



**Consultation on the priorities for the  
Corporate Plan 2017-2020**

***‘Changing Lives for Safer Communities’***

**Closing Date for responses  
14 October 2016**

## Introduction

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is developing its next Corporate Plan, which will cover the delivery of the Probation Service for the period, 2017-2020. In doing so, we will build on the successes achieved over the last corporate planning period, 2014-17. In its planning, PBNI tried to anticipate the longer term context in which it would deliver its statutory role in the Criminal Justice System. Although not possible to predict all the factors which will shape the justice system in the longer term, we concluded that a flexible and efficient Probation Service will be needed to ensure that those who have offended are resettled and rehabilitated to reduce future reoffending.

In order to develop this plan, we want to have your feedback on how well probation services are currently delivered and how you believe we can best contribute to creating safer communities in Northern Ireland into the future. The identified priorities for the period 2017-20 are set out in pages 13 & 14. We are interested in hearing your views on those priorities.

We are particularly interested in hearing views about how the PBNI might contribute to the draft Programme for Government, specifically Outcome 7 (***We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other***). PBNI is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Justice (DOJ) with Board members drawn from the community. We have a significant contribution to make to the DOJ's priorities and to the NI Executive's Programme for Government, more generally.

A number of indicators which will contribute to creating a safer community – all of which come within the PBNI's statutory role – have been highlighted, with the following identified as being important for the DOJ:

- Reduce crime
- Reduce reoffending
- Increase the effectiveness of the justice system

Additionally, PBNI is concerned with tackling the causes of crime in order to reduce crime and reoffending. We know that issues such as poor mental health, addictions, lack of employment, educational underachievement and low skills levels, difficulties with accommodation and poor personal relationships all play a role in contributing to why people offend. There are other outcomes to which PBNI may contribute which will in turn contribute to making Northern Ireland safer, including:

- We have a more equal society
- We enjoy long healthy active lives
- We have more people working in better jobs
- We care for others and we help those in need

PBNI has worked in the heart of local communities across Northern Ireland since it was established in 1982. During this time, we have built strong relationships with community representatives, the voluntary and community sector, local businesses and statutory partners. We value these relationships for their importance in helping us successfully deliver probation services within local communities. This consultation on the draft Corporate Plan provides an opportunity for all of those organisations and the wider public to shape how our services are delivered and our priorities in the future.

Throughout this consultation process, we will be engaging with a range of organisations, service users and our staff who actually deliver the services. While we will hold a number of meetings with key influencers and partners, we will also use social media and an electronic survey to engage widely with our stakeholders.

We are therefore asking the following questions for you and the community:

1. What services are the most important for PBNI to focus on over the next 4 years to **reduce crime**?
2. What services are the most important for PBNI to focus on, over the next 4 years to **improve the effectiveness of the justice system**?
3. What services are the most important for PBNI to focus on over the next 4 years to **reduce reoffending**?

The PBNI is well placed to contribute to the delivery of the outcomes and the identified indicators. To do so, it will be necessary to identify the supporting indicators, where the Probation Service can have a more direct impact.

Comments on all the services currently provided by the PBNI and on the identified priorities for the period 2017-20 would also be welcome.

The process for responding to this consultation document is outlined on page 15.

## **Delivering the Probation Service**

PBNI performs a critical role in the justice system. In 2015-16 PBNI provided 8255 reports to assist decision making in the criminal justice process. Of these reports, 4946 were Pre-Sentence Reports (PSR) provided to assist Judges in their sentencing decisions. In the prisons in Northern Ireland, PBNI delivers pre-release resettlement interventions to prisoners and also provides risk assessment reports to the Parole Commissioners to inform their decision making about prisoner releases. In the community, PBNI supervise offenders under a range of Orders and Licences to ensure sentence compliance. At 31 March 2016, PBNI were supervising 4209 people who were subject to Court licences/Orders. These include Community Service Orders, Probation Orders and Licences for people released from custody. Services are also provided to victims of crime through our Victims Information Scheme. The successful delivery of the probation service is central to the promotion of public confidence in both community sentencing and the wider justice system because of its role in delivering compliance, rehabilitation and resettlement.

