

# Probation Service Strategy Statement 2012 – 2014



Reduce re-offending to create safer communities



# Foreword

This Strategy Statement sets out our focus for the next three years and outlines the distinct contribution that the Probation Service will make to support the Department of Justice and Equality's goal of working for a safer and fairer Ireland.

Rehabilitating offenders to achieve and maintain positive change is at the core of our work. We believe that crime must be met by an effective and proportionate sanction which in many cases is a community sanction. Over the period of this strategy we aim to expand the range of non-custodial options available for Courts and to introduce schemes for prisoners to pay back to the community and to support reintegration. We will provide robust alternatives to custody, promote desistance from crime, and reduce re-offending and victimisation.

Our strategic plan is framed within the context of economic constraint and public service reform. The Government's Programme for National Recovery, 2011–2016 has an agenda of change and reform that aims to lay the basis for economic renewal and recovery. The Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 requires sustainable savings to be generated and changes implemented to ensure that frontline services continue to be delivered and improved. Our strategy builds on our achievements to date, our commitment to delivering public sector reform and focuses on the further development of a professional service delivering quality public services to the highest standards.

Key to our work is collaboration with our stakeholders particularly those in the criminal justice sector such as the Courts Service, Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Youth Justice Service. We also work with stakeholders in the community, other Departments, agencies and relevant authorities. We recognise the vital role of the community and voluntary sector in working in partnership with the Service, particularly through our funded projects, to support our staff in their day to day work. We have carried out consultations with these stakeholder groups and reflected their views in this document. We believe this plan contributes to a comprehensive multi agency approach to addressing crime and promoting social inclusion.

Our staff are critical to ensuring that we deliver quality offender assessment and supervision and remain innovative and progressive. High among our priorities is a commitment to research and innovation. This plan also concentrates on areas where the Probation Service can add the most value. We are committed to measuring our performance in order to promote good practice in the delivery of improved frontline services.

We will keep this strategy under review to ensure the Probation Service is strongly positioned to continue to deliver quality public services and play a significant part in making our communities safer and more inclusive.



Vivian Geiran, Director

August 2012

# Introduction

## THE ROLE OF THE PROBATION SERVICE

The Probation Service is an agency of the Department of Justice and Equality committed to working to achieve the high level objectives and policy goals of the Department in working for safer communities. The Service works closely with the Courts Service, the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Youth Justice Service, the Parole Board and many organisations in the community. Our role is to contribute to public safety by:

- The management of community sanctions and measures
- The effective assessment and management of offenders
- Facilitating the integration of ex-offenders

We are the lead agency in the assessment and management of offenders in our community and we play an important role in helping to reduce the level of crime by challenging offender behaviour and working with offenders to change their behaviour and make good the harm done by their offending. Our goal is to provide quality assessment and robust management of offenders using the best evidence based probation practice and meeting the highest standards of efficiency and accountability.

The Probation Service provides probation supervision, community service, offending behaviour programmes and specialist support services, to both adult and young offenders. We also work in prisons and places of detention to rehabilitate offenders and facilitate re-integration.

## STATUTORY FUNCTION

The Probation of Offenders Act (1907) provides for statutory supervision of offenders in the community and is the foundation for probation work in Ireland. We become involved in the criminal justice process between the **trial** and **sanction/sentencing** phases, often in cases where a court requires a **pre-sanction** assessment to assist in deciding on an appropriate sanction. In some cases, the court may be considering placing an offender on **probation** supervision or **community service**.

**Other relevant legislation is listed below:**

- Criminal Justice (Community Service) Amendment Act, 2011
- Fines Act, 2010
- Criminal Justice Act (2006)
- Criminal Justice (Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act, 2003
- Children Act, 2001(as amended)
- Sex Offenders Act, 2001
- Transfer of Persons Act, 1995 & 1997
- Criminal Justice Act, 1993
- Misuse of Drugs Act, 1977 & 1984
- Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act, 1983
- Criminal Justice Act, 1960
- Criminal Justice (Administration) Act, 1914
- Probation of Offenders Act, 1907



In addition to the Constitution and relevant legislation our practice is guided by

- The United Nations Rules on Supervised Community Sanctions
- The Council of Europe European Rules on Community Sanctions and Measures.
- The United Nations Rules on the Supervision of Young Offenders
- The Code of Ethics of the Irish Association of Social Workers and International Federation of Social Workers
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Probation Rules
- Framework Decision 2008/947/JHA on the mutual recognition of probation measures

# Vision & Values

## OUR VISION

Reduce re-offending to create safer communities.

