



**Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Communications and Engagement Strategy
2026-29**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. *“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*
- George Bernard Shaw.
- 1.2. A goal set out in the Probation Board for Northern Ireland’s Corporate Plan for 2026-29 is to: *“maximise awareness and understanding of PBNI, and the impact of our work, through the delivery of an innovative and impactful communication strategy”*. Within our Corporate Plan we also commit to; *“strengthen staff engagement through transparent communication and meaningful involvement in decision-making, ensuring all staff feel informed, connected and valued.”* For the purpose of this strategy, “meaningful involvement” includes clear opportunities for staff to contribute to discussions, influence decisions where appropriate, and receive feedback on how their input has been used.
- 1.3. Our Corporate Plan is underpinned by our aim of becoming a trauma informed organisation, and this is particularly relevant to steering the direction of this communications and engagement strategy. This strategy is explicitly aligned to the six principles of a Trauma Informed Approach: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment and inclusion. We are committed to ensuring all communication practices promote psychological safety, transparency, and respect for colleagues, service users and victims.
- 1.4. The importance of good internal and external communications is a thread that runs throughout our organisational strategic vision and priorities for the next three years.
- 1.5. Through this communications strategy we aim to deliver public service communication which explains the work of probation, provides information to help people access services, provides reassurance and responses to the public in times of crisis, and builds trust and confidence in the services we deliver. We also aim to empower and support our colleagues by engaging in an open, transparent and meaningful way. We will ensure that communication activities are proportionate and mindful of staff workload and wellbeing.

- 1.6.** This strategy reflects learning from the previous 2023–26 strategy including insights from staff, stakeholder and service user feedback. It reflects the findings from surveys of stakeholders and staff conducted in 2023 and 2022. It also reflects evolving best practice in public sector communications and the changing media landscape. PBNI is a member of the Confederation of European Probation Expert Working Group on ‘Communications and Raising Awareness’ which brings together communication specialists and probation practitioners engaged in communication-related work across various countries. It provides a platform to exchange experiences, share national approaches and strategies, and present projects and initiatives that enhance communication and promote awareness about probation. The learning and research provided through that group has fed into this strategy. We will continue to adopt a “you said, we did” approach to demonstrate how feedback influences decisions.
- 1.7.** Probation communications staff also work closely with communications professionals across the justice sector and we have consulted with those partners during the development of this strategy.
- 1.8.** During September to December 2025 the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) consulted on its Corporate Plan 2026-29. During this consultation there was significant feedback in relation to raising awareness of Probation’s role externally and ideas about how effective internal communications could support staff engagement. The feedback from the Corporate Plan has been used to shape this communications and engagement strategy.

2. Strategic Communications Context

- 2.1.** Effective communication is central to delivering high quality public services, however how we communicate and where we communicate is changing quickly. Developments in technology are creating new opportunities, challenges, and ethical questions. There have been changes in how the public consumes media. Traditional media continues to decline, and more people receive information through social media and video platforms. An alternative media environment is growing whereby people, particularly younger people receive information from podcasters, YouTubers, and TikTokers. This can make it difficult to communicate

information that is factual and complex. There are opportunities, however, in this landscape for Probation to tell its story to new audiences. The challenge for Probation is to responsibly use new and available platforms to create engaging communications and content that connects emotionally with people and raises awareness of what we do.

- 2.2.** Research has been undertaken into public attitudes towards those who offend and there has been analysis of public opinion about crime and justice. CEP members across Europe report a rise in 'populism' and a toughening of attitudes in respect of crime. A survey conducted in Britain by the National Centre for Social Research (2025) highlights that hardening of public attitudes with more than two-thirds of those aged 25-34 now stating offenders should be given stiffer sentences.
- 2.3.** In Northern Ireland, findings from the most recent NI Safe Community Survey stated that only 40% of respondents were confident that the criminal justice system as a whole was effective. The survey asked respondents, in their opinion, what would be the most important things the justice system could do to improve its public confidence rating. Respondents were most likely to cite 'tougher sentences' as one of the most important things that could be done to improve public confidence.
- 2.4.** In a context where probation is often perceived as being 'soft' there is a need to influence public debate away from the opposing pillars of *tough* and *soft* justice towards *effective* justice.
- 2.5.** Over the course of the next three years' probation will be operating in a difficult financial context where resources across the public service will be finite. It is all the more important therefore that policy makers and opinion formers understand the impact that probation makes and the contribution of probation staff to making communities safer.
- 2.6.** Through this strategy we aim to show by using evidence, statistics and stories communicated across multiple platforms how probation can reduce reoffending, protect the public and prevent further victims. We will ensure all internal and external communications are ethically informed and sensitive to the potential impact on colleagues, service users, and victims.

