



**NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
1 APRIL 2011 – 31 MARCH 2014**

1. Introduction

1.1 Effective communication will enable the Board to continue to be responsive to the needs of the community in respect of police service delivery and accountability.

1.2 This Communication Strategy supports the Board's 2011-2014 Corporate Plan which sets out the Board's Strategic Vision and Priorities over the next 3 years.

Communications forms a key element of this Plan and activities identified in this Strategy will be aligned to, and support delivery of the Board's programme of work.

1.3 Through its communication activities, the Board has given priority to raising public awareness of its role, responsibilities and membership; explaining how it is delivering on its responsibility to hold the Chief Constable to account on all aspects of policing in Northern Ireland; and making sure that policing services are being improved for the benefit of the public and delivering value for money.

1.4 The strategy outlines a communication approach which will assist with Board positioning on key issues, taking into account the needs of a number of key stakeholders, which will help raise the Board's profile and demonstrate outcomes. Everyone with the Board has an important role to play in the communication process and a corporate approach to communications remains central to overall reputational management.

1.5 The following sections set out the key elements of the strategy:

- Objectives
- Audience
- Messages
- Communication activities
- Capacity to deliver
- Timescales
- Evaluation

2. Communication Objectives

2.1 This strategy aims to serve as a framework to guide decisions and communications support to strategic and organisational priorities. The Board has a number of legislative responsibilities driving its activities to which its 4 Corporate Objectives relate, and a specific target has been set in the Corporate Plan to communicate in a timely way which adds value to policing.

- To increase public awareness and understanding of the role, work and membership of the Northern Ireland Policing Board;
- To increase understanding of policing issues and the work of PSNI among key audiences and encourage confidence in policing.
- To support internal communications.

3. Audience

3.1 Through its work Board members and officials engage and communicate with a wide range of audiences. Specific programmes of Board work will be directed at particular audience groups and communications will be tailored to inform on key issues and messages identified as relevant. A list of key audiences is attached at Appendix 1.

4 Messages

4.1 Policing and police service delivery remains an issue of significant public and media attention. As the body responsible for police oversight and accountability, the Policing Board must present and represent a strong public image on policing issues; influencing and engaging with those who have the power to voice strong opinion or take decisions on key issues. The Board has a unique role in that it is solely responsible for policing oversight and accountability and also has an important advocacy role to play on issues that contribute to police service effectiveness, efficiency, partnership working and overall service delivery. If the Board does not voice opinion no one else will speak for it. It is therefore essential that the Board communicates in a timely manner and in a way which adds value to policing.

4.2 The Board collectively must work to ensure that its place in the policing architecture is understood within policing, with key audiences and stakeholders; and demonstrate the value that the Board brings.

4.3 Whilst key messages will be developed to support particular areas of work, there are a number of core messages that will be used in communication activity. These are attached at Appendix 2.

5 Communications Activities

5.1 In delivering the strategy and supporting the work of the organisation a number of communication methods will be applied. As part of its annual programme of work opportunities for raising awareness of issues and events should be agreed by the Board and its Committees.

5.1.2 **Media Relations:** the Board must be proactive in its media engagement, building and developing good relations between the media, the Board and its Members. The media provide an essential means for both positioning the Board on key issues and communicating with the wider public. Board Members must be able and available to engage with the media and meet interview requests. In planning for events and issues of public interest briefing sessions will be used to increase media awareness and knowledge of the Board's work.

News releases and statements will be issued on key Board issues, including information flowing from Board and Committee meetings; and other events organised by the Board. In addition, opportunities for media features, profiles, interviews and platform pieces to focus on specific aspects of the Board's work and profiling Board members will be explored, as will specific media activity to target positive milestones for the Board.