## OUR MISSION

Working to reduce re-offending and contribute to a safer Ireland through the supervision and reintegration of offenders.

We will achieve this by:

- Engaging with offenders as well as their families and communities, to motivate and help them to lead better lives and avoid re-offending.
- Making a unique contribution to the Criminal Justice System, offering a range of effective sentencing options for Courts.
- Providing offender supervision based on quality evidence based assessments delivered by well trained and professional staff.
- Achieving excellence and innovation in practices which challenge offenders to reduce re-offending.
- Building positive and effective partnerships, both at a Local, National and European level, to meet the complex needs of offenders, the management of risk and promotion of social inclusion.
- Valuing and investing in the skills of our staff to provide a high quality service in all areas of our business.

To deliver our mission we have identified the following elements as key requirements. We aim to ensure:

- Skilled, engaged and motivated staff
- Continuous learning and improvement in how we work applying best value principles in how we deliver our service.
- Clear and efficient business processes
- Effective technology that supports key processes, information and communications
- Appropriate cross organisational co-operation and collaboration with other justice organisations

## OUR VALUES

- We believe that offenders can change their behaviour and through our purposeful intervention we can help them to achieve their potential as citizens.
- As with all members of society, we believe offenders must accept personal responsibility for their behaviour and where possible, make good the harm they do.
- We believe that crime must be met by an effective and proportionate sanction.
- Each person we engage with will be treated with dignity and respect.
- We will respect the interests and rights of victims of crime, in our work with offenders.
- We will act with equality, fairness and integrity to enhance public confidence in the Service.
- We are committed to a positive working environment, with a highly skilled and dedicated workforce.
- We are committed to accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in the provision of a quality public service.

# Operating Environment

This strategic plan is framed within the context of economic constraint and the requirement for sustainable savings to be generated. With less financial and staffing resources, the Probation Service remains committed to continuing its modernisation and delivering a range of effective sanctions for the Courts and the community at large.

The Probation Service as an agency of the Department of Justice and Equality supports the Department in the implementation of the relevant elements of the Government's Programme for National Recovery, 2011–2016 in particular with regard to:

- Enhancing safety in our communities
- Balancing the needs of the community and those of victims of crime and the rights of those accused
- Open Government reform
- Cross functional and joint agency collaboration, in particular, ensuring better coordination between the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service to create an integrated offender management programme

The Thornton Hall Project Review Group endorsed the principle that imprisonment must be a sanction of last resort and identified the importance of alternatives to custody from two perspectives; firstly "front door" strategies limiting the flow of offenders into prison by giving the courts a menu of options in relation to community sanctions and secondly "back door" strategies involving earned temporary release with a requirement of community service to prepare offenders for release on completion of their sentences. Initial indications from the White Paper on Crime consultations support the principle of penal moderation, greater use of non-custodial sanctions, early intervention and prevention methods. In addition support was shown in the use of Community Service Orders and to rehabilitation as the main purpose of criminal sanctions.

We are a national service delivered locally providing a service to courts and custodial institutions across the country. Our dedicated staff have a specific expertise in intervening with offenders and in assessing and managing risk. We work to ensure that Probation Officers are as skilled and informed as possible in their work with offenders. Staff with a range of administrative and IT skills support the work of Probation officers while Community Service Supervisors oversee the work of offenders ordered to undertake community service. In the course of their work our staff demonstrate professionalism, commitment and flexibility in their interactions with the Gardaí, Courts, Prisons, offenders and their families and the wider community.

In addition to Government policy in areas such as Equality and Diversity this strategy is also influenced by: Health and Safety legislation, Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003, Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003, Disability legislation, Official Languages Act and Employment Equality Acts 1994 and 2004.



