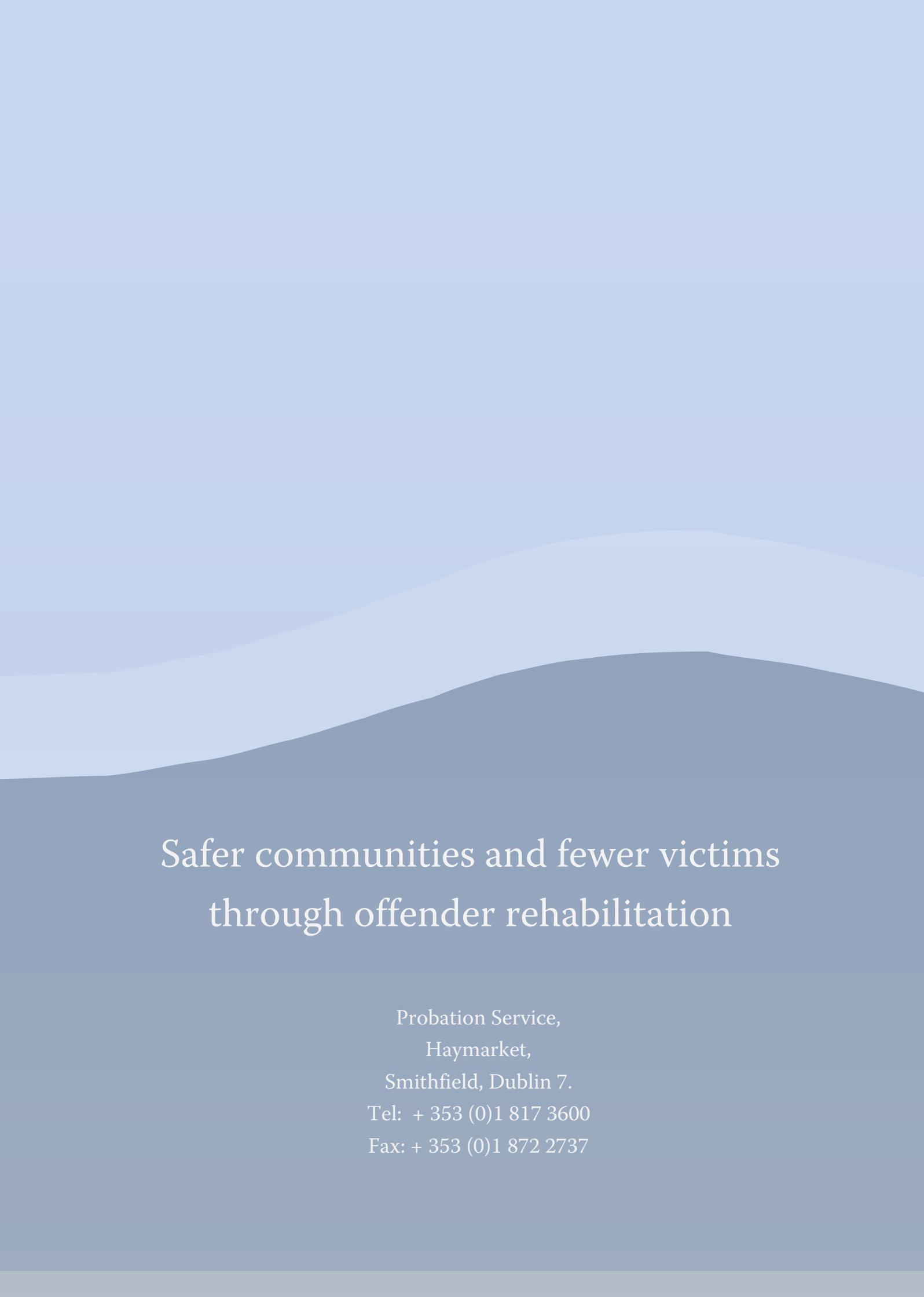


Lasting Change through Offender Rehabilitation

Probation Service Strategy 2015 – 2017





Safer communities and fewer victims through offender rehabilitation

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Probation Service Strategy Statement 2015-2017. This strategy sets out our strategic direction for the period 2015 up to 2017, identifying and highlighting Probation Service priorities and providing a high level framework for our annual work plans, mapping our strategies to our main operational activities. We have set out what we want to achieve and how we as an organisation intend to deliver our goals. This will be further developed through our annual work plans, which we will report on our progress each year in our published Annual Reports.



