



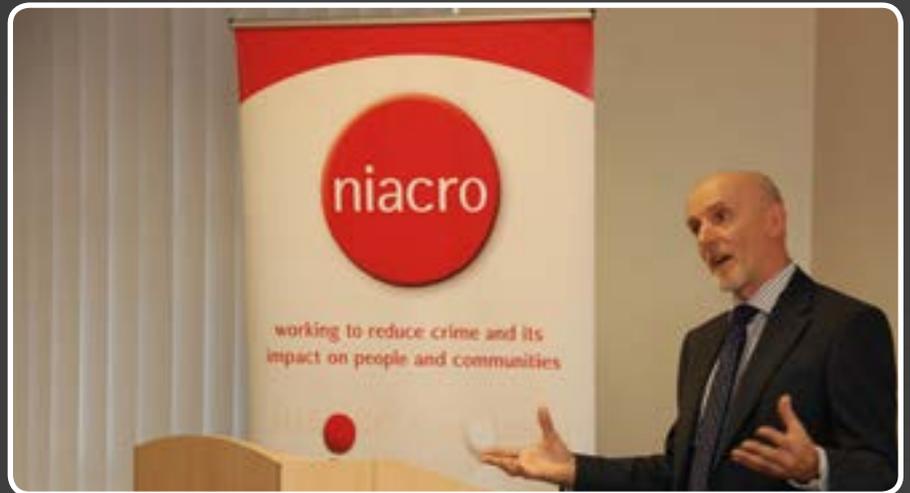
# Corporate PLAN 2015-2018

Strategic Framework COMMUNITY  
COMMUNITIES STAFF **JUSTICE** Accountability REFORM RESULTS  
organisation **Dignity** community challenges goals  
reducing crime **COMMITTED** Planning Anti-violence Early Intervention  
RISK Youth Justice Review **Strategic** **GOVERNANCE** CITIZENSHIP  
Co-operation POLICY Aims Awareness **Values** VOLUNTEERS  
Victims of Crime

Working to reduce crime and its impact  
on people and communities

The logo consists of a red circle with the word "niacro" written in white lowercase letters inside it.

niacro



*Bob Ashford addressing our AGM, November 2013.*

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 @niacro\_



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*Local representatives at the official opening of our southern area office in Portadown, December 2013.*

# Introduction

## **This Corporate Plan sets out what NIACRO will do in the years 2015-2018.**

We enter the three year period it relates to knowing that this document has been published in one of the most turbulent times the voluntary and community sector has ever experienced.

While cuts to the third sector were expected, the funding environment going forward is much more volatile than many had anticipated. It is in this context that this plan has been written with a focus on ensuring we continue to deliver our vital work to those who need it most, with the aim of reducing crime and its impact on people and communities. The immediate and lasting impacts of cuts to services and support for those affected by – or at risk of becoming involved in – the criminal justice system will inform our actions over the next few years.

Despite the financial pressures that have been evidenced recently, NIACRO will continue to advocate on behalf of those in the criminal justice system who have little or no voice. With less service provision and a criminal justice system under significant financial pressure, we are likely to see an increase in those who will be affected by crime. The marginalisation of individuals and families in the criminal justice system risks being intensified as austerity deepens, and so our role as advocates and policy influencers has never been more important.

In recent years, we have sought to influence policy in a range of areas, including prison reform, the criminal records regime, hate crime, and diversionary services for young people and adults. We will continue to advocate on behalf of our service users and their families across relevant policy topics, and seek to ensure that the challenging economic climate does not have an adverse impact on what progress has been made in reforming our criminal justice system.

The necessary restructuring of our organisation brings a renewed focus to three service delivery areas: children and young people; families; and adults.

These three areas are based on our experience of service delivery and are underpinned by the following principles:

- early intervention to prevent the development of offending behaviour should be a priority for the criminal justice system and across all government departments;
- access to stable accommodation is a key factor in reducing the risk of reoffending;
- ensuring that people have the requisite finances and money management skills contributes to the stability of individuals and families;
- accessing the labour market through education, training and employment programmes reduces offending behaviour in particular and crime in general; and
- supporting families to maintain positive and appropriate relationships with imprisoned relatives contributes to the reduction of offending behaviour and helps families to cope with the 'silent sentence' they serve in the community, enabling families to provide effective support to children separated from their parent and help mitigate the mental health, educational and developmental impact of separation.

The economic context and changes in legislation may impact on these areas. However, our experience of more than 40 years of service delivery has taught us just how critical these elements are in contributing to effective resettlement.