3. Aim, Vision & Mission

- 3.1. Aim:** To support the delivery of PBNI Corporate Plan 2026-29 through the use of high-quality public service communications.
- 3.2. Vision:** To communicate with clarity, integrity, and impact so that people understand, value, and engage with PBNI to create safer communities.
- 3.3. Mission:** To deliver high quality public service communication that helps ensure the probation service is more widely understood, respected and valued through clear, compassionate and informed communication.

4. Communications Principles

- 4.1.** We will communicate a clear vision of the work Probation carries out. Our communications and engagement will be:
 - Accessible & inclusive to all sections of our community and, in particular, groups who are the hard to reach including young people and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. This includes providing information in plain English, and alternative formats on request.
 - Clear and professional to demonstrate pride and authority in what we do. This includes avoiding unnecessary jargon and explaining technical terms where required.
 - Consistent with our strategic priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2026-29.
 - Flexible in ensuring communications are undertaken in a variety of different formats that reflect progressive communication and diverse local needs.

- Respectful, open and compassionate. We will communicate in a way that reflects our values including when we have to communicate difficult messages to communities, to our Service Users and to our colleagues. We aim to use strengths-based, person-centred language at all times.
- Targeted to ensure we get messages across to the right people in the right way.
- Timely to ensure we respond to all enquiries as quickly as possible and engage with people early as possible in the process of communication or engagement.
- Two-way. We won't just talk - we will also listen to inform actions taken. We will provide multiple safe and accessible ways for individuals to share their views, including anonymous options where appropriate.

4.2. These principles will guide organisational tone, content development, and engagement behaviour.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1. We will strengthen staff engagement through transparent communication and meaningful involvement in decision-making.

Over the period of the last communication and engagement strategy we invested significantly in staff engagement including through the establishment of a staff engagement forum, administrative forum, leadership forum, and increased visibility of Senior Management and Board through visits to teams. We have also made meaningful progress in embedding a Trauma Informed Approach. Establishing a Trauma and Resilience Implementation Group and taking forward the trauma informed work have been important steps in building a culture where people feel valued, safe giving feedback to managers and involved in decision making. The staff engagement survey in 2024 noted improvements across nearly all domains measured. Notably, an increased proportion of staff feel valued for the work they do (47.1% in 2024 compared to 32.5% in 2023) and the proportion

of staff surveyed who said they would like to be working for PBNl in 2 years' time increased from 44.3% in 2023 to 72.4% in 2024.

Through this strategy we will build on what has been achieved to date. We will develop a forward look and thematic approach to our internal forums to ensure that we use those engagements strategically and in a way that ensures employees receive the information they need, understand the importance of the work of the wider organisation, feel valued for the work they do and have a two-way communication channel. We will aim to ensure engagement activity is proportionate and does not create unnecessary pressure or workload burden.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Senior Leadership Team: Strategic oversight, decision-making and delivery of objectives.
- Board members: Strategic oversight and delivery of objectives.
- Communications Team: Delivery and coordination.
- Managers: Local communication and support.
- Staff: Participation and feedback contribution.

Wellbeing Safeguards and Support Mechanisms:

- All staff are encouraged to raise concerns and provide feedback without fear of negative consequences.
- Colleagues can raise concerns and/or seek support via managers, Communications or HR about internal or external communications.

Over the next three years we will:

- Provide a forward look and take a thematic approach to internal engagement annually (annex 1).
- Publish Probation News with key management messages.
- Hold Town hall every two months and provide creative content for these events.