Rehabilitating offenders to achieve and maintain positive change is at the core of our work. We believe that offenders can change their behaviour and through rigorous assessment and effective case management we can help them to achieve their potential as law abiding citizens. We also believe that offenders must accept personal responsibility for their behaviour and where possible make good the harm they do. Equally, we are committed to respecting the rights of victims of crime in all our work with offenders.

Our new strategy builds on our achievements to date with an agenda that is committed to the further development of a professional service, effective in reducing the risk of re-offending, bench-marked against best international probation practice and one in which our stakeholders are confident.

Through collaborative working we will take on board the recommendations of the recently published Strategic Review of Penal Policy which sets out a roadmap for the development of a just, proportionate, humane and effective penal system. Over the period of this Strategy we will continue to work in collaboration with our statutory, community and voluntary partners, to further improve outcomes in our shared objective, to help create a safer and fairer Ireland. We will also take forward an ambitious programme of work while continually, reviewing and updating our systems and structures to ensure we are as efficient and effective as possible. This will be supported by the implementation of a framework of professional standards which will strengthen professional practice and accountability at all levels in the Service.

This is an exciting time for the Probation Service, a time when there are opportunities for further growth and development. I believe this strategy sets out a clear vision and has the potential to make a significant contribution to increasing public confidence in criminal justice and assisting to build a fair, just and safer community.

Finally, I want to thank all those who have brought our Strategy to this stage of development and I look forward to working with all our stakeholders in its implementation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vivian Geiran".

Vivian Geiran

Director

February 2015

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THE WORK OF THE PROBATION SERVICE

The Probation Service is an agency of the Department of Justice and Equality, committed to helping to achieve the high level objectives and policy goals of the Department in working for safer communities and fewer victims through offender rehabilitation. The Service works closely with a wide range of statutory and community and voluntary organisation, delivering services on an interagency basis. Our role is to contribute to public safety by the management of community sanctions and measures (statutory function), the effective assessment and management of offenders and by facilitating the re-integration of ex-offenders.

Probation Service helps to achieve a safer and fairer Ireland by:

- Ensuring Court orders are implemented,
- Reducing risk of harm to the public,
- Reducing likelihood of reoffending, and
- Making good the harm done by crime (reparation and restorative justice)

The work of the Probation Service broadly falls into two categories, (1) offender assessment and (2) offender supervision and management. Probation Officers provide offender assessment reports to Court and to the Department of Justice and Equality, the Irish Prison Service, the Parole Board and other appropriate bodies as required. The Service also supervises and manages offenders in the community on behalf of the Courts and the Department of Justice and Equality.

The principal areas in which the Probation Service delivers services are:

- Offender Supervision and Sentence Management;
- Community Service and Community Return;
- Young Persons Probation (YPP);
- Community Partner Initiatives, (including Community Based Organisations in receipt of funding).

EACH YEAR:

OVER **10,000** PROBATION SERVICE ASSESSMENT REPORTS ARE COMPLETED.

OVER **15,000** OFFENDERS ARE DEALT WITH IN THE COMMUNITY.

ON AVERAGE **385,667** HOURS OF UNPAID WORK FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY ARE PERFORMED BY COMMUNITY SERVICE PARTICIPANTS, REPLACING -

1,021 ALTERNATIVE SENTENCE YEARS WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN SERVED.

AND:

60% OF OFFENDERS DID NOT REOFFEND FOR UP TO THREE YEARS AFTER A PERIOD OF PROBATION SUPERVISION.

OUR VISION, MISSION & VALUES:

LASTING CHANGE THROUGH OFFENDER REHABILITATION

Our Vision:

Safer communities and fewer victims through offender rehabilitation

Our Mission:

Offender rehabilitation through respect, accountability, restoration and social inclusion

WE WILL WORK TOWARDS CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES BY:

REDUCING RISK OF HARM

REDUCING RISK OF REOFFENDING

MAKING GOOD THE HARM DONE BY CRIME

MANAGING COURT ORDERS EFFECTIVELY

IN CARRYING OUT THEIR WORK ALL STAFF OF THE SERVICE WILL DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING VALUES:



OUR OPERATING ENVIRONMENT:

The Probation Service manages orders of the Criminal Courts, through the supervision of offenders in the community. Our primary goal is the maintenance of public safety through the rehabilitation and reduction in offending of those in our care. We are a national service delivered locally, providing a service to Courts, custodial institutions and communities across the country. Our dedicated staff have a specific expertise in intervening with offenders and in assessing and managing risk. We work to ensure that Probation Officers are as skilled and informed as possible in their work with offenders. Probation practice is delivered, informed and underpinned by social work practice.

