PRISONS 25 BY 25

Driving continuous improvement in the Northern Ireland Prison Service

Building for the future

Making the community safer by supporting and challenging people to change

“”

The Prison Service has shown that it is an organisation committed to **continued development and improvement**. As Governor I had personal experience of the difference that Prisons 2020 made for the people in my care. As Director of Prisons I believe that Prisons 25BY25 can be just as transformative. It clearly describes our ambition and I am determined that through Our People we will provide further opportunities to deliver high performing services, that everyone in Northern Ireland can value and respect.

Director of Prisons, David Kennedy

Contents

Message from the Minister

The transformation of the Northern Ireland Prison Service delivered by the Prisons 2020 Programme has been remarkable. Despite the challenges faced by prison staff in the context of an increasing prison population and the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic, the Prison Service achieved 95% of the 282 commitments contained in the programme.

It has been impressive to see how Prisons 2020 was embraced by staff, partners and stakeholders and I want to pay tribute to everyone who worked so hard to make this programme such a success. The person centred approach encouraged by Prisons 2020 placed the promotion of relationships - focused on challenging and supporting those in our care to change - at the core of all we do. Rehabilitation concentrated on reducing reoffending is, and must remain, the priority of the Prison Service.

Recognising that our Prison Service is on a journey and has much more to contribute in making our community safer, I am delighted to launch our next continuous improvement programme, Prisons 25 by 25.

This programme will maintain our commitment to deliver rehabilitation through Our People, Our Services, Our Infrastructure and our Partnerships, but significantly will also focus on Our Contribution to the community in terms of how those in our care can give something back to society. This will be an important element of the programme and will ensure that the Northern Ireland Prison Service is part of our community and not apart from it.

The programme will run to March 2025. I believe it is ambitious in the context in which the Prison Service will be required to operate over the next three years. Managing the impact of Covid-19 as we drive forward our recovery programme will remain challenging; the potential for a steady increase in the prison population will present particular pressures; and funding challenges could create a difficult operational environment.

However, I think it is right, and admire the Prison Service for its willingness, to aim high and set out an ambitious programme. It is incumbent on all of us to work with, and give support to, Prison Service managers and staff as they seek to deliver this important programme.

Naomi Long MLA
Justice Minister

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Prison Service has, over the past three years, been on an exciting journey. Our objective is to ensure NIPS is and remains a modern progressive Prison Service that is **Competent, Confident and Compassionate**. An organisation that is open, transparent and focused on delivering the best service we can to those in our care and wider society.

Our cost per prisoner place has reduced significantly as we have become more efficient while inspection reports demonstrate clear and significant progress in service delivery. Whilst we recognise the progress we have made, we equally recognise that we have much more to do. Prisons 25 by 25 will be our vehicle for achieving the much more that is necessary.

The focus of Prisons 25 by 25 will, following consultation, be on delivering rehabilitation through:

Our People – We have a professional, skilled and supported workforce serving with competence, confidence and compassion.

Our Services – Working with others, we rehabilitate and support those in our care through a person centred approach.

Our Infrastructure – We have a fit for purpose, secure estate which facilitates innovative delivery models.

Our Partnerships – In partnership with others, we rehabilitate and prepare those in our care for life in the community.

Our Contribution – We make a difference as part of the community.

Underpinning the above pillars we have set 25 key objectives or priority areas. While I am conscious of the very challenging environment ahead, it is important that we are ambitious whilst recognising we may have to tailor our annual action plans accordingly.

As a Prison Service we are required to work with some of the most complex and challenging members of our society. Many of these individuals come to us with significant self-harm, addiction and mental health issues. We recognise the unique opportunity we have to try and support such individuals, but the scale of the challenge we face should never be under estimated.

As a Service we don't and we won't always get things right, prisons are dynamic, high risk environments requiring the highest possible standards. We aim to achieve those standards consistently as we do the best we can within the resources available to us.

I believe Prisons 25 by 25 provides a route map that will help us to do that and perhaps more importantly, will enable the Minister, the Justice Committee and wider society to measure the progress we make.

