

9 October 2020

Dr Lesley Carroll
The Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

By email: ian.mcadam@prisonerombudsmanni.org.uk

Dear Lesley,

Reference: Targeted Consultation on the Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Thank you for your letter inviting the Probation Board for Northern Ireland to respond to the targeted consultation on your Strategic Plan 2020-24.

We welcome this opportunity to provide some feedback.

PBNI welcome the fact that this plan has an outcomes focus, and follows the principles of outcome based accountability. Understandably, the plan will need to be reviewed once a new Programme for Government is agreed. PBNI's own Corporate Plan and Business Plan emphasise the importance of having an evidence base and a learning approach.

The aim of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is 'changing lives for safer communities. Probation is involved at all stages of the criminal justice process, it works in Courts, providing pre-sentence reports to assist judges in their sentencing decisions. We work in communities, supervising sentences that are served in the community, and we work in prisons, preparing prisoners for release who are subject to licences. PBNI also work directly with victims of crime through the Victim Information Scheme. We therefore have an entire system view of individuals who come through the criminal justice system, and therefore we are responding in this context.

We have a number of suggestions about the Strategy which are outlined below:

We believe that The Vision would benefit from an explicit reference to emotional health and well-being. As practitioners, we are acutely aware of the serious impact of mental ill health of individuals across the criminal justice system.

Strategic Priority 1 - Improve investigative processes

At point 7, 'gather feedback from our key stakeholders to achieve improvement'; to date there has been no formal consultation with prisoners, former prisoners or families about the work of the Office. We would comment that there are potential linkages with our PBNI service user groups, many of whom have served time in prison, and are keen to have their views heard on a range of matters where they believe they can make a difference.

Finally, PBNI welcome the opportunity to further engage in the development of the Strategy where appropriate. Overall, the focus on feedback and co-design in the draft Strategy is important and very welcome.

I trust these comments are helpful and if you would like to discuss our response further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Cheryl Lamont CBE

Chief Executive