The Probation Service, as an integral part of the justice system, has a significant contribution to make to the Department of Justice and Equality's intent to build a coherent, strategic approach to reducing offending. As an agency of the Department of Justice and Equality, we remain committed to continuing our modernisation and delivering a range of effective sanctions for the Courts and the community at large.

We continue to support the Department in the implementation of the relevant elements of the Government's Programme for National Recovery, 2011–2016 in addition to supporting the *Programme for Change* arising from the Independent Review of the Department of Justice and Equality (July 2014) with particular regard to strengthening our:

- Leadership and management capability
- Openness and transparency across our business processes and structures
- Governance and accountability

- Cross-functional and joint agency collaboration
- Commitments to public service

The Service recognise that the 'Programme for Change' will be a key driver of strategy in the period ahead. In view of the scale of the transformation involved, this Strategy may be subject to review as the 'Programme for Change' is implemented.

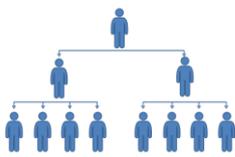
It is essential to good offender focused interventions that both criminal justice and non-criminal justice agencies encourage the development of a multi-agency problem-solving approach by focusing on offenders. The Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service in our combined efforts to address the cycles of sustained offending behaviour, have come together to develop and deliver joint responses to this work – an approach to which both organisations remain committed. Similarly, we are developing stronger and more co-ordinated partnerships with An Garda Síochána.

The Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill 2014, when enacted, and the publication of the Strategic Review of Penal Policy (September 2014) have the potential to shape the strategic development of penal policy in Ireland for years to come. The value placed on community sanctions as an integral part of the criminal justice system strengthens our position and will allow the Probation Service to play a key role within the criminal justice system in the coming years.

WE WILL CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES AND REDUCE RE-OFFENDING BY DELIVERING ON THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC GOALS:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <p>PROMOTION AND DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY SANCTIONS AND OFFENDER REHABILITATION:</p> <p>We will build on our existing high standard of practice, focussed on innovation and on-going development in the expansion and delivery of community sanctions and offender rehabilitation.</p> |
| 2 | <p>STRENGTHEN OUR SERVICE TO THE COURTS:</p> <p>We will further develop and strengthen our service to the Courts, ensuring community sanctions remain a viable and relevant disposal.</p> |
| 3 | <p>COLLABORATION WITH OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE PARTNERS:</p> <p>We will strengthen our collaborative arrangements, seeking out and developing new ways of working with our criminal justice partners.</p> |
| 4 | <p>DEVELOPING A MORE VICTIM-SENSITIVE RESPONSE:</p> <p>We will ensure a victim sensitive approach in all our work with offenders, recognising the harm caused for victims.</p> |
| 5 | <p>ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY:</p> <p>We will proactively engage with the Community in promoting and delivering community sanctions.</p> |

ACHIEVING OUR GOALS WILL BE SUPPORTED BY:

PEOPLE AND STRUCTURES	PROCESSES:	GOVERNANCE:
<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening our capabilities and skills, particularly of leadership and professional practice • Better alignment of structures and staff deployment for the evolving strategy • A well resourced and positive working environment that is inclusive and embraces diversity • An increase in flexibility, efficiency and innovation, building on the Public Service Reform Agenda 	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better management, integration and use of data and information processing systems • Deployment of leading edge technologies and improved business processes to facilitate and drive excellent performance and delivery • Shared service and expertise across partner organisations • Effective internal and external engagement, communications and networks 	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency • Improved performance evaluation and outcome measurement • Internal controls on expenditure • Business Planning • Standards of professional practice and business behaviour • Risk management

1

PROMOTION AND DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY SANCTIONS AND OFFENDER REHABILITATION:

We will build on our existing high standard of practice, focussed on innovation and on-going development in the expansion and delivery of community sanctions and offender rehabilitation.