I am delighted to present this programme and would wish to thank all those who have supported us in developing it.

Ronnie Armour
Director General

> Prisons 2020 set the foundation to enable us to develop innovative ways to deliver rehabilitation and to build a safer community. Through Our Infrastructure we opened Davis House which has transformed the daily lives of the men in our care. Through Prisons 25BY25 we can build on that work, increase our use of technology to help our staff to support prisoners to make a positive contribution as they resettle back into the community.
>
> **Governor of Maghaberry Prison, David Savage**

Continuous Improvement the Journey so far .....

In the summer of 2018, NIPS published its first continuous improvement programme – Prisons 2020. This was an ambitious programme that listened to the views of our partners, politicians, people in our care and their families, and importantly our staff.

Prisons 2020 – Key Achievements:

Our People:

Wellbeing: the creation of Prisons WELL, a bespoke employee wellbeing programme designed specifically for NIPS staff, including a Critical Incident Stress Management Programme and a staff support smartphone app, and pilot of revised staff shift patterns;

Leadership Development: a leadership development strategy which includes a tailor leadership programme for governor grades, and the introduction of a management development scheme called “Future Leaders” to support operational succession planning;

Recognition: promoting the work of our staff has resulted in recognition at local, national and international level and has contributed to changing the perception of prisons in wider society.

Our Services:

Prisoner Wellbeing: working with our Healthcare partners in the South Eastern Trust, delivery of a series of wellbeing and safety interventions for people in our care including SPAR (Supporting Prisoners At Risk) Evolution;

Tailored Support: introduction of dedicated residential landings to address the diverse needs of people in our care, along with the design of tailored pathways for specific population groups;

Family Engagement: the launch of the Strengthening Family Relations Strategy, the introduction of virtual visits during Covid and being the first Prison Service in the UK to facilitate Autism and Disability friendly visits.

Our Infrastructure:

Estates 2020: delivery of Davis House in 2019, a £53 million state of the art 360 cell secure facility at Maghaberry, advanced planning for a new female facility at Hydebank Wood College and a new Visit Centre at Maghaberry, and an annual capital minor works programme to repurpose and improve the existing estate;

Digitalisation: increasing the volume of in-cell telephony to 47% of the estate, introducing a new self-service prisoner portal and extending the use of tablet technology enabling the streamlining of processes and improved information sharing;

Transport: modernising the PECCS escorting fleet with the introduction of a new Prisoner Information system, to improve information sharing in advance of committal, and the rollout of upgraded radio systems to enhance staff security.

Our Partnerships:

Prisons Unlocked: delivery of an outreach programme which has raised the profile of the Prison Service and contributed to a better understanding of working and living in prison;

Learning and Skills: implementation of a new Service Level Agreement with Belfast Met (acting as the Lead College on behalf of the College partnership with North West Regional College) provides a more collaborative, cohesive and consistent approach to the delivery of learning and skills and maximises opportunities for personal development and preparing for employment;

Voluntary & Community Sector: building progressive partnerships with the VCS sector (including the IFA, GAA, Ulster Rugby, and Irish Boxing) has enabled the delivery of innovative rehabilitation programmes for people in our care, with involvement extending post release and contributing to improved citizenship.

The Pandemic Impact

We cannot look forward without acknowledging the extraordinary experience we have all been through over the past two years. The pandemic presented many challenges for everyone associated with prisons in Northern Ireland.

Those challenges were met with professionalism and innovation by everyone working in the Prison Service. It is testament to that work that just four people contracted Covid in the general population until the vaccine was rolled out and wider society had relaxed its restrictions.

Recovery from the pandemic began in essence on 4 April 2022. While we cannot be complacent early indications are that our staff, and partners, are making significant progress to return the Service to the high standards seen before the pandemic. Prisons 25 by 25 will play a key role in driving the Service through to full recovery.

Developing Prisons 25By25

Work to develop our new continuous improvement programme began in early 2021 with staff workshops, involving the senior leadership team and staff from across the Service. This culminated in the development of the 'Prisons 25 by 25' Framework. This framework was designed around the four pillars from Prisons 2020 which all agreed remained relevant, however it was proposed that a new pillar 'Our Contribution' would be added as a sign of the changing Prison Service and how it contributes to the justice family and wider society.

