PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

PBNI ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

“Making local communities safer by challenging and changing offenders’ behavior”
PBNI Corporate Plan (2011 - 2014)

28 September 2012
Through working in partnership with other agencies in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, PBNI will contribute to a reduction in homelessness, supervision will be enhanced and communities will be safer.

PBNI's Vision as outlined in the 2011-2014 Corporate Plan

Context and Background to PBNI's Accommodation Strategy:

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland first developed an Accommodation Strategy in 2003 in recognition of the direct link between homelessness/stable accommodation and offending/reoffending. Since 2003 there have been significant developments in relation to the management of offenders through the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI), changes in legislation (introduction of the 2008 Criminal Justice Order) and the introduction of PBNI’s revised standards (2011). It is the view of the Board that it is therefore timely to review its Accommodation Strategy, particularly in light of the contemporaneous strategic reviews being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on Homelessness, Supporting People’s Strategic Review and the PPANI Accommodation Strategy.

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland on 31 March 2012 supervised 4,441 people on court directed orders both community sentences and supervised licenses. The Criminal Justice Order 2008 (Northern Ireland) introduced Public Protection Sentences and Determinate Custodial Sentences. This was designed to make nearly all prisoners subject to statutory licences upon release. This is already having a significant impact upon PBNI.

The vast majority of these offenders will be accommodated appropriately within the community, usually with their own families and in their town of origin. Some will have the additional safeguard of curfews imposed through electronic monitoring, also introduced through the CJO 2008 (NI). This is shown by UK wide research to provide the best framework for engaging with offending behaviour and, subject to victim impact issues in serious harm cases, is the preferred model of working, (Arnull et al., 2007; Baldry et al., 2003).

Family and social supports, coupled with stable accommodation, can directly address risk factors associated with further offending. It also enables individuals to benefit from supervision and improves engagement with PBNI treatment programmes. Critically this also improves engagement with Trust and Voluntary Sector services, and programmes designed to address issues such and addictions, mental health and Learning Disabilities and assists with the pursuit of employment, (Allender et al., 2005).

Research from within Northern Ireland on these issues has been limited. PBNI, with Supporting People, will seek to commission research which will measure the impact of homelessness and lack of stable accommodation upon offending and reoffending by those subject to supervision and being managed within the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland during the period of this Strategy.
The direct link between homelessness and offending/reoffending has been evidenced by national research. Homeless ex-offenders are twice as likely to be reconvicted as those with stable accommodation, and ex-prisoners are one fifth less likely to re-offend if they have stable accommodation, (Home Office and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ‘Guide to Housing and Housing Support Options for Offenders and People at Risk of Offending’ London, 2005).

Nationally 32% of prisoners are homeless at the time of being taken into custody and a further third lose their accommodation whilst in custody. Across the United Kingdom 40% of prisoners have no stable home to return to, (Mcolv, G. & Taylor, ‘Accommodation for offenders and ex-offenders: A review of the literature’ Unpublished Report, Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling, 2000).

Those offenders in the community who are subject to community based programmes are significantly more likely to complete their programme of supervision if they live in stable accommodation, (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

By successfully addressing the accommodation needs of those under supervision, through an integrated approach with voluntary and statutory partners, PBNI staff have the opportunity to significantly impact their likelihood of reoffending and capacity to engage with licence requirements and treatment programmes. This will significantly enhance public safety and reduce the harm caused to others.

Linkages to other Strategies

The PBNI Accommodation Strategy informs and is informed by the following PBNI and Multi Agency Strategies and Policies:

- PBNI Corporate Plan (2011 - 2014)
- Significant Risk of Serious Harm Policy (PBNI)
- Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland
- Strategy for the Management of Women Offenders in Northern Ireland: 2010 - 2013 (Department of Justice, PBNI & NIPS)
- Communication Strategy (PBNI)
- Homelessness Strategy (NIHE)
- Supporting People Strategy NIHE)
- Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending 2012
- DSD Promoting Social Inclusion

Accommodation and Risk of Reoffending:

PBNI uses structured risk assessment tools with all those under supervision to identify the factors which increase risk of offending for each individual, and these factors are targeted through planned interventions. Many will score across a number of risk domains and it is often a complex combination and interaction of
issues such as homelessness, addictions, or psychological instability and mental ill health, which combine to both increase likelihood of offending and reduce the capacity of the individual to engage with supervision and treatment.

On 31 March 2012 of the offenders under supervision in the community ‘Lack of Stable or Suitable Accommodation’ was identified by their supervising officers as contributing to the offending behaviour of some 29% of the caseload.

Of the offenders in custody on 31st March 2012, who will be supervised upon release, ‘Lack of Stable or Suitable Accommodation was identified as a contributing factor in the offending and likelihood of further offending in 40% of cases.