Our people are the backbone of this organisation. Everything we do is underpinned by a commitment to develop our staff, volunteers and peer mentors who reward NIACRO with their outstanding dedication to our service users. In addition, our Executive Committee is comprised of talented members who provide a valuable oversight and scrutiny role.

This Corporate Plan period will be challenging. The financial health of the organisation going forward will be critical to the delivery of the results projected in this document. However, we will continue to demonstrate the contribution we make to reducing crime and use our resources effectively to achieve our aim.

As the third sector adapts to the changing funding landscape, there is also potential to work closely with colleagues in other organisations to achieve common goals and minimise the impact of reduced services. We are committed to exploring this potential and pooling resources to attain further efficiencies and maintain high quality service delivery.

We look forward to the challenges the next three years may bring and believe this Corporate Plan will help us achieve our goals.

*Olwen Lyner*

**Olwen Lyner**

Chief Executive

*Sid McDowell*

**Sid McDowell**

Chair



## Our Vision

Our vision is of a society in which the needs and rights of all citizens, including victims of crime, adults and children who offend and those who are at risk of offending, are equally respected.

## Mission Statement

We will work to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities.



*Lucy Gampbell OBE speaking at our Justice Series seminar on children affected by parental imprisonment, March 2014.*

## Our Values

- Justice** We believe that everyone in society, including victims of crime and those who have offended, has the right to be treated fairly.
- Dignity** We respect and value the worth of every individual.
- Citizenship** We recognise that members of society have both rights and responsibilities.
- Anti-violence** We recognise and oppose violence and the threat of violence that still permeates many communities and stakeholder groups in Northern Ireland.
- Accountability** We will be accountable for all aspects of our work.

# Planning Context

Since our last Corporate Plan, the environment in which we are operating has changed dramatically – and we expect further changes. The funding landscape is more uncertain than initially expected and local Assembly elections will bring changes in policy and political leadership that are likely to impact on our work.

While we must work to progress several ongoing issues, we have identified key concerns for the incoming planning period below:

## **Funding:**

Severe cuts to departmental spending are to be expected until at least the end of this decade. We expect this to continue to have a serious impact on our service delivery, while there is also an expectation that the voluntary and community sector will be called upon to deliver more on behalf of government. Consideration will be given to alternative financial models and structures to ensure effective use of resources, and there will be a need for statutory organisations to review how they allocate expenditure.

## **Departmental Co-operation:**

The Northern Ireland Executive departments are expected to change after the 2016 Assembly elections, with a reduction in the number of departments and transfers of responsibility. This will increase the need for elected representatives and departmental officials to work collaboratively to identify and fill gaps left by reorganisation to ensure progress and knowledge is maintained. We will seek to engage with these departments from an early stage to represent the needs of our service users and promote the message of co-operation on cross-departmental issues. In particular, we will highlight the need for all departments to contribute to resettlement and early intervention to reduce offending, as required by the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending. In addition, several policy issues will require departments to work together to deliver effective services, with relevant examples including welfare reform, mental capacity, racial equality, early intervention and children's services. In the context of reduced spending, departments need to ensure they work collaboratively to meet needs and avoid both duplication of effort and the neglect of vulnerable people.

## **Criminal Justice Reform:**

We will continue to monitor the implementation of the Prison Review's 40 recommendations. Since its publication in 2011, we have engaged with stakeholders to track progress and will continue to do so, ensuring that change isn't just made at a policy level but is also tangible for people in prison and their families. In addition, we will continue to monitor progress against the recommendations of the Youth Justice Review. We are particularly concerned with Recommendation 21, which calls for people to be allowed to apply to have their criminal record reviewed and expunged of old and minor offences. This was the catalyst for our recent Off The Record campaign on childhood convictions, and we will continue to promote its message going forward.

## Strategic Aims

The whole NIACRO team – including staff, volunteers, Executive, members and peer mentors – works together to support individuals, families and communities to make positive changes.

To maximise our impact, we work in partnership with a range of statutory, voluntary and private organisations. This commitment to collaboration and partnership supports our overall aim to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities, and enables us to effectively meet our strategic aims in specific areas of work.

### Children and young people

#### NIACRO believes:

Children and young people can be diverted from the criminal justice system through support designed to meet their needs and the needs of their families.

#### Strategic aim:

To reduce anti-social and offending behaviour among those perceived to be vulnerable to offending, through our work with children, young people and their families.