In April 2021 a period of consultation began to gauge views on the proposed framework for Prisons 25 by 25. Due to the pandemic, we had to adjust our original approach and conduct much of the engagement through questionnaires, surveys and virtual meetings. Our engagement focused on the following key groups:

- stakeholders (including partner organisations, governance bodies and unions) via a written questionnaire and follow up meeting;
- staff (representative of all grades and business areas) through an online survey;
- political representatives in 1-1 meetings; and
- people in our care and their families (all representative groups) through a paper questionnaire and family forum.

> The Prison Service works with over 40 key statutory, delivery and voluntary partners to support the people in our care to change. By putting 'Our partnerships' at the heart of Prisons 25BY25 we will work to support families, assist victims of crime and support people as they leave prison and return to the community. That is how we all play our part in reducing the risk of re-offending.
>
> **Director of Rehabilitation, Paul Doran**

From the consultation a number of common key themes emerged:

- very positive feedback on the content and simplicity of the programme;
- unanimous support from partner organisations in working together to achieve delivery of the priorities;
- importance of prioritising key challenges including mental health and substance misuse;
- ensuring that the framework continues to build on positive initiatives from Prisons 2020; and
- concerns about the impact that reduced budgets would have on realising objectives.

Having taken account of the feedback and reviewing organisational priorities, a revised Strategic Improvement Framework was finalised and endorsed of both the Minister and the Justice Committee.

At the core of the work to support and challenge those in our care is 'Our Services'. By addressing addictions, mental health and other issues that underpin negative behaviours we can make a real difference. Prisons 25BY25 will drive us all to have better outcomes for the people we are responsible for.

Governer of Magilligan, Gary Milling

The Challenges Ahead

As well as the opportunities identified through the consultation and the delivery framework; NIPS is also facing a number of significant challenges. These include a rising prison population with growing complexities of the people in our care such as mental health conditions and the increasing addiction issues affecting the wider community. The prison population is also seeing a rise in complex cases involving older people with significant social care needs that NIPS is not resourced or skilled to manage.

While we, as a society, have taken great strides in managing the pandemic, it is still with us and there is no certainty what lies ahead. Covid management remains a priority for NIPS.

Finally we, like many parts of the public sector, are facing significant pressures on our budget. This will have an impact on the services we provide both through our staff and our partner agencies.

Strategic Framework

PRISONS 25BY25

A modern, progressive and innovative Prison Service making the community safer by challenging and supporting people to change

Our People	Our Services
We have a professional, skilled and supported workforce serving with confidence, competence and compassion	Working with others, we rehabilitate and support those in our care through a person centred approach
Wellbeing & Resilience Prisons are a unique and challenging working environment; we support our staff, build their resilience and invest in their wellbeing as we work in innovative ways.	**Committal, Induction & Assessment** With more than 4,000 individuals coming into prison each year, we support those entering our care as we assess their specific needs and effectively introduce them to prison life.
Learning & Development Prisons require a highly skilled and professional workforce; we equip, upskill and develop all our staff to perform their duties to the highest standard.	**Mental Health** 30% of our population have mental health issues and over 50% have a history of self-harm. We will provide a safe, stable and trauma-informed environment that facilitates the South Eastern Trust to deliver high quality care in line with community provision.
Staff Engagement Prison staff are innovative and highly committed; we listen to and communicate with all our staff as we engage with each other in an environment of transparency and trust.	**Addressing Addictions** Over 50% entering our care are struggling with addiction issues. We will work to reduce the supply of illegal substances into our prisons; challenge and support those with substance dependency; and work in partnership with the South Eastern Trust to address the misuse of prescription medication.
Valuing People Prison staff provide a vital public service; our actions are underpinned by our values as we recognise the contribution of our staff, foster a culture of excellence and highlight the work they do on behalf of our Community.	**Tailored Pathways** Prison is not one size fits all; we assess individual needs and tailor our response accordingly, focusing on the diverse nature of our population and the importance of rehabilitation and resettlement for everyone in our care.
Respecting Diversity Prisons should be reflective of society; we embrace diversity and promote a positive, welcoming and inclusive working environment where staff are encouraged to reach their full potential.	**Learning & Skills** Many people enter prison with no formal qualifications or employment; we provide development opportunities focused on preparing individuals for release with the skills needed to make a positive contribution to Society.

