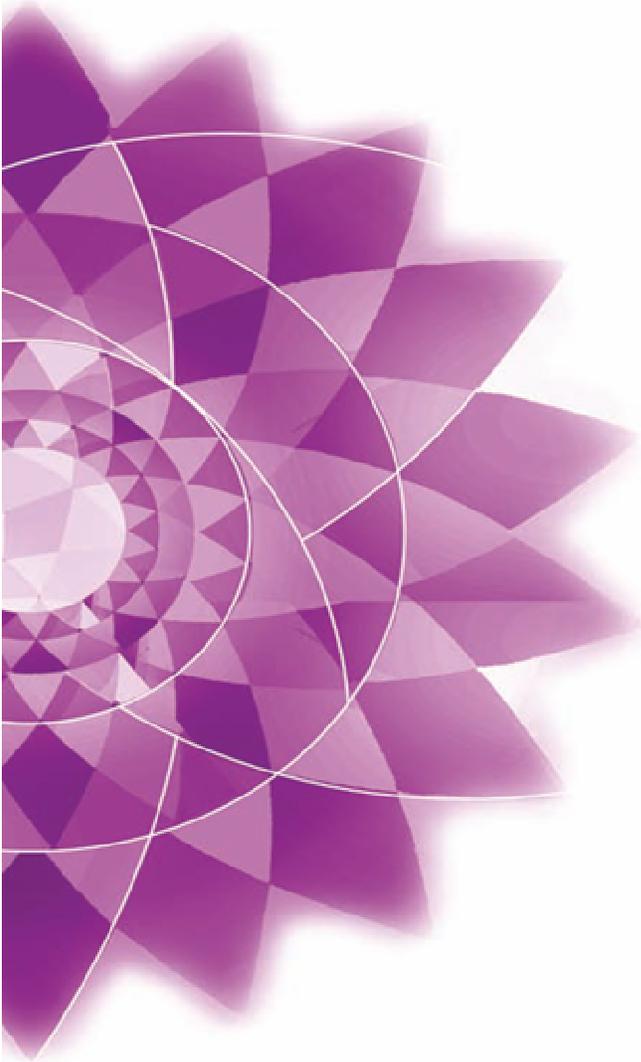


Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
Community Outreach Strategy
2012 - 2014



Independent, Fair and Effective

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this document

1.1.1 The purpose of this document is to define a Community Outreach Strategy for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) as it seeks to achieve its vision to be recognised as providing the people of Northern Ireland with a first class prosecution service.

1.1.2 This Community Outreach Strategy supports the achievement of the strategic objectives set out in the PPS Corporate Plan for 2011 – 14. It also complements the PPS Communication Strategy, published in January 2011.

1.2 About the Public Prosecution Service

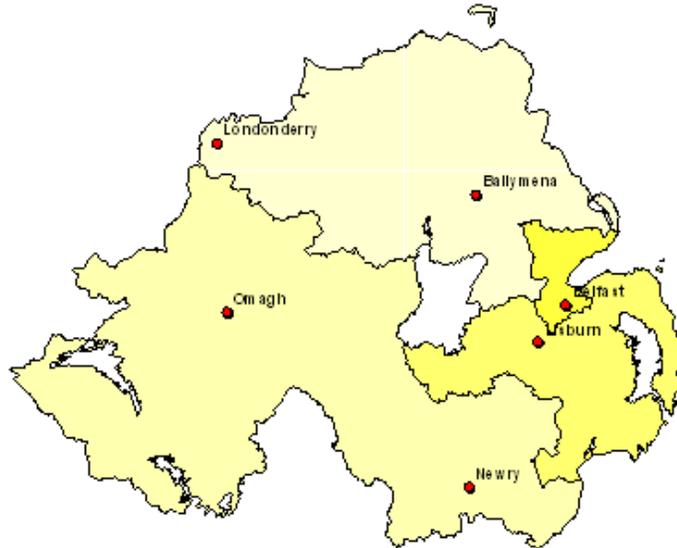
1.2.1 The Public Prosecution Service, which is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. In addition to taking decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the police, it also considers cases investigated by other statutory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs.

1.2.2 While the PPS works closely with the police and other agencies, it is wholly independent; its decisions are impartial, based on an independent and professional assessment of the available evidence and the public interest. The PPS vision is to be recognised as providing a first class prosecution service for the people of Northern Ireland.

1.2.3 The PPS is a regionally based organisation (see map, below). There are four regions and each is headed by a Regional Prosecutor

(Assistant Director). The Regional Prosecutor has overall responsibility for decisions as to prosecution and for the content of all prosecutions in that region, with the exception of those cases which are considered by prosecutors at Headquarters in Belfast.

