

PROBATION News

Magazine of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland • Issue 22 • August 2026



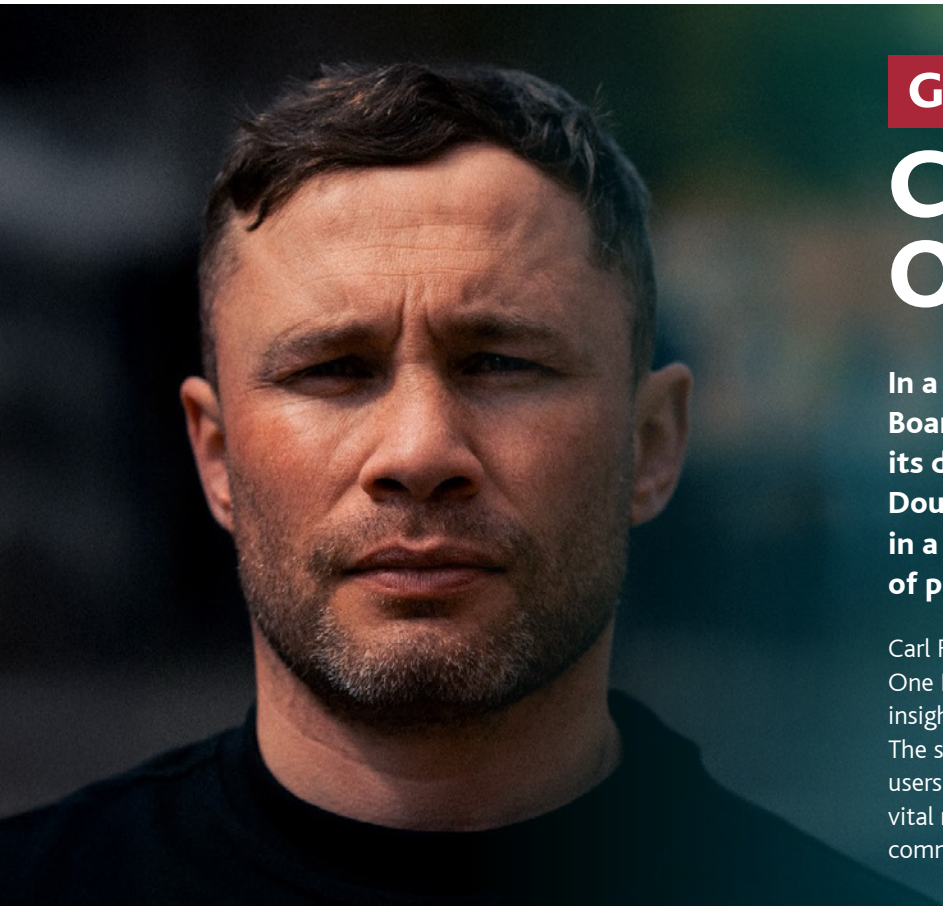
WELCOME to the twenty-second edition of the Probation News Magazine. This magazine provides a biannual opportunity to engage through sharing of news, best practice and information to stakeholders, staff and the public. We hope you enjoy reading this edition.

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GROUNDBREAKING NEW SERIES

CARL FRAMPTON: ON PROBATION

In a landmark development, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) opened its doors to award winning filmmakers DoubleBand for the first time, resulting in a six part series showcasing the reality of probation work.

Carl Frampton: On Probation, which aired on BBC One Northern Ireland, offers a rare and compelling insight into the work of frontline probation staff. The series follows their engagement with service users and victims of crime, highlighting their vital role in protecting the public and making communities safer.

With unprecedented behind the scenes access, the series explores the complexity of probation work—supporting individuals affected by addiction, poor mental health, and trauma, while managing risk and enforcing community sentences. It captures the balance at the heart of probation: helping people change, while holding them accountable where they do not.

Board Chair Glenn Houston said: "This series provides a unique opportunity to show the reality of probation work. Our staff operate in challenging circumstances, supporting people to change their lives while ensuring accountability when they do not."

Continued on page 5

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIARY

Welcome to this edition of Probation News. This has been an important period for the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), with opportunities to increase public understanding of the role probation plays in supporting rehabilitation, reducing reoffending and protecting communities. The recent BBC documentary series Carl Frampton: On Probation provided a unique insight into the everyday work undertaken by probation staff to make communities safer and protect the public.

