

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Business plan 2024/25

Strategic plan 2023 - 26

OUR VISION

To deliver high quality and timely independent investigations and work closely with partners to achieve tangible benefits for the safety and confidence of those in custody and under community supervision.

WHAT WE DO



**Resolve
complaints**



**Investigate
deaths**



**Identify and
disseminate
learning**



**Ensure trust
and confidence
in the criminal
justice system**



**Special
investigations**

WHAT WE VALUE

**Ambitious
thinking**

**Professional
curiosity**

**Diversity &
inclusion**

Transparency

Teamwork

Ombudsman's foreword

I am delighted to publish the 2024-25 Business Plan. At the time of writing this Business Plan I will have been in post as the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for 12 months. I set out my vision for the PPO in our [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#). The key objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan are still very much my priority for the next year, and I look forward to working with colleagues and stakeholders to deliver them.

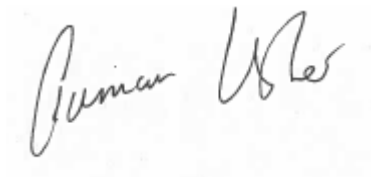
Over the past 12 months, my teams have done a lot of work raising the profile of the PPO to those who use our services and making sure we are visible and accessible. As part of this work, last year, we renamed our service investigating complaints from prisoners and those in youth custody to Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations (IPCI). This year, we will continue to raise awareness of IPCI with prisoners, but also focus on those who want or need to raise complaints with us from the other services in remit, including those in immigration detention and under probation supervision. We receive relatively low numbers of complaints from these groups, and we are committed to understanding why and addressing any challenges and barriers they may experience in making complaints.

As Ombudsman, I have been clear that the PPO needs to be more transparent and as a result we now publish complaint summaries and announce fatal incident investigations on our website. We are currently developing a new website which we hope will meet the needs of all users and enable us to share more information with you, in an accessible way.

I have been clear that identifying and disseminating learning is something of real value that the PPO offers to services in remit, and I am pleased that we have a team dedicated to doing this. I am excited to announce that, this year, the team will be looking at learning from complaints about property handling in prisons, which has been the highest subject of complaint to the PPO for many years.

As well as all of the above, this Business Plan, of course, focuses on continuing to conduct high-quality investigations and drive areas of improvement.

The PPO's staff are vital to us being able to meet our objectives, and I am keen that we invest in their learning and development. I am extremely grateful for all the hard work and dedication shown by the PPO's staff and look forward to what we can achieve over the next year.



Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

May 2024

About the PPO

The role of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman is to carry out independent investigations into complaints and deaths in custody. We provide this service for prisoners, young people in detention, those under probation supervision and individuals detained under immigration powers (detained individuals).

The purpose of our investigations is to understand what happened, to correct injustices and to identify learning for the organisations whose actions we oversee so that the PPO makes a significant contribution to safer, fairer custody and community supervision.

Strategic goal

To deliver high quality and timely independent investigations and work closely with partners to deliver tangible benefits for the safety and confidence of those in custody and under community supervision.

Function

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) is appointed by and reports directly to the Secretary of State for Justice. The Ombudsman's office is wholly independent of the services in remit, which include His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), Prisoner Escort and Custody Services; the Home Office (Immigration Enforcement); the Youth Justice Board; and those local authorities and voluntary organisations who administer secure youth detention accommodation. It is also operationally independent of, but sponsored by, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ).

The roles and responsibilities of the PPO are set out in their Terms of Reference (ToR)¹.

The PPO has three main investigative duties:

- To investigate deaths of prisoners, young people in detention, approved premises' residents and individuals detained under immigration powers (detained individuals), due to any cause.
- To investigate deaths of recently released prisoners that occur within 14 days of release from prison (except homicide)
- To investigate complaints made by prisoners, young people in detention², offenders under probation supervision and detained individuals.

Complaints from prisoners and young people in custody are investigated by Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations (IPCI). IPCI is part of the PPO.

Resource

The PPO is a demand-led organisation and to deliver our goals we need to have staff in the right roles, equipped with appropriate expertise and skills. We are waiting for

¹ <https://www.ppo.gov.uk/about/vision-and-values/terms-of-reference/>

² The PPO investigates complaints from young people detained in secure accommodation such as secure training centres (STCs) and young offender institutions (YOIs). Its remit does not include complaints from young people in secure children's homes (SCHs) or secure schools.

confirmation of our allocated budget for 2024/25. This will include funding from the MOJ and the Home Office.

Strategic objectives 2023-26

Our key strategic objectives for 2023-26 are set out under four themes:

1. To be visible, accessible and transparent to service users and stakeholders.
2. To deliver investigative excellence in a timely manner.
3. To increase the impact of our work on the actions of services in remit and the day to day lives of those in custody.
4. To use our resources efficiently and effectively.

This plan sets out the priorities for the Ombudsman and our staff for 2024/25.

