



The
Prisoner
Ombudsman
for Northern Ireland

Business Plan

2020-2021



Introduction

The business plan for 2020-2021 has been delayed due to a lack of resource in the office coupled with the significant impact of Covid-19 on day to day working.

Covid-19 has not only changed ways of working and resulted in delays that would not normally be acceptable, but has also provided an opportunity to test new ways of working which even a commitment to agile working and modernisation could achieve. In fact, much of the business plan has been underway despite it not being agreed and published as our focus has been on getting the work done and that is where we have placed our sometimes limited resource.

The business plan is aligned to the Office's 4 year Strategic Plan which sets out a commitment to carrying out investigations in a way that improves prisoners' lives by addressing ourselves to our mission: developing a learning environment in which we challenge others and ourselves to achieve improvement. A commitment and mission such as this requires that process and practice are founded in a culture of collaboration, openness and readiness to change. The strategic priorities are designed to enable the change required to modernise the work of the office and support the commitment to improvement.

4 Strategic Priorities:



The business plan sets out a programme of work that will address process, practice and culture within the office and between the office and our stakeholders and partners. The outcomes will contribute to improvement.

The business plan is a live document and will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that work required to achieve our strategic priorities is both named and monitored.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: IMPROVE INVESTIGATIVE PROCESSES		Outcome 1: Timely, thorough and proportionate investigations	
Actions	Indicators	Owner	Target
Work with SIB consultants to agree and implement measures to address and reduce: 1. The backlog of complaints (up to May 2020), and 2. Complaints awaiting allocation to 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Temporary investigators recruited, trained and investigating (up to 8) ▶ Complaints up to May 2020 allocated ▶ Measures to reduce complaints awaiting investigation to 30 implemented - overtime, additional hours, temporary investigators 	Director of Ops & SIOs	March 2021
Develop and implement a proportionate and thorough approach to investigating complaints to address the backlog & reduce number of complaints awaiting allocation <i>(2021/22 gather learning from pilot when reached 30 awaiting allocation and apply to complaints investigations)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Exceptional Assessment and Investigation of Complaints Process implemented - prisoners, NIPS and other stakeholders/partners informed, all support materials in place, training delivered and underway drawn on as pilot for improvement of complaints investigations 	Ombudsman with SMT	July 2020
Recruit full complement of complaints investigators and 2 additional permanent investigators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Business case for new posts agreed ▶ All posts filled 	Director of Ops	September 2020



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: IMPROVE INVESTIGATIVE PROCESSES		Outcome 1: Timely, thorough and proportionate investigations	
Actions	Indicators	Owner	Target
Address the Death in Custody caseload to complete cases and recruit 1 additional permanent investigator	Business case for new post agreed and post filled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Complete and publish 8 post-release death investigations ▶ Complete and finalise report /or finalise to publication stage death in custody investigations ▶ Issue 4 Death in Custody investigations for factual accuracy 	Ombudsman and SIO	March 2021
Work with a consultant from SIB to better understand workflow within the office and use the knowledge to inform office structure <i>(2021/22 look at structure and workflow to improve for efficiency, resourcing etc.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Restructure admin support team 	Admin Support Manager and SIO	March 2021
Develop a communications strategy for better reporting to partners, stakeholders and public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Agreed strategy for implementation 2021/22 	Ombudsman and SMT	March 2021
Develop a digitisation strategy for technology roll out to support transparency and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Agreed strategy and plan of work for 2021/22 	Ombudsman and SMT	March 2021
Develop stakeholder engagement plan to inform stakeholders about new processes and their purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Agreed plan for implementation 2021/22 	Ombudsman and SMT	March 2021



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: SAFEGUARD AND REINFORCE INDEPENDENCE		Outcome 1: Increase confidence in the Prisoner Ombudsman's Office	
Actions	Indicators	Owner	Target
Compliance with all corporate, business planning, risk management, internal audit and other compliance & governance requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strategic & business plans published ▶ Annual report published ▶ Internal audit & actions completed ▶ GDPR requirements in place 	Director of Ops	March 2021
DPIA, ISA's etc. updated <i>(2021/22 update and action plan re file retention and disposal)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ GDPR requirements met 	Director of Ops/Office Manager	March 2021



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PREPARE FOR AND IMPLEMENT STATUTORY FOOTING (2020/21 & 2021/22)		Outcome 1: Statutory Footing Workplan	
Actions	Indicators	Owner	Target
Agree a plan of work required to ready office for statutory footing, time frame, work areas etc. <i>(2021/22 action work plan with communications strategy and any other actions required to inform stakeholders, public etc.)</i>	► Time framed workplan agreed for action by SMT	Ombudsman and SMT	March 2021



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: DEVELOP A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT PUTS EVIDENCE TO WORK		Outcome 1: Data driven evidence base	
Actions	Indicators	Owner	Target
<p>Bring information from investigations, recommendations and phone call information together to form one evidence base to drive impact</p> <p>A new approach to recording, categories recorded against etc</p> <p>Work with consultants to improve recording/ monitoring of recommendations and put in place scoping work for new Casework Management System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Robust accessible data set categorised to inform public and internal discussions and bring trends to light ▶ New set of agreed recording categories ▶ New approach to monitoring and recording recommendations 	Ombudsman and SMT	March 2021
<p>Embed the learning approach into all office working and engagements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Training plan ▶ Learning circle approach in place with NIPS & SET ▶ Stakeholder engagements planned for 2021/22 for collaborative learning in conjunction with stakeholder engagement ▶ Strategy for presentation of information using technology agreed for action 2021/22 	Dir of Ops & SMT	March 2021