materials on the Purple Futures website at www.purplefutures.co.uk

Q28. Are we rebranding to Purple Futures?

No - there are no rebranding activities planned. Purple Futures is the name of the umbrella partnership. All partners remain the same i.e. Interserve, Shelter etc. and the CRCs all retain their own names and identities.

Q29. How are you going to involve staff?

This is the start of the journey together. We will be holding transformation programme events in March/April and asking people to get involved in a series of fun and interactive workshops. This will be an opportunity for you to learn more, exchange ideas, have a voice and contribute to the future success of the CRC.