Probation staff engage with individual offenders, and establish a professional relationship with them, aimed at motivating and helping them to make positive changes in their lives, so as to avoid further offending. We also hold offenders to account for their behaviour and challenge any behaviours or attitudes that might signal a return to offending ways. We achieve our goals through a range of innovative interventions and targeted programmes, benchmarked against best international practice. We provide probation supervision, community service, community return, offending behaviour programmes and specialist support services, to both adult and young offenders. We also work in prisons and places of detention to rehabilitate offenders and facilitate re-integration.

ACTIONS:

- 1 Further develop innovative community sanctions and other interventions, particularly those that address the underlying causes of offending.
- 2 Implement community based gender-specific approaches to working with women who offend.
- 3 Implement the Probation Service Offender Programme Strategy, to support staff in the delivery of evidence based effective interventions with offenders.
- 4 Implement a programme of professional standards and inspection to support and strengthen professional practice and accountability at all levels in the organisation.
- 5 Develop better ways to engage with service users to inform probation practice.
- 6 Generate a research programme, annually, to inform our practice, collaborating with our stakeholders as well as incorporating staff and academic expertise.
- 7 Engage with legislators, policy makers and partners to influence strategic direction and policy formulation, particularly those relating to community sanctions, both nationally and internationally.

2

STRENGTHEN OUR SERVICE TO THE COURTS:

We will further develop and strengthen our service to the Courts, ensuring community sanctions remain a viable and relevant disposal.

The Probation Service provides a range of high quality assessment reports to assist the Courts, at all levels, nationwide in their decision-making functions. These reports provide a thorough assessment of the offender and promote where appropriate the use of a range of community sanctions and measures. To ensure that supervised community sanctions remain a viable option for the Court, it is imperative that the Probation Service remains relevant to the Judiciary and the Court Service, by responding to the presenting issues and concerns of the Courts. The Service remains committed to providing appropriate high quality assessment reports, in addition to expanding the range of reports available.

ACTIONS:

- 1 Continue to provide a range of timely and high quality assessments for Courts nationwide.
- 2 Explore the requirements of the Judiciary and the Courts for future provision of assessments.
- 3 Implement a communication strategy to engage with the Judiciary in the promotion, delivery and review of supervised community sanctions, both as a diversionary measure and an alternative to imprisonment.
- 4 Develop the electronic exchange of information for the efficient management of assessments, Court Orders and outcomes.
- 5 Review existing systems and structures for managing Community Service to ensure readiness for the implementation of the Fines (Payments and Recovery) Act 2014.

3

COLLABORATION WITH OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE PARTNERS:

We will strengthen our collaborative arrangements, seeking out and developing new ways of working with our criminal justice partners.

All of us who work in the Criminal Justice System share the goal of helping to create a safer and a fairer Ireland. While each organisation and agency within the Criminal Justice System brings its own unique contribution to the process, we multiply what each of us bring to the table when our energies are combined in a focused way. Interagency co-operation with our Justice partners, particularly the Courts, the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Youth Justice Service, and the Parole Board, is central to everything we do.

ACTIONS:

- 1 Promote interagency co-operation with our Justice partners, particularly the Courts, the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Youth Justice Service, and the Parole Board.
- 2 Continue to deliver on our high level goals contained in the Joint Irish Prison Service/ Probation Service Strategy 2013-2015, with a commitment to developing a second strategy in 2016.
- 3 Further develop and expand the innovative and successful Community Return Scheme, promoting the use of cost effective community-based alternatives to imprisonment.
- 4 Continue to implement the recommendations of the Joint Irish Prison Service / Probation Service Strategy: An Effective Response to Women who Offend (March 2014)
- 5 Further develop and extend post-release supervision arrangements to facilitate offender reintegration and resettlement.
- 6 Develop a joint agency approach to the management of prolific offenders in collaboration with An Garda Síochána and the Irish Prison Service.
- 7 Work with partner organisations in the justice and health sectors to better address the issues of substance misuse and mental health among the offender population.
- 8 Expand our ICT capacity and increase efficiencies by creating common systems with our Criminal Justice Partners to improve how data is collected, managed and shared.
- 9 Continue to collaborate with our partner agencies on our joint commitments in relation to the further development of Recidivism Studies.

4

DEVELOPING A MORE VICTIM-SENSITIVE RESPONSE:

We will ensure a victim-sensitive approach in all our work with offenders, recognising the harm caused in developing our response.

