

Strategic Statement 2021-23 Action Plan

Probation Works for
Community Safety



Introduction

Creating safer and more inclusive communities is the focus of the statement of strategy for the Probation Service for the years 2021-2023.

Within that strategy, we have set out five overarching strategic pillars for the Service over this three year period:

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We have also committed to the publication of a detailed action plan that will set out in further detail the objectives and actions to be prioritised as part of the strategy. This action plan is set out in five sections, structured around the five pillar set out above. In each section, we outline the high-level commitments articulated within the statement of strategy followed by a detailed table of objectives and actions to be delivered during 2021-2023.

Pillar 1:

Enhancing Community Safety

We will enhance community safety by reducing the level of crime and victimisation in our communities through the implementation of high quality supervised community sanctions and measures.



GOAL 1

We will provide assessments and implement supervised community sanctions and measures to the highest standard.

ACTIONS

1. Ensure all risk assessments in use in the Service are fit for purpose and that sufficient staff are fully trained in relevant instruments.
2. Review, and as appropriate revise Service guidelines for the management of high risk cases in key areas including domestic violence, sexual violence, non-sexual violence, youth justice and cases to be managed under the Parole Act 2019.
3. Engage with Criminal Justice Policy and Criminal Justice Legislation to advance the Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill, Sex Offender Amendment Bill, and other legislation which relates to our responsibilities.
4. Embed the newly established Legal Unit to support effective practice which is in keeping with our statutory responsibilities.
5. Develop and implement a model of quality assurance which supports high quality professional practice.

GOAL 2

We will expand and develop the range and availability of community sanctions and measures that are fair, purposeful and proportionate.

ACTIONS

6. Review the current model in place for the operation of Community Service to maximise its potential as a viable Community Sanction and identify further scope for the Scheme, where direct alternatives to imprisonment can be expanded.
7. Strengthen specific initiatives and put forward new proposals which are gender specific and responsive to the challenges faced by women engaged with the Criminal Justice system.
8. Expand the use of structured programmes to ensure specific options are in place to support sentencing decisions, including the use of weekend programme delivery as an alternative to the concept of weekend sentencing.
9. Develop a strategy to support the reduction in the use of imprisonment for those currently being sentenced to periods of imprisonment of less than 12 months.
10. Foster innovation within the Service to enable the Service to identify and respond to developing and future crime trends/patterns.

GOAL 3

We will align and strengthen our multi-agency and collaborative work processes, prioritising high impact offending.

ACTIONS

11. Take a lead role in the development of and contribution to the revised arrangements for the management of offenders (adult and youth) – including JARC/YJARC, SORAM, domestic violence, throughcare from detention and the management of life sentenced prisoners.

12. Participate in the work of the *Task Force on Mental Health and Addiction* seeking to create clear pathways for service users through the development of an integrated care and case management model.

13. Engage with our partners in the Housing sector to improve the responsiveness to critical requirements as determined by risk and need.

14. Actively participate in the piloting of the Community Safety Partnership model roll-out to ensure it can support enhanced outcomes for communities.

15. Scope and develop an implementation plan to meet the requirements of the new statutory Parole Board, including ensuring clear protocols are in place for the management of those released from custody on Parole.

16. Implement the targets set in *Action Plan for the Joint Management of Offenders 2019-21*, in conjunction with our criminal justice partners, and further commit to ongoing joint activity as devised.

GOAL 4

We will support desistance and successful re-settlement after custody.

ACTIONS

17. In cooperation with the Irish Prison Service and Department of Justice, we will review, and as appropriate, revise our service delivery arrangements to prisons.

18. In conjunction with our criminal justice partners, we will take a lead role in the implementation of the recommendations of the *Review of Penal Policy Report (2021)*.

19. In cooperation with the Irish Prison Service, continue to implement the commitments in the *Irish Prison Service & Probation Service Strategic Plan 2018-2020* (extended to 2021 due to COVID) and further commit to ongoing cooperation throughout the duration of this strategy.

20. In collaboration with the Irish Prison Service, develop the range and scope of early release programmes, in order to enhance service user outcomes while maintaining clear risk management protocols.