- 5.1.3 **Photography** – opportunities to secure coverage in traditional and social media and other journals on the back on Board events; visits; launches, meetings will be exploited. This will include the use of video clips from Board meetings and other events being streamed over the Board’s Facebook page (and Website – subject to IT restrictions).
- 5.1.4 **Keynote speaking events** – speaking opportunities at relevant events will be used to inform of key positions.
- 5.1.5 **Events/Seminars/Exhibitions** - opportunities to inform audiences through seminars, exhibitions conferences and other face-to-face opportunities will be explored.
- 5.1.6 **Website/Online Communications/Social Media** - activity in respect of online communications will continue to be developed and where in house restrictions apply, a social media partner will be engaged to assist with interactive communications and engagement. ‘Policing Matters’, the Board’s e-newsletter will be linked to inform this work.
- 5.1.7 **Advertising** - advertising opportunities will be considered for awareness raising of the Board and key policing issues. Support for campaigns on key issues associated with policing may also be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.1.8 **Publications** - the Board produces a range of publications to support the organisation’s objectives. Publications will be produced to meet business needs and reach identified audiences. Publications may be made available in formats to those not fluent in English.

5.1.9 **Community Engagement / Consultation / Outreach** - the Board must listen to all its stakeholders and audiences and seek to consult and engage them whenever appropriate and practicable: communications activity will support this work.

5.1.10 **Corporate Identity** – the Board has in place corporate style guidelines which ensure that all internal and external visual communications meet established guidelines.

6. **Capacity to Deliver**

6.1 The Board through its Senior Management Team is responsible for agreeing key strategic issues and messages; and supporting the implementation of this Strategy.

6.2 A programme of action to advance the objectives contained in the strategy will be developed. This programme will include specific activities with clear timescales: the timings of individual activities will naturally depend on progress in other work areas and available resources. The following issues will also be considered:

- **Resources**
- **Media and Communication Skills Training**
- **Media Policy**
- **Board Values and Ethics/Statutory Responsibilities**

6.2.2 **Resources** - Everyone within the organisation has a part to play in communications activity. Three full time staff support this area of work. Budgets to deliver communications activity will be agreed by Board and Senior Management Team as part of the annual business planning process.

6.2.3 **Media and Communication Skills Training**

All those involved in communication activities must have the skills to do the job. Media and presentation skills courses will be offered, where necessary and appropriate to Board Members and senior officials.

6.2.4 **Media Policy**

The Board's media policy is contained within Standing Orders and states that the Chairperson is the official spokesperson of the Board, but can delegate this function to other Members where it is considered desirable or appropriate when dealing with specific subjects against a pre-determined brief. The Chairperson of a Committee may comment publicly on a specific subject directly relating to the work of the Committee and consistent with the Committee's position on the subject in question. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson or the Chief Executive may determine what information is to be made public.

6.2.5 **Board Values / Statutory Responsibilities and Ethics**

All those who speak on behalf of the Board are expected to uphold accepted professional standards and ethics. This policy also applies to Board staff who shall also act professionally, and remain politically neutral, in carrying out communication activities on behalf of the Board. The following guiding principles will be considered as part of all activity:

- **Open and Transparent:** The Board is committed to openness and transparency in all its communications activities and in line with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.
- **Clear, Concise and in Plain Language:** The Board will seek to ensure that all its communications are easily understood by using clear, concise and plain language.

- **Deliver Value for Money:** All communications should be efficient and effective with an emphasis placed on value for money. This should involve carefully choosing communication tools and activities to ensure maximum impact and overall effectiveness.
- **Based on Equality:** The Board is committed to equality in all its communications and activities should be inclusive and informed by the need to promote equality of opportunity. This should include systems in place to ensure that information is available in accessible formats, and in a timely fashion, where it is appropriate and practicable to do so, including provision for consultation and engagement with relevant interest groups

7. Timescales

7.1 Set out at Appendix 3 is a list of key strategic areas that the Board will be focusing on over the next 3 years. This will be subject to ongoing review.

8. Evaluation

8.1 All communication activity will be reviewed and assessed with a bi-annual report on activity presented to Committee. Reports on key launches will be presented to individual Committees.

- Media coverage
- Web and social networking statistics
- Annual survey of stakeholders.