## RISK MANAGEMENT & CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR THE PROBATION SERVICE

Risk management is a key element of corporate governance and is integrated within our normal work processes, informing our annual business planning and linking to the overall organisational objectives. The Probation Service remains vigilant in identifying events or occurrences that threaten the achievement of our objectives. In managing these factors the organisation's risks have been identified and evaluated in terms of the likelihood of occurrence and the possible impact on our operations and plans. Contingency plans have been developed to reduce or negate the impact of the risk.

**The main risks identified for the Probation Service in delivering our strategic objectives are seen as:**

RISK
<b>1. Staffing Risk</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Losing staff, with the associated loss of expertise, skill and corporate memory.</li> <li>Breakdown in partnership approaches with staff and trade unions.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Financial Risk</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The risk of reductions in allocated budget which may result in a diminished capacity to deliver certain services.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Infrastructural Risk</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Lack of suitable infrastructure necessary to support staff and the organisation in delivery of service.</b></li> </ul>
<b>4. Relations with key agencies and stakeholders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key agencies and stakeholders may be unable or unwilling to engage with the Service in achieving its objectives.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Reputational Risk</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any loss of confidence by stakeholders in the work of the Service</li> </ul>

**The critical success factors identified for the Probation Service in achieving our strategic objectives are seen as:**

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS
<b>1. Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Adequate staff resources to meet work demands.</b></li> <li>Staff commitment to change, flexibility, efficiency and innovation.</li> <li>Targeted allocation of resources.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Financial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate financial resources</li> <li>Effective resource management, budgetary control and accountability.</li> <li>Cost savings through effective procurement.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Infrastructural</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICT development to support business objectives.</li> <li>Improved performance and outcome measurement.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Key agencies and Stakeholders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross agency communication and collaboration.</li> <li>Involvement in cross Justice fora.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Reputational</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of and confidence in the work of the Probation Service.</li> </ul>

# *Building Our Strategy*

Our new strategy builds on our achievements to date with an agenda that is committed to the further development of a professional service, effective in reducing the risk of re-offending, bench marked against best international probation practice and one in which our stakeholders are confident.

The consultation process has been vital to the development of this strategy and in ensuring its relevance to service users, staff, criminal justice partners and other stakeholders. Extensive consultation took place in the preparation of this strategy, which included six consultation sessions in Cork, Galway, Dublin and Portlaoise attended by staff from all sections of the Service, including Probation Officers, Community Service Supervisors and administrative staff. We also had participation from many of our Service funded Community Based Organisations. Meetings were arranged with criminal justice partners, including the Courts Service and An Garda Síochána and the Service received a number of submissions from both internal and external stakeholders which were invited via the website and at the various focus groups.

Service users were invited to participate in the consultation process in locations in Dublin and Limerick. In general they were extremely willing to put forward their views and highlighted the benefits of their time spent with Probation Officers, in addressing issues contributing to their offending, improving problem solving skills and finding better ways to use their time. They also emphasised the importance of being involved in training programmes and other activities that increased employability.

The consultation process identified the following broad themes which have informed this strategy:

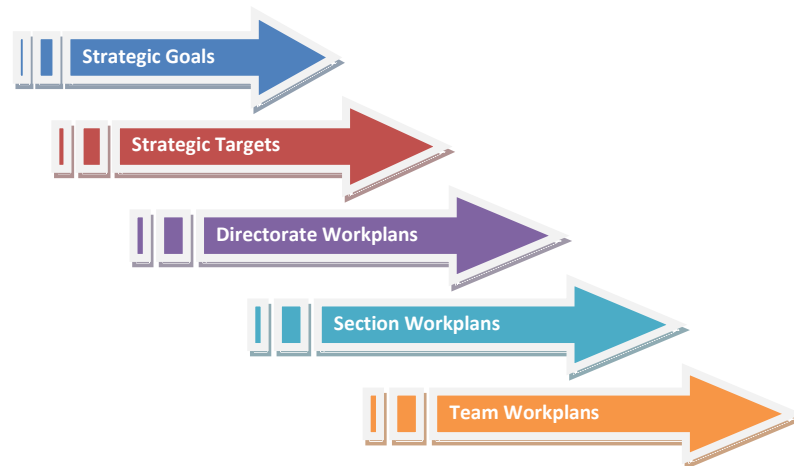
1. Our work should always be informed and guided by effective practices;
2. Victim interests must remain uppermost in our work with offenders
3. Innovation, flexibility and responsiveness is vital in the management of offenders
4. Increased collaboration across the Justice sector is critical in reducing re-offending
5. Opportunities to increase the use of technology in information management and other areas of our work should be enhanced