21. We will engage with prisoners and ex-prisoners to ensure interventions are designed and delivered to achieve meaningful outcomes in the area of resettlement and reintegration.

Pillar 2: Strengthening Collaboration and Engagement

We will work to address the complex issues impacting criminal justice, in cooperation with our statutory, voluntary and community partners.



GOAL 1

We will participate in the implementation of the Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy to strengthen greater cohesion, collaboration and enhanced outcomes for people engaged with the Service, victims and the public.

ACTIONS

22. Develop a *Probation Service Victim's Policy*, reflecting the Service's commitment to being victim informed and integrate the victim perspective into the work of the Service.

23. In keeping with the *Programme for Government* commitment, review the implementation of Restorative Justice within the Service and take strengthening measures where possible.

24. Fully engage with the implementation of relevant actions under the *Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027*, as part of the Service's overall intervention with young persons and young adults.

25. Proactively seek opportunities to increase the development of collaborative and systemic approaches, including joint training, secondment, work placement and the use of cross Department collaborative working group processes, further recognising and embedding the value of cross sectoral collaborative working.

26. Fully engage in the Department's *Innovation Network*, supporting the further development of an innovation culture within the Service.

GOAL 2

We will work creatively to challenge stigmatisation and reduce barriers to participation in society, promoting desistance, social inclusion and citizenship.

ACTIONS

27. Encourage Probation personnel and Community Based Organisations to highlight and address ongoing systemic barriers faced by service users.

28. Reduce prejudice toward persons with convictions, and those who have been in custody, by delivering an external stakeholder Communications Strategy.

29. Continue to prioritise the Service's commitment to and engagement with '*Working to Change*' *Social Enterprise & Employment Strategy 2021-2023*.

30. Establish a Service Users fora to give voice to the lived experience and views of those who have experienced interventions within the justice system, particularly those who have been under the supervision of the Service, to identify challenges and propose solutions.

31. Actively engage with Social Inclusion units across government to establish a network of partners for enhanced collaborative approaches to inclusion.

GOAL 3

We will enhance our work through our community based organisations delivering best practice, innovation, and measurable outcomes.

ACTIONS

32. Prepare and implement a strategy to further strengthen the alignment between the work of the Service and our funded projects.

33. Review and as appropriate revise the business planning processes for Community Based Organisations to improve efficiencies.

34. Develop collaborative platforms to promote innovation, best practice and shared training across the network of Community Based Organisations.

35. Engage with our Community Based Organisations and European partners to maximise the contribution of volunteer led activity within probation practice.

36. Collaborate with our Community Based Organisations to improve data reporting and outcome measures.

GOAL 4

We will strengthen collaboration with our European and international probation and criminal justice partners sharing knowledge, experience and evidence based practice for our mutual benefit.

ACTIONS

37. Review, and as appropriate revise the role and responsibilities of our International Desk to enhance coordination of our extensive European and international engagement.

38. Continue to build on our relationships with *Central European Probation (CEP)* to exchange learning and further develop our practice.

39. Organise and/or participate in international conferences and workshops to benefit from developing practice (Council of Europe, PPAG, CEP, RAN, 5 Nations, World Congress).

40. Advance a proposed European Team Partnering initiative in cooperation with the CEP.

41. Continue to cooperate with research and data driven activity.

Pillar 3:

Promoting Inclusion

We will further strengthen an organisational culture that recognises and supports diversity, integration and human rights, and is reflected in all aspects of Probation Service policy and practice.



GOAL 1

We will respond to the specific needs of the people supervised by the Service, recognising and acknowledging diversity.

ACTIONS

42. Ensure our training and development programme embodies appropriate responses, reflecting the range of difference and abilities of people on probation.

43. Involve diverse/ minority groups in the delivery of training.

44. The Offender Supervision Framework Manual of Practice and Core Skills will be developed to be responsive to diversity.

45. The Service will continue to ensure that probation practice is informed by and promotes a greater understanding of the individuality and difference in the Probation population.