The foundation and bedrock of successful probation work is the establishment of positive, supportive and respectful relationships between individual practitioners and people on probation. At the same time probation staff must balance that support with holding people to account, professionally assessing and managing risk, and taking appropriate enforcement action to protect the public. Carl Frampton: On Probation demonstrated how probation staff navigate this complex and difficult environment to keep communities safer.

Many of those supervised by probation in the documentary were affected by addiction, trauma and poor mental health, and it was important to see firsthand how people's experiences often contribute to their offending behaviour.

It was equally important that the series showed the impact and harm caused by offending, and this documentary didn't shy away from that reality. Episode six of the documentary told the story of a victim of crime, Joanna and in many ways hearing her story was the most impactful part of the series.

It showed why we carry out our work and shone a light on the devastating impact of crime across generations.

Alongside raising awareness of probation, PBNI's professional expertise helped inform scrutiny of wider criminal justice legislation while reinforcing our commitment to public protection, rehabilitation and reducing reoffending. Our recent engagement with the Justice Committee on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing, etc.) Bill provided an opportunity to discuss the proposed Supervised Suspended Sentence Orders as a credible community sentence that holds people to account, supports rehabilitation and helps make communities safer by reducing the likelihood of further offending. As sentencing options evolve, it is important that probation services are appropriately resourced to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities.

Partnership working remains central to our success and is reflected as a priority in our new Corporate Plan.

During recent months, we have continued to strengthen collaboration with partners in the community and voluntary sector and with our criminal justice organisations to improve outcomes for victims, service users and the wider public. Our collaboration with the High Sheriffs' Association of Northern Ireland and the establishment a High Sheriff Award presented to PBNI service users who have made significant progress on probation and is an important recognition for those who are committed to changing their lives for safer communities.

I am proud of the contribution that probation staff make every day. The stories featured in this edition demonstrate the positive impact of probation in supporting change, reducing reoffending and helping to build safer communities across Northern Ireland.

Amanda Stewart OBE
Chief Executive

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

The Minister for Justice, Naomi Long, MLA, has approved the PBNI Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan which sets the strategic direction for the organisation for the coming three years.

Last year we began a formal consultation on the draft Corporate Plan and at the same time, we consulted with staff and our key partners on the priorities for the PBNI Business Plan for 2026/27. I want to thank all the partner organisations and stakeholders who contributed to the consultation process. Both plans were approved for submission to the Department at a PBNI Board meeting on 19 March 2026. Given that the Northern Ireland Executive had not agreed a budget at that time we understood that there would be a delay before the Minister would be invited to approve both plans.

Ministerial approval of both our Corporate Plan and Business Plan is an important endorsement for our intended direction of travel, however the indicative budget and financial outlook continues to present significant challenges.

Many public bodies need to manage financial uncertainty and PBNI is no different in that regard. The challenge is to continue to deliver our core functions, without compromise to the statutory duties and responsibilities we must deliver, whilst remaining alert to the possibility of a reduced financial allocation.

As we end the second quarter of the business year, the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team have already implemented a range of prudent and proportionate measures to safeguard the organisation's financial position. These measures include the introduction of carefully managed recruitment controls and ongoing engagement with the Minister and senior officials regarding the sustainability of services delivered through our voluntary and community sector partners. We have also acknowledged the impact of any reduction in our capital allocation for planned developments in our Estate and IT infrastructure.

Notwithstanding the scale of the financial challenge, it is essential that the organisation maintains a clear strategic focus and continues to progress the priorities set out within the approved Corporate and Business Plans. While financial constraints will require careful management and informed decision-making, they should not diminish our commitment to delivering against our strategic objectives.

The Board will meet again in September, when it will receive a further update on the financial position. Board members will welcome Ministerial approval of the Plans, but will also require assurance that robust financial controls and mitigating actions are in place to achieve a balanced financial position at year-end.

We have worked hard to make the Probation service as efficient as possible. As a lean organisation, there are very few opportunities to reduce expenditure without adversely affecting frontline service delivery and the outcomes we achieve for the people and communities we serve. Nevertheless, we recognise that we are unlikely to be insulated from wider public expenditure pressures. While the financial environment remains challenging, we remain hopeful that any additional resources allocated to the Executive will be distributed in a way that supports continued investment right across the justice system. We have made it clear that any changes in the law in areas including community sentencing, reducing the prison population or widening the remit of the Probation service will need to be properly resourced.

For now, however, it is important to acknowledge a significant milestone. The Minister's approval of our Corporate Plan and Business Plan provides a clear endorsement of our strategic direction and priorities. It gives the organisation a strong basis from which to move forward with the clear aim of changing lives for safer communities.