- Hold quarterly area manager meetings.
- Hold biannual leadership forums.
- Provide regular communications updates to Board.
- Provide internal videos and podcasts on key issues for colleagues annually including trauma informed practice, budget updates, estate strategy and significant HR issues.
- Hold three staff engagement forums each year.
- Use our established internal forum to enhance wider staff understanding of decision making within PBNI.
- Continue to enhance visibility of managers and Board with a series of team visits.
- Conduct a staff engagement survey.
- Continue our collaboration and engagement with trade union colleagues through JNCC and other forums.
- Organise staff awards event every 3 years to recognise the impact of colleagues and annual long service awards.
- Develop PBNI intranet as a source of current and up to date information for staff.
- Conduct an internal communications survey.
- Provide communications plans/support to key internal organisational projects including roll out of estates strategy, roll out of programmes, enhanced combination orders and trauma informed practice.

5.2. Build stakeholder awareness and stakeholder engagement to enhance confidence in our work.

PBNI is a key part of the criminal justice system and there are a number of important interfaces where Probation works alongside partners to deliver services including the judiciary, the police service, the prison service, and youth justice agency. We will work with communications professionals across the justice system including within the Department of Justice and take a collaborative communications approach with criminal justice system partners in areas of mutual interest. We will ensure stakeholder engagement reflects inclusivity, representing diverse communities and perspectives.

Our engagement with stakeholders however goes beyond the criminal justice system. We will work with the Justice Committee and elected representatives to make them aware of the work Probation carries out. We will continue our work with PCSPs and look at how we can collaboratively work together to educate and raise awareness of key issues including tackling violence against women and girls, anti-social behaviour and the impact of addictions as well as addressing fear of crime in the community.

In recent years we have strengthened relationships with universities, schools and further education institutions that work will continue through this strategy.

The cross-border work we do with colleagues in the Irish Probation Service and throughout Europe will also be a feature of this strategy. Many of the challenges that we face in raising awareness and confidence of probation are faced by other jurisdictions and we will seek to learn and share best practice from those jurisdictions.

Over the next three years we will:

- Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise each year (annex 2).

- Organise an annual series of engagements/briefings with key stakeholders who are mapped out to raise awareness of Probation's work.
- Contribute to the justice communications group and provide a collaborative approach to any joint justice communications.
- Work with justice partners to raise awareness of the role of the Public Protection Arrangements including in respect of accommodation.
- Work with justice partners in respect of new areas of work that relate to Victims, the Sentencing Bill and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices.
- Jointly edit and publish the annual Irish Probation Journal with the Irish Probation Service.
- Publish external Probation News.
- Develop a judicial engagement charter.
- Hold membership of CEP communications group and share learning on best practice.
- Use social media campaigns to engage with partners on strategic issues including tackling violence against women and girls.
- Develop action plan for engagement with universities, schools and further education colleges alongside HR and L&OD.
- Attend justice outreach events annually.
- Conduct a stakeholder survey.

5.3. Build media awareness about the work of Probation to enhance public confidence in probation.

PBNI is committed to the principle of open justice and values the role of the media in informing the public of our work, as well as that of the wider criminal justice system. We are committed to maintaining an open and transparent approach and relationship with the media, and to working collaboratively, where appropriate, with the media to ensure accurate and balanced coverage of our work. The media has an important role to play in holding government and the public service to account.

The number of media enquiries to PBNI has increased over recent years, and the Communications Unit has worked hard to build relationships with individual members of the media. We have adopted a proactive approach to dealing with the media inviting them to briefings, site visits and helping them see at first hand the work we do.

In some instances, particularly in providing reactive responses to requests we need to balance our obligations in respect of data protection with providing the media with information, particularly in respect of ongoing court cases and legal proceedings.

In the next three years we will:

- Develop a media plan in conjunction with the BBC to highlight the PBNI documentary 'Carl Frampton on Probation.'
- Evaluate the impact of the documentary 'Carl Frampton on Probation' on raising awareness of probation.
- Use a storytelling approach to highlight with individual media the impact probation makes on changing lives.
- Provide media training to key staff in PBNI.
- Develop responsive media plans in respect of individual issues or crisis that arise.

