An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh
The Probation Service

Strategy Statement 2021-2023

Probation Works for Community Safety

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Foreword by Director

I am pleased to present the Probation Service's new Statement of Strategy 2021-2023. Our vision is for *'safer and more inclusive communities where offending and its causes are effectively addressed.'* In this plan we set out five priority areas and associated key strategic goals necessary to realise this.

This Strategy sets out an ambitious agenda for us over the next three years and builds on the Service's significant achievements to date. It has been prepared in the context of the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future and it sets out a number of strategic goals that will position the Probation Service to play our full role in the Department of Justice Strategy 2021-2023 and the inaugural Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy 2021-2023.

The effective supervision of individuals subject to community sanctions is the cornerstone of the work that we do and the Probation Service is continually developing and improving its systems, processes and practices in line with new evidence and research. To this end, a particular commitment over the course of this strategy is the implementation of the Irish Offender Supervision Framework (IOSF), a bespoke model of probation practice, that is evidence informed and underpinned by research. This new practice model will underpin and strengthen our work and enable us to further develop as an organisation, to ensure that we operate as effectively and professionally as we can. Implementation of the IOSF will ensure that our work is effective, consistent and accountable, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for service users and safer communities.

Aligned to this, the Strategy places an emphasis on quality assurance and an outcome focussed approach to our work. This will allow us to systematically gather, analyse and evaluate data to inform ongoing practice and policy decisions.

The Probation Service continues to prioritise multi-agency collaboration and this Strategy emphasises a number of goals focusing on strengthening partnership working with our criminal justice partners, other statutory organisations and the community and voluntary sectors.

Covid-19 has transformed the way that we work and it has required us to rapidly respond and change the way that we deliver services to our stakeholders, particularly our service users. The response to Covid-19 has highlighted the resourcefulness and commitment of our staff and it has demonstrated the high level of ingenuity and innovation within our organisation. Whilst Covid-19 has been a disruptive force in our lives, we will use this disruption as a catalyst to harness a permanent culture of innovation where staff, in each of their roles, are empowered and equipped to innovate. In this quest we will embrace new ICT capabilities and maximise their use to modernise how we communicate and how we deliver our services. This will be supported through a more robust and modern technological structure, establishing a more data driven, accountable and outcomes based service.

This Strategy sets out our ambition for a Probation Service that is effective, collaborative and innovative in how it engages with service users, staff, communities and stakeholders. We will provide robust alternatives to custody, promote desistance from crime, and reduce re-offending and victimisation. The strategic priorities outlined in the plan enable the Probation Service to grow capability in a broad range of areas that will support us in facing the inevitable challenges ahead.

Bringing our Strategy to fruition will require a collective effort from the whole of our organisation as well as our key stakeholders. Of critical importance will be the key role that our staff play successfully achieving these objectives. We have a cohort of skilled probation officers, who on a daily basis apply sound, professional judgement in delivering a valuable service to all of our stakeholders.

The Strategy Statement is complemented by a Workplan which provides more detail on each of our strategic goals, along with setting out our programme of work over the next three years. Our Workplan will ensure the effective oversight, monitoring and implementation of our High Level Goals in achieving our outcomes of safer communities, strengthened collaboration and engagement with our key stakeholders, promotion of inclusion, empowerment of our team, and the modernisation of our Service.

While this Strategy will be implemented in a complex and changing environment, I am confident that we can achieve our objectives through continued close alignment with the Department, our critical partners and through the dedication and commitment of our excellent staff.

Mark Wilson
Director

Mark Wilson
Director

"This Strategy sets out our ambition for a Probation Service that is effective, collaborative and innovative in how it engages with service users, staff, communities and stakeholders."

The Work of the Probation Service

The Probation Service has a national remit, with staff located throughout the country, providing a service to courts, custodial institutions and communities. The key role of the Probation Service is to provide effective interventions, with individuals subject to community sanctions, to reduce the risks associated with offending and to support their rehabilitation and reintegration.