Glenn Houston
Board Chair



CORPORATE PLAN 2026-29 LAUNCH

The Corporate Plan 2023-26 sets out PBNI priorities for the next three years. We appreciate the many responses received from individuals and organisations who participated in the consultation, including the meaningful contributions from those with lived experience of the justice system.

[Read the new Corporate Plan here](#)

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



PROBATION PRACTICE

We will enhance the quality of our practice to reduce reoffending, reduce the number of victims of crime and protect the public.



PARTNERSHIPS

We will develop strong external relationships and sustain partnerships with organisations that facilitate and enable rehabilitation and reintegration.



PEOPLE

We will continue to embed a trauma informed approach to develop our organisational culture and empower our people to deliver high quality services.



FUTURE PROOFING OUR SERVICE

We will respond to new challenges and opportunities by becoming a more digitally enabled service with high quality data, supporting innovation and continuing our commitment to sustainability.

PBNI VALUES



Respect: We will treat everyone with respect and dignity at all times and value diversity and differing viewpoints. This includes believing that all people, given the right circumstances, have the ability to change their lives.



Integrity: We will act in a way that engenders trust with all. We will be honest in what we say and do.



Openness: We will encourage people to speak up and make suggestions about practice, and we will be open about our decision making.



Accountability: We will be accountable to the public for our decisions and actions.



Compassion: We will act with compassion which is the foundation on which positive relationships are built.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PRIDE IN PROBATION STAFF

Chief Executive Amanda Stewart welcomed the BBC documentary, highlighting its importance in raising awareness of probation:

"We have worked with the production company over a number of years to explain the realities of our work and shine a light on a part of the justice system that is often misunderstood. For the first time in our history, we opened our doors so the public could see exactly what we do."

She added:

"Openness and transparency are central to my approach as Chief Executive. I wanted people to understand the decisions we make and the impact of our work."

The series also gives voice to victims, including a powerful account in episode six:

"Hearing directly from victims was a crucial part of this project. The story shared in episode six is one of resilience and courage, showing the lasting impact of crime on individuals and families."

Amanda concluded:

"I am incredibly proud of the staff who took part and those who supported the programme behind the scenes. This series highlights their professionalism, dedication and commitment to keeping Northern Ireland safe."



Probation Officer
Toni Upton in
the Portadown
Office



Probation Service
Officer Claire
Forsythe at a
placement



Community
Service
Supervisor Joe
Baker with Carl
at a community
service
placement



Area Manager
Sharon
Harrison at the
Cuan Mhuire
Community
Based Adult
Mental Health
Services.

CARL GIVES HIS VIEW ON PROBATION SERVICES

Reflecting on his experience, Carl Frampton spoke candidly about what he learned during the series.

Growing up in Tiger's Bay, Carl acknowledges how easily his life could have taken a different path—but boxing gave him a positive direction. Through the programme, he gained a deeper understanding of how trauma and life experiences can shape behaviour and make change challenging.

He said:

"Before this series, I didn't know much about probation. Going behind the scenes has been a real eye opener. I've met people with long criminal records, and the staff working with them are dedicated to helping them turn their lives around."

"It's tough work, full of ups and downs - and for sure, there are no easy solutions. But it has been a fascinating and challenging journey for me. I understand more about this world now – and how it can help prevent more people from becoming victims of crime."

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT PROBATION TV SERIES



Naomi Long MLA @naomi_long · May 15



Probation is one of the least understood and appreciated parts of the justice system. It's vital to public protection, rehabilitation and providing victims with information. Having previewed a few episodes, the complexity of the work and dedication of officers shines through.



Criminal Justice Inspection NI
@CJININews



This documentary illustrates the important work of @PBNINews and reflects some of our 2024 Follow-Up Review findings, where we saw staff building strong relationships with service users, creating trust, improving outcomes and helping build safer communities. [↓](#)



Commissioner for Victims of Crime NI
@CVOCNI



A really interesting watch, showing the hard work of Probation staff.

One of the most striking moments is when @RealCFrampton says "I think it's fair to say more needs to be done for victims of crime, but that's a responsibility for all agencies in the criminal justice system"



Kate Nicholl @KateNicholl · May 15
Replying to @naomi_long



I loved working with @PBNINews when I was mayor. Those exiting the justice system are some of the most marginalised in society & the team working with them are actual heroes. Class that Carl Frampton is using his platform to shine a light on their work



Northern Ireland Social Care Council

1,784 followers

1d ·

What many people may not know is that to be a Probation Officer in Northern Ireland, you must be a registered [#socialworker](#). That means Probation Officers have met the rigorous professional standards we set as a regulator — and are committed to the values of social work: dignity, respect and positive change.