- Use key opportunities over the next 3 years including debates about the sentencing bill to explain probation's work.
- Develop key messages for external audiences including debunking myths about probation is a 'soft' option.

5.4. Amplify the Voice of Service Users and Victims

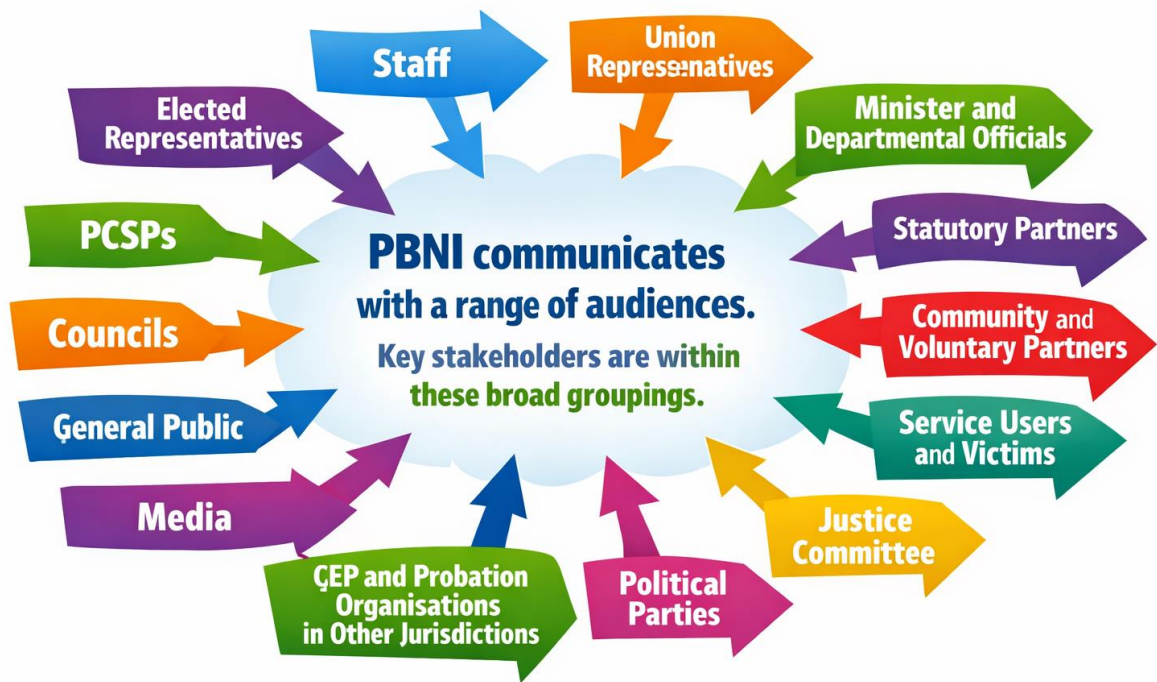
Within our Corporate Plan we commit to developing our work guided by evidence-based practice and informed by the voices of victims, service users, colleagues and partners. Service users and victims bring lived experience that improves our services and supports public understanding. Participation will be voluntary and supported, with clear consent processes. We will aim to ensure representation across diverse identities and experiences.

Over the next three years we will:

- Support the implementation of the service user strategy and action plan.
- Publish regular service-user insights.
- Embed trauma-informed storytelling style to make the public and stakeholders aware of the impact our work has on service users and victims.
- Develop digital resources tailored for users.

6. Stakeholders & Audiences

6.1. PBNI has a significant number of stakeholders. A mapping process has taken place to prioritise stakeholders for PBNI (annex 2). This will enable us to plan and prioritise groups of stakeholders in the next three years and develop our engagement strategy for Board and senior management. This mapping process however needs to be reviewed annually.



7. External Key Messages

7.1. Our core messages for 2026–29:

- Probation is a central part of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and is unique in that it touches upon every part of a person's journey through the system. It works to protect the public and reduce reoffending by supervising people who have offended in the community while overseeing their rehabilitation and resettlement.
- Everything that we do in Probation is about preventing people becoming victims of crime and making our communities safer.