### **Principles and Values**

In carrying out their work, our staff approach is based on PBNI's core principles and values:

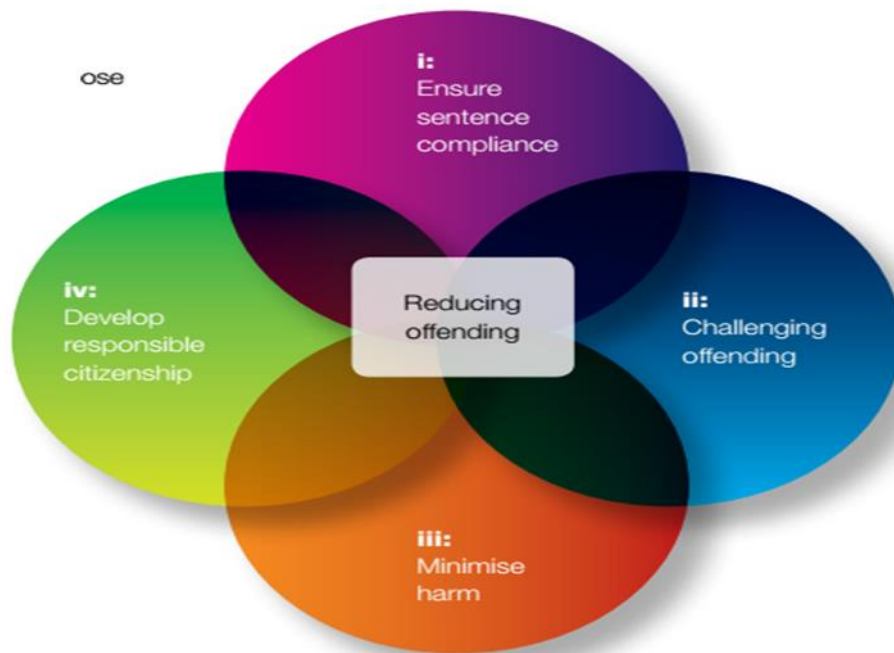
- *Respect for Human Dignity*
- *Recognising People's Capacity for Change*
- *Victim Awareness*
- *Integrity and Professionalism*
- *Equality and Diversity*
- *Collaborative working*

PBNI carries out its role through Probation Officers who are professionally trained social workers and other suitably qualified staff, who deliver front line services to both those who have offended and those who are victims of crime. Probation Officers are trained to carry out risk assessments and to challenge offenders on their behaviour by

holding them accountable for their actions to motivate them to change to minimise harm. Probation Officers are particularly skilled in building relationships with people who have offended (and their families) to help them to change their behaviour and attitudes to become better citizens.

The 4 core elements of how probation works are set out below.

(Source: The Probation Best Practice Framework)



**i. Ensuring sentence compliance** means that PBNI will hold offenders to account in terms of keeping to the requirements of a court order or conditions of a licence and will take appropriate enforcement action where there is evidence of non-compliance.

**ii. Challenging offending** means PBNI will engage with offenders in order to produce positive changes in attitudes and behaviours which will impact on and reduce the likelihood of them offending in the future. This involves supporting the offender to commit to change through constructive and effective interventions.

**iii. Minimise harm** means that PBNI will contribute to community safety through the appropriate and proportionate use of constructive and restrictive measures and controls to minimise the risk of harm to others and promote the safety of victims. This work is undertaken within multi-agency risk management arrangements.

**iv. Develop responsible citizenship** means that PBNI will support offenders to become more responsible citizens and better integrated into the community. This work involves PBNI in enabling offenders to access appropriate services, promoting social inclusion of offenders and assisting them to make positive choices about their own behaviour.

