

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

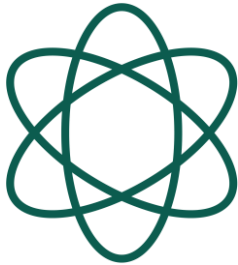
Strategic Plan

2022/23



Our vision

To carry out independent investigations to make custody and community supervision safer and fairer



Our values

We are:

Impartial: we do not take sides

Respectful: we are considerate and courteous

Inclusive: we value diversity

Dedicated: we are determined and focused

Fair: we are honest and act with integrity



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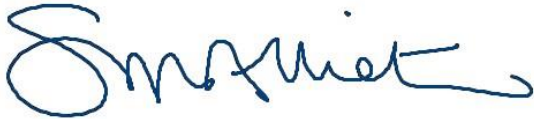
Ombudsman's Foreword

I am publishing this Strategic Plan in June 2022 to cover the period to November 2023. Our Strategic Plan usually covers a three-year period, however we have opted for a shorter duration for this Plan due to my imminent departure as the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and to enable the incoming Ombudsman to have an input into the future strategic direction of the PPO.

We have reviewed the four strategic themes we set out in our previous plan, and we agree that they remain relevant and should continue to inform our priorities for the current year.

The four strategic themes are confidence, effectiveness, impact and efficiency.

As well as our focus on these four themes, we have confirmed our commitment to, and emphasis on, diversity and inclusion. Our [Race Action Plan](#), which has been published on our website, sets out what we will do to be a truly inclusive organisation where our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues are empowered to reach their full potential and where they feel valued and respected.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sue McAllister', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sue McAllister CB
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

June 2022

Statement of Purpose

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's office exists to carry out independent investigations into complaints and deaths in custody. Our service is in respect of 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.

Strategic Goal

To carry out effective and independent investigations to help make custody and community supervision safer and fairer.

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 those provided by Her 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).

The PPO has three main investigative duties:

- Complaints made by prisoners, young people in secure accommodation¹, offenders under probation supervision, and individuals detained under immigration powers.
- Deaths of prisoners, young people in secure accommodation, approved premises' residents and detained individuals due to any cause. This also includes neonatal deaths and stillbirths that occur in prisons or in hospital following a transfer from prison.
- The investigation of deaths of recently released prisoners².

¹ 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).

² This refers to a pilot in which the PPO are investigating all deaths (except homicide) that occur within 14 days of release from prison.

Context

This section makes some assumptions about the kind of environment the PPO will be working in over the period of this plan, from June 2022 to November 2023, and what would have a direct impact on the strategic priorities of the Ombudsman.

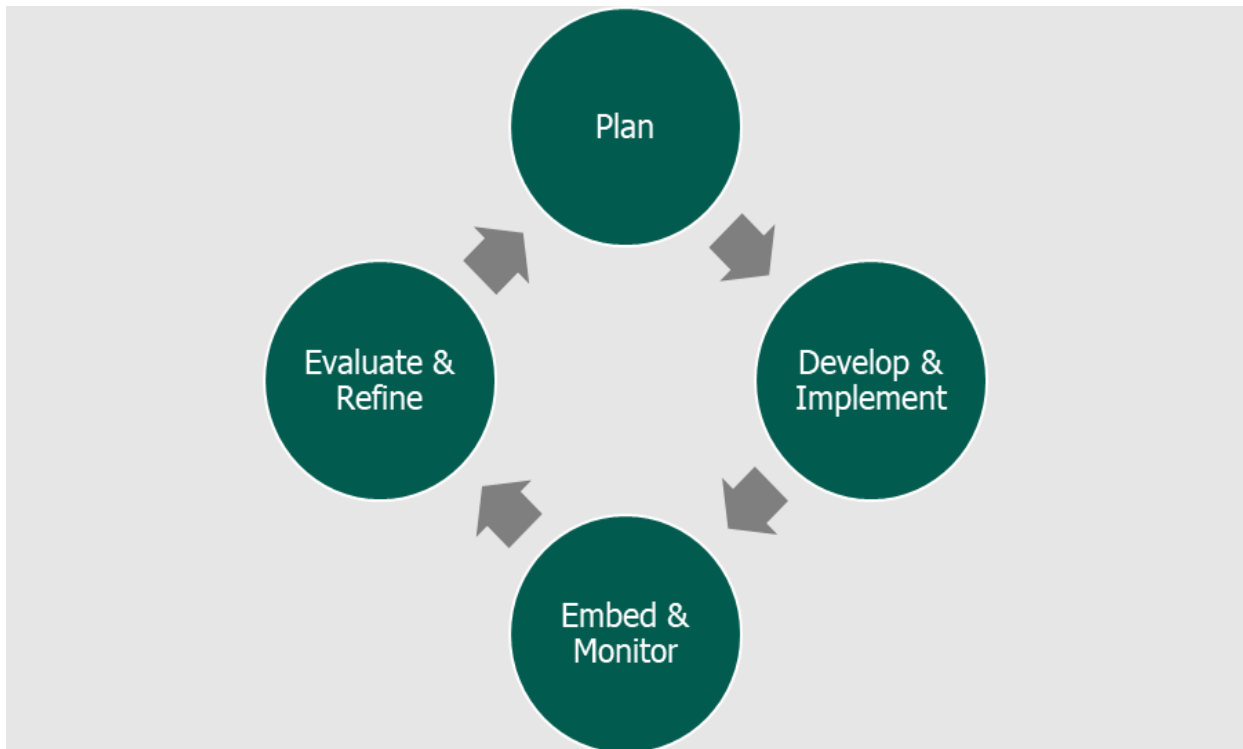
- The PPO's adjustment to a hybrid pattern of working.
- The ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the services in remit.
- Continued change across the services in remit, including updated prison safety and security policies, as well as consideration around future prison regimes.
- The projected increase in prison population and the impact of this on the PPO's workload and resources.
- Ongoing relationships with investigation partners, for example NHS England and NHS Improvement, requiring us to work together to accomplish our shared goals with maximum efficiency and to a high standard.