PPS Regional Office Locations



1.3 What is Community Outreach?

1.3.1 Community outreach, in the context of this strategy document, is:

- the process by which the PPS and the people of Northern Ireland will interact; and
- the way in which the PPS will engage at a local level with the community and relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies.

1.3.2 The aim of this Community Outreach Strategy is to:

“Increase public confidence in the independence, fairness and effectiveness of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.”

1.3.3 The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- i. increase the community’s awareness and understanding of the role of the PPS as part of the overall criminal justice system in Northern Ireland;
- ii. to help inform the community generally about criminal justice processes;
- iii. provide information about the operation of the PPS, for example, the Test for Prosecution and the criteria used to make prosecutorial decisions; and
- iv. assist with developing the community’s understanding of alternatives to prosecution, such as the use of diversionary options.

1.3.4 The Community Outreach Strategy must be:

Effective It must facilitate real and meaningful interaction between the PPS and local communities across Northern Ireland; and

Achievable The strategy must be realistic and deliverable. It must be a strategy which enables community outreach within the financial and staff resources available to the PPS.

2. OUTREACH FOR THE COMMUNITY

2.1 Equality and Diversity

2.1.1 Community outreach is for all members of the community. However, in order for the strategy to be effective in addressing the needs of the community in Northern Ireland, PPS must:

- recognise the diverse people and groups within this community, including the nine categories listed at Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- identify the community outreach services each of these groups and persons wish to be offered by the Public Prosecution Service; and
- agree how these outreach services are to be delivered.

2.1.2 In order to provide community outreach services that are effective, there is a requirement to define the main people and groups that the Public Prosecution Service will deliver different services to. Indeed there may be a requirement to deliver the same services to various groups, but in a different way.

2.1.3 The criteria used to define the key people and groups within the community, against which the Public Prosecution Service will design its services (and the delivery of these services), involve the identification of:

- i. priority - i.e. which groups are considered as a priority for the prosecution service in terms of information provision and outreach;

- ii. particular needs - for example, for specific services or non-standard delivery methods for services; and
- iii. particular interests – for example groups with specialist expertise or groups with special interests.

2.2 People and Groups

2.2.1 The proposed people and groups within the overall population of Northern Ireland that the Public Prosecution Service will consider when carrying out outreach to the community are detailed in the table below.

Segment	Description
General Public	The overall population of Northern Ireland.
Local Communities	<p>Local communities – homogeneous groups of people as defined by a range of factors including geographical proximity, common issues and particular needs.</p> <p>Local community representatives may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Members of Parliament (MPs); ➤ Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs); ➤ Local Councillors; ➤ Community Groups; and ➤ Church Leaders.
Section 75 Groups	The Criminal Justice Review recommended that all criminal justice organisations should fully consider the particular needs of all Section 75 groups when designing their services.

Youths	<p>Persons aged 17 and below – this is a specific area of our population which has particular needs and must be considered in a manner which will provide opportunities for growth and development. The creation of the Youth Justice Agency is one tangible recognition by the Criminal Justice System that ‘youths’ are a specific segment of our population who should be dealt with in specific ways.</p>
Young Children	<p>Persons aged 10 and below – the Criminal Justice Review identified that it is imperative to provide appropriate information for young children.</p>
Voluntary Sector organisations	<p>The Public Prosecution Service recognises that there is a wide range of voluntary sector organisations and charities that have a legitimate right for their views and concerns on the criminal justice system (for example, Victim Support for Northern Ireland, NSPCC, NIACRO, EXTERN, Women’s Aid), and the prosecution service in particular, to be listened to and considered.</p> <p>Such organisations are often focused on specific issues (e.g. domestic violence) and, in addition to providing a channel of communication for a wide range of people (including victims) provide a useful challenge function for the prosecution service in the development of its policies.</p>

3. COMMUNITY OUTREACH SERVICES

3.1 Principal Services

3.1.1 This section provides a description of each of the principal services that the Public Prosecution Service will deliver in order to meet its community outreach objectives.

3.2 Information Events

3.2.1 The Public Prosecution Service will hold information events at key milestones in the ongoing development of the Service. This will include, for example, the launch of new PPS policy statements.

3.2.2 Information events will be held centrally and locally as appropriate. Attendees will be invited to such information events based on the nature of the subject matter to be discussed. Attendees will be drawn from all sections of our community. It is envisaged that these events will also be covered in the media.

