PBNI Public Perception Survey: 2012

Background
The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) was established as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), under the Probation Board (Northern Ireland) Order 1982 and the first Board was appointed in December 1982. Since 12 April 2010, when justice functions in Northern Ireland were devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Department of Justice came into existence as a new Northern Ireland Department, the Probation Board has been an executive NDPB of the Department of Justice.

On a daily basis, PBNI provide
• Assessment reports to courts to assist judges when they are sentencing offenders
• Assessment reports to assist Parole Commissioners when decisions are being made about releasing people from prison
• The supervision of offenders in the community who are required to comply with court orders or licence conditions
• Behavioural change programmes
• Oversight of community service (unpaid work)
• A Victim Information Scheme

PBNI staff also work alongside partner organisations in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors to minimise the risk of harm posed by offenders and ensure victims’ views are taken into consideration. In all the work it undertakes the Probation Board seeks to reduce offending.

In order to gauge the level of public awareness and understanding of the work of PBNI, the organisation included a number of questions in the September 2012 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey.

Omnibus Survey
The Northern Ireland Omnibus¹ Survey is carried out on a regular basis by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and is designed to provide a snapshot of the lifestyle and views of a representative sample of people of Northern Ireland.

¹ An omnibus survey is a sample survey which contains questions about a wide range of issues.
As was the case with previous omnibus surveys, the sample for the September 2012 survey consisted of a random sample of addresses selected from the Land and Property Services Agency list of private addresses. At each address, one person aged 16 or over was selected to participate in the survey. From an eligible sample of 1,920 addresses, 1,131 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 59%. Interviews were conducted between 1st September and 29th September 2012.

**Survey Results**

**Awareness of PBNI (N=1,131)**

Just over two-thirds of survey respondents (68%) had heard of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. This is a similar finding to that in the 2009 survey, when 65% of respondents had heard of the organisation.

The level of awareness was higher in Eastern Council Areas than Western Council Areas (76% compared with 58%). The level of awareness in the Belfast City Council Area was 71%. A list of the Eastern and Western council areas is included in Appendix 1.

**Awareness of PBNI Services (N=769)**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were aware of some of the services that PBNI delivers. Figure 1 below presents the level of awareness, among those who had heard of PBNI, for each of these services.

The chart shows that, at 44%, the level of awareness was lowest in terms of PBNI’s provision of a Victim Information Scheme. Awareness was highest in terms of PBNI supervising community sentences, working with offenders in prison and working as part of the multi-agency public protection arrangements.

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2 Belfast excluded.
Effectiveness of PJNI (N=769)

Respondents were asked to indicate how effective PJNI is at delivering the range of services.

Around two-fifths of respondents\(^3\) (41\%) indicated that PJNI was effective\(^4\) at delivering services, while 13\% of respondents indicated that the organisation was ineffective\(^4\).

At 29\%, a substantial number of respondents were undecided, while 16\% indicated that they did not know.

The level of effectiveness reported in this survey is similar to that in the 2009 survey, when 39\% of respondents indicated that PJNI was effective in its supervision of offenders.

Two thirds of respondents\(^3\) (66\%) indicated that they felt PJNI makes a positive contribution to local communities. One-fifth of respondents (20\%) did not think that the organisation makes a positive contribution, while a further 13\% did not know.

This is also in line with results from the 2009 survey, when 66\% felt that PJNI makes a positive contribution to local communities.

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\(^3\) Respondents who had heard of PJNI.
\(^4\) Very/Fairly
Appendix 1: List of Eastern and Western Council Areas

**Eastern Council Areas**
- Antrim
- Ards
- Ballymena
- Banbridge
- Carrickfergus
- Castlereagh
- Craigavon
- Down
- Larne
- Lisburn
- Newtownabbey
- North Down

**Western Council Areas**
- Armagh
- Ballymoney
- Coleraine
- Cookstown
- Dungannon
- Fermanagh
- Limavady
- Derry
- Magherafelt
- Moyle
- Newry
- Omagh
- Strabane

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5 Belfast excluded