

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Probation Board Asks the Public for Views on Shaping the Future of Probation Services

23 September 2025

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland is seeking the public's views on how to help shape the future of probation services in Northern Ireland.

A public consultation is now open for 12 weeks as part of the development of the Board's Corporate Plan for 2026 - 29 which will set out the strategic direction of the organisation over the next three years.

Glenn Houston Chair of the Board said: "The Probation Board is committed to working in partnership to help reduce reoffending, tackle the root causes of offending behaviour and make communities safer. This Plan provides an important opportunity for us to hear from stakeholders and communities about the services that are being delivered and how we can shape services over the coming three years.

"Since PBNi's last Corporate Plan the operating environment has changed. The NI Executive and Assembly is in place, and we have a Programme for Government (PfG) that sets out the Executive's priorities for the remainder of this mandate. That stability and direction from Government is important, and many of the themes within the PfG relate directly and indirectly to the services we deliver. However, for Probation to be able to deliver on the commitments in the PfG and this Corporate Plan it is essential we have the right resources in place and that the organisation is structured in a way that enables it to deliver its services effectively.

"In the six months since taking up post as Board Chair I have had the opportunity to meet with a range of staff and key partners who support delivery of our service and I am incredibly impressed by the professionalism, dedication and commitment of all who work for and with Probation. The environment in which our staff operate is not an easy one. Working with people who have committed crimes that have caused harm to individuals and communities is a difficult job. Supporting people to change and holding them to account takes a particular set of skills and values, including believing that people have the capacity to change. Working alongside our partners we want to develop and continue to improve our services to provide a high quality, probation service to all."

Chief Executive Amanda Stewart continued: “At its core Probation works to prevent reoffending, reintegrate people to communities and protect the public. Our Probation Officers, who are social work qualified, provide a holistic approach in tackling attitudes and behaviours that lead to crime. They are supported by other dedicated staff members like Probation Service Officers, Community Service Supervisors and a range of operational and corporate staff too. Together we deliver services in the heart of the community.”

Ms Stewart continued: “Community sentences supervised by probation can break the cycle of offending. Many of those coming into contact with the justice system have also experienced traumatic incidents during childhood. Community Sentences allow people to retain contact with the support networks and services which can help to address the factors contributing to their offending. For example, they allow for the maintenance of family ties, housing tenancies, jobs, and childcare responsibilities – all factors which reduce the risk of reoffending. Probation Officers effectively have a dual role which is to provide support and assistance to help people move away from crime, but they also have significant enforcement powers, disclose information to employers, challenge people about their behaviours and return them to court if they can no longer be safely managed in the community.

Probation has built strong links with local communities and a range of community and voluntary groups assist us to deliver services. That work on the ground assisting people to access services to tackle poor mental health, addictions and find employment is vital.”

We want to hear your views. This consultation seeks views on Probation's priorities for the Corporate Plan 2026 - 29. We invite comments on this 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 16 December 2025 (please note that it may not be possible to accept consultation responses after this date). You can respond to the consultation exercise online at [NI Direct - Citizen Space](#) by email or by post. Please respond by email to info@probation-ni.gov.uk or by post to:

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