The up and coming 'Carl Frampton: On Probation', is a landmark BBC documentary series that shines a spotlight on the vital work of the [Probation Board for Northern Ireland](#) which in turn demonstrates the difference social work can make.

This series is a powerful reminder of what skilled, registered social workers do every day in courts, prisons, and communities across Northern Ireland, helping to protect the public and rebuild lives.

We encourage everyone to watch on BBC iPlayer from Monday 18 May.



Mark Goodfellow · 3rd+
Deputy Secretary, Safer Communities
4d ·

[+ Follow](#)

This deserves some of your time. Probation staff work incredibly hard to keep our communities safe and I very much welcome this as a way of raising awareness and understanding of - and respect for - this critical work.



The Probation Service

1w ·



Congratulations to our colleagues in [Probation Board for Northern Ireland](#) on this BBC documentary exploring the role and work of the Probation Service in Northern Ireland. This six part series begins next Monday 18 May.



PROBATION GIVES EVIDENCE TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The Chief Executive and Directors of Operations giving evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly Justice Committee.

The Chief Executive and Directors of Operations recently gave evidence to the Justice Committee on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing, etc.) Bill, outlining PBNI's position on the proposed reforms.

PBNI welcomed the emphasis on **proportionality, fairness and transparency** as core sentencing principles, noting that clear statutory guidance can improve consistency and public confidence while preserving judicial discretion.

The organisation supports the recognised purposes of sentencing—**punishment, public protection, deterrence, rehabilitation and reparation**—and emphasised that these are not mutually exclusive.

Community sentences, including probation orders and community service, can both hold individuals accountable and support rehabilitation, ultimately helping to prevent further harm.

PBNI expressed broad support for the introduction of **Supervised Suspended Sentence Orders (SSOs)**, highlighting evidence that, in some cases, noncustodial sentences are more effective than short prison terms in reducing reoffending.

However, in our evidence we stressed that:

- SSOs must be used appropriately in cases that would otherwise result in custody
- They must not “widen the net” unnecessarily
- Effective delivery depends on proper resourcing and targeted interventions

For SSOs to be effective in rehabilitating people, they need to be properly resourced, targeted at the right cases, and supported by a full range of interventions. Without that, the benefits will not be realised.

HIGH SHERIFF AGM

The High Sheriffs' Association of Northern Ireland (HSANI) hosted their Annual General Meeting on April 29, 2026. The Association seeks to sustain the role of the High Sheriff in relation to its traditional areas of responsibility which include lending support to the judiciary and organisations that assist crime reduction whilst continuing to develop relationships with voluntary sector organisations working in and for the whole community.

In recent times PBNi has partnered with the High Sheriff's Association to present service users with awards to recognise their progress in changing their lives. We were invited to attend their AGM alongside the Lady Chief Justice Dame Siobhan Keegan.



Chief Executive Amanda Stewart and Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery at the Northern Ireland High Sheriffs Association AGM.

ENDEAVOUR AWARD



Darrah who is a service user has completed his Endeavour Award. Speaking about the award he said at first it was something he wasn't really keen on. But once he got started it gave him motivation to volunteer and go to the gym.

He added: "Now I've done the award I feel a lot better about myself and, it has felt great giving back to the community. This award has given me the inspiration to write this short piece of poetry, and I hope it can inspire people like me and help them move forward".

POETRY

I was raised where love was never rare
But I still found darkness waiting there
A young man lost in streets and pride
With pain and anger locked inside
At twenty, life placed a child in my hands
But I broke apart what I didn't understand
One moments rage became lifelong shame
And prison walls still echoed her name
I chased fast money, poison and smoke
Until another sentence had me broke
The man I was careless and blind my soul I lost no time to find
Now I teach with clippers instead of crime
Building young men one cut at a time
My past still lives
But it no longer leads
Because growth begins where regret succeeds.



PROBATION'S CASELOAD STATISTICS FOR 2025-26 HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED. THE KEY FINDINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS:



ON 31 MARCH 2026, **3,953 SERVICE USERS** WERE SUPERVISED BY PBNI



DETERMINE CUSTODIAL SENTENCES (DCS)

ACCOUNTED FOR THE LARGEST PROPORTION OF CASELOAD (39.2%) SUPERVISED BY PBNI IN MARCH 2026, FOLLOWED BY PROBATION ORDERS (26.3%).