The aim of the Service is to reduce offending and victimisation, resulting in safer communities. In achieving this goal the Probation Service works collaboratively with our justice partners, statutory partners, and alongside wider stakeholders in the community and voluntary sector.

Our work incorporates:

Providing reports to assist the courts in sentencing.

Supervising those subject to community sanctions.

Providing professional, effective and evidenced based interventions.

Working with partner organisations to provide targeted responses to crime and associated risks, particularly with the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service.

Addressing the harm caused from offending behaviours.

Working with victims of crime through our Restorative Justice & Victims Unit.

Working with prisoners in custody and through the transition to community supervision.

All of our staff, carrying out these roles, are professionally trained with specific expertise in assessing and managing risk and in intervening effectively to enable and support sustained desistance from offending.

Probation staff utilise a range programmes and interventions that are evidence informed and supported by research.

Mission, Vision & Guiding Principles

Our Vision:
Safer and more inclusive communities where offending, and its causes, are effectively addressed.

Our Mission:
To provide services to the courts and wider criminal justice system through the delivery of effective community sanctions.

Our Guiding Principles:

- Professional & Accountable
- Transparency & Openness
- Respect & Integrity
- Collaboration & Partnership
- Innovation & Creativity
- Evidence Informed & Data Driven

Our Fundamental Principles:

The European Probation Rules and the Public Sector Duty emphasise the importance of human rights and equality. These principles are core to the work carried out by the Probation Service and are reflected within the Service's Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles.

Our Operating Environment

The Probation Service, as an agency of the Department of Justice, is an integral part of the broader Criminal Justice System. The Probation Service provides a unique contribution through the management and rehabilitation of people referred to the Service, by the courts or on release from custody. Our work is shaped and informed through collaboration with a range of strategically aligned organisations from statutory, voluntary and community settings. It is through this partnership approach that we aim to achieve our vision of 'safer and more inclusive communities where offending and its causes, are effectively addressed'.

Our plan sets the strategic direction for the Probation Service over the next three years. Our priorities and goals are closely aligned to those expressed in the Department of Justice Strategy 2021-2023, the inaugural Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy 2021-2023 and other relevant high level strategies. We will continue to prioritise partnership working across the criminal justice sector in order to achieve our shared goals and to help realise a more joined up cohesive criminal justice system.

In addition, we are committed to strengthening our strategic alliances within the broader statutory sector and the voluntary and community sectors to ensure a collective response to our shared goals and responsibilities.

The Probation Service works within a legislative framework which places obligations and responsibilities on how we carry out our work (see Appendix 2 for list of relevant legislation).

Of particular relevance is our obligations under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. Section 42 of that Act establishes a positive duty on public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of all those with whom they engage. This incorporates our staff, service users and those with whom we engage with through our work. These obligations are consistent with our Guiding Principles and our commitment to meeting them is reflected in our strategic goals.

We are conscious that through the lifetime of this Strategy our operating environment may change which may require us to adapt and re-prioritise, without losing sight of our key goals and responsibilities. Our associated supporting actions will be monitored and reported on through the appropriate mechanisms. This will support us in maintaining focus and monitoring our progress over the course of the Strategy.

Developing our Strategy

This Strategy Statement was developed following an extensive consultation process involving our staff, service users, the public and a wide range of stakeholders. The process commenced in November 2020 and ran for a period of four months. Covid-19 changed the usual means of communicating with our stakeholders and we adapted by using innovative methods, such as social media platforms and on-line surveys to seek the opinions of our stakeholders. Notwithstanding these challenges we received valuable and insightful contributions which have helped to inform the development of the Strategy.

How we consulted with our stakeholders:

Issued invitations for written submissions to over 50 key stakeholders including our partners across the wider justice sector, academia and government departments and agencies.

Issued on-line surveys to all of our staff.

Invited written submissions combined with on-line surveys to all of our community based funded projects.

Carried out a public consultation process via the Probation Service website and social media platforms.

Issued survey based questionnaires to service users based in the community and within the prison setting.

Facilitated an online forum with a group of service users.

The Probation Service would like to thank all our staff, service users and stakeholders for taking the time to provide their valuable contributions and submissions to the development of this Strategy.

