

the Parole Board for England and Wales

Business Plan 2014–2015

Purpose

The Parole Board is an independent body that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community.

The Parole Board aims to:

- Make risk assessments which are rigorous, fair and timely with the primary aim of protecting the public and which contribute to the rehabilitation of prisoners where appropriate.
- Demonstrate effective and accountable corporate governance by maintaining strong internal control, setting clear objectives and managing corporate risk and to deliver best value by optimum use of resources.
- Promote the independence of and public confidence in the work of the Board, while effectively managing change.

This business plan sets out how the Parole Board will rise to the challenge of an increasing workload during 2014-15. We are undertaking a process whereby we will radically modernise and improve our own ways of working and play a leading part in doing the same across the whole parole process. Improvements needed to meet the challenges we now face will mean changes at many points in the parole process and we will be working closely with partners to do this.

Context

Osborn, Booth and Reilly

In October 2013 the Supreme Court published its decision in the case of *Osborn, Booth and Reilly* [2013] UKSC 61. The cases brought before the court concerned prisoners rights to an oral parole hearing and the decision in this case will mean that many more prisoners will now be able to obtain an oral hearing.

Initial estimates suggest that the impact could be an increase in the number of oral hearings each year from 4,500 to over 14,000. In short, in any case in which a prisoner raises an issue, whether or not the resolution of that issue will affect the decision to release, fairness dictates that he/she should have the right, if he/she chooses, to raise that issue in an oral hearing. Even in cases in which no such issue is raised, factors such as the length of time in custody post-tariff may also operate in favour of an oral hearing.

In response to this the Parole Board is working closely with colleagues in NOMS and the Ministry of Justice to put in place a range of measures to deal with the impact of this decision. Although felt most directly by us at the Parole Board the case has substantial consequences for prisons, probation and legal aid.

Within the Parole Board we are currently working to redesign the parole process and how we work. While some extra resources have been made available to us, just doing more of what we do now will not be realistic. Indeed, we consider this a unique opportunity to challenge ourselves, and our partners in the parole process, to think about how we can work differently in the future. For example, we are likely to consider changing the way we hold some hearings, how panels are made up and what

is considered by those panels. It is still early days and we are currently developing these ideas so that we can consult more widely on them in the spring/summer.

Triennial Review, Corporate Governance Reform and other changes

As well as the radical redesign of the parole process we are also facing other challenges this year. These include: the triennial review of the Board that is now underway; implementing reforms to corporate governance; continuing the move to finance shared services; and dealing with major changes happening in the wider criminal justice system affecting us such as probation reform and changes to legal aid.

Where changes outside parole affect us we are working hard to mitigate any negative impact they may have. For example we have produced a guide for prisoners who are unable to secure legal representation and will be monitoring the impact of legal aid changes closely and wherever possible we are contributing our expertise to the development of the National Probation Service.

Approach to the Business Plan

The impact of OBR is such that our response programme (Fair For the Future) now cuts across all our activity. We have therefore decided to take a different approach to this year's business plan.

We will have a single overarching priority that will be supported by three key strands. The single priority summarises what we are seeking to achieve across all the reform work we are undertaking this year and reflect our previous priorities in business as usual. The plan will be supported by a major programme of work which we are undertaking during the year and contain the details of our

reform programme and key indicators for our business as usual.

Our Overarching Priority is:

To make right and fair decisions at the right time, utilising resources across the whole system to best protect the public

This priority fits closely with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) priority of protecting the public and punishing offenders as part of a more effective and cost efficient custodial system.

Three key strands underlying this will be:

- Our people; members and staff
- Our systems and processes
- Our stakeholders

Each of these strands will cut across our programmes of work and business as usual and will be led by small teams from within the secretariat. We will also use these strands as key themes for performance analysis and reporting.

Major Programmes for the Parole Board in 2014-15 will be:

1. Fair for the Future (FFF)-

Objective: to design and implement an efficient case management model which enables the Board to accommodate the increase in oral hearings within agreed resources, allows members to continue to make fair and right decisions, supported effectively by the Secretariat and is flexible and robust enough to meet the challenges of future changes in legislation and policy with greater resilience

2. Member Practice and Development-

Objective: implementation of the FFF reforms for members. Including comprehensive training, development of new remuneration model subject to Ministerial approval, resource and development modelling and where necessary recruitment

3. Information Technology (IT) Strategy

Objective: To develop our long term IT strategy in order to improve the provision of ICT to achieve greater electronic working and to support more efficient ways of working. Central to this is a market engagement exercise to test the value for money from our existing case management system and to help the Board decide whether to develop our existing system further and invest in new functionality.

Business as Usual

We recognise that with so much change going on it will be important to ensure that day to day work does not suffer and so a focus will also be maintained on business as usual. This will be done by continuing to monitor Key Performance Indicators and management information, however the dramatic change in our workload means that many old targets are now unachievable or are no longer relevant and an analysis of what we believe we should measure and proposed targets is set out below.

Key Strands of Work, Key Performance Indicators and Management Information

The changing nature of our work this year means we have modified the ways we identify and measure success.

To do this further work is required to develop full KPIs in some areas and in others we are keen to gather wider, supporting management information.

In this section we have set out the KPIs we are already able to measure, the additional management information we will report in order to monitor overall workloads and then objectives to develop new KPIs or carry out deep dives needed into some areas of our work.

Section 1- Key strands

Our People-

Staff Engagement to monitor the following:

- Survey result- improve overall score to over 50%
- Sickness- to reduce sickness rates to average of 5 days per staff member per year- (13/14- actual 6 days per year, MOJ target 7.5)
- Turnover- to reduce staff turn over to below 20% (13/14 35% due to extraordinary change)

Members Engagement to develop and monitor the following measures:

- Number attending regional events (and conference)
- Number attending focus groups, pilots, sending in feedback
- Number replying to consultations e.g. lifer chairs, corporate governance
- Number submitting expression of interest e.g. accreditation, non hearing work
- This information has not been captured previously so will be started in 14/15 and a baseline established for future years

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4. Time to conclusion- to develop mechanism for monitoring this in advance of a future KPI.
 5. Cost per case- a single definition to be agreed and base line established once FFF implemented and new processes agreed.

Assumptions and Dependencies

The role of the Parole Board within the wider parole process means there are a high number of operational dependencies in the way we work and the actions of others will often have a direct effect on our ability to deliver. The strongest example of this is deferrals where they often occur as a result of actions of others, for example witnesses or report writers. The Parole Board is committed to driving up performance across this process and has led the introduction of the end to end review which is now overseen by the joint Generic Parole Process Monitoring Board and activity and targets arising out of this review have been included in the business plan.

Risks

A review of risks has recently been conducted and, again in light of the major changes currently happening, it has become particularly important to monitor our risks closely. Our risk register is monitored on a monthly basis. In addition a mapping exercise has been undertaken to show how our risks are controlled or mitigated through our major programmes and KPIs..

Equality and Diversity

The Parole Board is committed to a policy of equal opportunity to all and values diversity. This is underpinned by the Board's Equality Action Plan 2012-15.

When developing aims and objectives every effort is taken to ensure equality and diversity is fundamental.

Beyond 2014–15

There is a great deal of uncertainty about our likely future workload and the bigger changes to probation which will be taking place beyond 2014-15.

We are working with MoJ Analytical Services to monitor the impact of OBR on our workload and others and will continue to do this throughout the year. As we also develop our new ways of working we will also use this to identify future resource implications as we go through 2014-15.

