



Northern Ireland  
**Public Services**  
Ombudsman



# NIPSO

Strategic Plan

**2022-25**

## Foreword

The Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman has a unique role in providing a space for redress for individual citizens, and opportunities for learning and improvement by public services. It has been in existence since 1969 with independence and fairness at its core.

In developing our three year Strategic Plan I have been acutely aware of maintaining the independence and proud history of the Office while also taking account of both the changing context and the many changes in attitudes and values of today's society.

To make our Strategic Plan relevant and inclusive we reached out to complainants, public bodies and our staff to get their views on their expectations and experiences of interacting with NIPSO. We also asked them for their suggestions for how we could improve.

We undertook a public awareness survey, a customer satisfaction survey and a consultation with a number of public bodies. I personally met with many complainants, advocacy groups and public bodies to understand what we do well, what we might do better and how we could incorporate these into our plan.

The plan has an emphasis on accessibility and engagement. Advocacy groups and complainants told us that they did not always know when to come to the Ombudsman, and even if they did it was not always easy. They told us we needed to listen to people

more, and make it easier for them to contact us as well as to understand our decisions.

Complaints can often act as an 'early warning' system. Therefore we also have an emphasis on using our work to make a real difference, not just through our individual decisions but also by identifying trends and systemic issues that can inform and improve public services and policy.

Underpinning all of this are our core values of being independent, people focused, and fair, all while aiming to deliver excellence.

Our aim is to make sure we have a relevant, modern and inclusive Ombudsman's Office that makes a positive difference for people and public services in Northern Ireland. Our Strategic Plan represents the important steps forward on this journey.

**Margaret Kelly**



*Northern Ireland Public  
Services Ombudsman*



## Vision

Make a positive difference to people and public services in Northern Ireland by providing individual resolution and improved services through learning from complaints.

## Purpose

Investigate unresolved complaints about public bodies, uphold standards and ensure accountability for both public bodies and for local Councillors. Contribute to broader improvement by sharing the learning from both individual complaints and systemic reports.



# Values

Our values underpin all aspects of our work and how we engage internally and externally.



**Independence**  
We are open, non-partisan, unbiased, and we act with integrity.



**Fairness**  
We are honest and impartial, ensure all views are listened to and use an evidence-based approach to our decision making.



**People Focused**  
We treat people with respect and empathy, and recognise and value individual experience. We are accessible, and engage and explain our decision making.