Our Infrastructure	Our Partnerships	Our Contribution
We have a fit for purpose, secure estate which facilitates innovative delivery models	In partnership with others, we rehabilitate and prepare those in our care for life in the community	We make a difference as part of the community
Estates Programme Prison is a community within a wall where people live, work and visit; our new estate is of the highest quality, designed to support rehabilitation, enhance independence and improve safety for staff and people in our care.	**Programmes and Interventions** Prisons are committed to reducing reoffending; working with our partners we develop and deliver programmes and interventions focused on supporting and challenging individuals to change in preparation for life in the community.	**NIPS Role in the Justice System** NIPS is a key justice delivery partner; we contribute to the effectiveness of the justice system working in partnership to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, improve justice efficiency and build public confidence.
Maintenance & Development Staff, visitors and people in our care deserve fit for purpose, modern facilities; we maintain our current estate as we upgrade and replace existing buildings to enhance service delivery and meet statutory requirements.	**Employability, Housing & Healthcare** Our responsibility to those in our care doesn't stop at the gate; we work with partners to ensure people in our care are given the best possible opportunities and have the most appropriate support on release.	**Explaining Our Work** Prisons are seen as closed communities that are not always understood; we are an open, transparent, accountable and learning organisation reaching out to explain the role we perform and the service we provide.
Technology & Innovation Prisons should be at the cutting edge of progress; we embrace digital development focused on improving staff and prisoner safety, enhancing prisoner independence and family connectivity and maximising efficiency.	**Family Engagement** Those with positive family connections are much less likely to reoffend; we recognise the challenges imprisonment has on family life and commit to strengthening family ties for those in our care.	**Supporting Victims** Prisoners are not alone in serving a sentence; we recognise the impact of crime and promote a victim centred approach focused on facilitating restorative practice and effective communication.
Security & Operations To facilitate rehabilitation prisons and people in our care must be safe and secure. We will ensure our security systems, procedures and infrastructure can manage the risks we face dynamically and in line with statutory obligations and recognised best practice.	**Pre-release Testing** Public protection is central to the justice system; working with our partners we prepare, test and assess those in our care for release by providing opportunities for reintegration, evaluating their progress and when necessary recalling those who don't meet the standard required.	**Shared Opportunities** NIPS work with other prison services to drive improvement; we share, collaborate and learn with custodial partners as we develop our expertise, promote cooperation and encourage best practice.
Sustainability Prisons as part of the community must be socially responsible; we invest to reduce energy and water consumption, carbon emissions and improve biodiversity to deliver environmental improvement.	**Community Partnerships** Prisons are a part of the community, not apart from the community; we value the contribution of the voluntary and community sector, faith-based organisations and the business sector.	**Giving back to the community** Prisons are a community that can make a difference; we encourage staff and those in our care to improve the experience of others through charitable giving and productive use of their time and talents.

What Now?

The Strategic Improvement Framework will be supported by annual delivery plans which will be prepared against the 25 priorities, along with anticipated timeframes and key delivery partners where required. Year 1 plans (2022/23) are now being developed by the senior team.

Our intention is to be ambitious when setting the objectives at the outset of year 1 however we recognise that uncertainty around the budget position and the continued challenge of the pandemic may impact on our ability to deliver.

As with Prisons 2020, the Prison Service Management Board will continue to have a governance role in Prisons 25 by 25 and will be provided with regular updates on performance.

Prisons are part of the community, not apart from it. Prisons have a proud track record of reaching beyond the gate and supporting the community. The addition of 'Our Contribution' to Prisons 25BY25 is an illustration of our confidence in the work we do and the role we have to play in wider society.

Governor of Hydebank Wood College and Women's Prison, Richard Taylor