



22 April 2015

Dear Consultee,

Update on Equality and Disability Action Plans / Equality Screening and Consultations within the Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

The following summary provides an update on the PPS's latest Equality and Disability Action Plans, as well as current activity in respect of equality screening and consultations.

Equality Action Plan / Disability Action Plan

The Service has now published revised Equality and Disability Action Plans for 2015-16.

It should be noted that our Equality and Disability Action Plans are normally aligned with the Service's business planning cycle, that is, they usually cover a three year period, mirroring the Service's Corporate Plan. However this position has now changed, in that the Service has agreed to extend the life of its current Corporate Plan to the end of 2015-16. This is so that the next business planning cycle will align with the new Spending Review Period which commences from 2016-17. In light of this decision, the Service's Equality and Disability Action Plans will also be extended to the end of March 2016, with new plans taking effect from 1 April 2016.

Whilst the Equality and Disability Action Plans have been extended, we have carried out a review of all actions for 2015-16 to ensure that the plans continue to address key issues within the PPS. Key changes are outlined below.

Equality Action Plan

The following new measures have been added:

- consideration of the annual PPS Omnibus Survey findings (page 9);
- development of a Youth Offenders Policy (page 11);
- ongoing review of Hate Crime recording practices and procedures (page 12);
- implementation of new Prosecution Quality Standards (page 15); and
- supporting the implementation of Statutory Time Limits in the Youth Court (page 15).

A number of measures have also been updated, including those in relation to the Registered Intermediaries Scheme (page 10), the NI Executive Autism Action Plan (page 13), the Victim and Witness Care Unit (page 14), and the revised Witness Expenses Policy (page 16).

Disability Action Plan

The following new measures have been added:

- needs assessments for all victims and witnesses are carried out to ensure that applications for special measures are made as required (page 17);
- ongoing review of Hate Crime recording practices and procedures (page 18);
- implementation of new Prosecution Quality Standards (page 20); and
- monitoring and assessment of complaints from service users (page 20).

A number of measures have also been updated, for example in relation to the Registered Intermediaries Pilot Scheme (page 15), the Victim Information Portal (page 16), the revised Witness Expenses Policy (page 16), the Victim and Witness Care Unit (page 17), the NI Executive

Autism Action Plan (page 18), and disability declarations / reasonable adjustments (page 20).

If you have a comment on any aspect of these plans, please contact me through any of the means outlined below.

Current Policy Work

It is important that the PPS keeps those interested in its work regularly informed of what it is doing to assess the impact of its policies as regards equality of opportunity and good relations.

The section below provides details of policy work carried out within the PPS from 1 January to 31 March 2015.

This update lists policies both external and internal for which the PPS has carried out a screening exercise. It also includes details of forthcoming, current and closed consultations.

(a) Screening exercises completed 1 January – 31 March 2015:

Name of Policy	Brief Description	Outcome
<i>Public Prosecution Fees Scheme (Scheme C)</i>	<i>Revised policy outlining the mechanics of the remuneration of external counsel for legal services delivered on behalf of the Public Prosecution Service.</i>	<i>Screened out</i>

(b) Forthcoming consultations:

Name of Policy	Brief Description	Current Status
<i>Code for Prosecutors</i>	<i>The Code for Prosecutors, issued under section 37 of the Justice (NI) Act 2002, gives guidance on the general principles to be applied in determining in any case whether criminal proceedings should be brought, what charges should be preferred and how prosecutions should</i>	<i>Policy in final stages of development.</i>

	<p><i>be conducted. It also sets out the standards of conduct that the PPS requires from prosecutors including external Counsel instructed on behalf of the Director.</i></p> <p><i>Before issuing or making alterations to the Code under section 37, The Director must consult the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and the Advocate General for Northern Ireland.</i></p>	
<i>Victims and Witnesses Policy</i>	<i>The revised policy document describes the services PPS provides to victims and witnesses called by the prosecution. It also gives guidance to PPS staff on best practice in the provision of those services.</i>	<i>Policy in initial stages of development</i>
<i>Court Witness Expenses Policy</i>	<i>The PPS is required to call the victims and witnesses of crime to court to give evidence in the prosecution of cases. This policy documents the process of inviting witnesses and reimbursing their expenses.</i>	<i>To be incorporated into the revised PPS Victims and Witnesses Policy (see above)</i>
<i>Director's guidance on Prosecutorial fines</i>	<i>Guidance on the procedures and processes which prosecutors must follow in relation to the use of prosecutorial fines, which is an alternative to a court prosecution.</i>	<i>Policy in initial stages of development</i>

(c) Current consultations:

Name of Policy	Brief Description	Current Status
<i>None</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

(d) Recently closed consultations:

Name of Policy	Brief Description	Consultation closed	Remarks
<i>PPS Prosecution Quality Standards</i>	<i>The new PPS Prosecution Quality Standards set out the quality standards against which the public, and particularly those who come into contact with the Service, can assess how we perform. They apply to all who help to deliver the prosecution service, including public prosecutors and administrative staff, as well as external Counsel who represent the PPS at court.</i>	<i>20 March 2015</i>	<i>Responses currently under consideration.</i>

If you or your organisation is interested in receiving any consultation documents or wish to register an interest in forthcoming work, please contact me stating if you would prefer a hard copy posted to you or an email version, providing your email address. You can also request a copy of the full screening decision on any policy in this way.

You can visit the Public Prosecution Service website at www.ppsni.gov.uk to access our equality information and can review current and previous Section 75 reports and policy screening forms (from January 2012). Any consultations undertaken by the PPS will be posted on the PPS website within the 'Consultation' area which is accessible from the home page. Other equality related information is located within the 'Equality' section.

Documents will be made available in alternative formats, for example Braille, audio CD or disk. If you have any requests for alternative

formats, or if you wish to make any other comment about this equality work, please contact me through any of the ways set out below. You can also update me of any changes to your contact details that may be required for future correspondence.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Scott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

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