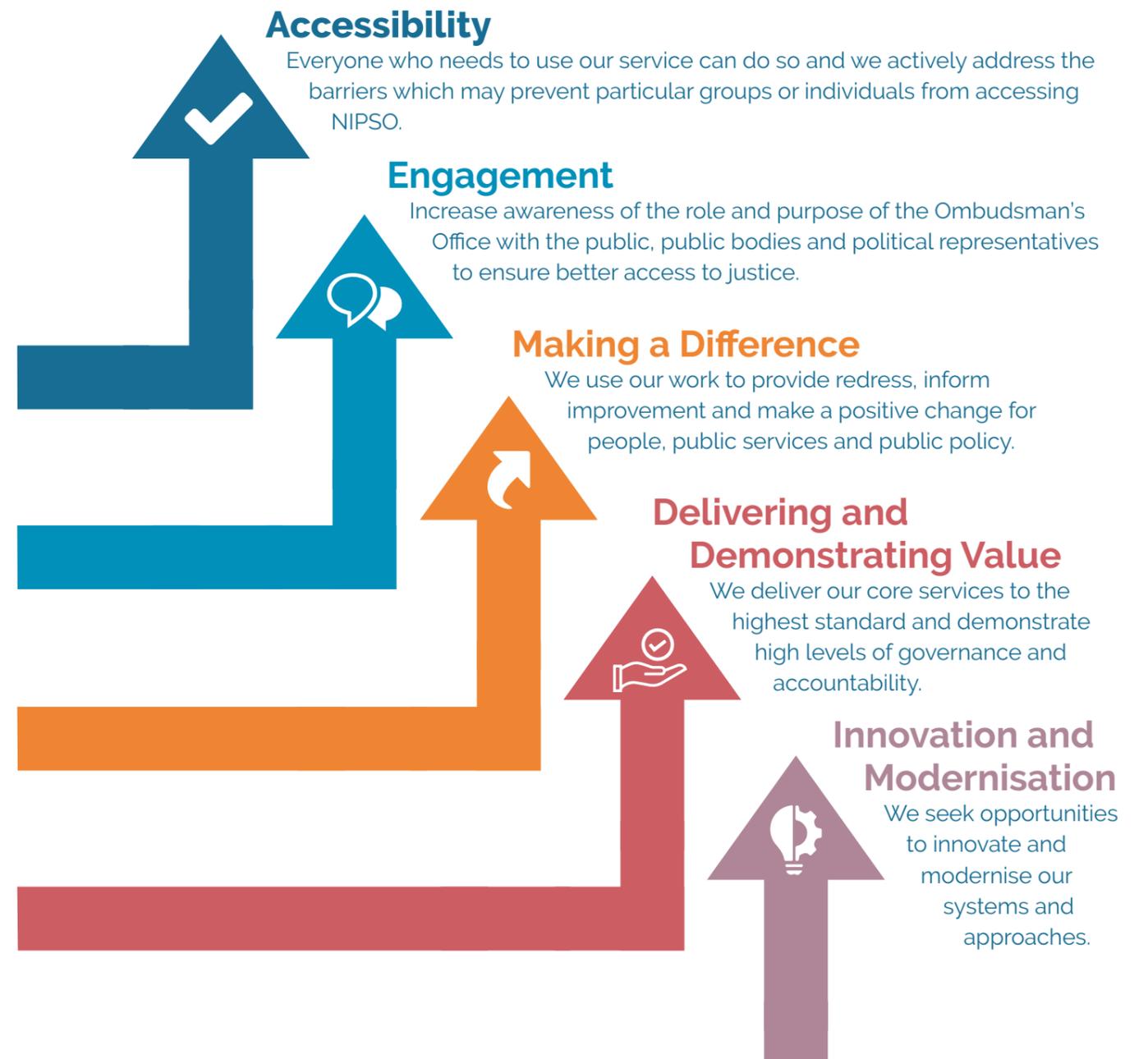


**Excellence**  
We deliver an excellent service, meeting our service standards with high levels of governance and accountability. We have a focus on continuous learning and improvement.

# Strategic Themes

Our five strategic themes connect and drive all our work across our different functions. We ensure that we embed our values and approach across each.

These are:



# Strategic Objectives

## Accessibility

- 1.1 Make all our services as accessible as possible by reviewing our accessibility and making any necessary adjustments.
- 1.2 Ensure all our information is provided in a variety of formats and is easily understood.
- 1.3 Provide opportunities through our engagement strategy for those groups least likely to access NIPSO to engage with us.
- 1.4 Highlight issues of accessibility in public services through our Model Complaints Handling scheme.

## Engagement

- 2.1 Regularly engage with a wide range of stakeholders through the development of an engagement strategy - including, the public, public services, support and advocacy groups and political representatives to improve understanding of NIPSO's role and work.
- 2.2 Increase the awareness and understanding of NIPSO's work through a range of media including social media.
- 2.3 Use our Own Initiative Investigations to address matters of wider public interest.
- 2.4 Promote greater awareness and understanding of our work by publishing a range of investigation, thematic and other reports.
- 2.5 Promote and engage on the Councillors Code of Conduct to improve understanding and contribute to standards in public life.

## Making a Difference

- 3.1 Make recommendations to ensure appropriate redress for individuals.
- 3.2 Use data and trends from our work to help drive wider improvements.
- 3.3 Use the learning from our work to influence wider change in public policy and services.
- 3.4 Respond to public consultations or calls for evidence where our case work evidence can make a difference.

## Delivering and Demonstrating Value

- 4.1 Invest in and develop our people to ensure that we provide a well-trained team across all functions, as part of our new People Strategy.
- 4.2 Embed the principles of good administration and complaints handling into all our functions by providing independent service standards review and using peer review for continuous learning.
- 4.3 Deliver our statutory functions in line with our legislation.

## Innovation and Modernisation

- 5.1 Review and modernise our working systems and practices building on the move to digitisation that we have undertaken during the last two years.

# Measuring Progress

We will measure on progress by using the following high level outcomes:

## 1

### Accessibility

NIPSO services are accessible for everyone who needs them and barriers to access are proactively identified and addressed.



- Public Survey
- Complainant Feedback
- Analysis of complainant demographics
- Content analysis of media coverage
- Evidence of adjustments made

## 2

### Engagement

We enable better access to justice through engagement with the public, public bodies and political representatives.



- Complainant Feedback
- Analysis of complainant demographics
- Content analysis of media coverage
- Focus Groups
- Feedback from networks and key stakeholders
- Feedback from Code of Conduct resources

## 3

### Making a Difference

We use our investigations, evidence and learning to make a positive difference for people, to improve public services and inform public policy.



- Analysis of investigation outcomes
- Progress on Complaints Handling Standards
- Analysis of impact of policy influencing
- Feedback from networks and key stakeholders

## 4

### Delivering & Demonstrating Value

We deliver our core services to the highest standard and demonstrate high levels of governance and accountability.