- Whilst sometimes it can be difficult to articulate to the public the exact nature of Probation's role, the best way of describing it is that we help people to change their lives.
- Probation staff have a dual role of supporting people when they want to change and holding them to account and taking enforcement action if they are not complying with the terms of their community sentence or licence conditions.
- Community sentences are a key sentencing option for Judges and every person on a community sentence is supervised by Probation. These sentences address the rehabilitative needs of people who have offended and have a punitive element. The most well-known form of community sentence is the Community Service Order which requires an individual to provide unpaid work for the benefit of the local community. It is also a very effective form of community sentence with 75% of those receiving Community Service not reoffending within 12 months.
- Probation is value for money. The average cost of a prison place in NI is in excess of £50k per year, an ECO costs £10k and the average cost of a community order is just under £5k.
- A growing body of evidence demonstrates that in certain circumstances community sentences are more effective than short prison sentences at reducing reoffending. In nearly every jurisdiction, research has shown that community sentences are more effective than prison sentences of less than 12 months.
- Probation is very clear that crime and reoffending can be reduced through effective and rigorous sentences served in the community. With the right investment, community sentences can succeed where short prison sentences cannot.
- Evidence shows that investing in Probation has the potential to save money throughout the criminal justice system.

7.2. Messages will be adapted for specific audiences. Language will remain person-centred, avoiding stigmatising or deficit-based terminology.

8. Channels & Tools

8.1. We will use a multi-channel approach including:

- Internal: intranet, email, teams, in person briefings and engagement events, town halls, newsletter, digital communications.
- External: website, social media, videos, podcasts, engagement events.
- Partners: newsletters, briefings, outreach events, engagement events, social media.

9. Measurement & Evaluation

9.1. To ensure the success of the effectiveness of this Strategy, all communications activity will be regularly measured and evaluated against the vision and aims of this Strategy. To assist in this evaluation, a suite of indicators will be developed. These include delivery of specific communications plans highlighted within this Strategy as well as:

- Evaluation of staff' engagement through the staff' engagement survey.
- Evaluation on internal communications through internal communications survey.
- Evaluation of stakeholder engagement/awareness through stakeholder survey.
- Increased intranet and website traffic, and creative programme of regular content and expansion of social media users.

9.2. Evaluation will inform continuous improvement. Delivery against this strategy will be reported to SLT and through the business plan mechanisms reporting to Board. Findings will be shared transparently, including actions taken in response.

10. Communications and Engagement Year 1 Delivery Plan (2026-2027)

10.1. Context for Communications and Engagement Plan in Year 1:

The importance of good internal and external communications is a thread that runs throughout our organisational strategic vision and priorities for the next three years. This communications plan flows from the three-year communications and engagement strategy which aims to deliver public service communication which explains the work of probation, provides information to help people access services, provides reassurance and responses to the public in times of crisis, and builds trust and confidence in the services we deliver. We also aim to empower and support our colleagues by engaging in an open, transparent and meaningful way.

In the coming year there will be an election to the NI Assembly and PBNI's engagement strategy and media planning will need to take this into consideration. There may be changes to key stakeholders that PBNI currently work with.

There are significant pieces of legislation including the Sentencing Bill which may provide opportunities for PBNI to raise awareness of our role, and we will seek to use those opportunities effectively.

In the coming months we will also see the broadcast of a documentary about PBNI which has the potential to significantly increase awareness and interest in the work of probation in Northern Ireland. We will seek to capitalise on this whilst also mitigating any risks or negative publicity that transpire.

As AI develops over the next months the communications unit will also develop our use of AI to assist in developing communications internally and externally including through the use of infographics to explain our impact.

10.2. Strategic Priority: We will strengthen staff engagement through transparent communication and meaningful involvement in decision-making.

Actions:

1. Develop a forward look of thematic engagement events for colleagues and deliver themed creative content – see Annex A.
2. Publish Internal Probation News for staff.
3. Hold 6 themed Town Hall events for staff.
4. Plan and deliver on a staff awards event in 2026 including the annual long service awards.
5. Deliver an engagement survey and internal communication survey with staff by the end of 2026 and develop and implement action plans arising from the survey results.