Three Strategic Goals have been identified which will form the basis of our work in 2012 - 2014

- **Strategic Goal 1** Reduce re-offending and prevent further victimisation through the promotion and delivery of community sanctions and measures
- **Strategic Goal 2** Address crime and social inclusion through strengthened strategic alliances and partnerships
- **Strategic Goal 3** Enhance organisational capability in delivering excellence and innovation

### Implementing the Strategy

The long term strategies, objectives, key activities and performance targets and indicators will be highlighted in this document. Annual work plans will also support this corporate plan in outlining how the Probation Service will work in each of the next three years to achieve our long term strategies.



## *Strategic Goal 1: Reduce re-offending and prevent further victimisation through the promotion and delivery of community sanctions and measures*

Our work with offenders is built on purposeful professional relationships designed to reduce reoffending, promote positive change in offending behaviour and enable re-integration into communities. We aim to reduce the risk of reoffending and harmful behaviour through quality assessment and effective supervision using a range of innovative and evidence led interventions.

Reducing re-offending means fewer victims and adds significantly to the well being of our communities as offenders become more productive members of society.

Rehabilitation yields substantial gains for communities and society as a whole resulting in a safer place for all to live, work, visit and do business.

Over the next three years the Probation Service will work towards achieving this strategic goal by:

1. Expanding the range of innovative and evidence led interventions delivered by the Service nationally.
2. Developing initiatives to break the cycle of offending, provide alternatives to custody and enable re-integration of offenders
3. Contributing to the development of policy initiatives through the promotion of the significant role of community sanctions in the reduction of re-offending and as an option for Courts as well as an effective sentencing alternative to custody.

Strategic Goal 1: Reduce re-offending and prevent further victimisation through the promotion and delivery of community sanctions and measures		
	1 Expand the range of innovative and evidence led interventions delivered by the Service nationally.	Strategic Outcomes
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Extension of the use of risk based approaches to the management of offenders</li> <li>○ Continue to contribute to the development of multi-agency responses to the management of specific offender groups, such as young offenders</li> <li>○ Further develop and implement group and individual programmes to address offending.</li> </ul>	Reduced rates of Re-offending
2 Develop initiatives to break the cycle of offending, provide alternatives to custody and enable re-integration of offenders		
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop initiatives and operational responses in alignment with high level Government and Department priorities. Commence the national roll out of the post custody Community Return Programme (earned temporary release with a requirement of community service).</li> <li>○ Ensure better communication between the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service to create an integrated offender management programme.</li> <li>○ Build on the flexibility of Community Based Organisations to respond to the changing needs of the Criminal Justice System and offenders.</li> </ul>	Fair, effective and efficient justice systems  Reduced rates of Re-offending and more secure communities  Value for money
3 Contribute to the development of Justice policy initiatives through the promotion of the significant role of community sanctions in the reduction of re-offending and as an effective sentencing alternative to custody.		
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use research driven information to highlight the positive impact of probation interventions on re-offending and rehabilitation.</li> <li>○ Inform and support probation legislation and other provisions at National and European level</li> <li>○ Continue to develop protocols for integrated offender management programmes and information sharing with other Departments and Agencies.</li> </ul>	Fair, effective and efficient justice systems  Strengthened international relations

## *Strategic Goal 2: Reduce crime and promote social inclusion through strengthened strategic alliances and partnerships*

Many offenders under the management of the Service have complex needs such as alcohol or drug problems, serious mental health difficulties, significant learning disabilities and dysfunctional backgrounds which impact on offending. Cross organisational co-operation and goal sharing with a collaborative approach across a range of agencies facilitates rehabilitation and re-integration into communities. This strategy recognises this need and provides for a coordinated multi agency approach, while also acknowledging the important contribution that the voluntary and community sectors make. The Service has established partnerships with community based projects and initiatives across the country that support and add value to the work of the Service.