These figures compare with national research which suggests that 23% of Adults under probation supervision are not in settled/suitable accommodation. (Communities and Local Government ‘PSA 16 (Socially Excluded Adults) qualitative research on settled accommodation’ March 2010.) and 40% of prisoners have no stable home to return to, (Mclvor, G. & Taylor)

**Strategic Partnerships:**

PBNI is not an accommodation provider. Over the years PBNI has worked closely with Statutory and Voluntary Sector partners and local Community Groups to identify and address the accommodation needs of those subject to supervision.

**Statutory Partners:**

**Northern Ireland Housing Executive**

As the principal Housing Agency in Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive is the key partner in helping to assess and address the accommodation needs of those supervised by PBNI.

The Housing Executive’s statutory duty to homeless people is contained within the Housing (NI) Order 1988. This legislation requires the Housing Executive to assess the duty owed to homelessness presenters in relation to eligibility for such services as temporary accommodation and permanent housing.

The Order also makes provision for the Housing Executive to financially assist voluntary sector organisations to provide a range of services to assist the Housing Executive in fulfilling its statutory duties. The Housing (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010, placed a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to develop and publish a 5 year homelessness strategy and to provide advice and assistance on homelessness to the broader public free of charge.

The Housing Executive’s Corporate Plan contains a range of objectives aimed at promoting independent living. Critical to this is the delivery of housing support services to vulnerable people, (including homeless people), through the Supporting People Programme.
This is the primary funding stream for Approved Premises, where offenders may be required to reside for a period to provide supported housing where behaviour can be managed and monitored in the interests of public safety and from where permanent approved accommodation can be sourced.

The vast majority of offenders supervised by PBNI are accommodated within ordinary social housing provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing Associations and the Private Rented Sector. They are capable of sustaining these tenancies.

Others are assessed as presenting a potential risk to the public and for a period may be required to reside in Approved Premises where they are closely monitored and can be subject to curfews and other restrictions such and alcohol and drug testing.

**Department of Social Development: Promoting Social Inclusion**

The PSI working group published its strategy, “A strategy to promote the social inclusion of homeless people, and those at risk of becoming homeless in Northern Ireland” in July 2007. Following this, inter agency sub-groups were formed to promote the improvement of services and access to existing services in a number of areas; Health, Employability, Leaving Institutions, Young People and staff training. The Action Plan attached to this Strategy was developed, delivered and monitored by a number of inter-agency sub-groups: Health, Education, Leaving Institutions, Young People and Staff Training.

Upon completion of the Strategy period it was agree that the DSD had a continuing role to play in encouraging interagency co-operation in relation to homelessness. This model was re-enforced in the Housing (Amendment) Act 2010. Subsequently a new Homelessness Partnership was initiated.

Over the next 5 years, it has agreed and mandated responsibility to develop and deliver an action plan for each of the key objectives of the Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland. It will also evaluate the outcomes and efficacy of any agreed actions.

Each of the key objectives:- prevention, access to affordable accommodation, ending rough sleeping and improving services to vulnerable people have relevance to PBNI in its work with offenders and reducing reoffending.

The DSD has a continuing commitment to encourage inter-agency co-operation in relation to homelessness. It will therefore provide a vehicle where joint working can be promoted and the relevant duties contained within the Housing (Amendment) Act 2010 discharged. PSI Homelessness now has two ‘summits’ a year and 4 active sub groups.
Northern Ireland Prison Service

Currently PBNI works closely with the Northern Ireland Prison Service in Offender Management Units to identify those individuals within the prison system who require assistance with accommodation upon release.

Where possible, suitable temporary accommodation is identified from where more permanent solutions can be found. Housing assessments are completed by Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff prior to release. They also participate and contribute to pre-release risk assessment meetings such as Local Area Public Protection Panels under the auspices of the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland.

Advice and guidance on accommodation are provided to offenders pre-release as part of their resettlement plan by the Housing Rights service. Additionally the health departments within the prison sector identify those with Learning Difficulties and Mental Health issues. An integrated discharge plan for those with such complex needs which addresses their need for supported housing is necessary. PBNI will work with its partners to overcome the obstacles to identifying and assessing these individuals in a timely manner and secure appropriate resources to link them to services which will help sustain their reintegration into the community and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Voluntary Sector Partners:

Approved Premises¹

Whilst the Probation Board for Northern Ireland does not own or manage accommodation for offenders, it works in close partnership with a range of voluntary and community organisations, and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, through Supporting People, to offer accommodation to some 76 offenders in 6 Approved Premises across Northern Ireland. These professionally run establishments work to Probation Approved Standards for offender management and are regulated by Supporting People. The Criminal Justice Inspectorate for Northern Ireland presently conducts planned and unannounced inspections of the Approved Premises. The Approved Premises providers have consistently been commended for making a significant contribution to the work of the Probation Board and in managing risk and protecting the public.