Victim concerns are central to our engagement with offenders – in pre-sentence reports, individual supervision plans, group work programmes and in all risk management work. In our work with offenders we incorporate measures to increase victim awareness and empathy, as well as offender accountability. This work includes specific elements of reparation and restoration such as Community Service, victim impact assessment reports completed for Courts, as well as restorative practice interventions including family conferences, victim-offender mediation and community-based restorative panels. The Probation Service remains committed to work to ensure fewer victims through offender rehabilitation as outlined in the Victims Charter (Victims Charter and Guide to the Criminal Justice System 2010).

ACTIONS:

- 1 Commit to full implementation of the EU Directive, establishing minimum standards on the rights, supports and protection of victims of crime.
- 2 Promote and further develop our National Victim Services Team to deliver a comprehensive information and support service for victims nationwide.
- 4 Continue to incorporate measures to increase victim awareness and empathy and offender accountability across all areas of work.
- 5 Deliver a victim offender mediation service, directly by the Service.
- 6 Implement the Probation Service Restorative Justice Strategy.
- 7 Work with our national and international partners in contributing to policy and practice development in relation to victim services.

5

ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY:

We will proactively engage with the Community in promoting and delivering supervised community sanctions.

Many offenders under the supervision of the Probation Service have complex needs such as alcohol or drug problems, literacy skills, and social skills. These offenders require a broad range of support and assistance in the community if they are to make better choices for themselves and their communities. Specialised initiatives and support services are also delivered by community-based providers such as restorative justice, mentoring and sex offender programmes. The Probation Service provides funding and support to community based organisations to develop and deliver services in communities, which enhance the work of the Probation Service in changing offending behaviour.

The Probation Service recognises and acknowledges the important role that the community plays in working with offenders, supporting their rehabilitation, re-integration and engagement in a positive lifestyle. Providing opportunities for community members to engage with us is an important feature of our work. This includes creating opportunities for volunteering and the provision of community service placements.

ACTIONS:

- 1 Support and work with our partnership network of community-based organisations to deliver on our strategic goals.
- 2 Expand our network of locally-managed community service projects and hosts in key locations nationwide.
- 3 Create opportunities for citizens to become more involved in the on-going development and delivery of services, acknowledging the diversity of our communities and where appropriate providing opportunities to facilitate the input of service users and particularly the 'voice of the child'.
- 4 Explore opportunities for ex-offenders to become involved in the delivery of services, including an expansion of mentoring and volunteering initiatives.
- 5 Engage with local communities and their representatives on relevant fora towards the promotion of safer and fairer communities.
- 6 Engage with other government departments, agencies and the voluntary sector in managing offenders and providing for their rehabilitation.