The Service also works closely with other agencies of the Criminal Justice System in this and other jurisdictions and other relevant bodies such as the Health Service Executive, Vocational Education Committees and Local Authorities to make communities safer.

Over the next three years the Probation Service will work towards achieving this strategic goal by:

1. Contributing to a Criminal Justice wide co-ordinated and integrated system of offender management
2. Working with local, national and European partners to develop and deliver effective services to reduce re-offending
3. Working to improve outcomes for victims through developing enhanced strategic alliances with the wider statutory, voluntary and community sector

Strategic Goal 2: Address crime and social inclusion through strengthened strategic alliances and partnerships		
<b>1</b>	<b>Contribute to a Criminal Justice wide co-ordinated and integrated system of offender management</b>	<b>Strategic Outcomes</b>
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Further develop alliances and formal protocols with Criminal Justice and other relevant agencies in the management of offenders</li> <li>○ Introduce changes to service delivery to contribute to a more efficient and effective cross functional justice model.</li> <li>○ Establish a range of multi-agency responses to the assessment and management of offenders.</li> <li>○ Develop a data management strategy to inform multi-agency offender management.</li> </ul>	<p>Fair, effective, efficient and accessible justice systems</p> <p>Greater Public Confidence</p>
<b>2</b>	<b>Work with local, national and European partners to develop and deliver effective services to reduce re-offending</b>	
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foster North-South and European co-operation.</li> <li>○ Participate in the development of social integration measures including cross departmental initiatives.</li> <li>○ In collaboration with the statutory, community, and voluntary sectors continue to develop local initiatives to proactively respond to the changing patterns of offending and community needs and profiles.</li> <li>○ Mobilise opportunities for locally based initiatives to enhance the development of a range of flexible probation interventions.</li> <li>○ Collaborate at a European level to support best practice in the implementation of the Framework Decision on Community Sanctions and Measures and in the assessment and management of offenders.</li> </ul>	<p>Fair, effective and efficient justice systems</p> <p>Strengthened international relations</p> <p>Value for money</p> <p>Reduced rates of Re-offending and more secure communities</p>
<b>3</b>	<b>Work to improve outcomes for victims and offenders through developing enhanced strategic alliances with the wider statutory, voluntary and community sector</b>	<b>Greater Public Confidence</b>
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pilot the expansion of a range of Restorative Justice initiatives.</li> <li>○ Further develop services to victims through the expansion of restorative justice initiatives for adults and young persons.</li> <li>○ Increase the use of community volunteers in delivering services.</li> </ul>	<p>Value for money</p> <p>Reduced rates of Re-offending and more secure communities</p>

### *Strategic Goal 3: Enhance organisational capability in delivering excellence and innovation*

The Probation Service is committed to achieving its objectives through best corporate governance principles with well defined and managed practices. We will support the delivery of these objectives through the effective use of resources and by optimising staff performance and development.

