

## A Strategic Plan for NAPA 2026-30

### NAPA's purpose:

Officially, as registered in Companies House, we are:

**The Independent National Approved Premises Association CIC [NAPA]**

**Company Number: 11961233**

NAPA CIC (Community Interest Company) is an association of the eight providers of the dozen or more independently managed Approved Premises in England & Wales. All Approved Premises (APs), whether run independently or by the state directly, provide community based residential facilities for those who have offended.

The independently managed sector now provides about 15% of the Approved Premises (AP) estate in England & Wales, and well over half of the AP provision for females (six out of nine female APs in 2025). These independent APs (IAPs) are sometimes owned by a charity, with a board of trustees, but alongside these are some other specialist provider organisations too. However, they all operate as part of His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service's (HMPPS) AP estate, alongside the 90+ APs managed directly by the Probation Service itself.

Over the years, the role of Approved Premises has reflected the changing priorities of the criminal justice system. Under earlier names such as "Approved Homes" and "Probation & Bail Hostels", APs have evolved from housing homeless boys convicted of petty offences, providing substitute families for adolescents, training unemployed offenders for work, counselling in therapeutic communities, offering alternatives to custodial sentences, and then for a period mainly used for pre-trial remand purposes, they have more recently been exclusively used for providing enhanced supervision in the community for high-risk individuals on release from prison.

### NAPA aims to:

Deliver a range of services and functions that support and assist the work of our Associate IAPs by contributing to the achievement of best practice, consistency and high-quality service delivery across the whole of the sector.

We particularly seek to:

- **Influence** – policy and practice; to achieve both the best use of independent Approved Premises (IAPs) and the highest standards of practice in the work they undertake.
- **Work in Positive Partnership** – with independently managed Approved Premises, managing bodies, the Ministry of Justice, The Probation Service (PS), HMPPS and other relevant agencies.
- **Represent** – employer perspectives relating to the provision of independent Approved Premises and the staff that work in them.
- **Disseminate** – information on practice, policy developments and opportunities.
- **Promote** – understanding of the work of IAPs; the development of quality standards; appropriate levels of resourcing; and best use of all IAPs.
- **Contribute to** – the identification of training and staff development needs; the provision of training; the development of policy and the sharing of good practice.

The work of NAPA and its Strategic Director is overseen by an Executive Committee drawn from the Associate IAP providers. These individuals are the formal Directors and Members of NAPA CIC.

**For reference: – Extract from the Companies House registration entry for NAPA CIC:**

**Article 5 - Objects:** 'The objects of the Company are to carry on activities which benefit the community and in particular (without limitation) to furthering the work of independent approved premises in delivering community based residential facilities for high risk offenders.'

**Community Interest statement:** 'In particular, the company's activities will provide benefit by furthering the work of independent approved premises in delivering community based residential facilities for high risk offenders.'

**Activities:** 'The company has been set up to support the independent approved premises in England and Wales. The Company will deliver a range of services and functions that support and assist the independent approved premises by contributing to the achievement of best practice, consistency and high quality service delivery.'

**Community benefit:** Independent approved premises are community based and at the forefront of efforts to protect the public by reducing reoffending and managing risk of harm....

...If the company makes any surplus it will be retained and reinvested into the business.

## **A Summary of NAPA's purpose and aims:**

In short, we consider that we have an **enabling** role in our business relationship with our Associate IAP providers. NAPA's role could be informally described as similar to that of a 'trade association', in that each of the IAPs has its own governing body, and it is not for NAPA to have any kind of 'governing' or 'managing' role in respect of any of them. But NAPA can serve in an 'enabling' role in matters where the IAPs have interests in common, for example with information-sharing and some training. Furthermore, NAPA can act as the collective eyes, ears and voice of IAP providers within the wider criminal justice and supported accommodation networks.

## **The 2026-30 context:**

During the period of the previous Plan, which eventually took up the period 2022-6, the majority of the IAP providers were operating under 'old' contracts with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) – often extensions of quite 'historic' contracts – while there was a growing minority of IAP providers being issued with 'new' contracts between 2021 and 2023. From 2023-6, MoJ conducted a lengthy commissioning programme, completed in the early summer of 2025, which had the effect of ending almost all the 'old' contracts with effect from April 2026. (During this process, from April 2025 the two Newcastle APs that had been run by St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) were transferred to Interventions Alliance, by agreed arrangement, at first on an interim basis which was then extended). The other main outcomes of the commissioning programme were that Hestia Battersea was to end its role as an IAP, while four new IAPs were scheduled to start operating from or soon after April 2026.

With the departure of SVP from the IAP scene in March 2025, the number of providers had already reduced from ten to nine. The overall result of HMPPS's commissioning programme should have been that with effect from April 2026, the independent AP sector would still consist of nine IAP providers, though with every expectation that they would now be managing a total of 17 IAPs between them. All would now be on the new-style contracts with MoJ (except for the two Newcastle IAPs, pending the next round of commissioning). However, the subsequent sudden departure of Strides from the IAP scene too has meant that there will instead be only eight IAP providers, and no certainty that the IAPs won't reduce from 17 to 16.

