



**PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

**2015 – 2020**

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio tape or in an ethnic-minority language upon request. Requests for alternative formats can be made to the Probation Board using the following contact information:

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Document Amendment History

| <b>Version Number</b> | <b>Date</b>   | <b>Description</b>   |
|-----------------------|---------------|--|
| 0.1                   | August 2014   | First draft  |
| 0.2                   | October 2014  | Second draft following internal consultation               |
| 0.3                   | January 2015  | Updated following external consultation                    |
| 0.4                   | February 2015 | Updated following Good Relations Group and SMT discussions |
| 1.0                   | 13.03.15      | Board Approved   |

## Foreword

Welcome to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) Disability Action Plan 2015-2020 which sets out how we intend to meet our statutory obligations and also how disability issues will be more effectively mainstreamed by making sure they are central to policy and decision making within PBNI.

This Disability Action Plan is a statement of the PBNI's commitment to meeting its statutory obligations to have regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

## Introduction

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life .

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a **disability action plan** setting out how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

## Commitment

PBNI is committed to the effective implementation of its disability duties and this Disability Action Plan. We will allocate the necessary resources in order to implement this plan effectively, and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

Day to day responsibility for implementation of the Action Plan lies with the Director of Probation who, through the Deputy Head of Human Resources, is

responsible for overseeing and managing the implementation of this action plan to ensure that disability duties are complied with. The Deputy Head of HR who is also the Disability Champion will keep this Disability Action Plan under review. PBNI will also put appropriate internal monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that the action plan is effectively implemented.

We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five year review of our disability action plans and submitting this review to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

### **Communication**

We will communicate this plan to staff and provide training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

A copy of this and our previous Disability Action Plan, Annual Progress Reports to the Equality Commission as well as PBNI's five year review of its Disability Plans are available on our website [www.pbni.org.uk](http://www.pbni.org.uk).

### **Consultation and Engagement**

We believe that the involvement of people with disabilities in the development of this action plan is essential to its success. To this end we have sought the views of staff and groups representing people with a disability about service delivery and employment issues. We consulted with different groups representing people with a disability and advertised the consultation of this plan through the Board's website.

PBNI is committed to involving people with disabilities in the delivery of this plan and its further development. We will ensure that this plan remains a live document and that progress is noticeable and changes apparent. To this end we will update the action plan if during the five years; we identify actions that should be incorporated into the plan as a result of our consultation with service users.

We are grateful for the time and expertise people and groups have given to the development of this plan and are thankful for all the comments received both from our own staff and from people who have taken the time to respond to our external consultation.

Any future amendments to this plan will be communicated to consultees and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

### **Alternative Formats and Publication**

If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or ethnic minority language, please contact us to discuss your requirements.

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### **The Work of the Probation Board**

The work of PBNI is often complex and multi-faceted, but can be summarised in five core elements:

1. Ensuring sentence compliance means that PBNI holds offenders to account in terms of keeping to the requirements of a court order or conditions of a licence and will take appropriate enforcement action where there is evidence of non-compliance.
2. Challenging offending means PBNI engages with offenders in order to produce positive changes in attitudes and behaviours which will impact

on and reduce their likelihood of offending in the future. This involves supporting the offender to commit to change through constructive and effective interventions.

3. Minimising harm means that PBNI contributes to community safety through the appropriate and proportionate use of constructive and restrictive measures and controls to minimise the risk of harm to others and promote the safety of victims. This work is undertaken within multi-agency risk management arrangements.
4. Promoting responsible citizenship means that PBNI supports offenders to become more responsible citizens and better integrated into the community. This work involves PBNI in enabling offenders to access appropriate services, promoting social inclusion of offenders and assisting them to make positive choices about their own behaviour.
5. Providing Support means that PBNI works to improve and safeguard the social well-being of individuals, families and communities.

The focus of all of the work undertaken by the Probation Board is to reduce offending and making communities safer. These elements are incorporated into the full range of work undertaken by PBNI staff. We recognise that we are dealing with people, and therefore we assess each individual's risks and needs to put in place a programme of work which aims to reduce their likelihood of offending in the future.

### **Public Life Positions**

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland is a Non-Departmental Public Body. Public life appointments to positions including the Board are the responsibility of the Department of Justice.

PBNI is considering how best to gather service user feedback and will seek to identify a people to represent the interests of services users, PBNI will take appropriate steps to identify disabled people to participate fully.

## **Achievements**

Below are some of the achievements delivered through PBNI's previous Disability Action Plan 2010 - 2014.

