

## **THE DIPLOMA IN PROBATION STUDIES TRAINING PROGRAMME**

Once appointed, trainees will become **employees** of a local Probation Area and commence a two year programme of **academic study** and **practice based work**. This will lead to the award of the **BA (Hons) in Community and Criminal Justice** and the **NVQ Level 4 in Community Justice**, which together make up the **Diploma in Probation Studies (DipPS)** - the qualification needed to work as a Probation Officer.

Trainees will receive a salary (see **page 18 of the booklet**) and all training costs will be paid by the National Probation Service.

### **The Degree**

As well as being employees of a Probation Area, Trainees will be enrolled as students on the **BA (Hons) in Community and Criminal Justice** undergraduate degree programme. The Midlands Probation Areas are in partnership with De Montfort University, Leicester, to deliver this programme. The degree is designed to meet the employment needs and professional qualification of National Probation Service trainees. This is delivered in a modular format which **combines** academic input and employment-based learning, including the completion of an NVQ level four in Community Justice. Trainees will gain academic credits for their work-based practice and will complete the programme in two years.

The degree is a **distance learning programme**. Modules are introduced through **introductory workshops** and then undertaken through a series of study activities, directed by the *Module Guide*, including online seminars, structured reading and exercises. Each module is assessed. There will be a variety of modes of delivery including **taught, experiential, distance** and **open learning**, and use of **information technology** including **email, the Internet, computer-assisted teaching** and **conferencing**.

The flexibility of this approach allows the maximum benefit to be accrued from employment-based learning combined with access to high quality teaching opportunities and use of resource-based learning materials. Each module attracts 15 credits at undergraduate level and students are required to gain 360 credits for an honours degree.

There are a number of themes which underpin the programme enabling students to extend their understanding of community and criminal justice to their specialist field. These include an interdisciplinary approach to community and criminal justice, and methods of working with risk and public protection. The programme as a whole is structured with a clear commitment to valuing and working with diversity and to enable students to analyse and reflect upon their own practice.

## NVQ

NVQs are work-based and can only be obtained when applicants have demonstrated their competence in practice. The **Units of Competence** for Trainee Probation Officers are prescribed by the Regulations for the DipPS. Trainee Probation Officers will be expected to undertake a full range of Probation Officer activities under supervision. They will work with a Practice Development Assessor, who will help to create the opportunities to learn, practice and demonstrate the relevant skills and knowledge. (The precise arrangements may differ among Areas, but in every Probation Area there will be someone who has the responsibility to guide and teach the Trainee in this way and someone who will be responsible for assessment).

To gain the necessary learning opportunities, Trainees may work in a number of different settings in the course of their traineeship. It should be noted that there **may** also be some residential requirement for a small number of training workshops.

Interested candidates do need to be aware that both academic study and practice based work elements of the training programme will require the use of **information technology**. Although it would be helpful to have some IT experience, employing Probation Areas will provide appropriate training. Candidates with a disability should refer to the Disability section on **page 4 of the booklet**.

## Programme Structure

The Programme is structured in two parts.

In **Part One** (approximately 8 months), there are some **15 days of direct teaching** to introduce 4 academic Modules. This teaching will be delivered in **Birmingham** and **Leicester**, at venues accessible for Trainees across the Midlands Region. There are also four **practice** Modules and these are assessed through the submission of a portfolio of evidence, giving examples of practice and demonstrating that the learning outcomes have been met.

During **Part Two**, there are some **20 days of direct teaching** in support of the **eight academic** modules. Again, this teaching will be delivered in **Birmingham** and **Leicester**, at venues accessible for Trainees across the Midlands Region, **plus** 12 NVQ Units in Community Justice at Level Four.

As part of the integrated award, successful completion of the NVQ Units gains 120 academic credits – one-third of the degree.

The **curriculum** for the Diploma in Probation Studies is based on the **Occupational Standards** which set out what Probation Officers must be able to do. This ensures that the curriculum is relevant and will equip people to begin practice confidently and competently on qualification. It also ensures that learning at the University and learning at work are complementary, so

that practice experience informs learning at University and theoretical learning guides practice. Some of the academic modules and NVQ Units are currently under review. Details of the academic and practice module titles and NVQ units will be sent to all shortlisted candidates.

The arrangements are overseen by the Diploma in Probation Studies Standing Panel, within the Skills for Justice, which is the relevant Sector Skills Council. Programmes are subject to ongoing review.

Upon successful completion of the Programme and award of the Diploma in Probation Studies, Trainees are eligible for employment as Probation Officers. The current salary range for Probation Officers can be found on **page 18 of the booklet**.

It should be noted that while Trainees are given appropriate learning opportunities in the workplace and adequate time for academic study, they are expected to take a **significant amount of responsibility for their own development**.

The experience of the programme so far is that the achievement of the degree at a high academic standard and of an NVQ, for which competence must be demonstrated across a wide range of tasks, is very demanding.

The great majority of Trainees have found the programme to be stimulating and enjoyable, but also hard work, requiring a high degree of personal commitment and sustained motivation (please see **page 17 of the booklet**).