10.3. Strategic Priority: Build stakeholder awareness and stakeholder engagement to enhance confidence in our work.

Actions:

6. Hold a series of engagement events for identified stakeholder groups in 2026-27.
7. Draft three-year action plan alongside staff in HR/L&OD to engage with universities, schools and FE colleges. Implement Year 1 of the action plan.
8. Develop a social media calendar of campaigns to address strategic issues including VAWG. Evaluate external engagement with social media through analytics and report to SLT/Board.

9. Maintain and increase external engagement through collaboration with justice colleagues, and international probation partners including PPAG and justice outreach at Pride and Mela events.

10.4. Strategic Priority: Build media awareness in the work of Probation to enhance public confidence in probation.

Actions:

10. Develop and execute media plan in conjunction with the BBC to highlight the PBNI documentary 'Carl Frampton on Probation.' from April 2026.
11. Target individual media platforms and representatives and use a storytelling approach to illustrate the impact probation makes on changing lives.
12. Be responsive to emerging media issues and develop appropriate communication plans.
13. Hold a workshop on how we can best use AI to support our communications work.

10.5. Strategic Priority: Amplify the Voice of Service Users and Victims

Actions:

14. Hold an event to launch the Service User Engagement Strategy in 2026 and involve service users in the organisation of the event.
15. Promote the fourth edition of the service user newsletter CONNECT and implement the SU engagement communication plan.

11. Feedback

11.1. PBNI recognises the importance of listening and responding to feedback. If you have any feedback or any recommendations for further improvement to this strategy, please contact PBNI's Communications Unit.

Annex 1: Calendar of thematic internal engagement events

Meeting	Date	Theme
Quarterly Area Manager Meeting	3 March 2026	Operational – Mobility Policy
Leadership Forum	3 March 2026	Budget 2026-29 Corporate Plan 2026-29 Business Plan 2026-27
Town Hall Bi Monthly	4 March 2026	Budget 2026-29 Corporate Plan 2026-29 Business Plan 2026-27
Staff Engagement Forum	21 April 2026 (Morning) rescheduled to 26 May (afternoon)	Decided by staff engagement working group
Town Hall Bi Monthly	6 May 2026	Strategic Priority 2 (People) – invite Inspire to talk about services available and wellbeing. Summary of CEO presentation to Inspire (Q &A). Service user to talk about impact of service user groups
Admin Officer Forum	End May 2026 (TBC)	
Quarterly Area Manager Meeting	16 June 2026 (Morning)	
Town Hall Bi Monthly	24 June 2026	Update on Trauma Implementation from Kirsten and Michael
Staff Engagement Forum	2 September 2026	Decided by staff engagement working group
Town Hall Bi Monthly	2 September 2026	Strategic Priority 3 (Partnerships) (Focus on CVS coming along to talk about referrals that can be made) representative from NIACRO and Turnaround.
Quarterly Area Manager Meeting	24 September 2026	
Leadership Forum	6 October 2026 (Morning)	Strategic Priority Partnerships (panel discussion from CVS partners).

Town Hall Bi Monthly	4 November 2026	Strategic Priority Future Proofing (Focus on use of AI in PBNI).
Admin Officer Forum	End November 2026 (TBC)	
Quarterly Area Manager Meeting	8 December 2026 (Morning)	
Staff Engagement Forum	16 December (Morning)	Decided by staff engagement working group
Town Hall Bi Monthly	16 December 2026	Update from member of the staff engagement forum to the organisation and Christmas quiz.

Annex 2: Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis

Stakeholder	Relationship	Communication needs	Method	Benefit & Risks	Lead
Probation Staff and Trade Unions	Work closely with.	Two-way engagement providing staff with timely and clear information of relevance through a range of established forums. Clear explanation for decisions, clear visibility of Senior Management Leadership, middle management and Board.	Frequent and clear communication in an accessible way, with clear channels for feedback and questions.	An engaged staff will ensure effective delivery of PBNI aims and priorities. They will also have their own external networks through which to advocate for probation. A disengaged staff will be less effective.	Senior Management, Board Middle management Communications Unit.
Minister and Departmental Officials	Work closely with.	Two-way engagement, making department aware of issues impacting probation.	Governance meetings and accountability meetings. Visits to front line staff and projects. Attendance at board meetings /events	Understanding of impact probation makes and risks organisation facing. Minister and dept are advocates for probation and	Senior Management, Board Middle management Communications Unit.