Our Strategic Pillars

Our Strategic Plan sets out five key pillars that embody the strategic focus of the Service over the next 3 years.

Aligned to each strategic pillar are a number of interconnected goals.

These goals will serve to map our programme of work and drive the operational activities that we will need to progress in our annual work plans.

2 Strengthening Collaboration and Engagement
3 Promoting Inclusion
1 Enhancing Community Safety
5 Modernising Our Approach
4 Empowering Our Team

Pillar 1:
Enhancing Community Safety

We will enhance community safety by reducing the level of crime and victimisation in our communities through the implementation of high quality supervised community sanctions.*

Probation staff engage with individuals subject to community sanctions, including those subject to Probation supervision on release from prison and places of detention. We support and motivate them to make positive changes in their lives in addition to addressing the harm caused from their offending behaviour. Through a detailed assessment process we identify criminogenic risk factors and needs. This informs both reports provided to the Courts as part of the sentencing process, in addition to the development of an individual targeted case management plan. As part of this case management plan process we address the presenting risk areas through a range of evidenced based interventions and targeted programmes.

Our active engagement and collaboration with a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations facilitates a more holistic and systematic response to addressing the risks associated with offending behaviour, in addition to providing opportunities to desist from crime.

GOALS

1.

We will provide assessments and implement supervised community sanctions to the highest standard.

2.

We will expand and develop the range and availability of community sanctions that are fair, purposeful and proportionate.

3.

We will align and strengthen our multi-agency and collaborative work processes, prioritising high impact offending.

4.

We will support desistance and successful re-settlement after custody.

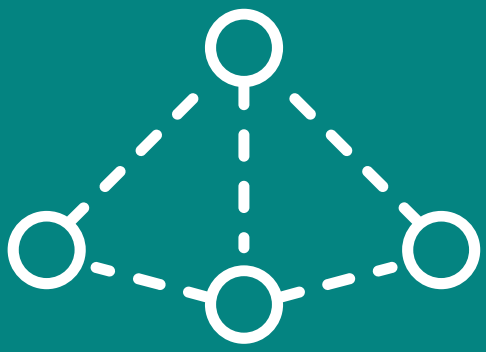
*__Community sanctions__ means sanctions and measures which maintain offenders in the community and involve some restrictions on their liberty through the imposition of conditions and/or obligations.

The term designates any sanction imposed by a judicial or administrative authority, and any measure taken before or instead of a decision on a sanction, as well as ways of enforcing a sentence of imprisonment outside a prison establishment.

Council of Europe Probation Rules 2010.

Pillar 2:
Strengthening Collaboration and Engagement

We will work to address the complex issues impacting criminal justice, in cooperation with our criminal justice partners, the broader statutory sector and voluntary and community organisations.



The work of the Probation Service is often difficult and complex and cannot be carried out in isolation. With this in mind, we place a strong emphasis on working closely with our broader criminal justice partners and in particular with the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service. Working collaboratively, and strengthening multi-agency approaches to further improve outcomes in our shared objectives, remain a key priority for the Service. We also recognise the unique contribution the voluntary and community sectors play in supporting desistance from offending and enhancing community safety. We will continue to build and further develop our partnerships with key stakeholders in order to achieve our shared goals.

GOALS

1.

We will align our work with the implementation of the Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy 2021-2023 to strengthen collaboration and deliver better outcomes for the people we supervise, victims and communities.

2.

We will work creatively to challenge stigmatisation and reduce barriers to participation in society, promoting desistance, social inclusion and citizenship.

3.

We will enhance our work through our community based organisations delivering best practice, innovation, and measurable outcomes.

4.

We will strengthen collaboration with our European and international probation and criminal justice partners sharing knowledge, experience and evidence based practice for our mutual benefit.

Pillar 3:
Promoting Inclusion

We will further strengthen an organisational culture that recognises and supports diversity, integration and human rights; which is reflected in all aspects of Probation Service policy and practice.