#### Services:

- Delivering early intervention services to support children, young people and their families
- Representing and giving voice to the views and concerns of children and young people who use our services
- Supporting children and young people to develop their skills and make positive lifestyle choices

#### Results:

- Young people and their families engaging effectively with our early intervention services and showing increased resilience
- The views of young people from the community, custody and care represented at strategic levels
- Young people involved with our personal development services evidencing increased capacity and community engagement.

### Families

#### NIACRO believes:

People in prison and their families have the right to maintain relationships in prison and in the community; by helping families to access services, their ability to cope and to support effective resettlement is strengthened.

#### Strategic aim:

To reduce offending, and its impact, through services which provide effective support for families and children affected by imprisonment.

#### Services:

- Delivering services which support families and children to cope when a relative is imprisoned
- Supporting visiting arrangements to help maintain family relationships during imprisonment
- Supporting families affected by imprisonment to access appropriate financial advice and support

**Results:**

- Families given effective emotional and practical support
- Prison visits supported
- People helped to access mainstream services.

**Adults****NIACRO believes:**

Supporting people who have offended or who are at risk of offending to make positive choices contributes to reducing offending and anti-social behaviour.

**Strategic aim:**

To contribute to a reduction in offending and re-offending through appropriate and effective support for both adults in the community and those leaving prison.

**Services:**

- Supporting transition from custody to community to reduce the risk of reoffending
- Contributing to resettlement in the community
- Providing support and guidance for employers and service providers in relation to criminal records

- Contributing to the prevention of homelessness and supporting people to lead settled lives in the community
- Supporting peers and volunteers to contribute to service delivery

**Results:**

- Reduction in assessed risk of re-offending, based on increased take-up of co-ordinated and planned opportunities as part of the release and resettlement process
- Individuals making demonstrable personal progress through opportunities to improve their personal, social and work skills
- Increased number of employers and service providers using our services
- People whose tenancy is at risk or who have been intimidated in the community given effective support to either stay in their homes or secure appropriate alternative housing
- Peer mentors and volunteers enabled to provide support to service users.



*Simon Weston OBE supporting our Off The Record campaign on youth criminal records, January 2015.*

## Influencing Others



*The guest Policy Panel discussing key justice issues at the staff conference, October 2013.*

### Services:

- Influencing policy to reflect our service users' needs and experiences
- Engaging with politicians, public representatives and statutory organisations to promote our policy messages and advocate for change
- Communicating with stakeholders, including through the media, to increase understanding and influence opinion
- Involving service users in policy formation and influencing
- Co-ordinating and publishing topical research
- Monitoring and reporting the impact of our services

### NIACRO believes:

The knowledge and experience we gain from our work gives us the obligation, the authority and the responsibility to seek to influence policy makers, service providers and the wider public.

### Strategic aim:

To have an impact on policy and practice by communicating our key messages and engaging with relevant publics.

### Results:

- NIACRO's views and positions evident in public policy and political discussion
- Strong working relationships developed or maintained with public representatives and relevant organisations
- Stakeholders informed and supportive of our messages through effective communication
- Staff, volunteers and service users confident to represent NIACRO in public fora and to relevant authorities
- Research and reports reflects service user experiences and the impact of service engagement.

## Applying Resources Effectively

### NIACRO believes:

We must use our resources efficiently and effectively to bring maximum benefit to our service users.

### Strategic aim:

To achieve our goals through support for our staff and volunteers, and through securing and managing the necessary resources.

### Services:

- Exercising good governance
- Developing staff and volunteers
- Exercising robust financial management and proportionate control systems
- Maximising value of income through collaboration and co-operation with partner organisations

### Results:

- Commitment and contribution of our Executive Committee maximised to support NIACRO in a challenging external environment
- Staff and volunteers valued, supported, trained and developed, evidenced by the retention of Investors in People and Investing in Volunteers awards
- Demonstrably sound financial systems
- Collaboration evidenced in the design and delivery of appropriate services.



*Belfast Lord Mayor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir takes a selfie with NIACRO staff at the re-launch of our magazine NIACRO News, April 2014.*

## Governance

The activities of NIACRO are overseen by an Executive Committee made up of members with relevant experience and skills.

This group is elected at our Annual General Meeting and meets six to eight times a year on a voluntary basis.

The role of the Executive Committee is to review and have oversight of the organisation's work. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Executive Committee for the delivery of this Corporate Plan.

The Executive Committee is supported by a Finance and Audit Committee, which regularly reviews all financial processes and information.

It ensures compliance with high standards of corporate governance. External auditors and an independently commissioned process of internal audit supports this system.

In delivering the aims of the Corporate Plan, the Chief Executive and senior members of staff produce an annual business plan and report on progress against its targets to the Executive Committee on a quarterly basis.