				<p>important they understand all elements of work.</p> <p>This grouping impacts on financial/statutory and reputational issues</p>	
<p>Statutory partners (Police, Judiciary, Prisons, YJA, health trusts, DoJ, Dept of Communities, Dept of Health)</p>	<p>Work closely with.</p>	<p>Providing partners with clear understanding of strategic priorities, values and vision and delivery against priorities</p> <p>Important that justice partners understand when any changes to probation practice might impact on their organisation and vice versa.</p>	<p>Proactive and transparent engagement to build relationships based on frequent, valuable and focused contacts through operational leads and communication events.</p> <p>Collaborative engagement to share information in an accessible way to</p>	<p>Greater collaboration across criminal justice. Without good communication more likely to be silo working. This grouping impacts on financial/statutory and reputational issues</p>	<p>Senior Management, Board members Communications Unit.</p>

			build effective relationships and build strong mutual understanding of each other's role and work.		
Community Voluntary sector partners	Work closely with.	Providing partners with clear understanding of strategic priorities, values and vision and delivery against priorities	Proactive and transparent engagement to build relationships based on frequent, valuable and focused contacts through operational leads and communication events.	Assistance in delivering services leading to safer communities.	Senior Management, Board members Communications Unit.
Justice Committee, political parties and media with justice interest)	Work closely with.	Understand performance of probation and impact of service delivery.	Briefings, visits, information provided directly and or on public platforms.	Can be advocates for probation when the correct information is provided.	Senior Management, Board members Communications Unit.

CEP and probation organisations in other jurisdictions	Work closely with.	Share best practice and learning	CEP meetings, cross border PPAG meetings, five nations meetings	The ability to share information operationally and corporately to enhance service delivery and organisation efficiency.	Senior Management, Communications Unit.
Service users (people under probation supervision and victims)	Keep satisfied. based on provision of probation services.	Understand expectations and responsibilities. Understand and aware of services we provide.	Timely, accessible and clear information directly from Probation . Feedback mechanisms in place to enable feedback from service users to inform learning and practice.	Service Users can be powerful advocates of the benefits and impact of probation.	Operational leads. Service user groups. Senior Management, Communications Unit.
Councils, PCSPs	Keep satisfied. Based on provision of	Transparent, accurate, factual and accessible information provided	Proactive and transparent	Balance protection of sensitive information with transparency.	Area Managers Senior Management. Communications Unit.

	probation services.	directly and or on public platforms.	engagement on issues of relevance. Use of own channels (website and social media channels).	Can amplify and influence public opinion narratives.	
Universities NISCC	Keep satisfied.	Up to date accurate, factual and accessible information provided directly and or on public platforms.	Attendance at careers days and briefings events	Staff recruitment Research opportunities Sharing best practice	Senior Management. Communications Unit. L&OD Operational colleagues
General public	Keep informed. Based on provision of probation services.	Transparent, accurate, factual and accessible information provided directly on public platforms.	Share relevant information in an accessible way. Use of own channels (website and social media channels).	Balance protection of sensitive information with transparency. Can amplify and influence public opinion narratives.	Board Members Senior Management. Area Managers Front line colleagues Communications Unit.

Annex 3: PBNI's Social Media Policy



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy Owner	
Owner:	Gail McGreevy
Author:	Ivor Whitten
Screening and Proofing	
Section 75:	10 November 2023
Data Protection:	10 November 2023
Human Rights:	10 November 2023
Consultation	
	<i>Senior Management Team; NAPO; NIPSA; NISCC; DoJ; Area Managers; Corporate managers, Business Support Managers</i>
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1.0	01.11.23	Review of policy draft
2.0	17.01.24	Minor amendments and sent out for consultation
3.0	08.05.24	Minor amendments following consultation
4.0	14.06.24	Amendments following PPC

Alternative Formats

This documentation can be made available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio tape or in an ethnic-minority language upon request. Requests for alternative formats can be made to PBNI.

