

Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Business Plan 2015-16

The strategic aims and objectives of the Prisoner Ombudsman are described in the 2014-17 Corporate Plan. The specific targets for 2015-16 are set out below. The intention is that they will be completed by the end of the financial year.

1. Statutory Footing

1. Identify issues to be included in the legislation and supporting regulations.
2. Contribute to the DoJ Statutory Footing Project Board.
3. Scope and address the implications for current PO staff, particularly in light of the Voluntary Exit Scheme.
4. Prepare for an extension to our remit to include contribution to investigations at the Juvenile Justice Centre for Northern Ireland, if this proposal is approved by the NI Assembly as part of the statutory footing process.

2. Complaints and DiC Investigations

1. Produce investigation reports which are evidence-based and impartial.
2. Ensure full compliance with Complaints and Death in Custody Terms of Reference by Investigators.
3. Adhere to timescales (nine months for draft DiC reports, and 18 weeks for final Complaints reports) in all investigations.
4. Commission an independent review of our professional practice in investigating and reporting on Complaints.
5. Ensure an Investigator is on site within four hours of being notified about a death in custody.
6. Update Complaints and DiC Terms of Reference once the position is clear in respect of statutory footing.
7. Review and update Complaints administration processes and the Complaints Database.
8. Apply mechanism agreed with the NIPS for monitoring implementation of accepted recommendations via a dip sample.

9. Identify ways to assess implementation of recommendations in conjunction with other oversight bodies e.g. Independent Monitoring Boards, Criminal Justice Inspectorate, Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
10. Maximise accessibility for everyone who has contact with our services. Ensure low user groups – such as foreign national prisoners, young offenders 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. In 2015-16 this will include comparison against the baseline established during 2014-15.
2. Contribute to relevant consultation exercises, conferences and other events to share the findings of Complaint and DiC investigations.

4. Support for NIPS Reform

1. Meet monthly with the NIPS Director General, and quarterly with prison governors to share feedback from investigations and other matters of mutual interest.
2. Meet regularly with other stakeholders including the SEHSCT, CJI, Independent Monitoring Boards, the Coroner, RQIA, ICRC and the Northern Ireland Ombudsman to share feedback from investigations and other matters of mutual interest.
3. Contribute to the training of NIPS staff if requested.
4. Issue two editions of “*Inside Issues*” magazine to prisoners.
5. Engage with other government departments to support policy-making that assists prison reform.

5. Corporate Affairs

1. Adapt to budgetary reductions (5% reduction scheduled for 2015-16) and associated changes;
2. Prioritise investigative capacity in event of further staff reductions;
3. Communicate implications of staff changes clearly to all stakeholders
4. Publish annual report by September 2016.