*Our 41st AGM, November 2012.*

- **Chair:** Sid McDowell
- **Vice Chair:** Brendan Fulton
- **Treasurer:** Patrick Farry

## Corporate Plan Review 2012-15

The following section offers an overview of activities across our five key business areas in the last three years.

### Working with Children and Young People

#### Strategic Aim:

To reduce anti-social and offending behaviour among those perceived to be vulnerable to offending through our work with children, young people and their families.

education, training and employment support for young people: on this project, we worked with 108 young people, of which 57% moved on to education, training or employment.

#### Results and Evidence:

**Services delivered which support children and young people through stronger family and social relationships.**

- **Child and Parent Support (CAPS):**
  - » During the three year period, 287 families engaged with the service. We hosted the Craigavon and Banbridge Family Support Hub from 2013-14 as shadow hosts, before being officially awarded the contract in January 2014.
- **Maximising Opportunity for Voluntary Engagement (MOVE):**
  - » Our new mentoring and befriending project MOVE supported 81 vulnerable young people and we made two short films to promote and evaluate the project.
- **Independent Visitor Scheme (IV):**
  - » 141 young people who are looked after by the Belfast and Southern Trusts used the service.
- **Choose2Change and New Directions:**
  - » We worked with 185 young people including 167 new referrals; 50% moved on to education, training or employment.
  - » We also introduced the New Directions project in partnership with The Bytes Project to enhance

**Views and concerns of children and young people in vulnerable situations represented to, and recognised by, policy-makers.**

- **Independent Representation Scheme (IR):**
  - » Volunteers made weekly visits to Lakewood and responded to around 150 issues raised by the young people. We facilitated research with the young people and worked with them to produce colourful murals at the centre.
- We established a youth forum, 'Voice Box', to gather young people's views; it met at least three times each year from 2013, with 100 young people taking part.

**Evidence of our contribution to improving the personal, social, educational and employability skills of children and young people.**

- Research by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) showed 80% satisfactory completions for CAPS users in 2013-14. Users and referral agents routinely express satisfaction with the project in its annual reports.
- The 2015 evaluation of New Directions found the pilot programme made a tangible difference to the lives of the young service users: "All those interviewed would have no hesitation recommending the programme to another young person."

# Working with Adults in the Community

## Strategic Aim:

To reduce re-offending through effective support for people and communities.

## Results and Evidence:

Increased opportunities for people who have offended to enhance their employability.

- Jobtrack offered 1-2-1 intensive support to 2,501 new referrals (2,266 from PBNI); 30% moved into training or employment.
- Jobtrack Women supported more than 300 women in the community, in partnership with the Probation Board's Inspire project and the women's sector.
- We added 17 employer-led workshops on interview skills to our programme of 27 employer advice events.
- We held regular Celebration of Achievement events to mark service users' commitment to the programme.
- An independent evaluation of the project showed a return of £13.60 for every £1.00 invested.

A range of departments and agencies informed of, and encouraged to recognise their contribution to, reducing re-offending.

- We engaged with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) at operational and strategic levels to try to ensure their policies and services were as supportive as possible to our service users.

- We gave evidence to the Employment and Learning Committee Inquiry on careers advice and to the Justice Committee on the Justice Bill.
- We took part in a successful pilot of DEL's LEMIS programme; 53% of those undertaking the programme found full time work.

Increased opportunities facilitated for mainstream service providers and employers to engage successfully with people who have offended.

- We trained more than 2,500 people in best practice in recruitment and selection, with a continuous increase in demand from employers; worked intensively with Further Education colleges to reduce unfair barriers to training and education; and established links with employer networks and chambers of commerce.

# Working with People in Prison and their Families

## Strategic Aim:

To ensure the criminal justice system meets its obligations to those in prison and their families during and after imprisonment through providing and securing access to services.

## Results and Evidence:

Services delivered which effectively support people during the imprisonment of a family member.

- **Family Links:**
  - » We received 4,534 referrals, sent out 3,730 information packs, contacted 3,334 families within the target 24 hours of receiving the referral, and made 1,808 home visits.
  - » We provided bus transport for 12,179 journeys to prison, and volunteer drivers made 250 journeys.
  - » A total of 112,937 visits were made to our Visitor Centres at Hydebank and Magilligan prisons.

Effective resettlement services provided for people in prison and returning to the community.

- **Jobtrack Prisons and Through the Gate:**
  - » Approximately 1,750 people used these services, with an average of 35% moving on to education, training or employment.