Nevertheless, this new strategic Plan therefore now has little need to include references to the 'old' contracts, or to assisting the transition away from them. Instead, this Plan can focus on the core task of enabling all NAPA's Associates to find ways of working with HMPPS (contract managers and others) as effectively as possible under the new arrangements.

We expect the main collective concerns for our Associates to be, at least initially:

- How the new contracts are implemented, especially the performance management element
- How the new inspection programme by HM Inspectorate of Probation is implemented, and its potential effects on IAPs, both intended and unintended
- How HMPPS may plan and implement the possible further expansion of the IAP sector, both in terms of more beds, and/or potentially some possible developments in their role
- - And the prospect of a new commissioning programme starting perhaps in 2027

As always, NAPA will aim to facilitate direct dialogue between its Associates and either HMPPS or HMI Probation, rather than become an unnecessary extra step in that dialogue.

### **Workstreams:**

In broad terms, these have been categorised up to now as 'Internal' (to NAPA, its own functioning and administration of its work with its Associates) and 'External' (its working relationships with its Associates and HM Prison and Probation Service, and also with a wider range of organisations and interested parties). Each of these two workstreams has, in principle, two elements: a Maintenance and a Development element. These categories continue to be appropriate.

#### **A. Internal:**

##### **A. Maintenance:**

For NAPA itself our plan is to achieve and maintain a good level of **resilience** and **security**. At the start of this four-year Plan, a key area where we need to establish improved resilience and security is with our finances. We have been consciously running an annual 'deficit' for the last three years, knowing that we would need to establish a more sustainable approach once the recent HMPPS commissioning programme was completed. We now set out that new approach:

##### **Finance:**

NAPA has no plan to 'make a profit', that is to say over any sustained period of time we aim on average to break even year-on-year. We provide services to our Associates each year in exchange for an annual charge, payable by invoice at the start of each financial year, and at the end of that financial year our aim is that our expenditure will match our income as closely as possible. We have reviewed how we will aim to achieve that annual matching in future in a sustainable way.

As a first step, NAPA had already established, in 2025/6, the principle that the unit charge will in future increase each year by the same Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure - the end-of-January figure - with which HMPPS annually increases its contract payments to the IAPs. But in a further step to continue to establish and maintain a stable and sustainable pattern of expenditure and income for future years, we now plan to adopt the following approach:

##### ***Expenditure:***

The expenditure items that are within NAPA's control, that is the salaries, honoraria, and fees we pay our Associate Trainers, will all also be increased by the same CPI figure in the subsequent financial year. Should the other expenditure items increase in future years to such an extent that the total threatens to exceed projected income, then other options will have to be considered in that event.

*Income:*

NAPA plans that for 2026/7 onwards, the annual charge to our Associates will consist of potentially two elements: there will be a single 'unit charge' for the provider (which will include the charge for one IAP), and there will also be a 'part-unit charge' for each additional IAP managed by that provider. Under such a system, every single IAP – not just every provider - will be entitled to receive annually one training session, and two Conference places, without additional charge.

*Establishing the new annual charge system:*

With this in mind, NAPA's Executive has reviewed its projected expenditure plans for the year 2026/7, which will serve as the 'base year' for the purposes of the new system. It was important neither to underestimate, nor over-inflate, the figure for this base year. In doing so, the Executive also had to take into account the likely reduction of IAP providers from nine to eight. Another point to note is that there is a specific identifiable variable cost to be incurred for each individual IAP, principally for the training session and the Conference delegate places – this was relevant when considering the options for the new annual charge system.

The NAPA Executive resolved, after considering the options, that the unit charge for each provider for 2026/7 would be £7,350. – and that the part-unit charge for each additional IAP would be 50% i.e. £3,675. However, this will need to be continually reviewed in the light of evolving circumstances, and because NAPA's turnover is very likely to exceed the VAT threshold in 2026/7. Registration is likely to be necessary by April 2026.

Other elements of NAPA's 'internal' work also continue to require attention:

*Website, ICT and social media:*

We plan to continue to be self-sufficient and resilient as far as we can in terms of maintaining our website (revised in 2021) - plus our LinkedIn account (we have closed Twitter/X) and all our administrative systems. Each of our two employed staff will continue to be able to access all our administrative resources, and we intend that each will be able to cover for the other when needed.

*Training, and sharing experiences:*

For our Associate IAP providers we will continue to maintain an annual calendar of meetings, training events and the Conference/AGM. The training packages provided by our Associate Trainers (ATs) primarily focus on aspects of long-term skill development. They complement the wider opportunities to share experiences and perspectives provided by NAPA's meetings. Our aim is to maintain the resources and facilities that we need so that we can enable each individual IAP to develop its own work much more straightforwardly than it would be able to do on its own.

We are exploring two developments related to our provision of staff training:

First, we aim to introduce more coherence to the overall shape of what we offer, so that each training session can be related to an overall picture of what AP work is all about – the Three Purposes of Probation/AP work.