An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh
The Probation Service

APPENDICES

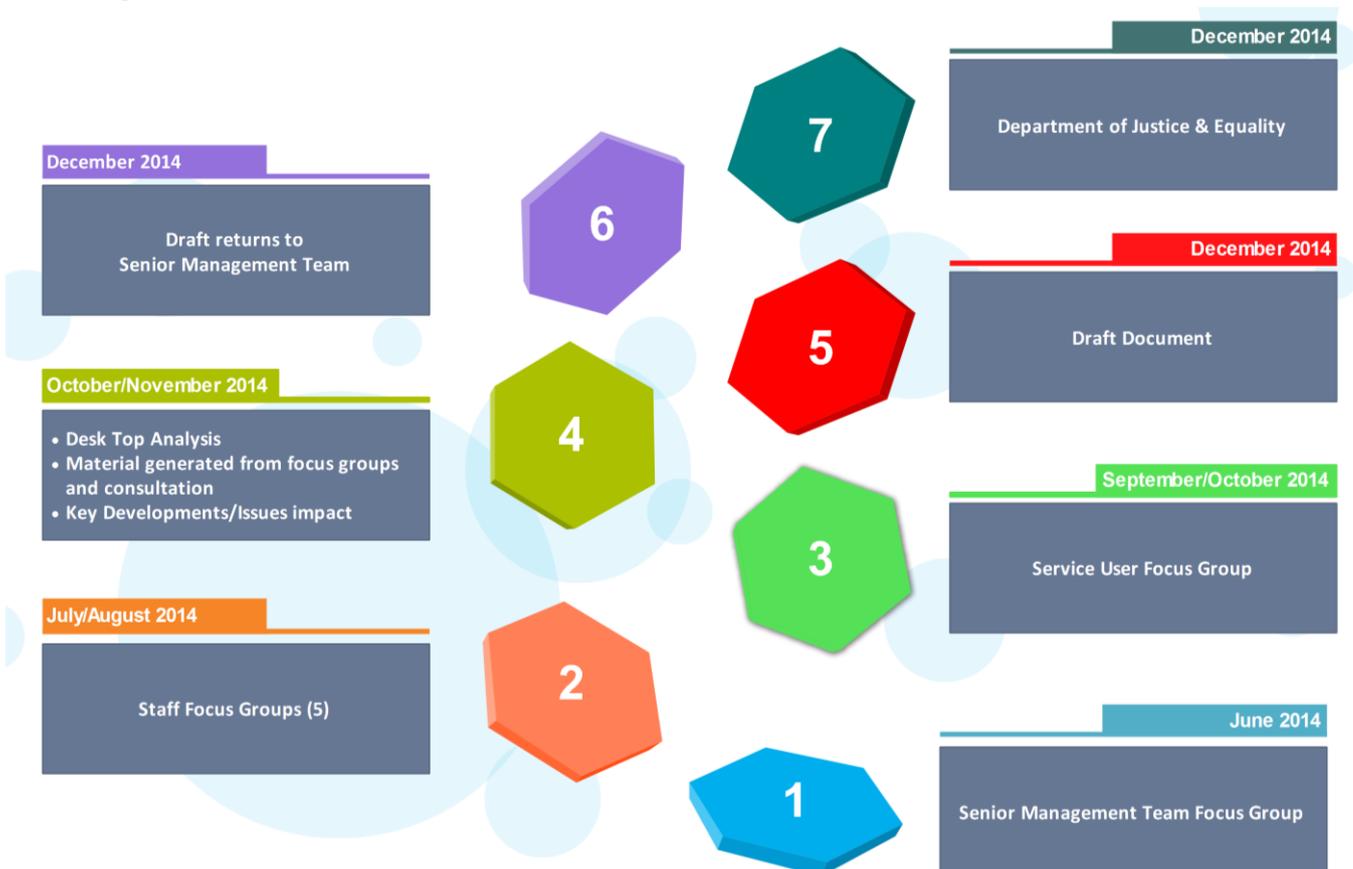
APPENDIX 1: GENERATING OUR STRATEGY

Our strategy builds on our achievements to date with an agenda that remains committed to the further development of a professional service, effective in reducing the risk of re-offending, bench marked against best international probation practice and one in which our stakeholders are confident.

The consultation process has been vital to the development of this strategy and in ensuring its relevance to service users, staff, criminal justice partners and other stakeholders. Extensive consultation took place, which included six consultation sessions in Cork, Galway, Dublin and Portlaoise attended by staff from all sections of the Service, including Probation Officers, Community Service Supervisors and administrative staff. We also had participation from many of our Service funded Community Based Organisations.