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1. Rationale

- 1.1. This policy is twofold. It sets out how PBNI will use social media as a means of communicating corporately and it also sets out the standards expected of members of staff who use social media in a personal capacity.
- 1.2. Social media is a term used to describe a range of online applications which allow users to create and share content.

2. PBNI Corporate Social Media

- 2.1. PBNI corporately use social media, in accordance with legislation as a platform for:
 - Communicating with staff, stakeholders and the wider public.
 - Raising awareness and understanding of our role.
 - Promotion of services and events.
 - Complementing other PBNI communication channels such as the PBNI website.
 - Engaging with media.
 - Engaging with stakeholders.
- 2.2. Social media enables Probation staff to be accessible and visible to their communities and can be used as an effective means to positively impact on the achievement of operational and corporate objectives.
- 2.3. PBNI welcomes comments from members of the public on social media channels however any which contain content deemed unsuitable will be removed.
- 2.4. PBNI's social media sites are currently as follows:
 - Facebook page for PBNI
 - X(formerly Twitter) page for PBNI
 - YouTube account for PBNI
 - Instagram for PBNI
 - LinkedIn for PBNI
- 2.5. PBNI will select its social media platforms carefully taking account of

functionality, stability, support, resilience, longevity, capacity, and ability to increase participation.

3. Personal Social Media Accounts

- 3.1. In using personal social media, members of staff must ensure that their activity is in accordance with legislation and that it is consistent with their responsibilities as set out in the Code of Conduct and all other PBNI policies and procedures including the Dignity at Work policy, and Discipline Policy. All PBNI staff must adhere and uphold PBNI values.
- 3.2. All PBNI staff who use social media are expected to adhere to the same standards of propriety as would be expected in any other public forum, be it during work or in their own time. The simple rule to remember is that the principles covering the use of social media by PBNI in both a work and personal capacity are the same as those that apply for any other activity under the Staff Code of Conduct.
- 3.3. Social media is a public forum, and the same considerations apply to using social media as speaking in public or writing for a publication either officially or out of work.
- 3.4. This policy applies regardless of whether the social media sites are accessed using PBNI IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- 3.5. Members of PBNI are free to use social media in their own time. But they should always be mindful of their duties not to disclose official information and should not take part in any public activity which compromises, or might be seen to compromise, the services delivered by PBNI.
- 3.6. Staff should not breach PBNI confidentiality nor bring PBNI's reputation into disrepute. This may lead to disciplinary procedures being taken.
- 3.7. This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the Social Media Procedures and alongside PBNI policies relating to the use of Internet and Email.
- 3.8. This policy covers Board Members, full time staff, part-time staff, agency staff, placements and volunteers.

4. Aim

- 4.1. The purpose of this policy and the associated procedures is to set out the Probation Board for Northern Ireland's (PBNI) overall approach to the use of corporate social media and provide clear procedures for staff in relation to their personal use of social media.

5. Objectives

- 5.1. To set out how PBNI use corporate social media channels to raise awareness and understanding of the role of probation.
- 5.2. To ensure PBNI staff understand that when using social media in a personal capacity the same standards are expected of them as in any other public forum. That is, they adhere to PBNI standards of behaviour as set out in the Code of Conduct.

6. Programmes and Projects

- 6.1. PBNI Communications Unit can give advice and guidance in relation to all social media matters.
- 6.2. Staff should also note that if a service user tries to contact a probation officer or make a complaint through social media platforms, the contact should be treated like any other form of contact such as email, mail or phone. The contact should receive a response and be asked to make direct contact with the relevant probation officer or complaints unit.

7. Resources

- 7.1. There is a resourcing need to ensure there is sufficient communications staff to maintain the PBNI social media channels.

8. Communications and Training

- 8.1. PBNI staff who are responsible for updated corporate PBNI social media accounts will be trained on an ongoing basis. This policy will be communicated to all staff.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 9.1. This policy will also be kept under review to ensure it is in keeping with current legislation and good practice.
- 9.2. All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they read and understand it.

10. Review

- 10.1. This policy will be reviewed four years from the date of approval. Interim reviews may also be prompted by feedback, and/or identified changes in practice.

11. Non-compliance

- 11.1. Breach of this Policy by employees may merit consideration under the Board's Disciplinary Policy.