

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (PBNI) EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS ACTION PLAN

2025 - 2030



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the new Equality Action Plan (EAP) for the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI). This EAP sets out the actions PBNI intend to take over the next five years to promote equality, equity and diversity among people protected by the nine Section 75 groups. The people in the Section 75 categories are:

1. people of different ages,
2. religious beliefs,
3. racial groups,
4. political opinions,
5. marital status,
6. sexual orientations,
7. men and women generally,
8. people with and without disabilities,
9. people with and without caring responsibilities.

PBNI'S WORK

PBNI has a presence across all communities and is a central part of the criminal justice system. It works to address the causes of offending to help prevent people coming back into the system and protect the public. The services we provide enable individuals to change their behaviour which in turn reduces the likelihood of reoffending. This reduces the numbers of victims and makes communities safer. Our aim is to change people's lives for safer communities.

Our staff work in a range of occupations in PBNI. The majority of our staff deliver front line services dealing directly

with our 4000 Service Users. This includes managing people on probation (those serving a community sentence or who have been released from prison subject to licence) and preparing pre-sentence reports for judges and magistrates in the courts to enable them to choose the most appropriate sentence. Staff also work in prisons preparing people for release into the community and we provide an information service for victims of crime.

PBNI's Board is tasked with setting the strategic vision and monitoring the service's performance against objectives. PBNI's Board they take an active role in the promotion of welcoming, diverse and inclusive organisation.

CONSULTATION

We welcomed feedback on the draft EAP during a 14-week consultation which ran from Friday, 20 December 2024 to Friday, 21 March 2025.

The actions and priorities in this EAP have so far been informed by research in relation to equality issues we experience and know about, and among other organisations; a review of information provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland; and consultation with our staff and our service users; and with bodies representing the section 75 categories.

During the lifetime of this EAP, we will continue to gather information about our service users in relation to the Section 75 groups and update our staff equality information in the lifetime of this plan. We also intend during the lifetime of this plan to carry out an audit inequality to use during reviews our EAP and Disability Action Plan (DAP) in the future.

Our intention is to have actions that will make a real and meaningful difference to the lives of people who work for us and our service users, by addressing the inequalities they experience or to better promote equality of opportunity.

WHAT IS IN OUR EAP?

The following tables outline our actions for the next five years. The Plan includes actions aimed at:

- Improving the data we use to support decision making.
- Supporting our staff.
- Improving our services.

HOW WILL WE REPORT ON OUR PROGRESS?

This five-year EAP is designed to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances and needs and will evolve over its lifespan.

We will report annually on our progress against the EAP via our S75 Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), which is submitted at the end of August each year and available on our website. The Plan will be produced in clear print and plain language and will be made available in alternative formats on request, including large print, DAISY, Braille, easy-read, audio cassette and computer disc.

This plan will be in place from 1 May 2025 to 30 April 2030.

SECTION 1: IMPROVING THE DATA WE USE TO SUPPORT DECISION MAKING

We know that high quality data plays a role in improving services and decision-making. The following actions are aimed at improving the data we collect to ensure the effective discharge of our S75 equality duties.

SECTION 1: IMPROVING THE DATA WE USE TO SUPPORT DECISION MAKING			
What we aim to achieve	What we will do (Measures / Actions)	By when (Timescale)	Performance Indicators
Improved equality information in the S75 categories so that we can inform decision making	1. Take steps to make the information gathering from service users standard.	Ongoing during the lifetime of this plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 60% of service users complete equality information.
	2. Undertaken an Audit of Inequalities relating to staff and service users	March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of Inequality completed to help address any issues of inequality which are priority for Corporate Action Plan.
	3. We will take active measures to encourage staff to update their equality monitoring information after their employment has started.	April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual awareness raising campaigns to encourage staff to update their equality data. Development of annual equality profile for staff and service users.

SECTION 2: IMPROVING OUR SERVICES FOR SERVICE USERS

We know that high quality data plays a role in improving services and decision-making. The following actions are aimed at improving the data we collect to ensure the effective discharge of our S75 equality duties.

SECTION 2: ADDRESSING BARRIER TO ACCESSING OUR SERVICES			
What we aim to achieve	Actions	By when	Performance Indicators
Provide a welcoming, person-centred and accessible services for our service users, particularly those whose first language is not english.	4. We will continue to develop our interpreting services for our service users.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased staff awareness about translation / interpreting services. • Monitoring use of uptake for translation / interpreting services. • Use of technological aids to support translation / interpreting services.
Improve our services for service users who have Neurodiverse conditions ¹ , so that we can raise	5. We will develop neurodiversity guidance and other	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of information on neurodiversity and any services to which staff

¹ Neurodiversity is a broad term, used to describe the many and varying ways in which human brains are wired. It encompasses the wide variety of ways humans think, learn, feel and process information. Neurodiversity can include Autism, ADHD, ADD, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia and Acquired Brain Injury. (HSE 2024)

SECTION 2: ADDRESSING BARRIER TO ACCESSING OUR SERVICES			
What we aim to achieve	Actions	By when	Performance Indicators
awareness in the workplace and in the provision of our services.	communication materials for our staff along with key stakeholders including experts by experience.		or service users can be signposted to. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and information provision for staff in terms of people who are neurodiverse, through online training.