Strategic objectives 2023-26 and priorities for 2024-25

Objective 1: Be visible, accessible, and transparent to service users and stakeholders.

- We will increase awareness of the PPO amongst those in custody, so they know how to use our services.
- We will raise awareness of the PPO in the immigration estate and to those under probation supervision.
- We will improve the understanding of the PPO's role to those who use our services and services in remit.
- We will improve relationships with those who use our services and services in remit to increase confidence in the PPO.
- We will review and improve our processes to ensure that the PPO is accessible.
- We will be more transparent about our investigation findings and data, promoting learning within the services in our remit.

2024-25 priorities	Measure of success (2024-25)
Continue to promote IPCI to those in prison and the youth estate.	Launch of an IPCI video for prisoners and a good practice in handling complaints video for prison staff. Development of further IPCI promotional material.
Launch IPCI ambassadors across the prison estate (a scheme where prisoners support others in effectively using IPCI).	IPCI ambassador scheme launched, with 10 pilot sites operating by the end of the second quarter and the scheme expanded to 40 sites by the end of the business year.
Carry out a programme of visits to Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) and run workshops with detained individuals to raise awareness of the PPO complaints process and understand any barriers.	Increased number of complaints from those in IRCs. Increased eligibility of complaints from detained individuals. Identified and implemented any learning for the IRCs and PPO to improve access to the complaints process.
Carry out a programme of engagement with probation services and those under probation supervision to raise awareness of the PPO complaints process and understand any barriers.	Increased number of complaints from those under probation supervision. Increased eligibility of complaints from those under probation supervision. Improvements made to remove any identified barriers.

	Identified and implemented any learning for probation and PPO to improve access to the complaints process.
As part of the engagement activities, implement a proactive and targeted communications strategy to increase awareness of the PPO to those under probation supervision and detained individuals.	Developed and implemented a communications strategy aimed at those under probation and those in Immigration Removal Centres.
Continue to raise awareness of IPCI with young people and women in prison.	<p>Learning and recommendations from IPCI's work within the youth and women's estate to be shared and discussed with services in remit.</p> <p>Learning and recommendations to be implemented.</p>
Publish a Race Action Plan with a renewed focus on service users.	Demonstrable understanding of how PPO services are affecting minority ethnic groups.
Develop and embed a robust and consistent approach to investigating issues relating to diversity and inclusion.	Development of a consistent investigation methodology to identify discriminatory behaviour.
Respond to all Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests within the prescribed timescales.	Success will be measured against a target of 100% of FOI and Subject Access Requests being completed on time.
Launch a new PPO website, providing accessible and transparent information.	New PPO website launched.
Publish information and guidance about how the PPO carry out investigations.	Publish the PPO's investigation methodology for complaints and fatal incident investigations.

Objective 2: We will deliver investigative excellence in a timely manner.

- We will improve the timeliness of our investigations and reports by ensuring a robust and proportionate approach to investigations.
- We will provide up-to-date guidance to support our staff in carrying out investigations.
- We will develop a continuous improvement model to aid the sharing of internal learning with staff.

2024-25 priorities	Measure of success (2024-25)
<p>Meet the following timeliness targets for all fatal incident investigations:</p> <p>Initial reports: Natural cause deaths: Complete our investigation and issue our initial report within 20 weeks (100 working days) of the PPO being notified of the death.</p> <p>All other fatal incident cases: Complete our investigation and issue our initial report within 26 weeks (130 working days) of the PPO being notified of the death.</p> <p>Final reports: Finalise all fatal incident investigation reports within 12 weeks (60 working days) of the initial report.</p> <p>Publication: Produce and publish anonymised reports for fatal incident investigations within 10 working days of being notified that the inquest has concluded and the investigation report has been finalised.</p>	<p>Business targets will have been met if at least 90% of fatal incident reports are delivered to time and there is no longer a backlog of fatal incident investigations awaiting initial report.</p> <p>Business target will have been met if at least 90% of anonymised fatal incident reports are published on the website on time.</p>
<p>Meet the following timeliness targets for all complaints investigations:</p> <p>Eligibility: We will determine the eligibility of all complaints within 10 working days of receipt.</p> <p>Standard complaints: Complete our investigation and submit our initial report for consultation for standard complaints within 12 weeks (60 working days) of accepting the complaint as eligible.</p> <p>Complex complaints: Complete our investigation and submit our initial report for consultation for complex complaints within 26 weeks (130 working days) of accepting the complaint as eligible.</p>	<p>Business targets will have been met if at least 90% of complaints assessments are completed on time.</p> <p>Business targets will have been met if at least 90% of standard and complex complaints investigations are completed on time.</p>
<p>Continue to review the investigation approaches and report templates for all types of fatal incident investigations to</p>	<p>Report templates reviewed.</p>

ensure they are proportionate, and we are delivering investigative excellence.	
Develop operational manuals for fatal incident and complaint investigations to provide more accessible and up-to-date guidance to support our staff in carrying out their work.	<p>Production of operational manuals for fatal incident and complaints investigations.</p> <p>Process in place to ensure operational manuals are kept up to date.</p>
Extend and embed the investigative approach to post-release death investigations.	<p>Continuous improvement in investigation methodology for post-release death investigations.</p> <p>Greater joint working with relevant stakeholders to maximise the impact of post-release death investigations.</p> <p>Improved levels of wider stakeholder engagement beyond HMPPS.</p>
Develop and embed an approach for identifying and sharing learning internally with staff, including learning from prevention of future death (PFD) reports and PPO surveys.	<p>PFD reports are regularly reviewed, and any learning is shared internally.</p> <p>Process embedded for identifying and sharing learning from PPO surveys.</p>