## **Working in Partnership**

PBNI work closely and effectively with a wide range of partners with the shared goal of reducing reoffending. The key partners include: PSNI, Youth Justice Agency (YJA), Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), Health and Social Care Trusts and the Community and Voluntary Sector. The collaborative work delivers on the ground through initiatives such as

- Public Protection Arrangements N.I.
- Reducing Offending Partnerships
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)
- The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
- The Police Community Safety Partnerships

## **Developing Innovative Practices**

The following are examples of recent innovations in Probation Practice:-

- **‘Reset’, The Intensive Resettlement and Rehabilitation Project**

Due to difficulties in making the transition from custody to community resettlement, a proportion of individuals have to be recalled to custody, in order to protect the public, within the first few weeks of release. The transition from prison to community resettlement is a critical point in an offender’s life and can have wider societal implications in terms of crime rates, the impact on victims, confidence in the Justice System, and the costs to society.

PBNI introduced ‘Reset’, as a bespoke desistance based adult Mentoring Scheme, which aims to positively support former prisoners through the period of transition back into the community by enabling them to meet the challenges within the first few weeks of release. By doing so, the need to undertake recalls is prevented with significant savings to and consequently reduced pressure on the justice system.

An independent evaluation by NISRA has demonstrated the effectiveness of the project.

- **The Enhanced Combination Order (ECO)**

Statistically, more than 8 out of 10 people sent to prison in Northern Ireland each year are there for less than 12 months. Such short sentences give little time for rehabilitation work in custody to take place. Following discussion with the Lord Chief Justice, PBNI introduced the ECO pilot which gives the Courts an alternative to short prison sentences (up to 12 months). While this innovative approach has to be formally evaluated at the end of the 18 month pilot, the initial indications are positive.

- **Restorative Practice Pilots**

The efficacy of restorative interventions was highlighted in the Ministry of Justice 'Restorative Justice Action Plan 2012'. It noted that for offenders who took part in restorative justice, there is a 14% reduction in reoffending rates. PBNI was successful in 2015 in securing money from the Assets Recovery Community Scheme to fund two pilot projects for 9 months with our long term restorative justice partners, Community Restorative Justice Ireland and Northern Ireland Alternatives. The pilots are currently being evaluated.

- **Mobile App for Service Users**

A report published by Ofcom in 2015 revealed that smartphones have become the most popular device for getting online, with record ownership and usage. Northern Ireland is a 'smartphone society' with 63% of Northern Ireland adults now owning a smartphone. This number is likely to grow.

PBNI, recognising this change in how people access information, sought to consider ways of using technology to communicate more effectively with service users and enhance engagement. Evidence shows that more effective service user engagement assists in the process of desistance from crime.



After conducting a survey of service users which indicated an App would be useful to enhance engagement and compliance, PBNI developed the App 'Changing Lives'. This is being rolled out across the organisation and will be formally launched later in the autumn. It is likely there will be further developments to the App once we have service users' and operational staff's feedback.

## **Corporate Planning Period 2014-2017**

During the last Corporate Planning period, delivering innovation and managing change underpinned our work. Indeed one of the strengths of PBNI is its willingness to use the expertise of its community based Board members, as well as the professional and committed staff to introduce innovative approaches to improve the Probation Service. The result is improvements to community safety, fewer victims and more success in delivering desistance from crime.

In September 2015 the DOJ published: 'Supporting Change: An Approach to Desistance'. PBNI has a pivotal role in the delivery of the approach. During the period 2014-17, PBNI developed a number of innovative projects to support offenders desist from crime. Examples are outlined in pages 7, 8 & 9.

Like all public services, PBNI has faced significant budget reductions over recent years. Since 2010/11, the budget has been reduced by about 17.6% (or £3.5M). In order to continue its statutory duties to the requisite standards, the Board put in place an Organisational Development Programme which allowed the budgetary reductions to be managed, while at the same time protecting front line service delivery. This included a review of the professional practice standards to ensure they were fit for purpose to ensure compliance with Courts' sentences, to have the necessary arrangements in place to protect the public and to facilitate the necessary behavioural change for the service users. As part of the Programme, the PBNI's estate has been reviewed and rationalised.