3.3 Meeting the Community

3.3.1 The Public Prosecution Service will conduct meetings with local communities. These meetings will be conducted at local level through the regional offices. The purpose of these meetings will be to explain the role of the prosecutor and to enhance the understanding of how prosecutors work (i.e. how decisions are made) and to listen to concerns of the local communities about criminal justice processes and matters.

3.3.2 Potential contact points between the Public Prosecution Service and local communities will include:

- Local elected representatives (including MEPs, MPs, MLAs and Councillors);
- Church leaders;
- Industry and commerce leaders;
- District Policing Partnerships;
- Resident Groups;
- Representative Section 75 Groups e.g. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM), Disability Action, Rainbow, Age NI etc.
- Youth Groups;
- Schools; and
- Voluntary Organisations.

3.3.3 While it is envisaged that some of these meetings will be held in response to requests, it is expected that many meetings will be initiated by the prosecution service. The Regional Prosecutor, in each of the regions, will have lead responsibility for arranging and attending these meetings.

3.4 Inter-agency work

3.4.1 The Public Prosecution Service will work closely with statutory bodies, agencies and other organisations. The key purpose of this work is to enhance the understanding of how prosecutors work (i.e. how decisions are made) – it is envisaged that the focus is likely to be on policy issues. However, the prosecution service will work with other agencies such as the Police Service in an attempt to solve problems at a local level e.g. community safety.

3.4.2 Potential organisations that the Public Prosecution Service will interact with include:

- Police Service of Northern Ireland;
- NI Courts and Tribunals Service;
- Youth Justice Agency;
- Probation Service;
- Northern Ireland Departments and other investigative agencies;
- Representative Groups (e.g. Women's Aid); and
- Other Voluntary Sector Organisations (e.g. Victim Support, NSPCC, NIACRO).

3.4.3 While some of this work may be properly conducted at a regional level, a significant number of issues will also require liaison with PPS headquarters functions, including Policy Section.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY

4.1 Implementation

4.1.1 While it is important that these proposed community outreach services take full advantage of the regional structure of the PPS, headquarters staff will provide a central co-ordination function. Support will also be provided by the PPS Media and Communications Officer in order to ensure that those engaged in outreach on behalf of the PPS deliver a clear, consistent and accurate corporate message.

4.1.2 Implementation of this Community Outreach Strategy may have significant resource implications for the PPS. A key principle of implementing this strategy is that all staff will have a responsibility to participate in the community outreach activities as required. Accordingly, this will form an important part of the business plan for each Region and Section and will be included in the performance agreements for all staff at Assistant Director level and above and other staff as required.

4.2 Roles and responsibilities

4.2.1 The likely impacts on resources within the PPS of implementing this Strategy are detailed below.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Role in delivery of the PPS Community Outreach Strategy</p>
<p>Director/Deputy Director</p>	<p>The Director (and the Deputy Director) will have ultimate responsibility for the Service's community outreach activities.</p> <p>The Director (and the Deputy Director) will participate in community outreach activities as appropriate e.g. specific information events.</p>
<p>Management Board / Senior Management Group</p>	<p>Members of the Management Board, which is chaired by the Director, will have a responsibility for both initiating and participating in specific community outreach activities in the context of their specific role within the organisation.</p> <p>The Senior Management Group, chaired by the Deputy Director, will have a shared responsibility to ensure that the Community Outreach Strategy is delivered.</p>
<p>Regional Prosecutors and Assistant Directors</p>	<p>Regional Prosecutors and Assistant Directors will have responsibility for the Service's community outreach activities within their Region or Section.</p> <p>Regional Prosecutors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ have responsibility for meeting the prosecution service's community outreach objectives in their region;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ act as the primary representative for the prosecution service in its regional community outreach activities – there will be specific performance measures set for each regional prosecutor in this area; and ➤ act as the primary spokesperson for the prosecution service in regional media. <p>It is envisaged that the Regional Prosecutor will be the ‘public face’ of the prosecution service in each region and will build effective working relationships with local community representatives (e.g. elected representatives, church and business leaders).</p> <p>Assistant Directors in central functions will have responsibility for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ outreach to groups not associated with a particular geographical region; and ➤ inter-agency outreach as set out at paragraph 3.4 above.
Members of PPS Staff	Other PPS Staff (including Senior Public Prosecutors, Public Prosecutors and administrative staff) will be expected to participate in community outreach events as required.

5. REPORTING AND MONITORING

5.1 Management arrangements

5.1.1 The PPS Management Board's Policy and Quality Sub-Committee will be responsible for:

- monitoring progress against the outreach strategy and reporting to the Management Board as required; and
- compiling an annual report on community outreach activity to the Management Board.

