

Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Business Plan 2018-19

The strategic aims and objectives of the Prisoner Ombudsman are described in the 2014-17 Corporate Plan. A fresh Corporate Plan for 2018-21 will be developed by the new Ombudsman once appointed and in the meantime specific targets for 2018-19 are set out below. The intention is that they will be completed by the end of the financial year. The office will continue to work with others to contribute to the delivery of the Programme for Government outcome 7.

1. Statutory Footing

1. Subject to legislation being in place, identify issues to be addressed in the underpinning Regulations; and update Terms of Reference for investigating deaths in custody and complaints;
2. Contribute to the Department of Justice Statutory Footing Working Group;
3. Address staffing implications for current PO staff;
4. Deliver all aspects of the new offices remit as provided by statutory footing, including name change, rebranding and new website;
5. Communicate to stakeholders and promote the new office of Prison Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

2. Complaints and Death in Custody Investigations

1. Produce investigation reports which are evidence-based and impartial;
2. Ensure full compliance with Complaints and Death in Custody (DiC) Terms of Reference by Investigators;
3. Adhere to timescales (nine months to factual accuracy stage for draft DiC reports, and 12 weeks from complaint allocation to IO to NIPS Factual Accuracy) in all investigations;
4. Ensure an Investigator is on site within four hours of notification of a death in custody;
5. Conduct a quarterly validation exercise in each prison of accepted recommendations made in complaint reports;
6. In response to the low number of complaints received from each establishment, we will conduct dip-sample exercises in Magilligan Prison and Hydebank Wood College of complaints that were finalised at internal NIPS Stages 1 & 2;

7. Assess implementation of accepted Death in Custody recommendations in conjunction with other oversight bodies e.g. Independent Monitoring Boards (IMB), Criminal Justice Inspectorate (CJI), Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA);
8. Maximise accessibility for everyone who has contact with our services. Ensure low user groups – such as female prisoners, young offenders, foreign national prisoners and visitors - have opportunities to understand the role of the Prisoner Ombudsman.

3. Support for NIPS Complaints Handling

1. Assist the NIPS to improve local resolution of complaints at source.
2. Contribute to relevant consultation exercises, conferences and other events to share the findings of Complaint and DiC investigations.

4. Support for NIPS & SEHSCT Partnership Working

1. Meet monthly with the Director of the Reducing Offending Division, and quarterly with prison governors to share feedback from investigations and matters of mutual interest.
2. Meet regularly with South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) senior managers to share feedback from DiC investigations and other matters of mutual interest.
3. Meet regularly with other stakeholders including CJI, Independent Monitoring Boards, the Coroner, RQIA, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman to share feedback from investigations and other matters of mutual interest.
4. Contribute to training of NIPS and SEHSCT staff as requested.

5. Corporate Affairs

1. Prepare a 2018-2021 Corporate Business Plan (Subject to the appointment of a Prisoner Ombudsman).
2. Monitor our financial performance against the budget allocation for 2018/19 of £638k (90% staff costs and 10% non-staff costs) and strive to work within the required budget variances of 1% with no overspend.
3. Publish annual report by September 2019;
4. Issue two editions of “*Inside Issues*” magazine to prisoners.