

PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY GLOUCESTERSHIRE PROBATION  
AREA IN RESPECT OF THE NEW ADMISSIONS POLICY AT RYECROFT

The government's National Strategy for Approved Premises (hostels) – [published in the Autumn 2004](#) - is being phased-in in Gloucestershire, as elsewhere in England and Wales.

The strategy changes the admissions policies of Home Office Approved Premises (hostels) and includes admitting higher-risk offenders.

Ryecroft Approved Premises, in Gloucester, is on track to get the new strategy in place [this](#) year and is currently trialling its new policies and procedures.

The 16-bed unit, which provides the most secure accommodation for offenders outside prison, is required to accept all categories of offenders.

But until the new national policy is fully implemented, the changes will be limited to those who have committed offences against adults and will include some convicted of robbery. In time, other high risk of harm offenders will be considered for admission, including those who may have offended against children.

Ryecroft Manager Dave Berry said the new regime was being successfully piloted on a small number of higher risk offenders.

He said: "We are confident that Ryecroft is now in a position to safely assess and manage offenders at all levels of risk, and therefore fully fulfil our public protection role as defined and required by the Home Office. "

The new national policy requires Approved Premises, including Ryecroft, to accept offenders convicted of more serious offences than previously, including domestic violence, robbery and sex offences, as well as medium risk or prolific offenders.

Baroness Scotland, the Criminal Justice Service and Offender Management Minister, said: “While we understand fully local concerns, Approved Premises (hostels) provide a greater degree of control and supervision of offenders than would be possible if those offenders were living elsewhere in the community.

“It is precisely because we want to protect the public that Approved Premises are used to supervise and manage offenders who are assessed as presenting a risk of harm to the public.

“These establishments enhance public protection locally and nationally. They do not diminish it.”

Ryecroft has made thorough preparations which including on-going consultation with local residents and statutory organisations, enhanced partnership work with the police, staff training and refurbishment.

Gloucester Probation Area works closely with the police and also the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, introduced in April 2001, to manage the risk posted by sex offenders living in the community.

Ends

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Notes to editors:

- Gloucester Probation Area is a law enforcement agency. It is part of the National Probation Service which, together with the HM Prison Service, makes up the National Offender Management Service.
- Probation staff work with offenders to protect the public and reduce re-offending. They deliver sentences of the Courts through credible and

effective community punishments including programmes to change offending behaviour.

- Risk assessment and management of offenders, including prisoners released on licence, is essential to public protection. An important part of Gloucester Probation Area's work is with victims of crime to ensure their views are represented.
- Many of Gloucester Probation Area's activities are inter-agency. As well as the Prison Service, key partners include police; courts and sentencers; the Crown Prosecution Service; government agencies such as health, employment and education; local authorities; voluntary and private sectors; and victims and communities.
- Offenders living in Approved Premises have been ordered to do so by the courts as a condition of bail, or as a requirement of a community sentence because the court believes that they need more supervision or a settled address. Living at Approved Premises may also be a condition of release from prison.
- Ryecroft's completion rate (residents who successfully complete their placement at Ryecroft) is consistently above the National Probation Directorate target
- Public protection measures include:
  - Security measures including CCTV, alarmed exits and restricted window openings
  - Electronic tagging
  - Staffing levels – a minimum of two staff on duty at all times
  - Resident monitoring
  - Curfew (11pm to 7am)
  - Treatment – mental health problems, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse etc
  - Sex Offender Prevention Orders – applied for by the police and granted by the courts, prevents specified activity like contacting named individuals
  - Drug Testing

- Exclusion zones – some offenders are prohibited from locations as part of their probation order or licence
- Contact restrictions
- Police – joint management of offenders means regular liaison with, and visits to Approved Premises, by police
- Recall to Prison – if a resident breaches his license
- Room searches – if illegal or not permitted substances are found the resident could be recalled to prison