<p>Policing Board</p> <p>Board Chair and Vice Chair</p> <p>Board Members</p> <p>Chief Executive and Senior Management Team</p> <p>Board staff</p> <p>Board Reference Groups</p> <p>Custody Visiting Volunteers</p> <p>District Policing Partnerships (Police and Community Safety Partnerships) Members and staff</p> <p>Independent Vetting Panel Member</p>	<p>General public (as segmented by community background, religion, age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and socio economic background)</p> <p>Political representatives – local, national and international</p> <p>Government and statutory bodies</p> <p>Trade unions</p> <p>Opinion formers – locally, nationally and internationally</p> <p>Campaign and pressure groups</p> <p>Community representatives</p> <p>Business representatives</p> <p>Educational bodies</p> <p>Statutory and voluntary agencies</p>
	<p>Media</p> <p>Print</p> <p>Broadcast</p> <p>Political commentators and feature editors</p> <p>Online and social media</p> <p>Specialist publications</p>
<p>Policing</p> <p>Chief Constable and Chief Officer Team</p> <p>Police officers and support staff</p> <p>Police Federation and staff associations</p> <p>Association of Chief Police Officers</p>	<p>Key Stakeholders</p> <p>Minister of Justice</p> <p>Department of Justice</p> <p>Member of Justice Committee</p> <p>Police Ombudsman</p> <p>Criminal Justice Inspector</p> <p>Human Rights Commissioner</p> <p>Victims Commissioner</p>

KEY MESSAGES

- The Board's job is to oversee policing in Northern Ireland and to hold the Chief Constable to account for service delivery to the public.
- The Board is working to ensure that the community gets a good police service. Policing is a public service and its customers, the public have the right to get a consistently good service.
- Through its work, the Board wants to encourage people to have confidence in policing; and in asking the questions and getting answers, the Board seeks to improve the quality of policing in Northern Ireland; and ensure the public can have confidence in policing.
- The Board works with the police to ensure there are enough resources to deliver effective and efficient policing and value for money.
- When the police get it wrong, the Board will make sure lessons have been learnt and how, in future, police policies and practice will change.
- The Board's work is based on fairness, equality and promoting good relations.
- Policing has been through significant reform, and whilst there is still work to do, the focus is now on building the service to the community.

COMMUNICATION MILESTONES AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
April	Final meeting of the 2007/11 Policing Board		
May	Annual police performance statistics publication	Annual police performance statistics publication	Annual police performance statistics publication
June	Reconstitution of the Policing Board Annual Report publication	Thematic Review Publication Annual Report publication	Thematic Review Publication Annual Report publication
July	Gender Action Plan Publication LGB&T Thematic Report		
August	Custody Visiting Annual Report		
September	Parades Report		
October			
November	Introduction of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships 10-Year Anniversary of PSNI/Establishment of NI Policing Board		
December	ICVA National Custody Visiting Conference		

January	Human Rights Annual Report 2011	Human Rights Annual Report 2012	Human Rights Annual Report 2013
February			
March	Annual Policing Plan 2012-2015	Annual Policing Plan 2013-2016	Annual Policing Plan 2014-2017

KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES 2011-2014

- Reconstitution of the Policing Board
- Police Budget and Resources
- Community Engagement and Public Confidence in Policing
- Policing with the Community Strategy 2020
- Police Performance and scrutiny reports
- Human Rights and policing
- Professional and ethical standards.
- Introduction of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

In addition to these strategic issues, there are a number of ongoing issues for the Board including:

- Independent Assessment Report implementation and organisational review
- Anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drugs abuse, & night-time economy concerns
- Burglary, Domestic Violence, Racist & Homophobic Attacks
- Threat of, incidence of and response to terrorist & paramilitary incidents
- Parades
- Use of Force
- PSNI Training, Education & Development Strategy
- Public Services College development
- PSNI People Strategy
- PSNI Estates Strategy
- PSNI Gender Action Plan and Diversity Strategy
- PSNI IT Strategy
- PSNI procurement issues
- PSNI Communications Strategy
- Organised Crime