The Probation Service strives to be a more inclusive organisation. We aim to the deliver fair and accessible services to all who come into contact with the Service. We see it as our duty to identify and help remove barriers that may prevent reintegration, rehabilitation and access to opportunities, allowing for full positive participation in society.

GOALS

1.

We will respond to the specific needs of the people supervised by the Service, recognising and acknowledging diversity.

2.

We will fully embrace our responsibilities under the Public Sector Duty - Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

3.

We will work to optimise life opportunities for those engaged with the Service, enabling their positive participation in society.

4.

We will create opportunities for people supervised by the Service to participate in the work of the Service.

Pillar 4:
Empowering Our Team

We will invest in our team to promote innovation, learning and well-being, empowering our staff to deliver a high quality, professional service.

Core to the success of this strategy is the investment in our staff, each of whom play a vital role in the delivery of a high quality, professional service. We will develop our staff to ensure they are trained and skilled to carry out their roles effectively. We will create an environment to support the wellbeing of our staff and the development of their professional practice, supporting creativity and innovation in how we carry out our work.

GOALS

1.

We will further develop professional practice throughout the Service, ensuring our approach is grounded in evidence, is effective and is consistently implemented.

2.

We will support new ways of working within a changing environment.

3.

We will promote a culture that encourages innovation and staff participation across the organisation.

4.

We will prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, responding to changes in the environment.

Pillar 5:
Modernising Our Approach

We will further develop the Service to attain the highest standards of organisational performance and governance.

The Probation Service has well established structures to ensure oversight, governance, transparency and accountability for the work we undertake. We will embrace new ICT capabilities and maximise their use to modernise how we communicate and how we deliver our services, with a focus on metrics and outcomes to inform the future direction of the service. We will endeavour to adapt to changing circumstances in a flexible, proactive and creative manner.

GOALS

1.

We will harness data as an enabler, identifying and using key data sets to inform policy, decision making and research, both internally and within the broader criminal justice system.

2.

We will implement a comprehensive communication strategy, to create a greater understanding of community sanctions.

3.

We will increase the use of technology to modernise how we deliver the Service.

4.

We will further enhance our governance structures to ensure the highest standards of organisational performance, accountability and transparency.

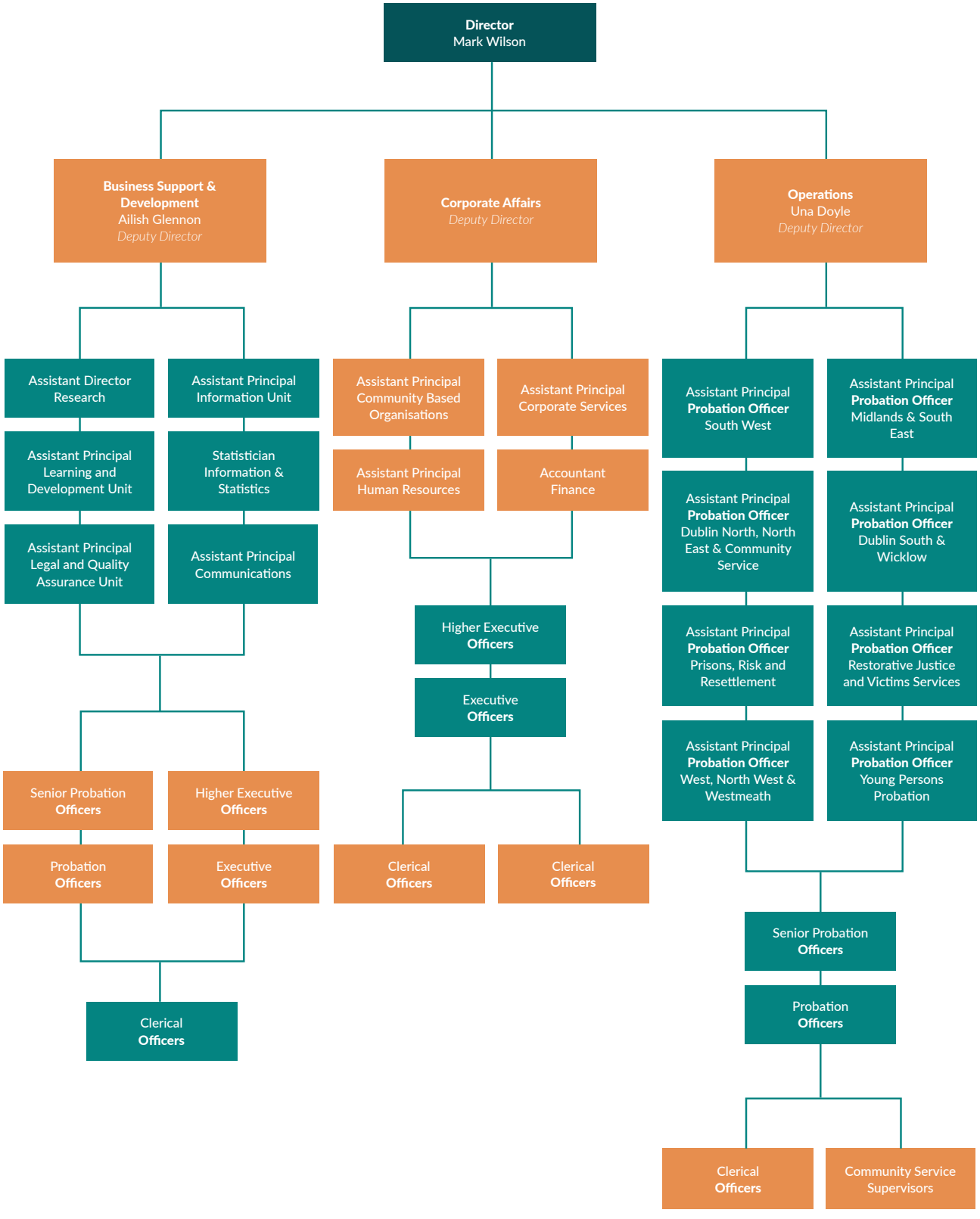
5.

