

Decentralisation, Probation and Welfare Service

Headquarters to Navan

As part of the decentralisation process the Probation and Welfare Service is transferring its Headquarters to Navan. The Government decision states that one hundred staff are to move to the Navan site. As the current staff numbers attached for the Probation and Welfare Service Headquarters total 71 staff in all. A number of outlying office staff will have to be included in the overall number to make up the shortfall. The offices selected are based on the North side of Dublin adjacent to the M50.

Mission and Mandate

The Probation and Welfare Service is responsible for managing offenders in the community, providing a range of community based sanctions and developing diversionary programs for individuals who are at risk of offending.

The Probation and Welfare Service is also responsible for work with offenders in custody.

This national Service implements and supervises community sanctions for offenders referred to it by the Courts. It also provides a service to offenders in custody. The main functions it supervises are:

- Probation Orders
- Supervision on deferment of sentence
- Community Service Orders
- Supervises temporary Release Orders (made by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform)
- The Children Act, 2001 also has provisions which are implemented by the Probation and Welfare Service.

The Sex Offenders Act, 2001 requires the Probation and Welfare Service to supervise certain sex offenders on release from custody

Structures and staffing

Structures:

The staff in Smithfield can be broken down into the following teams.

1. Principal Probation and Welfare Officer and Staff.
2. The Finance and Corporate Affairs Section
3. The IT Division.
4. Research and Statistics

And the following teams

1. Circuit Court Team
2. Dublin 7,15 Team
3. Homeless Offenders Strategy
4. Sex Offenders
5. Prisons
6. Special School
7. Youth Justice
8. Community Service

Staffing:

These breakdown to the following staff numbers

Title	Staff No
Principal Probation and Welfare Officer	1
Assistant Principal Probation and Welfare Officer	8
Senior Probation and Welfare Officer	8
Probation and Welfare Officer	29

Higher Executive Officers	2
Executive Officers	3
Staff Officer	1
Clerical Officers	15
Service Officers	4

included.

1. Finglas
2. Donaghmede
3. Parnell St

Staff breakdown as follows

Title	Staff No
Senior Probation and Welfare Officer	3
Probation and Welfare Officers	17
Executive Officers	1
Clerical Officers	3.6

In order to meet our requirements under the decentralisation process the following teams will have to be

Locations

In order to provide the level of service necessary for the Dublin regions that will be transferring to the Navan office alternative accommodation or down sizing of existing premises will have to take place. This process cannot begin until a definite time frame has been put in place regarding the proposed site in Navan.

Service and outputs

The Smithfield office provides.

- The administrative core to the Service throughout the country, and liaison with the Courts, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- The IT infrastructure and staff .
- The Probation and Welfare Service staff based in Smithfield and the Dublin offices included in the decentralisation plan address the needs of clients in their local areas. In order to continue to so, the staff or the clients will have to travel to Dublin or Navan respectively.

Budgets etc.

In calculating the financial requirements over the next few years the following will have to be examined

1. Increased Travel and Subsistence costs.
2. Acquisition of alternative premises within the Dublin area, and the cessation of leases of existing premises. While there may be a saving in the long term, penalties may be accrued with the early cessation of certain leases.
3. Costings for the movement of equipment etc.

Customer base

The Headquarters administration staff deal with the needs of the Probation and Welfare Service offices throughout the country, with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Prison Service and the Courts.

The main customers of the Probation and Welfare Service in Smithfield and the outer offices are the clients based in the Dublin North and the Court Service.

Key relationships

The key relationships for the Probation and Welfare Service are the clients, the Courts and the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, the local community, and the prison service.

Due to the distances involved and the time involved in travelling, it may prove difficult to maintain the client relationship when the officer is based in Navan.

People

Staff Turnover

It would be expected that there would be high turnover of staff within the Probation and Welfare Service of clerical staff due to the Decentralisation, and it would be expected that only one of the core administrative staff at the present time would be transferring to the Navan area.