- PBNI implemented a programme of equality monitoring designed to understand the equality profile of service users including disability. This information is now used regularly as part of policy development and equality screening.
- PBNI has ensured that new PBNI offices have ground floor accessible offices for service users and staff or that suitable and accessible lifts are in operation to ensure that our premises are accessible.
- PBNI continues to work in partnership with criminal justice organisations to promote good equality practice through the Criminal Justice Equality Network CJEN.
- Under PBNI's revised Equality Scheme all policies are screened to identify if there are opportunities to promote positive attitudes and engagement in public life.
- All PBNI personnel involved in recruitment and selection receive bespoke equality training which includes awareness of steps that are permitted in law to enable the fair participation of people with disabilities in recruitment and selection procedures.
- PBNI has convened a Good Relations Group chaired by the Deputy Director of Probation and comprises of senior managers from across the organisation. This group considers PBNI's section 75 (2) responsibilities as well as disability issues.
- PBNI Induction training on Equal Opportunities has been expanded to specifically raise awareness of our disability duties under DDA.

- Bespoke disability awareness training on mental health and specific learning difficulties has been designed and delivered to staff by PBNI Psychology Department.
- PBNI publishes articles in its staff magazine 'Probation News' that raise awareness of various forms of disability including sensory, learning, physical, mental health and long-term illness.

### **Action Measures**

Outlined below are measures that PBNI proposes to take during the next five years to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.

To promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities we must remove cultural and physical barriers. We are committed to actions that will help remove the disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people. We have decided for our third disability action plan 2015 - 2020 to concentrate on a smaller number of achievable actions that will lead to tangible improvements in the lives of people with disabilities.

The PBNI Disability Action Plan 2015 - 2020 focuses on key areas to help secure improvements and changed attitudes:-

- Engagement in Public Life
- Promoting Positive Attitudes
- Communications
- Compliance

|    | Key Area                  | Action   | Dates                             | Business Area           | Performance Indicator   |
|----|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1  | Engagement in Public Life | We will actively seek engagement with disabled people as part of service user feedback.  | March 2016 & on-going             | Statistic and Research  | PBNI will receive feedback from disabled service users as part of PBNI's Service Users Survey 2015-16   |
| 2  | Engagement in Public Life | PBNI will review its Recruitment Policy with a view to ensuring that no barrier exists to prevent people with disabilities from successfully applying.   | March 2016.                       | Head of Human Resources | The Recruitment Policy reviewed and published by 31 March 2016. The review will address positive action measures in recruitment for people with disabilities.   |
| 3  | Engagement in Public Life | PBNI will request that during the recruitment of new Board members that the Department of Justice will encourage people with disabilities to apply.  | Nov 2015                          | TBC                     | Affirmative action measures will be used in the recruitment of new PBNI Board members to attract people with disabilities to apply.   |
| 4  | Positive Attitudes        | Continue to improve accessibility to PBNI's Estate.  | Year 1 - 5                        | Head of Finance         | All new premises will be accessible and DDA compliant.  |
| 5  | Positive Attitudes        | To ensure that all public facing staff receive the Department of Justice Autism Guide for Criminal Justice Professionals. Training in Autism will be delivered to staff as part of DOJ's Autism Strategy.                          | March 2016                        | Head of Psychology      | PBNI will deliver Autism Awareness Training to Operational Staff by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2016.<br><br>DOJ Guide will be made available to all staff through PBNI's IT system.   |
| 6  | Positive Attitudes        | PBNI will publicise the work of organisations that offer assistance with disability issues including assistance with travel and supported employment to assist staff and their work with service users.                            | Dec 2016                          | Head of Human Resources | To publish an article in PBNI's staff magazine about the opportunities offered from the Workable scheme during the 2015-16 business year.   |
| 7  | Communication             | Review internal/external communication practices to ensure information is accessible.  | March 2017                        | Head of Communications  | The next Communication Strategy due in 2016 will include a section that seeks to review and improve the accessibility of information.   |
| 8  | Communication             | Publish and promote the Disability Action Plan.  | June 2016                         | Head of Human Resources | The Disability Action Plan will be published electronically and circulated to all PBNI consultees and staff. This will happen in Q1 of 2015-16 business year.   |
| 9  | Communication             | As part of our communication we will publish articles about our commitment to people with disabilities in our internal magazine 'Probation News' and seek to share selected articles with external publications.                   | Yearly 2015 to 2020               | Head of Communications  | At least one article promoting positive attitudes towards disability per business year will be written and published in PBNI's staff magazine. These articles will also be offered to Disability Action to include in their publications. |
| 10 | Compliance                | The Deputy Head of Human Resources will prepare a Report for the Board on the progress of this Disability Action Plan annually. This progress report will be forwarded to the Equality Commission and published on PBNI's website. | August 2015 and yearly thereafter | Head of Human Resources | Progress Report completed and published in August 2015 and yearly thereafter.   |