Second, we will try to develop a modest element of 'Recognition' of the knowledge, understanding and skills of IAP staff, not only to aid the effectiveness of those IAPs but also to help staff to grow their sense of career development as well.

### Governance:

NAPA's Executive Committee will continue to direct the organisation. It will meet at least four times per year and consists of the Directors of NAPA CIC formally registered at Companies House plus some additional Trustees and/or senior managers from Associate IAPs who become Members of the CIC for their term on the Executive. The Handbook, with Appendices, adopted in 2023, provides the framework for the governance of NAPA, and will continue to be reviewed annually.

In summary, we take the view that the main future Internal work will be 'Maintenance only', though through regular reviews we must be open to taking new measures to improve our resilience and security, and respond to any setbacks of course.

#### A2. Development:

We will identify and implement any new measures that are needed to achieve a good level of **resilience** and **security** (for example, internet security of our online systems, and documentation of our administrative processes), and proper governance of the CIC.

### **B. External:**

#### B1. Maintenance:

NAPA aims to maintain all the existing liaison mechanisms with HMPPS and the wider AP sector. Our role in these liaison mechanisms is to ensure that the work of IAPs is well co-ordinated with the state sector where it should be co-ordinated, but also independent from it where it should be independent. However, where there continues to be a lack of shared understanding between HMPPS and IAPs about how those two considerations are defined, a Development workstream relates to this.

#### B2. Development:

NAPA aims to develop a shared understanding with HMPPS and our wider partners about where it is proper to be 'integrated' with state-run APs and where it is proper to behave independently.

NAPA aims to keep developing NAPA's understanding of Government's future contracting arrangements as they in turn develop, to ensure that IAPs are enabled to engage as effectively as possible when each future round of contracting eventually comes round.

### **Aim / Outcome in 2030**

In principle, we should be regularly measuring, during the period of this Plan, how far the Plan is proving successful in practice; however, 'organisational success' is not an easy thing to measure.

NAPA is not a service delivery organisation, but each of its Associate IAP providers is. The main three purposes of each Approved Premises should mean that individuals who have previously offended will reduce their offending behaviour, they will comply with the terms of their sentence or licence, and their risk of harm to others will be contained as far as it is reasonable to expect. There will also be some other 'pro-social' purposes. An IAP's success in achieving its purposes can in principle be measured through long-term research methods. If an IAP is found to be successful through such research, then the credit should of course go properly to that individual IAP.

In principle, the aim of NAPA CIC is, in its capacity as an 'enabler', to make a contribution that helps each independent AP to achieve those purposes. The way to 'measure' that indirect contribution that NAPA might be making to the effectiveness of each IAP is to ask the people best placed to assess whether NAPA's work has 'made a difference' in practice - the staff and Trustees of each IAP.

Accordingly we planned back in 2021 to survey annually those staff and Trustees for their assessment of NAPA's contribution, using a survey employing a 'Likert' scale (which provides quantified 'scores' of 'satisfaction'). We undertook such a survey in September/October 2021, the results of which effectively served as a 'baseline' or 'benchmark' position; the idea was that in January or so of 2023 and subsequent years we could conduct further Annual Surveys and the scores each year could then be tracked. We have continued to do so every January since then.

This regular 'set' of questions in the Annual Survey help NAPA gauge these aspects of its work:

- For maintaining its key Internal processes, the IAPs meetings, the annual Conference, and the annual 'training package'
- For maintaining its key External process, facilitating the working relationship between IAPs and MoJ/HMPPS.
- For developing its External workstream, promoting the work of IAPs within the wider criminal justice system
- And overall value for money for IAPs, as perceived by the Associate IAPs

However, what are probably more important than the results of the formal 'scores' are the informal 'free text' feedback about which aspects of NAPA's work have been found to be most helpful or least helpful to IAPs each year. Accordingly, the results of the survey have been collated and analysed, and then presented for the consideration of the Executive each year. In this way the feedback has continued to inform the content of the Workplan for each subsequent financial year.

Since this mechanism has been so useful hitherto, we plan to continue with it. The questions (below) remain pertinent, and retaining them as they are means that we will be able to compare results over time. The Comments will also no doubt continue to be useful each year too.

### **The questions in NAPA's Annual Survey**

- 1.** In my opinion, the IAP meetings I've attended this last year have been productive and worthwhile.
- 2.** In my opinion, the most recent NAPA Conference that I attended was productive and worthwhile.
- 3.** In my opinion, the training package our IAP(s) received this last year was productive and worthwhile to the staff.
- 4.** In my opinion, NAPA's work was helpful to us in managing our interactions with MoJ/HMPPS.
- 5.** In my opinion, NAPA has been helpful in promoting the work of our IAP(s) within the CJS.
- 6.** In my opinion, during the last 12 months NAPA has made a contribution in enabling my IAP to benefit the community this year.
- 7.** In my opinion, the service that NAPA has provided for my IAP during the last 12 months has been good value overall