INFORMATION CHARTER

Introduction
This information charter sets out the standards that you can expect from the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) when you request information from PBNI. This includes personal and non-personal information which we hold and process in keeping with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000, and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

It will tell you how you can get access to information, including your personal data and what you can do if you think standards are not being met.

This charter will be kept under review and updated to take into account any changes in legislation or to PBNI's current policies and practice.

Responsibilities

The Director of Probation has a duty to ensure that PBNI complies with the requirements of legislation.

The Head of Information Technology, reporting to the Deputy Director (Finance & Corporate Services) is responsible for IT security as well as all information technology matters.

The Information Technology Security Officer (ITSO) is responsible for creating, maintaining, giving guidance on and overseeing the implementation of Information Security.

The Compliance Section of the Communications Unit has a duty to provide guidance and support on issues relating to Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Records Management.
All Managers are responsible for ensuring that information systems in their areas conform to PBNI policies and guidance and to the requirements of legislation.

All Members of Staff are responsible for applying the correct principles when dealing with the information that they process and hold. Training is provided to staff to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities in respect of the management of information.

How our information is managed

PBNI maintains and protects all information according to legislation, current policies and best practice. It has security measures in place to maintain and safeguard the confidentiality, integrity and availability of our systems and data. All information is stored, processed and communicated in a secure manner making it readily available to authorised users.

PBNI is committed to the proactive dissemination of information, to be open and transparent and will routinely publish information unless restricted by legislation or public policy considerations.

Personal information

Personal information is information about you. PBNI holds information for the purposes of our work, in particular preparing reports for court, supervising offenders, giving information to victims and employing staff. PBNI recognises how important it is to protect employees and other service users’ privacy and to comply with the Data Protection Act.

If we hold information on you, PBNI will safeguard your information and in most circumstances will not disclose personal data without consent. PBNI may have to disclose information without consent but only if the law allows it and/or it allows it and we believe it is important to do so.

If we ask you for personal information we will:

- let you know why we need it, where it is not obvious;
- only ask for what we need, and not collect excessive or irrelevant information;
- make sure nobody has access to it who should not;
- let you know if we share it with other organisations; and
- only keep it for as long as we need to in accordance with our retention schedule.

In return, to keep information reliable and up to date, we ask you to:

- give us accurate information, and
tell us as soon as possible of any changes, such as a change of address.

Access to personal information
You can find out if we hold any personal information about you by making a ‘subject access request’ under the Data Protection Act. If we do hold information about you we will:

- give you a description of it
- tell you why we are holding it
- tell you who it could be disclosed to, and
- let you have a copy of the information in an intelligible form.

We handle all information in a manner that respects the rights of individuals and which complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

To request any of your personal information held by PBNI please email dpa@pbni.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at the address provided below. You can also complete the form attached to our leaflet ‘Your Right to Know’.

If we do hold information about you, you can ask us to correct any mistakes by contacting us using the same contact details.

PBNI does not charge for requests for personal information.

Access to information
The Freedom of Information Act 2000 enables the public to have access to unpublished information from a public body subject to certain conditions. Like all other public sector organisations PBNI is required to make the information it holds available unless subject to an exemption.

PBNI is committed to the proactive dissemination of information, to be open and transparent and will publish information unless restricted by legislation. All information available under our publication scheme (as listed in our ‘Guide to Information’) is provided free of charge on line and in hard copy unless otherwise stated.

If you need to make a written request or if you require the information in a different format or language, there may be a charge for this. We will let you know in advance if there is a charge.

If you wish to request information (not personal) or have a query about a request please email FOI@pbni.gsi.gov.uk
Complaints
If you are not satisfied with how your request for information has been handled, you can make a
complaint through the PBNI complaints procedure. If you are not happy with the outcome of our
internal complaints procedure you can appeal against the decision to the Information Commissioner
who will decide if your request has been handled properly. For more details please go to the
Information Commissioner’s website at www.ico.gov.uk

Legislation – disclosure of information
The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 have a number of exemptions
which must be considered before publication or disclosure. If we use an exemption we will explain it to
you. However, PBNI will not withhold information simply because it falls into a relevant exemption. We
will assess the impact of disclosure in relation to the requested information and make a decision on a
case-by-case basis (except where we have decided that information of that type should be published
proactively). For more information on exemptions and your rights under legislation please go to the
Information Commissioner’s website www.ico.gov.uk

To request information you can also write to:
Communications Unit
(Compliance Section)
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Headquarters
80/90 North Street
Belfast
BT1 1LD