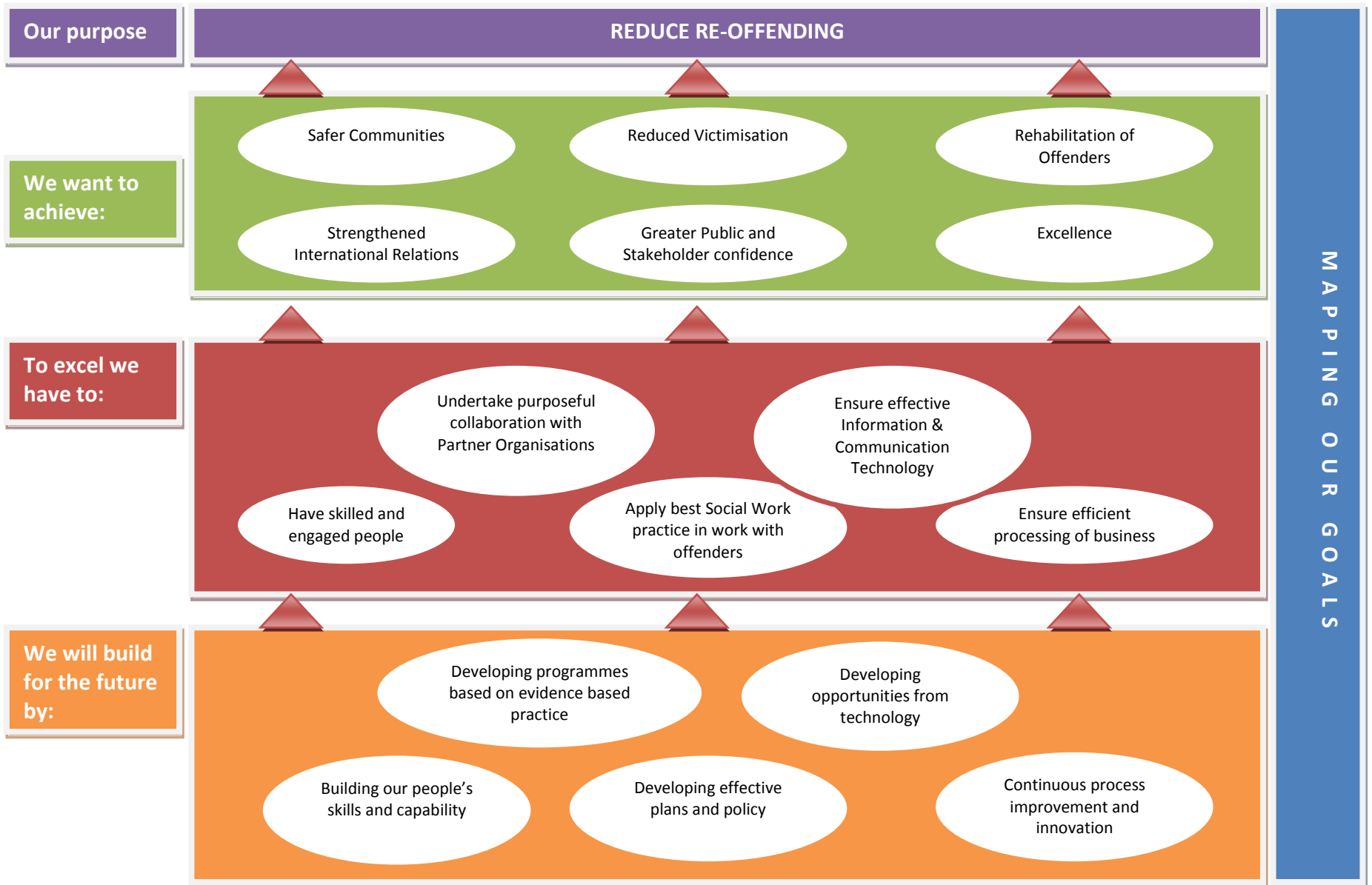
Over the next three years the Probation Service will work towards achieving this strategic goal by ensuring:

1. Our services are delivered to the highest standards and levels of professionalism
2. The benefits of ICT, research and data management to enhance and inform service delivery are maximised
3. Effective management of resources achieving value for money is ensured.

