

Parole Board Chief Executive's blog – May 2020

This week, the Parole Board has shared its 2020 to 2022 business plan which includes our strategic aims and priorities. It is worth noting, given the current climate, that while the current situation with Covid-19 will have a significant impact on the timings of the delivery of this plan, the aims and objectives still remain relevant, perhaps even more relevant, and the Parole Board continues to work towards the aims shared in the plan.

Firstly, I would like to reiterate that our top priority, as always, is to keep the public safe by only releasing someone when we are satisfied that imprisonment is no longer necessary for the protection of the public; and in undertaking fair and independent reviews ensure that continued detention is lawful.

We have 3 strategic aims that help us to achieve this:

1. We make independent, impartial and quality decisions
2. We work efficiently and effectively and provide value for money
3. We seek to be as open and transparent as possible

The Board makes independent, impartial and quality decisions by ensuring they are fair, respect the rights of the prisoner but always put public safety first. We operate like a court by making difficult, impartial decisions by considering evidence without fear or favour.

To help us make the best decisions we plan to:

- Increasingly use research to inform our understanding of, and approach to, risk;
- Provide members with a revised framework for decision making about risk;
- Provide more legal training and support
- Launch a rigorous and open recruitment processes to recruit new Parole Board members that represents the public that we serve.

To improve our efficiency and effectiveness we will:

- Ensure that all 26,000 cases heard per year are processed in a timely manner
- Ensure decisions are fully informed and based on all evidence available
- Improve the forecasting of our workload;
- Ensure we have better dossiers on prisoners and better case management and deployment of our resources.

Openness and transparency is also a huge part of what we do and we have made major strides in this area in recent times, which we are determined to build on. We already:

- Provide a service to produce around 100 summaries per month to explain

our decisions to victims, the public and the media.

- Publish an accessible annual report each year and regularly publish performance data so that we are accountable for our decisions and open about our performance.
- Publish a full listing of our members.
- Publish our reconsideration decisions.

Unfortunately the Parole Board is often misunderstood by victims, the public and sometimes in Parliament, because there is a lack of understanding of the work it does. I am therefore determined and committed to ensuring we raise greater awareness of the work we do. We strive to improve this so that all those affected by our decisions understand how we make them.

By April 2021 we will look to provide better information about Parole Board decision-making to prisoners, their families, victims and the public; and implement a robust system for providing information about individual cases; make parole hearings more open and provide better access to data.

As previously mentioned, the timescales above may vary due to the current public health situation but I would like to assure everyone that the Parole Board continues to process a huge number of cases despite the restrictions in place and everyone is and will work to achieve the goals set out in the business plan.