# Corporate Plan 2017-20

## Setting the planning context

Into the next planning cycle, PBNi will continue to carry out its statutory role, as set out in the 1982 Order. The following are relevant considerations:

- Although recorded crime has shown an overall downwards trend over the last twelve years<sup>1</sup>, it has risen over the last three years. The level of crime recorded in 2015/16 shows an increase of 1.8 per cent on the previous year. Despite this rise, Northern Ireland remains a safe place to live.
- Since 2012 the trend for the number of people under community supervision by the PBNi has remained broadly at the same level.
- There is likely to be continuing pressure on public sector finances with the attendant potential implications for service delivery. It is not known whether the settlement for next year will be for one year or for a longer period. Uncertainty about budget settlements inhibits longer term planning.
- Following Assembly elections in May 2016, a new NI Executive was formed. For the first time, an official opposition has been established. It is not anticipated that there will be Assembly elections before 2021.
- The NI Assembly Justice Committee has indicated that in this mandate it will consider innovative approaches to issues including domestic abuse, crimes against older people and anti-social behaviour. There remains interest in the work carried out in the previous mandate with regards to innovation including the use of 'problem solving' courts.

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<sup>1</sup> PSNI Recorded Crime Statistics

- The NI Executive's Draft Programme for Government has been published for consultation. There are very clear outcomes and indicators that are relevant to the work carried out by PBNI. The PBNI will work with the wider Criminal Justice family to help deliver Outcome Based Accountability.
- 'A Fresh Start: the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan' was published in November 2015. The NI Executive's Action Plan published on 19 July 2016 flowing from this agreement is of relevance to PBNI. In particular PBNI has a key role in working to prevent re-offending and criminality in communities.
- In June, the new Justice Minister announced a major review of policy issues in relation to sentencing. The Review will look at the legislative framework for certain categories of crime, the setting of tariffs for murder, the arrangements for unduly lenient sentences and the effectiveness of the current sentencing guidelines mechanism to enhance public confidence, consistency and transparency in sentencing. As part of the Review the effectiveness of community disposals will be considered. The Minister has also made clear that she has a number of priorities including tackling mental health, tackling crimes against older people, crimes against the vulnerable, and working with the local community and voluntary sector.
- The UK voted to leave the EU following a referendum held in June 2016. There may be implications for PBNI in terms of cross border working. There may also be, over the course of the corporate planning period, a loss of funding for both the public and the community and voluntary sectors in Northern Ireland.

## **PBNI Priorities for Corporate Plan 2017-20**

PBNI's priorities for the Corporate Plan will be primarily informed by the Programme for Government 2017-2020 and aligned to Departmental priorities, particularly in relation to the outcome indicators of:

- Reducing crime;
- Increasing the effectiveness of the justice system; and
- Reducing reoffending.

The priorities for the period 2017-20 include:-

1. Delivering on PBNI core statutory obligations in relation to providing assessment reports to the Courts and Parole Commissioners; supervision of people subject to Court Orders and Licences; the provision of resettlement services to prisoners; and information services to victims.
2. Playing a key role in the development and delivery of problem solving courts as a means of dealing more effectively with the root causes of offending behaviour, in a range of areas including both domestic abuse and substance misuse.
3. Continuing development and delivery of innovative work, including social enterprises, aimed at improving the resettlement and rehabilitation outcomes for people who have offended. This will include resettlement mentoring schemes and restorative practice interventions in partnership, including the Community and Voluntary Sector.
4. Contributing to the Northern Ireland Executives Action Plan in tackling paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime. This includes leading on the delivery of a bespoke initiative for young men to reduce their vulnerability to becoming involved in paramilitarism and organised crime.
5. Targeting PBNI's service delivery on the perpetrators of crime against vulnerable people: children, older people, minority groups, victims of domestic violence and victims of sex offences. This will require strengthened collaborative working with key partners, such

as: PSNI, NIPS, YJA, Community and Voluntary sector; and local Health and Social Care Trusts.