- 3,478 people in prison and 884 in the community used our advice service; we delivered managing money training and produced a managing money handbook in four languages; and introduced a new service of benefits checks for families and for people preparing for release.

Increased engagement with communities to understand and support people returning from prison. Awareness raised of the needs of the children of prisoners.

- We are active members of the Children in Northern Ireland (CINI) and Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) networks. We continuously raise the issue of the 'Silent Sentence' served by families with relevant statutory services and policy-makers, through briefings, our Justice Series and in participation in conferences and other fora.
- We completed the three year Challenge Hate Crime project with a major conference and a unique publications pack of research and reports and joined the European Radicalisation Awareness Network.

## Influencing Others

### Strategic Aim:

To engage with the political, statutory, voluntary and community sectors, and with the wider public, in order to have an impact on policy and practice.

Organisational views and positions communicated effectively in policy, practice and media discourse, including by service users.

- We changed our name formally to NIACRO in recognition that the criminal justice debate is moving from the language of offending to a focus on desistance.
- We responded to 107 policy consultations, published online a range of policy briefings, and greatly increased our use of social media, significantly growing our following.
- We published seven issues of NIACRO News and conducted a review and redesign of the magazine, leading to it being named as a finalist in the Best External Publication category at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) awards.
- We actively engaged with, and responded to, press and broadcast media on issues of concern to our service users, the criminal justice system and wider society.



*Working in partnership to promote prison reform, October 2013.*

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**Effective working relationships developed or maintained with relevant organisations in all sectors locally and internationally.**

- We held seven seminars in our Justice Series, attracting political, departmental and sector representatives.
- We engaged with politicians and public representatives through oral evidence to Assembly Committees, attending party conferences and providing briefings to MLAs, including meetings on our Off The Record campaign.
- We worked in partnership with other third sector organisations to maximise our influence on policy and practice, including co-organising the international COPE network conference and engaging with various European partners through the Active Inclusion network.
- We monitored the implementation of the Prison Review and developed our role as a 'critical friend' to DOJ, NIPS, SEHSCT and the Prison Reform Oversight Group. With other third sector organisations, we organised events critically assessing the implementation of the Prison Review's recommendations, resulting in ongoing effective engagement with voluntary, statutory and political representatives. In addition, we developed our relationships with relevant organisations outside of criminal justice, including in health, social services and the voluntary sector.

**Staff and volunteers being confident to represent NIACRO with statutory organisations and other fora.**

- We enabled services users and staff to comment in the media, including on accessing education, training and employment and on healthcare in prisons, to speak publicly and on film about their experiences, and to contribute to NIACRO News.

**Carried out research, surveys and evaluations.**

- We regularly gathered feedback on our services to help improve them and direct policy. Research carried out with Family Links service users helped inform a media and policy campaign on the issue of the Silent Sentence.
- In partnership with The Bytes Project, we commissioned five research papers exploring youth justice and access to education, training and employment.

# Applying Resources Effectively

## Strategic Aim:

To continuously develop our staff and volunteers. To secure, develop and manage resources that achieve our objectives.

## Results and Evidence:

**Robust governance control exercised.**

- The Executive Committee met on 18 occasions. We produced a revised governance framework.

**Effective recruitment, training and development of staff including retention of the Investors in People award.**

- We retained the Investors in People (IIP) Silver Award in 2013-14.
- We introduced *The Niacron*, an internal e-news bulletin posted on our new Intranet to improve internal communication, and implemented a new IT system.

**Effective recruitment, training and development of volunteers, including service users, leading to retention of the Investing in Volunteers award.**

- We retained the Investing In Volunteers standard and maintained a pool of 100–150 volunteers, who took part in regular training and social events as well as their volunteer contribution.
- We developed peer mentoring, recruiting service users to share their experiences.

**Resources maximised through collaboration and co-operation; sound financial systems.**

- The Finance and Audit Committee and Management Group routinely considered financial information. The organisation reviewed its banking arrangements, received an external health and safety report and oversaw regular risk register reporting.
- We changed pension and life assurance brokers, and also completed the valuation of our premises. Our new Southern Area office was officially opened in December 2013.
- We produced a finance governance document and updated the finance procedures: these are published on the intranet for all staff. We received substantial/satisfactory ratings for all our Internal Audits. Our systems were adequate and operated effectively in relation to risk management, control and governance, thereby providing satisfactory/substantial assurance in relation to the effective and efficient achievement of NIACRO's objectives.



*Our Challenge Hate Crime Conference, September 2012.*



*Young people at the premiere of two short films about the MOVE project, May 2014.*



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 Organisations

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Working to reduce crime and its impact  
 on people and communities