



IPRT SUBMISSION TO THE PROBATION SERVICE STRATEGY 2021-2023
PUBLIC CONSULTATION SURVEY
2nd March 2021

Please note that while the exact content of the submission is reflected in this document, the submission was originally made via online survey through www.probation.ie.

Pillar 1: Enhancing Community Safety

(maximum 200 words per answer below)

1. Please provide detail on any relevant actions for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Provide effective and tailored community sanctions and early release programmes nationwide that meet the needs of individuals and particular cohorts (e.g. women). This action is important in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in regards how the absence of face-to-face contact has impacted service-users.
- (b.) Continue to improve sentence management for people in prison and work with families to support positive post-release outcomes. Rehabilitation and reintegration must be at the core of the Probation Service's strategy and are essential to achieving the community safety objective.
- (c.) Liaise with relevant bodies to ensure that offenders have access to suitable accommodation, supports and services.
- (d.) Increase engagement with media to enhance public understanding about the Probation Service, focussing on 'what works' and dispelling proposals that are not supported by evidence e.g. the disclosure of information on persons who sexually offend to the wider public.

2. Please provide detail on any relevant indicators of success for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Offenders have access to suitable community sanctions and early release programmes nationwide. Tangible (e.g., recidivism rates) and 'soft' outcomes for offenders engaged in community sanctions programmes are tracked and published in the Probation Service's Annual Report. A review of probation practice (both learnings and challenges) during the Covid-19 pandemic are published and considered.
- (b.) The number and quality of probation interventions with people in prison are tracked, assessed, and published in the Probation Service's Annual Report.
- (c.) Joint protocols between the Probation Service and bodies such as Local Housing Authorities exist, are publicly available to access and are implemented.
- (d.) The Probation Service has increased engagement with the media. The general public have a greater understanding of its work and the importance of evidence-based interventions.

3. Please provide any additional relevant information:

N/A

Pillar 2: Strengthening Collaboration and Engagement

(maximum 200 words per answer below)

1. Please provide detail on any relevant actions for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Establish a Steering Committee focused on Community Sanctions. This committee should comprise of key stakeholders including members of the Judiciary, the Irish Prison Service, the Department of Justice, and community-based organisations. This committee should have a programme of work including, for example: reviewing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

on various areas of work such as parole; enhancing the delivery of community sanctions for women; and expanding the eligibility of early release programmes such as Community Support Schemes and Community Return.

- (b.) Provide training and updates to the Courts and other stakeholders on the work of the Probation Service e.g. awareness-raising on the importance of pre-sentence reports and completion rates of Community Service Orders and Probation Orders.
- (c.) Establish a council comprised of service users to advise and inform the work of the Probation Service.

2. Please provide detail on any relevant indicators of success for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) There is an increased use of Community Service Orders and a marked reduction in short-term prison sentences imposed at District Court level. There is no evidence of a 'net widening' of community sanctions. Community sanctions are being consistently applied throughout District Courts in Ireland and short prison sentences (i.e. sentences less than 12 months) are abolished. Data is being collected and published which shows that District Court judges generally accept recommendations made by the Probation Service in pre-sentence reports.
- (b.) Members of the judiciary and other criminal justice stakeholders nationwide have a greater understanding of probation options as an alternative to prison.
- (c.) A Council has been established and the views of individuals on probation are heard in relevant forums to support and inform evidence-based policy-making.

3. Please provide any additional relevant information:

N/A

Pillar 3: Promoting Inclusion

(maximum 200 words per answer below)

1. Please provide detail on any relevant actions for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Ensure the specific needs of cohorts who may be at risk of discrimination are met e.g. by considering specific factors such as age, gender, race, cultural background, and health status when designing and developing services.
- (b.) Champion and consider introducing an annual target to employ persons with convictions histories in the Probation Service.
- (c.) Ensure there is adequate and practical training for staff so that they understand the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and how this duty impacts the way in which they carry out their work. Such training should include specific teaching on cultural competency and gender-based violence.

2. Please provide detail on any relevant indicators of success for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Data is published that shows that underrepresented and particularly vulnerable cohorts (some of which are mentioned above) have equity of access to probation sanctions. There are tailored programmes available across the country to meet the needs of specific cohorts.

- (b.) A target percentage of persons with convictions histories are employed by the Probation Service.
- (c.) All probation staff have received training in cultural competency, gender-based violence and the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

3. Please provide any additional relevant information:

Champion and raise awareness that the Probation Service pro-actively hires persons with convictions histories. This would support a cultural change of public attitudes towards the employment of persons with convictions.

Pillar 4: Empowering our Team

(maximum 200 words per answer below)

1. Please provide detail on any relevant actions for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Establish specific forums within the Probation Service which allow probation staff to give feedback on the current state of the Service, contribute ideas on how to improve the Service and/or develop new initiatives for the service.

2. Please provide detail on any relevant indicators of success for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Forums established and feedback and ideas from staff are considered for implementation within the Service.

3. Please provide any additional relevant information:

N/A

Pillar 5: Modernising our Approach

(maximum 200 words per answer below)

1. Please provide detail on any relevant actions for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Become a data driven service. This would include commissioning and independently evaluating community sanctions and other probation practices.
- (b.) Undertake audits to understand how community sanctions are operating in practice. This might include looking at, for example, the nature and content of community sanctions, the impact of such sanctions on re-offending rates (if any), the extent to which probation orders and Community Service Orders are being imposed and reasons for any low take-up of these orders by the courts.

2. Please provide detail on any relevant indicators of success for this pillar / priority area:

- (a.) Quality data is available to ascertain trends and improvements to the Probation Service. An independent evaluation is published on community sanctions and any recommendations arising from the evaluation are implemented.

3. Please provide any additional relevant information:

Please see IPRT's previous submission on the Probation Service Strategic Plan 2018-2020, which remains relevant and is available as follows:

https://www.iprt.ie/site/assets/files/6450/final_iprt_submission_to_inform_the_role_and_priorities_of_the_probation_service1.pdf