In 2011 there were 400 referrals made by probation officers for places in Approved Premises. Of these, 82 were on offenders seeking a bail address. The majority of referrals to the Approved Premises are for offenders being released into the community from prison. They are subject to licence conditions to reside there and these are given priority. PBNI supervises and enforces these licences until their date of expiry. Each offender is risk assessed jointly by PBNI and hostel staff and other relevant partners, including the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the

¹ Approved Premises; “Hostels which receive Supporting People funding specifically for offenders, allocate bed spaces for Criminal Justice referrals and apply PBNI standards” (CJINI definition July 2008)
agencies which compose the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI). Individual risk management plans are created and enforced for each offender for the duration of their stay. Failure to comply will lead to the offender to be returned to court or recalled to prison.

Work is undertaken with hostel residents to address the factors which have contributed to their previous offending behaviour. They are required to live positive lifestyles and engage in training and employment opportunities. Offenders are progressed towards resettlement in approved locations where they will continue to receive support to sustain them in their new accommodation and be risk managed by Probation staff working in coordination with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Police Service and other criminal justice agencies and statutory bodies such as the Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Probation Board acknowledges the work which staff in the Approved Premises undertake on behalf of the Criminal Justice Sector and in the interest of public protection. The staff have shown the highest standards of practice and resilience in dealing with many challenging and difficult circumstances.

Partners include the Extern Organisation and Presbyterian Board of Social Witness, who run 3 dedicated Approved Premises, and the Salvation Army, Edward Street and Mid Ulster and South Tyrone (MUST) who provide offender dedicated places in their Supported Housing facilities for Homeless People. Women’s Aid is also extremely helpful in accommodating women from within the Criminal Justice System who have accommodation needs.

**Floating Support**

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive provides financial support to voluntary organisations to provide support services to help offenders move on from Approved Accommodation into independent accommodation within the Greater Belfast area. It provides this support on an ongoing basis to those who have difficulty living independently to help sustain them in their tenancies. This programme is funded by Supporting People. Such support is available elsewhere in the province through a range of organisations but Probation Managers in rural teams have identified more consistent availability of such a service as a priority.

**Other Providers of Temporary Accommodation**

A range of accommodation providers across the province, such as the Simon Community, also work with local Probation Teams in providing accommodation and support for offenders under supervision.

The challenge for PBNI is to identify, secure and develop new and existing partnerships which can deliver solutions to the accommodation needs of offenders and thereby contribute to a reduction in offending.

This will require the development and agreement of protocols for data protection and in regard to shared risk. Training for provider's staff and support for these agencies if they are willing to work with a client group that is new for them?
Strategic Purpose and Outcomes:

Temporary Accommodation

Through partnership working, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Voluntary Sector accommodation providers should seek to identify and secure access to suitable temporary accommodation for all those under supervision assessed as being homeless or in unsuitable accommodation.

Subject to a victim impact assessment, such accommodation should be as close to the person’s town of origin and family and social supports as is possible.

Offenders in temporary accommodation should be case managed with partners from statutory and voluntary sector agencies to minimise the period of residence in temporary accommodation, prior to securing permanent accommodation, consistent with public safety.

Floating Support Services should be available across Northern Ireland to help sustain those offenders who struggle to live independently in the permanent accommodation secured for them.

Approved Accommodation

PBNI will seek to secure partnerships with a number of temporary accommodation providers to meet the need to have sufficient Approved Accommodation places across Northern Ireland to facilitate the safe management of offenders close to their place of origin.

PBNI will continue to contribute to a multi-agency communication strategy to help assuage community concerns about the location and operation of Approved Premises.

Housing Benefit

PBNI will liaise with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to minimise the impact upon the risk management of offenders of the change in Housing Benefit regulations which will, in 2012, raise the age threshold for the Shared Accommodation Rate from 25 to 35.

Sex Offenders

Through the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland, PBNI will continue to assess and manage sex offenders with particular focus on suitable temporary and long term accommodation.

Life Sentence Prisoners

PBNI will continue to work with the Northern Ireland Prison Service in assessing and managing the phased release of life sentence prisoners to approved temporary and permanent accommodation.
Learning Disability

Those offenders under supervision who are assessed as having a Learning Disability diagnosis which entitles them to services from the Health and Social Care Trusts will be identified and referred to ensure that they are able to access appropriate specialist accommodation and or treatment and support services to sustain them in their own accommodation in the community. PBNI Psychology Department and staff will liaise with the Trust to seek opportunities to develop a greater range of appropriate supported accommodation for Learning Disabled with forensic issues.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

PBNI will through our Psychology Department continue to work with Health and Social Care Trusts to identify those in the Criminal Justice System with a Mental Health diagnosis and Personality Disorders and work with Supporting People to develop resources to address their needs for safe and appropriate accommodation.