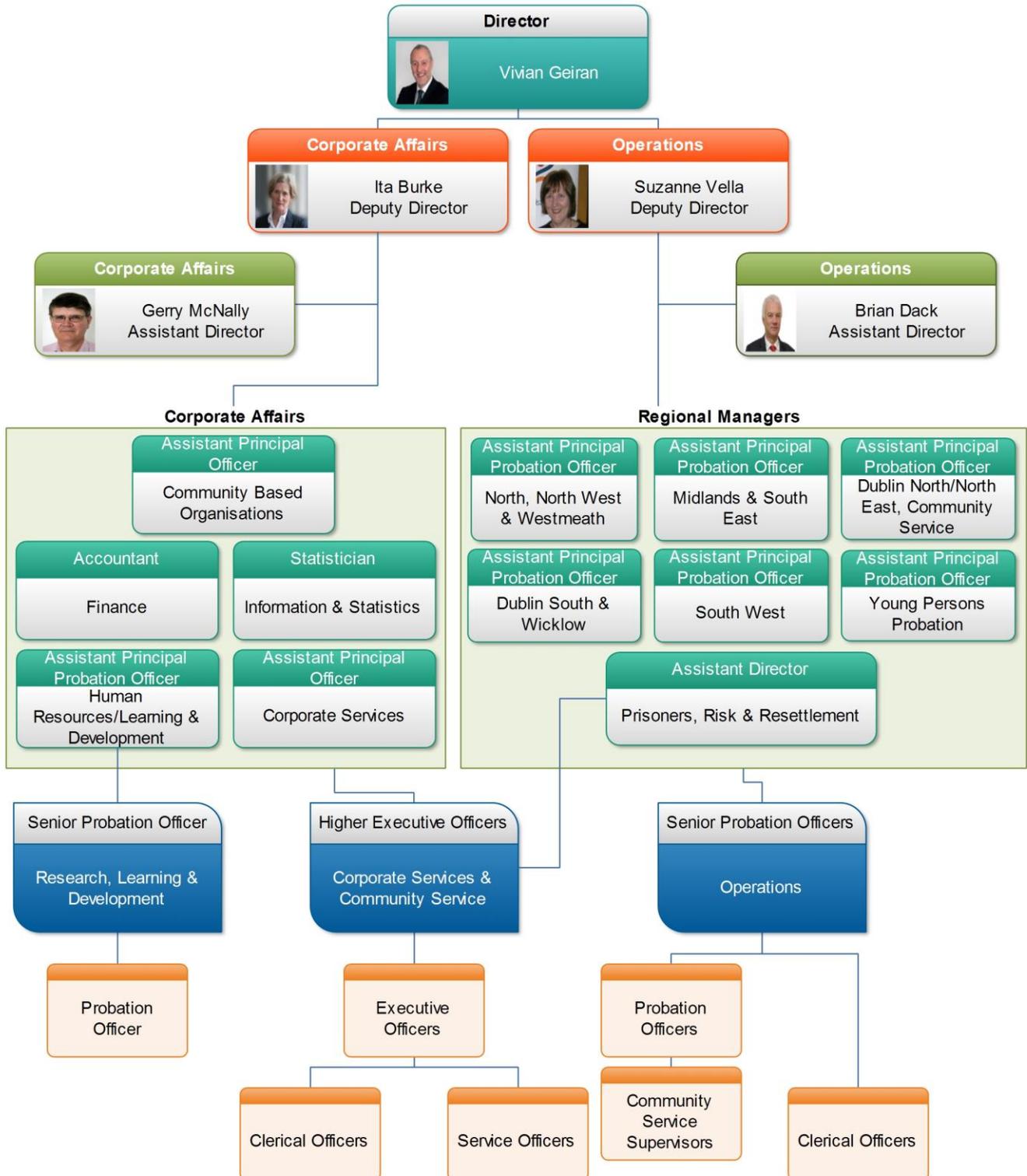
Consultation also took place with our criminal justice partners, including the Courts Service, the Irish Prison Service and An Garda Síochána, as well as consultation with staff representative groups. Submissions were also received, from both internal and external stakeholders, via the Service website.

Service users were invited to participate in the consultation process in two key locations, Dublin and Cork. At these focus groups, Service users highlighted the benefits of their time spent with Probation Officers in addressing issues contributing to their offending, improving problem solving skills and finding better ways to use their time. They also put forward their views on how the Service could be improved during the lifetime of this strategy.



APPENDIX 2: PROBATION SERVICE ORGANISATIONAL CHART

The Probation Service Organisational Chart



APPENDIX 3: LEGISLATIVE BASIS

LEGISLATIVE BASIS

The Probation of Offenders Act (1907) provides for statutory supervision of offenders in the community and is the foundation for probation work in Ireland. We become involved in the criminal justice process between the **trial** and **sanction/sentencing** phases, often in cases where a court requires a **pre-sanction** assessment to assist in deciding on an appropriate sanction. In some cases, the court may be considering placing an offender on **probation** supervision or **community service**.

Other relevant legislation is listed below:

- Criminal Justice (Community Service) Amendment Act, 2011
- Fines Act, 2010
- Criminal Justice Act (2006)
- Criminal Justice (Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act, 2003
- Children Act, 2001(as amended)
- Sex Offenders Act, 2001
- Transfer of Persons Act, 1995 & 1997
- Criminal Justice Act, 1993
- Misuse of Drugs Act, 1977 & 1984
- Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act, 1983
- Criminal Justice Act, 1960
- Criminal Justice (Administration) Act, 1914
- Probation of Offenders Act, 1907

In addition to the Constitution and relevant legislation our practice is guided by

- The United Nations Rules on Supervised Community Sanctions
- The Council of Europe European Rules on Community Sanctions and Measures.
- The United Nations Rules on the Supervision of Young Offenders
- The Code of Ethics of the Irish Association of Social Workers and International Federation of Social Workers
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Probation Rules
- Framework Decision 2008/947/JHA on the mutual recognition of probation measures





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