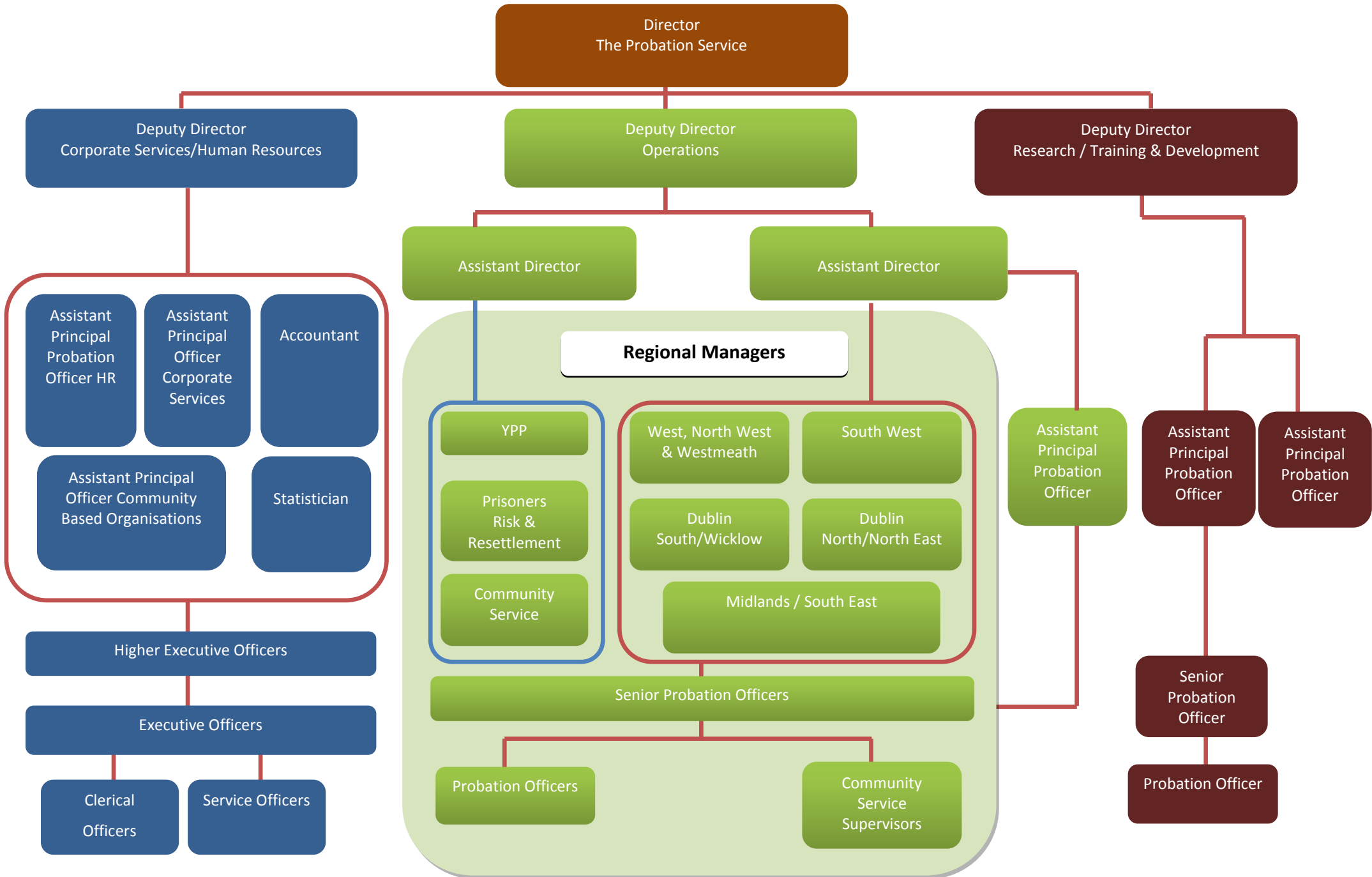


Measuring our progress towards our Strategic Goal:

Strategic Goal 3: Enhance organisational capability in delivering excellence and innovation		
<b>1</b>	<b>Deliver our services to the highest standards and levels of professionalism</b>	<b>Strategic Outcomes</b>
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Promote a culture of continuous learning within the organisation.</li> <li>○ Develop and implement quality assurance reviews in relation to professional practice standards</li> <li>○ Develop a structured communication programme with stakeholders and service users</li> <li>○ Ensure a quality customer focus in Service delivery</li> </ul>	Value for money and excellence in the delivery of probation and justice services
<b>2</b>	<b>Maximise the benefits of ICT, research and data management to enhance and inform service delivery</b>	
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Undertake research to inform practice, policy and facilitate international comparisons</li> <li>○ Develop integrated web based management information systems for Community Based Organisations and Community Service</li> <li>○ Develop and implement a Data Strategy</li> </ul>	Value for money and excellence in the delivery of probation and justice services  Greater Public Confidence
<b>3</b>	<b>Ensure effective management of resources achieving value for money</b>	
Key Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to focus on manpower planning towards meeting Service delivery needs and the development of new initiatives</li> <li>○ Increased use of CBOs to support delivery of frontline services.</li> <li>○ Ensure the potential for savings is realised through collaboration in the procurement of goods and services</li> <li>○ Maximise usage of Service Energy Management Policy</li> <li>○ Develop and roll out E-Learning</li> </ul>	Value for money



# PROBATION SERVICE ORGANISATIONAL CHART







Reduce re-offending to create safer communities



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