Objective 3: Increase the impact of our work on the actions of the services in our remit and the day to day lives of those in custody.

- We will make custody and community supervision safer and fairer by identifying and sharing thematic and real-time learning from our investigations.
- We will work with others to improve the complaints processes within services in remit to encourage complaints to be resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- We will review our approach to making recommendations to ensure they have impact.
- We will use our evidence base to target our thematic work to where it is needed the most.
- We will hold services in remit to account.
- We will work collaboratively with partners to increase our collective impact.

2024-25 priorities	Measure of success (2024-25)
Produce thematic learning publications and hold stakeholder engagement sessions to share learning from investigations and increase the PPO's impact.	<p>The publication of four themed learning publications and two Policy into Practice publications.</p> <p>Recommendations from our learning</p>

	<p>lesson bulletins are accepted by the relevant services in remit.</p> <p>Each learning product has a stakeholder engagement plan that is implemented in a timely manner to encourage a collaborative and problem-solving approach to the learning identified.</p>
Implement proactive and targeted communications plans to ensure publications are widely disseminated and have impact.	Each learning product has a unique, targeted and proactive communications plan and the success of each communications plan is measured.
Carry out a review of findings from prison property complaint investigations and share learning with HMPPS, with a view to improving property handling in prisons.	Publication of the learning from property investigations and discussions with HMPPS to demonstrate how and where improvements could be made.
Continue to develop and establish effective partnerships with stakeholders to share expertise, learning and increase impact.	<p>This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint communications. • Introduction of joint forums. • Working with stakeholders to effect policy changes. • Working with stakeholders to make improvements to working practices.
Continue to use learning from our investigations to influence national policies within the services in remit.	PPO responds to relevant policy consultations with influential evidence.
Review approach to making recommendations following a complaint investigation to identify systemic and endemic issues, improve the impact of our recommendations and drive system-wide change.	Increase in complaints recommendations requiring policy changes.

Objective 4: We will use our resources efficiently and effectively.

- We will become a data-led organisation.
- We will invest in and support our people to develop their skills and capability.
- We will embed an effective performance management approach.
- We will improve our I.T. to enable us to use our resources more efficiently and effectively.

- We will work with our partners and stakeholders to embrace digital working and new technology to provide a more efficient, effective, and inclusive service.

2024-25 priorities	Measure of success (2024-25)
We will use our skills and expertise to carry out special investigations when commissioned to do so.	Effective and efficient delivery of Operation Deerness (a special investigation into Medomsley Detention Centre).
Develop and implement a knowledge management strategy that promotes effective and efficient knowledge sharing within the PPO.	Knowledge management strategy embedded.
Develop and introduce a digital learning and knowledge hub to promote and share training, learning and knowledge across the PPO.	New internal site introduced and promoted across the PPO.
Establish an effective performance management approach.	Performance management framework embedded.
Identify training needs across the organisation and develop a training programme for both new and existing staff.	<p>An evaluation of current training needs for existing staff carried out with any recommendations implemented.</p> <p>Development of a training programme for new and existing staff.</p> <p>Development of a process for monitoring Continuous Professional Development (CPD) / training that is carried out.</p>
Establish an approach for reviewing allocation of resources against demand to enable the PPO to remain resilient to and respond to fluctuations in workload.	Development of a model to understand resource requirements against incoming workload.
Continue to refine and improve our databases, data collection and data management to improve methods for monitoring casework and identifying trends/themes. This will involve exploring the use of new software or methods for analysing and understanding PPO data.	<p>Demonstrable improvements made to data recording, collection and management.</p> <p>Use of data dashboards to become business as usual across the PPO.</p>
Review the PPO's approach to family liaison to further understand the needs of bereaved families and the resource allocation requirements.	Review carried out and any changes implemented.

<p>Continue to improve and embed the PPO's approach to business continuity and risk management.</p>	<p>Production of a business continuity plan and raise and maintain staff awareness of business continuity principles.</p> <p>Introduce tools and approaches for maintaining business continuity and risk management.</p> <p>Undertake a business continuity exercise.</p>
<p>Explore the use of new technology and digital working as a means of communicating with those who use our services.</p>	<p>Introduction of new technology to communicate with those who use our services.</p>



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