The Plan

The key activities under this Strategic Plan are set out under each of these themes:

- Confidence
- Effectiveness
- Impact
- Efficiency

The Approach



PPO's Strategic Plan 2022/23

Confidence

Improve the confidence of our stakeholders in our role as an independent, impartial and fair investigative body and complaints resolution service.

Confidence in our independence, impartiality and fairness is essential to the acceptance and impact of our recommendations, as well as being crucial to encouraging complainants to raise concerns in the first place. It is therefore vital that we foster this confidence among all our stakeholders including complainants, bereaved families, staff and management in the services in remit, and other interested parties.

- We will seek opportunities to improve our relationships with services in remit in order to increase awareness of learning from PPO investigations and facilitate effective implementation of recommendations by frontline staff.
- We will seek opportunities to improve relationships with those who use our services to increase awareness of, and confidence in, the PPO.
- We will continue to seek legislative opportunity for placing the Ombudsman's role on a statutory footing.

Effectiveness

Empower staff to continually review and improve the quality and timeliness of our investigations and resulting reports ensuring a robust and proportionate approach.

Investigating all eligible complaints and fatal incidents in our remit in a timely and proportionate manner requires continual focus. It remains a priority area for the PPO to identify ways to improve performance.

- We will work with staff to adopt a continuous improvement methodology to maximise effectiveness across the office.
- We will use feedback from stakeholders, complainants and bereaved families to improve our operational effectiveness.
- We will promote diversity and inclusion, and support and empower our staff to develop professionally, achieve their potential and drive success.

Impact

Focus on the outcomes of investigations and increase the impact of our work on the actions of services in remit and the day to day lives of those in custody.

A key concern of the PPO is that we have been identifying the same lessons and making the same recommendations to services in remit for many years and we continue to do so. If our investigations are to make a difference, we need to be even more outcome focused and identify actions we can take to ensure services in remit address the failings that we have identified.

- We will produce thematic material and share learning from our investigations to drive changes and improvements in services in remit.
- We will review our approach to making recommendations, including looking at the wording and prioritisation, to ensure they are achievable and can be implemented.
- We will review our definition of a repeat recommendation and develop effective means of tracking repeat recommendations and holding services in remit to account.
- We will explore how we can present our recommendations and learning in a clear, thematic way on our website
- We will explore options for working collaboratively with HM Inspectorate of Prisons, the Independent Monitoring Boards, HM Inspectorate of Probation and the Independent Advisory Panel for Deaths in Custody, in order to magnify our voices and to increase our collective impact.

- We will use our evidence base to target our services to where they are needed most.
- We will use thematic learning from our investigations and pilots, including the post release death investigations pilot, to influence policy development in the MoJ and services in remit.
- We will improve reporting on the outcomes achieved as a result of the PPO's work.

Efficiency

Use our resources efficiently and effectively.

The work of the PPO is demand led and so the office must respond to all eligible complaints and deaths in remit. It is therefore difficult to predict the volume of work that will come into the office at any one time. This means the bulk of our budget pays for staff to support our operational delivery. Changes to financial allocation have a direct impact on the number and type of staff that we employ. To operate efficiently within existing constraints, we will continue to monitor our resources and spending.

- We must identify actions that will allow us to use our existing resources with maximum efficiency and support improvements in delivery. This will ensure that we remain resilient to and can respond robustly to fluctuations in workload.
- We will develop a knowledge management strategy that promotes and supports effective and efficient knowledge sharing within the PPO.
- We will work with our partners and stakeholders to embrace digital working and new technology to provide a more efficient, effective, environmentally friendly, and inclusive service.

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