

Entrant company name: **Kindred**

Entry title: **Probation in Verse**

Category: **Public Sector Campaign**

Campaign: Probation in Verse

Client: MoJ & HMPPS

Brief, objectives, budget

Despite work to transform the Probation Service, negative media stories about the job often prevail, contributing to recruitment challenges. It's against this backdrop that we were briefed to deliver a PR campaign burst that would reframe what it means to work in the Probation Service, bringing the rewards of probation roles to life and setting them apart from competing careers to attract more people into the profession.

The objectives were to:

- Inspire people about the rewards and societal impact of working in the Probation Service
- Highlight what working in the Probation Service involves and the variety in the roles
- Encourage people to consider the Probation Service as a career

Strategy, creativity, innovation

Our PR campaign was part of the MoJ and HMPPS 'Extraordinary Jobs' marketing campaign. This campaign aims to attract people into probation roles through authentic representations of the challenges and rewards these jobs offer. It is honest, straight-talking and challenges misconceptions. It brings together both the world of the job and the personality of the people doing it.

This authenticity was central to our PR approach. PR is the ideal channel through which to share real, impactful and emotional human interest stories that can capture the attention of potential recruits.

Our focus was on finding these authentic stories and telling them in a new, compelling and attention-grabbing way.

This search led us to Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage, who our team discovered was a probation officer for eight years before becoming a full-time poet. His father had been a probation officer too.

Here we could combine celebrity and authenticity, perfectly. With beautiful content thrown in too.

The idea, research, planning

Simon agreed to write a poem about what it's like to work in the Probation Service. Aware that his personal experience was outdated, we arranged for him to speak to serving probation staff to understand what a typical day involves. In Simon's words, many of these people 'laughed in his face' – saying there was no typical day.

These conversations inspired Simon's poem: A Life In The Day Of.

The poem cleverly used each letter of the alphabet to bring to life real stories of the people probation staff work with, the scenarios staff face and the impact they have on the lives of others. Here's a brief extract:

A's sprawled in reception, he's sofa surfing, needs a bed.
B left a message, she's hearing voices again in her head.
Make a plan. Rip it up. Boil the kettle.
C keeps his third appointment in a row- minor miracle.
Tell D a hard truth.
Give E some tough love...

This innovative approach required us to relinquish full creative control of the copy to Simon, trusting in the authenticity of his words rather than reverting back to standard, formulaic key messages.

Implementation of tactics

Broadcast focus

The poem was written to be performed. Simon was our main spokesperson, talking about the poem, the role of a probation officer and the staff he spoke to during the project. He reflected on his own experiences and how passionate his late father was about working in the Probation Service. Coverage went beyond straight interviews, with Simon reading the poem in full.

Involving serving probation officers in Simon's research for the poem created opportunities to place these individuals as case studies. They featured in media talking about their take on the poem and sharing the challenges and rewards they've faced in their roles.

Framing the story

We commissioned consumer research to unpick how much the general public knows about working in the Probation Service. Our hypothesis – which the research supported – was this would be very little compared to other public service roles: more than a third of adults (35%) said they know nothing about what it must be like to work in the Probation Service compared to teaching (15%), policing (22%) and social services (22%).

Supporting content

Simon was able to provide an audio read of the poem, but no further filming. We therefore needed to find a way to bring the words of the poem to life and 'house' Simon's read of it. Due to the pressures within the Service, we weren't able to get into a probation office to film, so our creative challenge was to collate a film using existing footage of probation officers and turn this into something interesting that would work for online media and which the public would want to watch (watch the film on the link above– hopefully you'll agree that we nailed this!).

Measurement, evaluation, impact

The campaign landed incredibly well, and coverage sentiment was 100% positive. Google searches for 'probation officer' spiked on launch day (20th March)– the highest volume of searches in March. The HMPPS 'Probation Jobs' web page saw a 230% increase in visits in the days after launch coverage landed.

These results were achieved via:

- 48 pieces of quality media coverage, with five national hits including BBC Radio 4's 'World at One' (which was later uploaded as a standalone piece on BBC Sounds) and the Daily Mirror
- 100% of coverage included a campaign spokesperson
- 30m+ reach to the working public
- 75% of coverage included a website CTA
- Significant regional coverage spread in priority recruitment areas

Post-campaign research– which analysed audience views before and after seeing our coverage– found that the campaign was successful in meeting the objectives:

- Inspiring people about the rewarding role: there was a 51% increase in people feeling inspired by the work of probation officers and a 54% increase in people associating it with being a fulfilling job.
- Highlighting what the role involves: 70% of people better understood the variety involved in the role of being a probation officer after seeing our PR burst, compared to 47% before; and there was an 86% positive shift in understanding the skills it takes to be one.
- Encouraging people to consider the role: there was a 33% increase in people saying they would consider the role after seeing our coverage.