- Progress on KPIs
- Staff feedback
- Public Awareness Survey
- Customer Satisfaction Survey

## 5

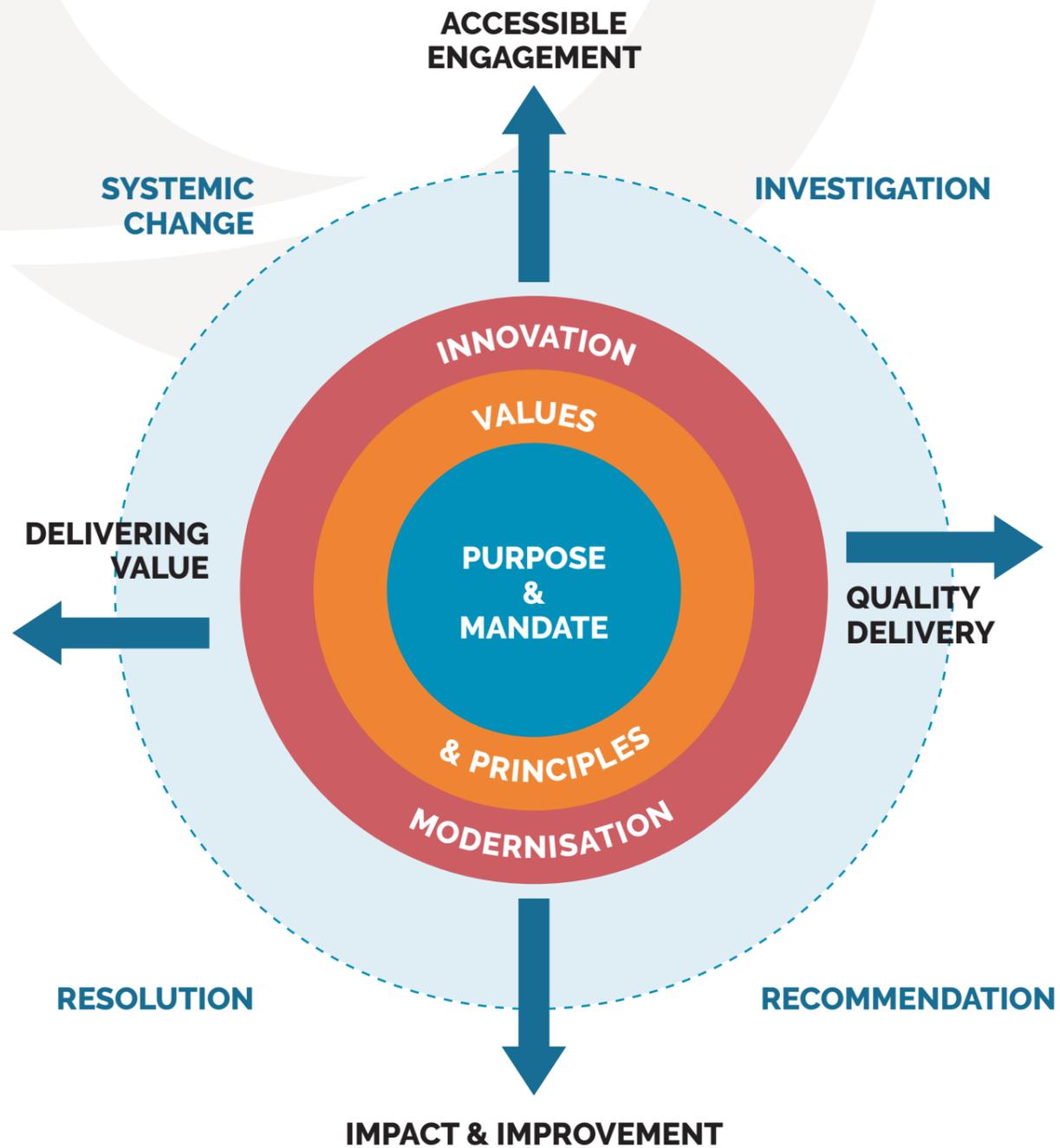
### Innovation & Modernisation

We are an innovative office with effective systems and a commitment to learning.



- New Website
- Maximise use of our case management system
- Online learning for complaints handling
- Measure equality, diversity & inclusion

# NIPSO Strategic Framework 2021-2024



MAKE A POSITIVE  
DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE  
AND PUBLIC SERVICES IN  
NORTHERN IRELAND BY  
PROVIDING INDIVIDUAL  
RESOLUTION AND  
IMPROVED SERVICES  
THROUGH LEARNING  
FROM COMPLAINTS



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