ORDERS AND LICENCES WHERE THE PRINCIPAL OFFENCE RELATED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON (VAP) OFFENCES **ACCOUNTED FOR THE LARGEST PROPORTION OF CASELOAD (31.6%)** SUPERVISED BY PBNI IN MARCH 2026



AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, **MALES** ACCOUNTED FOR THE MAJORITY OF SERVICE USERS BEING SUPERVISED (90.3%).



OF THE SERVICE USERS BEING SUPERVISED BY PBNI ON 31 MARCH 2026, 28.5% WERE **IDENTIFIED AS HIGH RISK** UNDER THE ASSESSMENT, CASE MANAGEMENT & EVALUATION SYSTEM (ACE).



IN MARCH 2026, OVER ONE-THIRD (35.7%) OF SERVICE USERS SUPERVISED BY PBNI WERE **AGED 30 TO 39**.



THE PBNI BELFAST DIRECTORATE

WERE SUPERVISING THE LARGEST PROPORTION OF SERVICE USERS IN MARCH 2026 (35.3%), FOLLOWED BY THE RURAL DIRECTORATE (28.4%).

ON 31 MARCH 2026, 706 SERVICE USERS (17.9% OF ALL SERVICE USERS SUPERVISED BY PBNI) WERE CATEGORISED UNDER **THE PUBLIC PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (PPANI)**.



IN MARCH 2026, 5.0% OF SERVICE USERS SUPERVISED BY PBNI (199 SERVICE USERS) WERE ASSESSED AS **SIGNIFICANT RISK OF SERIOUS HARM TO OTHERS (SROSH)**.



THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VICTIMS REGISTERED WITH PBNI

INCREASED BY 8.1%

FROM 566 ON 31 MARCH 2025 TO 612 ON 31 MARCH 2026.



DURING 2025/26, **6,600 REPORTS WERE COMPLETED BY PBNI STAFF** (EXCLUDING LETTERS); THE CORRESPONDING FIGURE FOR 2024/25 WAS 6,203. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THE 2025/26 FIGURE INCLUDES 481 PRISON AND PPANI DESIGNATED RISK MANAGER (DRM) REPORTS. DATA RELATING TO THESE REPORTS WAS UNAVAILABLE PRIOR TO APRIL 2025.



CONTACT PROBATION AT

PROBATION HEADQUARTERS

80/90 North St, Belfast BT1 1LD	028 9052 2522
Communications Unit	028 9052 2522

AREA TEAMS

West Belfast and Lisburn

Glenshane House, 202a Andersonstown Road, Belfast, BT11 9EA	028 9030 6630
Unit 4, Wallace Studios, 27 Wallace Avenue, Lisburn, BT27 4AE	028 9262 3456

North Belfast and South East Antrim

171 – 179 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GE	028 9034 7474
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South and East Belfast

297 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1AG	028 9052 6655
330 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 2GE	028 9054 1444

Down and Ards

15 Castle Street, Newtownards, BT23 3PA	028 9185 8282
Downshire Civic Centre, Ardglass Road, Downpatrick, BT30 6RA	028 4461 8281

North West

25 Shipquay Street, Londonderry, BT48 6DL	028 7131 9670
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VICTIM INFORMATION UNIT

80/90 North St, Belfast BT1 1LD	0300 123 3269
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North Antrim

3 Wellington Court, Ballymena, BT43 6EQ	028 2566 2345
19/20 The Diamond, Coleraine, BT52 2DN	028 7034 6880

Rural South

1d Monaghan Street, Newry, BT35 6BB	028 3025 3030
12 Church Street, Portadown, BT62 3LQ	028 3839 7575

Rural West

Sperrin Centre, 1 Market Street, Omagh, BT78 1EE	028 8225 4872
Cathcart Square, 14 Dublin Road, Enniskillen, BT74 6HH	028 6634 3345

Rural Mid Ulster

9 Kirk Avenue, Magherafelt, BT45 6BT	028 7930 2115
25 College Street, Armagh, BT61 9BT	028 3752 9876



PROBATION MATTERS PODCAST

Probation publish Podcasts to raise awareness and understanding of the work we do supervising community sentences to change lives for safer communities.

Each podcast examines different areas of our work in Courts, Communities, Custody and with Victims of Crime.