SECTION 3: SUPPORTING OUR STAFF

We value our staff and want to make sure that this is demonstrated in what we do. We are committed to celebrating and embracing the diversity of our staff and working to redress where there is any diversity gaps. We want to ensure that our staff, can feel able to bring their authentic selves to work so that they feel valued and can continue to provide safe, effective and compassionate service.

SECTION 3: SUPPORTING OUR STAFF			
What we aim to achieve	Actions	By when	Performance Indicators
We recognise that men and people from racial minority backgrounds are	6. We will seek to understand the needs of our men in our	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies reviewed, developed and recommended relating

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What we aim to achieve	Actions	By when	Performance Indicators
not well represented in PBNI and will take steps to promote a welcoming, diverse and inclusive workforce.	<p>employment, applicants and ethnically diverse staff and applicants.</p> <p>7. Promote events to celebrate the diversity of our staff and their contribution to PBNI throughout the year.</p>		<p>to EDI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal EDI group set up to meet and is engaged. • Staff engagement forum is attended by wide range of staff • Staff engagement survey. • Advertising will be designed to promote minorities.

SECTION 3: SUPPORTING OUR STAFF			
What we aim to achieve	Actions	By when	Performance Indicators
<p>We recognise that the majority of our workforce are women who traditionally have been responsible for caring needs. We will take steps to ensure we have working practices available that staff with caring responsibilities can access.</p>	<p>8. We will improve awareness of the flexible working application process, encourage appropriate use of hybrid working and understanding of special leave provisions to enable good work-life balance.</p>	<p>Review of Flexible Working and Hybrid Working – December 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish baseline on uptake of flexible working and monitor year on year staff accessing these opportunities. • Increased awareness of flexible working, work-life balance and special leave policies. • Monitoring reports produced twice a year on flexible working.
<p>It is important that staff who have or acquire a disability are supported in the workplace by overcoming any potential barriers to achieving their full potential. PBNI is committed to creating a safe and welcoming</p>	<p>9. We will promote the use of the Disability Passport to ensure individuals have reasonable adjustments relevant to their needs.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Disability Passport is taken up by staff. • HR have accurate records of reasonable adjustments. • Improved support for disabled staff to return and remain in work.

SECTION 3: SUPPORTING OUR STAFF			
What we aim to achieve	Actions	By when	Performance Indicators
environment for all staff.	10. We will review our policies and procedures and their implementation with a view to promoting a person centred, trauma informed approach in the workplace.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies reflective of up to date advice and best practice from the ECNI, LRA and other partners and external organisations taking account of legislative developments.
We have effective policies and relevant training to support them to provide the most inclusive and compassionate probation service	11. We will work to improve uptake of equality training, both mandatory and developmental.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uptake of mandatory equality training monitored.
	12. We will work to ensure that staff who experience domestic and sexual violence are supported in the workplace through training and advisory assistance.	Training completed by December 2025. Trusted Colleagues in place by December 2025. Domestic Violence Trust Colleague twice yearly forum set up by December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic and sexual violence workplace policy in place and support networks established. • Positive feedback from ongoing engagement from affected staff.
Personal stories can really	13. We will address specific inequalities for	Throughout the lifetime of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of gender specific health

SECTION 3: SUPPORTING OUR STAFF			
What we aim to achieve	Actions	By when	Performance Indicators
resonate and be most impactful in terms of effectively communicating key messages. We recognise that collaborating with people with lived experience enhances the training we provide and gives staff a different perspective, improving the services we provide.	staff, for example provide menopause information sessions and celebrate men's health week to promote inclusion and visibility of gender specific issues in the workforce.	the plan	<p>inequalities for staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased inclusion and visibility of gender specific issues. <p>Better support for staff with gender specific issues.</p>
We recognise from qualitative data that many of our staff are carers of children and older people. Being a carer also affects our service users.	14. We ensure that there is promotion of Carers Day to highlight care and caring and help informal / family carers understand their rights and find out about support that may be available.	November 2025 and annually thereafter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent approach to Carers Day. Flexible Working records on applications for Flexible Working.

CONTACT DETAILS

For more details of our achievements in meeting our dual disability duties, please refer to our Annual Progress Report which is available online or by contacting:

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