46. In conjunction with criminal justice partners, consider best practice for interventions with service users aged 18-24.

GOAL 2

We will fully embrace our responsibilities under the Public Sector Duty.

ACTIONS

47. Devise and implement a Public Sector Duty Action Plan 2021-2023 that continues to deliver on our obligations under the PSD.

48. Ensure that the strategy is inclusive of the needs of minority cultures and traditions.

49. Ensure that Probation supervision is both equitable and proportionate.

50. In keeping with the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-21, ensure both enhanced access to justice for and greater participation of persons with disabilities.

51. Ensure the Service equality proofs policies and procedures with regard to its staff and service users.

GOAL 3

We will work to optimise life opportunities for those engaged with the Service, enabling their positive participation in society.

ACTIONS

52. We will administer the Kickstart funding under 'Working to Change' Social Enterprise & Employment Strategy 2021-2023 to support the development of meaningful pathways to employment for service users.

53. We will work closely with housing partners, directly providing and/or jointly commissioning accommodation when appropriate, to provide stability for service users as part of their pathway to desistance.

54. We seek to build on the opportunities for service users to engage with youth, sport and recreational activity which supports integration and positive citizenship (including service user volunteerism).

55. We will continue to support a broad range of Community Based Organisation to provide psycho-social, training and employment, and health interventions for service users.

56. We will seek out and promote opportunities for social inclusion for persons supervised by the Service.

GOAL 4

We will create opportunities for people supervised by the Service to participate in the work of the Service.

ACTIONS

57. In keeping with 'Working to Change' Social Enterprise and Employment Strategy 2021-2023, assist the Department to explore how the civil and public service can provide meaningful employment opportunities to suitably qualified people with convictions.

58. Promote employment opportunities and pathways through the implementation of 'Working to Change' Social Enterprise & Employment Strategy 2021-2023.

59. Devise mechanisms for service user participation in the design and roll-out of the Offender Supervision Framework.

60. Support the growth in peer led initiatives and programmes, including those already in place within Community Based Organisations (including through Social Enterprise).

61. Maximise opportunities for service users to be involved training of Probation personnel.

Pillar 4: **Empowering Our Team**

We will invest in our team to promote innovation, learning and well-being, empowering our staff to deliver a high quality, professional service.



GOAL 1

We will further develop professional practice throughout the Service, ensuring our approach is grounded in evidence, is effective and is consistently implemented.

ACTIONS

62. Embed an evidence informed model of professional practice (*Offender Supervision Framework*) within the Service to achieve a consistent and high standard of intervention with service users.

63. Implement the *Workload Risk Based Approach to Workload Management* across all community based teams nationwide, strengthening our evidence based approach to case management.

64. Retain a priority commitment to research and further strengthen our collaboration with 3rd level institutions, informing our work across a range of strategic operational areas.

65. Develop and implement an action to respond to the finding and recommendations of the PS Mental Health Research: *Moving Forward Together: Mental Health Among Persons Supervised by the Probation Service*.

66. Review, and as appropriate revise the role and responsibilities of the management structure to achieve greater efficacy and efficiency.

GOAL 2

We will support new ways of working within a changing environment.

ACTIONS

67. In keeping with the post COVID developments across the civil and public service, develop a blended approach to work activity which is commensurate with service delivery needs in achieving effective public safety measures.

68. Review findings and support actions following Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey (CSEES) 2020 publication for our Service increasing staff participation and engagement.

69. Continue to develop innovative solutions to increasing effectiveness in service delivery through the use of technology.

70. Continue to develop our capacity to provide continuous professional development and opportunities for all staff grades, and maximise the use of ICT where appropriate.

71. Respond creatively and flexibly to challenges within the changing work environment.

GOAL 3

We will promote a culture that encourages innovation and staff participation across the organisation.

ACTIONS

- 72. Generate opportunities for staff to actively contribute to the implementation of the Offender Supervision Framework.

- 73. Generate opportunities for staff to contribute to the Service's strategic and operational priorities in both operational and corporate services (e.g. 'A Seat at the Table' programme).

