

PBNI Disclosure Log – Response to Request

Request Reference: 023.20.16
Date of Request: 8 July 2016
Date of Response: 25 July 2016

Request

I request all papers and information regarding the ACE score which is used within prisons to determine an individual's low, medium, high likelihood of reoffending upon release. I would like the following information and documentation:

What was the ACE score initially used for and what class of prisoner it was directed towards.

Who is responsible for it being used for all prisoners and why this came about.

Proof that it is lawfully being used within prison and proof that it is accurate and if it was done by two different probation officers, the final score would be the same.

Response

I attach [Appendix 1](#) - PBNI guidance on the ACE (Assessment, Case Management and Evaluation) tool. This is primarily for practitioners but I hope it clarifies the process for you.

The most relevant sections, which I believe may assist your understanding, are contained within pages 7-18, but I have also provided a summary below and additional information which I hope will address your particular queries:

The ACE system was initially developed by the Warwickshire Probation Service and the University of Oxford Probation Studies Unit.

ACE is used by PBNI, in conjunction with professional judgment, to assess the likelihood of general re-offending within a two year period.

It is used by PBNI when assessing individuals a) who have had a pre-sentence report requested by the courts, b) who are or will be under statutory supervision - this includes those subject to a supervision order or a period in custody or both and c) in custody, not subject to statutory supervision, but who make a request for conditional early release.

In order to assist the Judge to make an appropriate decision regarding sentencing, and/or PBNI to comply with its statutory obligation to supervise individuals effectively it is important that we can assess, amongst other things, the likelihood of those individuals' re-offending.

PBNI carry out ACE assessments / review every 26 weeks in the community (every 16 weeks where individuals are assessed as posing a Significant Risk of Serious Harm) but can be reviewed more frequently should a significant change in circumstances occur, for example further offending or recall to prison.

An ACE will be completed in relation to all prisoners who will be subject to post release supervision at various stages of custody, for example, at the point of committal to custody following conviction and prior to the prisoner's release (unless an ACE has been completed within the previous 6 months).

Additional ACE reviews will be completed at critical transition/trigger points, for example in advance of a Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland hearing in regards to a prisoner (unless an ACE has been completed within the previous 6 months).

ACE is not a static tool but will reflect progress or otherwise made by the individual during the period of supervision. No two individuals' assessments will be the same as the assessment must reflect for example, the individual's particular social and personal circumstances, the nature of the offence, offence history and compliance with supervision. That is why it is conducted at various stages throughout the period of contact with Probation and the ACE score may change, decreasing or increasing.

ACE includes a simple scoring system as well as allowing space for descriptive details about the individuals' characteristics or circumstances. Each of the areas within the headings Social, Personal and Offending such as Accommodation, Community, Physical health, substance misuse, lifestyle/associates, are individually scored. The scores are then added to denote the overall offending related score.

The ACE indicates the likelihood of reoffending as follows:

0-15 (low) 16-29 (medium) 30 or more (high)

An ACE assessment is usually carried out by the individual's supervising Probation Officer. The Probation Officer carrying out the assessment however, may change for various reasons, for example, when staff are moved or on leave but every Probation Officer is trained in use of the ACE assessment tool and is qualified to carry out this assessment.

Scores are subject to fluctuation, but this is indicative of changes in the individual's situation as clarified above and in the attached guide, not influenced by a change of Probation Officer conducting the assessment.

As with all aspects of our work, this process is subject to line manager oversight and in particular where there are any issues of concern raised, an individual's assessment can be subject to review by relevant line managers.

If you have any queries about this letter, or if you feel I have misinterpreted your request please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the way PBNI has handled your request, you may ask for an internal review using our complaints procedure. A copy of our [complaints procedure](#) is available on our website www.pbni.org.uk. If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

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