Young People

PBNI will continue to liaise with the Health and Social Care Trusts and NIHE to help sustain young people subject to supervision by PBNI staff on statutory orders in accommodation including those returning to the community following a period in Care or Detention.

Women Offenders

PBNI will agree a model with the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Northern Ireland Housing Executive to progress and manage the accommodation needs of women offenders with complex needs.

Foreign Nationals

PBNI will continue to liaise with statutory and voluntary sector partners to address the issue of foreign nationals sentenced by the courts to supervision in the community who are homeless and may not be eligible to benefits.

Challenges for the Probation Board:

The successful reintegration of offenders into the community provides the best solution to the reduction of further offending. Community confidence in this process is critical. PBNI, working with its Statutory, Voluntary and Community Partners, has a proven track record in assessing and managing the risk posed by offenders in the community and reducing rates of reoffending.

Gaining community confidence and even greater community participation in the support structures for offenders, is a significant challenge for the Probation Board. Circles of support for socially isolated individuals are central to their sense of
wellbeing and belonging to society and helps them sustain positive lifestyles and avoid relapse into substance misuse and other negative behaviours which increase the likelihood of reoffending.

Those who have committed sexual offences cause particular concern for the community. They can, however, be effectively managed within the Public Protection Arrangements, of which PNI is a core member, and reoffending rates with this particular client group are low. Community understanding of the extensive resources committed to these arrangements by Probation and its Criminal Justice Partners is important to the potential for increased tolerance of Approved Premises where some of these offenders may be temporarily accommodated prior to placement in approved long term residences. Without such facilities PNI’s capacity to protect the public would be significantly diminished.

PNI and partners have already developed an integrated approach in recognition of the impact of support needs around housing, substance misuse and mental health, on reoffending. In the period of this strategy we will seek to enhance this model and seek to address these issues in holistic and innovated ways.

The strategy will be further reviewed in 2014.

Roisin Muldoon
Assistant Director

28 September 2012
### Appendix 1

**Actions to Achieve Outcomes: 2011 - 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PBNI will continue to work with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Supporting People and voluntary sector partners who provide Approved Premises for the safe management of offenders in the community and expand the current model to ensure greater availability across the Northern Ireland.</td>
<td>Additional Approved bed places will be secured in the North West and South Down/Armagh.</td>
<td>An increase of 10% (8-10) approved bed spaces will be available.</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBNI will continue to contribute to a multi-agency communication strategy in relation to Approved Premises.</td>
<td>Reduced community opposition and negative press coverage of Approved Premises.</td>
<td>Increased confidence and tolerance of local communities in the operation and management of Approved Premises.</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Accommodation; Assistant Director, Risk, and Head of Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBNI will continue to work with Health and Social Care Trusts at a regional level to improve access to specialist accommodation, including that provided by the voluntary sector, for those under supervision who have Learning Disabilities, Mental Health issues, Personality Disorders and addictions.</td>
<td>Improved levels of engagement by PBNI clients with Health and Social Care Trusts treatment and support services around their Learning Disability and Mental Health needs.</td>
<td>Learning Disabled and Mentally Ill offenders subject to supervision in the community will have Care and Treatment plans, including access to supported accommodation or community based support to sustain them in their accommodation.</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Accommodation and Head of Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBNI will, with Supporting People, identify and develop new partners across Northern Ireland to ensure the availability</td>
<td>Offenders will be assisted to sustain tenancies.</td>
<td>All Rural Teams in PBNI will have access to a dedicated Floating Support Service for Offenders under</td>
<td>Assistant Director  Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBNI staff will prioritise the accommodation needs of those offenders under their supervision as a significant contributor to a reduction in reoffending</td>
<td>Staff awareness of the impact of homelessness or unsuitable accommodation on risk of reoffending will be raised and offender homelessness reduced.</td>
<td>Assistant Directors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offence Related ACE scores for accommodation amongst those under supervision in the community will be reduced.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBNI will, with Statutory and Voluntary partners, seek to help address the accommodation needs of specific offender groups including: women offenders with complex needs, Young People and Foreign Nationals.</th>
<th>Pathways to solutions for the needs of these groups will be identified and made available to staff.</th>
<th>Assistant Director, Accommodation with other relevant ADs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suitable accommodation will be available.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBNI with Supporting People will commission research on the impact of Homelessness and lack of stable accommodation upon reoffending rates in Northern Ireland</th>
<th>A suitable partner will be identified to complete this research.</th>
<th>Assistant Director, Accommodation. Info and research Department PBNI.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The research will be completed within the period of the Strategy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>