We will drive climate action and sustainability across the Service.

Appendices

1. Organisational Chart
2. Legislative & Regulatory Framework

Appendix 1:
Organisational Chart



Appendix 2

Legislative & Regulatory Framework
The work of the Probation Service is an integral part of the criminal justice response to those who commit offences and is defined and imposed by law. The Probation of Offenders Act (1907) provides for statutory supervision in the community and is the foundation for probation work in Ireland. This Act is augmented by other legislation, with the most relevant outlined below:

Probation
- Probation of Offenders Act 1907
- Criminal Justice (Administration) Act 1914

Community Service
- Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act 1983 (as amended)
- Criminal Justice (Community Service) (Amendment) Act 2011

Temporary Release (supervised)
- Criminal Justice Act 1960 (as amended)
- Criminal Justice (Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act 2003

Prisoners
- Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act, 1995
- Transfer of Sentenced Persons (Amendment) Act, 1997

Suspended Sentences (supervised)
- Criminal Justice Act 2006
- Criminal Justice (Suspended Sentences of Imprisonment) Act 2017

Children YPP
- Children Act 2001 (as amended)

Sex Offenders
- Sex Offenders Act 2001
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017

Misuse of Drugs
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 (as amended)

Fine default alternatives
- Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014

Spent convictions
- Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016
- Section 258 of the Children Act 2001

Data Protection
- Freedom of Information Act 1997 and Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003
- Data Protection Act 1988

Note: Full text of all legislation can be accessed at http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/

In addition to the legislation probation practice is guided by National and International Rules and Recommendations:

- Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Probation Rules
- Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)3 on the European Rules on community sanctions and measures
- Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)11 on the European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions or measure
- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (The Tokyo Rules) 1990
- United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) 2010
- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules) 1985
- CORU Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers (2010)
- Victims Charter https://www.victimscharter.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Victims-Charter-22042020.pdf
- Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (Victim Rights Directive)
- Council of Europe Guidelines regarding recruitment, selection, education, training and professional development of prison and probation staff (2019)
- Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)8 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning restorative justice in criminal matters
- Council of Europe Guidelines for prison and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism (2016).

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