Therefore replacements for the 16 administrative posts would have to be in place before the transfer to Navan. This involves re-training of this staff with the co-operation of existing staff members.

Non movers

Due to the specialised nature of the work carried out by the Probation and Welfare staff there is little possibility of the posts being filled in the Navan area by other professional grades. Therefore in order for the move to take place in excess of 60 professional grade staff members would have to volunteer to transfer. There has no interest voiced from any of the professional grades regarding moving to Navan.

Business

In order for the Service to transfer the following would have to be put in place.

IT Requirements

Eircom will have to be contacted and a schedule put in place for the transfer of the main data bearers to the new office.

Hardware suppliers will have to be contacted regarding the physical disconnection, moving and reconnection of the IT Hardware.

In order to keep the IT Network running while the move takes place arrangements will have to be made for the purchase/lease of extra equipment, extra know how, and staff resources.

Telecommunications:

The main switch / PABX and associated hardware will have to be transferred to the Navan office. Arrangements will have to be put in place with Eircom Business Services for this purpose.

Data/Telecommunications Wiring:

In order for both the IT / Telecommunications transfer to take place, a CAT 5 Network / Comms must be ready at the new site. It would be hoped that the transfer of the PABX would take place over a weekend so that there would be less loss of service to the staff.

It is important that Eircom is now approached so that the needed IT Bandwidth will be available by the time Probation and Welfare Service moves to Navan.

File Storage and Retrieval:

In order to keep the Probation and Welfare Service running a complete audit of all files stored within the headquarters and the outer offices that are moving must take place. This is necessary to achieve the following.

1. A smooth transfer of the files to the new headquarters
2. A golden opportunity to streamline the file retrieval system, and so assist the transfer process and future efficient management of the filing systems.

Travel Costs:

Due to the fact that Probation and Welfare Officers will have to travel to Dublin on a regular basis for Court duty, and to interview clients, existing budgets will have to be increased to allow for this. A detailed examination will have to take place to forecast this issue properly.

Travel times:

Due to the fact that Officers will have to travel to Navan and Dublin, scheduling of interviews and time patterns will have to be examined, and the staff levels will need to be increased to maintain the level of service

Telephonists:

Eircom will have to be informed regarding the transfer of the two telephonists from Smithfield to the Navan office.

Buildings:

The Office of Public Works has identified premises in Kells Road, Navan. The premises are currently occupied by the Department of Agriculture and by the Navan Probation and Welfare Service team. The premises which are currently in a poor state will be gutted and refitted to a high standard.

The premises identified has been the source of much communication between this office and the Office of Public Works. The office has been the subject of a Health and Safety order due a number of hazards. The premises is currently being vacated by the Department of Agriculture and the Probation and Welfare Service local office due to these issues. This negativity regarding the site will not help to sell the site to the existing staff in Smithfield.

We have also been informed that the Probation and Welfare Service Headquarters will be sharing the site with other agencies.

Dublin Commitments.

Due to the nature of the work involved, alternative sites within the Dublin area will have to be acquired so that Probation and Welfare Officers can interview their clients and continue to administer their duties in the Courts.

Decentralisation Implementation Plan – Probation and Welfare Service

Economies anticipated:

- overall savings resulting from downsizing of offices in Dublin area.
- savings arising from government owned premises in Navan

Risks anticipated:

- decline in responsiveness of Service to major customers i.e. courts, prisons, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, especially in emergency situations.
- reduction in level of accessibility to Service by clients and families.
- increased cost to families in contacting Service in Navan.
- reduction in levels of supervision of offenders – less contact leads to less client engagement, less responsiveness of clients, increased risk of re-offending, increased cost to State of detecting, prosecuting and disposing of criminal charges.
- increased costs of travelling and subsistence.
- increased travel time and costs for staff from southern areas accessing headquarters, training etc. based in Navan.
- reduction in level of contacts with community agencies, statutory and voluntary.
- reduction in contact with employers, FAS, VECs, all of whom provide support services and require regular liaison.