5.1.2 To inform the monitoring and reporting of progress against the annual plan the PPS Private Office will maintain a log of outreach activity and will report quarterly to the Policy and Quality Sub-Committee. Regular updates on outreach activity will also be published via the PPS website.

5.1.3 In order to build capacity internally, exemplars of good practice in PPS outreach work will be published via the PPS intranet and Staff Brief.

5.2 Monitoring and evaluation

5.2.1 Where an outreach event is organised by the PPS (for example, a policy launch), efforts will be made to carry out an evaluation of the event. An important element in evaluation will be the feedback received from external participants. The Service will actively seek such feedback and will do so in a variety of ways, ranging from informal contacts with participants to more structured methods, such as questionnaires.

5.2.2 On an annual basis the PPS will participate in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. The findings of the survey will help to inform PPS management as to the success of outreach in raising public awareness of the Service and its role. The results of the survey will be published.

5.2.3 An evaluation of this strategy will be conducted by the end of 2013. The results of the evaluation will inform the development of any subsequent strategy for the period from 2014.

6. OBJECTIVES AND MILESTONES FOR 2012-14

6.1 PPS Corporate Plan

6.1.1 The PPS Corporate Plan sets out four strategic priorities for the Service as the focus of its work programme for the period 2011-14. Strategic Priority 2 relates to the key issue of building community confidence:

Strategic Priority 2:

- Building the confidence and trust of the community we serve.

Objective 2.2:

- To engage effectively with stakeholders and the wider community.

In order to build public confidence we will engage with the community to explain what we do. Our Communication Strategy for 2011-14 will be supported by a proactive approach to media engagement. As part of our Community Outreach Strategy we will ensure that Regional Prosecutors and their senior staff are increasingly visible as they attend meetings and other events, including those organised by the voluntary sector and community groups.

6.2 Outreach Milestones

6.2.1 The following table presents the key milestones which the Service will seek to achieve over the next three years in order to deliver on this outreach strategy.

Key Milestones	
Policy launches / information events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information events, to be held centrally or locally as appropriate, will be arranged to accompany the launch of all new PPS policy statements (see paragraph 3.2.1).
Regional outreach activity	<p>The Service will deliver a minimum of six outreach events within each PPS region on an annual basis. These will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At least three events involving local communities (see paragraph 3.3.2); and ➤ At least three events involving statutory bodies, agencies and other organisations (see paragraph 3.4.2).
PPS website	<p>An update on outreach activity will be published via the PPS website on a quarterly basis (see paragraph 5.1.2).</p>
Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will monitor all outreach activities, carried out centrally or locally, to ensure that they are meeting the Service's outreach objectives (see paragraph 5.2.1). ➤ A quarterly report on outreach activity will be provided to the PPS Policy and Quality Sub-

	<p>Committee (see paragraph 5.1.2).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An annual report on outreach activity will be provided to the PPS Management Board (see paragraphs 5.1.1). ➤ A full evaluation of the strategy will be completed by end December 2013 (see paragraph 5.2.3).
<p>Public awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On an annual basis the PPS will participate in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey in order to gauge public awareness of the PPS and its role (see paragraph 5.2.2). ➤ Results of the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey will be published each year.

7. SUMMARY

7.1 Community Outreach Strategy

7.1.1 The prosecution service will undertake community outreach in order to:

“Increase public confidence in the independence, fairness and effectiveness of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.”

7.1.2 The strategy the PPS will adopt to achieve this aim will be comprised of a range of components. These components will:

- build on existing practices and on-going initiatives (e.g. the Criminal Justice System’s Public Information Working Group);
- emphasise joint working (with other criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector and community leaders); and
- have a local focus (through our network of regional offices across Northern Ireland).

7.1.3 The PPS will build partnerships with a wide range of voluntary sector organisations in order to maximise the accessibility for the general public across the whole of Northern Ireland.

7.1.4 While this Community Outreach Strategy will assist in efforts to increase public confidence in the Public Prosecution Service as it evolves, it is imperative that there is a continuing focus on the core work of the Service. The continuing conduct of prosecutions in an independent, fair and effective manner will be the key determining

factor in the level of public confidence in the Public Prosecution Service.

7.1.5 This increased level of transparency and public accountability supported by the community outreach activities outlined in this paper will allow the prosecution service to fulfil its responsibilities in increasing public confidence in the PPS and the overall criminal justice system.

7.1.6 This strategy for the period 2012 – 2014 will be kept under continual review.

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