6. Contributing to the development of the public policy on resettlement and rehabilitation.
7. Maintaining, in the face of continuing budgetary challenges, a focus on improving upon effectiveness and efficiency. This will include the delivery of a new more efficient case management system; a refreshed estates strategy; a new business delivery model which will shape how we deliver our services to the public; and contribute to the effectiveness of the justice system by proposing a new format for pre-sentence reports to the Magistrates Courts.

## Consultation Process

### About this Consultation

This consultation seeks views on PBNI’s priorities for the Corporate Plan 2017-20. We invite comments on Plan from members of the public, key stakeholders as well as organisations and individuals who have an interest in this area. Responses or requests for further information should be provided by 14 October **2016** (please note that it may not be possible to accept consultation responses after this date). You can respond to the consultation exercise by email, post or online.

<b>When is the consultation taking place?</b>	<b>Now to 14 October 2016</b>
<b>Which audience or groups are being consulted?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Influencers</li> <li>• Operational Partners</li> <li>• General Public</li> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Service Users</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• On-line Survey</li> <li>• Social Media</li> <li>• Letters</li> </ul>
<b>How are we consulting?</b>	

## **Participating in the Consultation**

The consultation process will run to **14 October 2016** (please note that it may not be possible to accept consultation responses after this date).

## **Questions**

The consultation questions are included at the beginning and end of this document.

## **Enquiries and responses**

You can respond to the consultation exercise by either:

- Completing the survey online at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PBNICPweb1](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PBNICPweb1)
- Completing the response form in this document and returning it via email to [consultation@pbni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@pbni.gsi.gov.uk) or by post to the Board Secretary: Michael Cox, PBNI, 80-90 North Street, Belfast, BT1 1LD.

Please send any queries, comments or requests for information to [consultation@pbni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@pbni.gsi.gov.uk) or telephone: (028) 90262 462.

## **Who is responding?**

When responding, please state whether you are making a submission as an individual or representing an organisation. If responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

## **Accessibility**

If you require the consultation document in an alternative format this can be arranged by contacting Lisa Maginnis, Communications Unit on [lisa.maginnis@pbni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.maginnis@pbni.gsi.gov.uk)



## **Publication of responses**

PBNI intends to publish responses to the consultation (the contact details of private individuals will be removed prior to publication) and a summary of responses online following completion of the consultation process. Please tell us if you don't want your response to be published. Any personal data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Respondents should also be aware that PBNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 may require that any responses not subject to specific exemptions under the Act be communicated to third parties on request.

## **PBNI Consultation Response Form Corporate Plan 2017-2020**

Please complete this response form in full and return to [consultation@pbni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@pbni.gsi.gov.uk) or by post to the Board Secretary:

Michael Cox, PBNI, 80-90 North Street, Belfast, BT1 1LD.

Alternatively this response form can be completed online at: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PBNICPweb1](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PBNICPweb1)

**Closing date for responses: 14 October 2016**

I am responding (delete as appropriate) : -

- as an individual ✓
- on behalf of an organisation ✓

**Name:**

**Job Title:**

**Organisation:**

**Address:**

**Tel:**

**Fax:**

**e-mail:**

The questions that we are asking during this consultation process are:

1. What services are the most important for PBNI to focus on, for you and the community, over the next 4 years to **reduce crime**?

2. What services are the most important for PBNI to focus on, for you and the community, over the next 4 years to **improve the effectiveness of the justice system?**

3. What services are the most important for PBNI to focus on, for you and the community, over the next 4 years to **reduce reoffending**?

4. Comments on all the services currently provided by the PBNI and on the identified priorities for the period 2017-20 would also be welcome.