- 74. Continue to recognise excellent work and dedicated service through our Staff Recognition Awards.

- 75. Establish mechanisms to capture innovative ideas that build on the positive developments in service delivery during COVID.

- 76. Foster a culture of evidenced based practice developments.

GOAL 4

We will prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, responding to changes in the environment.

ACTIONS

- 77. Develop a Probation Service Well Being Strategy to ensure a pro-active and positive focus on mental health and well-being is maintained throughout the life of this strategy.

- 78. Further embed Health & Safety across the Service nationally through collaborative working, including engagement with newly appointed Safety Representatives and Lead Worker Representatives.

- 79. Implement actions arising from Mobile Working Support Project assessments, including the roll out of identified ergonomic equipment.

- 80. Provide ongoing Health & Safety Training to include Safety Officer, Safety Representative, First Aid, Fire Safety, Ergonomic assessments etc., to ensure the Service retains high levels of competence at local, regional and national levels.

- 81. Maintain a focus on our estate to ensure it is supportive of our needs, including the completion of an Estate Review across the Service nationally.

Pillar 5: **Modernising Our Approach**

We will further develop the Service to attain the highest standards of organisational performance and governance.



GOAL 1

We will harness data as an enabler, identifying and using key data sets to inform policy, decision making and research, both internally and within the broader criminal justice system.

ACTIONS

82. Develop a road map to ensure the Service maximises its use of data.

83. Actively participate in Department led data projects, including the Criminal Justice Data Group, Criminal Justice HUB project.

84. Continue to strengthen our partnership work with the Central Statistics Office to ensure advanced metrics are developed to add depth and breadth to the Reoffending reports, particularly focusing on the inclusion of non-justice data.

85. In conjunction with the Department, advance a replacement Case Tracking System for the Service.

86. Consider relevant published data, both justice and non-justice, to inform Service policy and practice.

GOAL 2

We will implement a comprehensive communication strategy, to create a greater understanding of community sanctions and measures.

ACTIONS

87. Devise a comprehensive marketing strategy to more effectively communicate the role and responsibilities of the Service to the general public, stakeholders and partners.

88. Fully review internal communication channels to ensure meaningful engagement with staff and thereby maximise staff contribution to the work of the Service.

89. Actively manage social media channels in support of enhancing the understanding and creating a profile for our work.

90. Dynamically embrace new opportunities/formats for enriching communications.

91. In partnership with the Department and within the criminal justice system context, structure our engagement with media.

GOAL 3

We will increase the use of technology to modernise how we deliver the Service.

ACTIONS

92. Ensure staff are equipped with technology to deliver services most effectively within a post COVID/ blended working context.
93. Develop the facility to enable secure face-to-face virtual meetings between Probation Officers and service users.
94. Maximise the opportunities for service user engagement through the use of technology (e.g. delivery of virtual programmes with clients).
95. Ensure ICT development/infrastructure is used to support equity in staff resourcing across the Service.
96. Expand the use of video conferencing and new technologies, to support the work of the Service.

GOAL 4

We will further enhance our governance structures to ensure the highest standards of organisational performance, accountability and transparency.

ACTIONS

97. Continue to build on the positive engagement with Criminal Justice Governance in relation to the Service's Oversight Agreement and Performance Delivery Agreements.
98. Continue to review and update our business processes to ensure appropriate governance arrangements are in place for all aspects of our work.
99. Ensure a proactive approach to the management and evaluation of organisational risk by ongoing review of risk management systems.
100. Ensure compliance with our obligations under GDPR.
101. Review the governance and oversight arrangements across the Service to ensure they are fit for purpose for both current and future activity.

GOAL 5

We will drive climate action and sustainability across the Service.

ACTIONS

102. Actively manage energy consumption through ongoing monitoring and implementation of energy reducing strategies.
103. Review Energy consumption across the Probation Service Estate.
104. Engage with the OPW Optimising Power at Work campaign.
105. Contribute to the achievement of the Department's climate strategy/targets.
106. Promote and Implement plans and policies to support the achievement of Climate Action goals.



