

PROBATION NEWS

Magazine of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland • Issue 16 • Feb 2023



WELCOME to the sixteenth edition of the Probation News Magazine. This magazine provides a biannual opportunity to engage through sharing of news, best practice and information to stakeholders, staff and the public. We hope you enjoy reading this edition.

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LORD MAYOR VISITS PROBATION

Probation's Chief Executive Amanda Stewart was delighted to welcome the Lord Mayor, Councillor Christina Black, to Probation Headquarters to hear more about its community-based justice work. The Lord Mayor spent an hour or so talking to Probation Staff in Headquarters to hear more about the impact Probation is making in the Belfast Area. The Lord Mayor also took time to visit the Cathedral Quarter to see Probation's Community Service operated Graffiti Removal Service and meet John Finnegan Community Service Supervisor along with Service Users operating the powerwashers.

The Lord mayor noted the great work the Graffiti Removal Scheme does and is a great partnership between Probation and Belfast City Council. The scheme helps to clear away unsightly graffiti in the Belfast area. **Find out more about the Graffiti Removal Scheme on our website.**

After the visit, the Lord Mayor took to social media to say: "Thanks to Amanda Stewart, Chief Executive of Probation for welcoming me to Probation. It was great to speak with staff and visit their Graffiti Removal Service, which works in partnership with Belfast City Council."



Probation's Chief Executive Amanda Stewart was delighted to welcome Belfast Lord Mayor, Councillor Christina Black to Probation Headquarters to meet with staff and visit our Graffiti Removal Service.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIARY



Welcome to this edition of Probation News. It has been another busy few months with plenty of opportunity to engage with staff and key partners. With Domestic Abuse being a priority identified for Probation from our consultation on the Corporate Plan, I was delighted to welcome Sarah Mason, Chief Executive, Women's Aid Federation NI and some of her staff to our office to mark the 16 Days of Action campaign. The meeting was very productive, and we had a good discussion on how we can enhance our partnership working to tackle Domestic Abuse. Unfortunately, the number of victims of this heinous crime continues to increase as latest PSNI figures show that 20% of their caseload relates to Domestic Abuse incidents. We have also seen an increase in the number of cases we are dealing with. In 2021 there were 30 cases related to Domestic Abuse that registered with the Probation Victims Unit and in 2022 this had increased to 83 cases.

To further enhance our partnership working in this area, I was privileged to take part in a panel discussion as part of a recent conference organised by the Bar Library focussing on the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) which became law last year. It was an excellent event and provided an opportunity to highlight the work we are doing in this area.

Probation's caseload has increased and staff are working with people whose needs are becoming increasingly complex which includes serious mental health and addiction issues. Many have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences and suffer from intergenerational trauma.

Probation is well positioned within the justice sector to lead an approach to trauma-informed practice, and we have given a particular focus to further developing this area of work within our new Corporate Plan. We are organising a staff development day at the end of March on 'Supporting our People to Provide a Trauma Informed Service' and I am looking forward to the discussion and hearing your ideas for further developing this within Probation.

It is important to keep up to date with what is happening within Probation in other jurisdictions and I was very pleased to attend the Five Nations of Probation meeting. I also attended with staff from PBNI the Public Protection Advisory Group Annual Seminar in Dublin and it was a good opportunity to engage with colleagues in Probation, Prisons and Policing in both jurisdictions and learn from each other.

The Directors, Head of Communications and I have also continued briefings with political party groups which has provided an opportunity to discuss key issues for PBNI, seek views to inform our Corporate Plan and to raise issues which we would wish to put to a new Minister and Executive.

I was also delighted to welcome the Right Hon. Lord Mayor of Belfast, Christina Black to our offices at the start of the year. During her visit she met with Probation staff and visited our Graffiti Removal Service which works in partnership with Belfast City Council to clear away unsightly graffiti in the area. It was great to see a social media post from a local Councillor calling for additional funding for Probation for this work!

To coincide with this year's European Victims Day of Crime we also recently welcomed Geraldine Hanna, Victims of Crime Commissioner Designate for a seminar to discuss partnership working to improve victim services. This is the first in a series of themed engagements we plan to hold with a range of our partners during the year.

Internally, I have been working with the senior team to take forward organisational change and as part of this review a new senior leadership structure is now in place. I would also like to take the opportunity to formally welcome Melissa Spence and Emer Loughran as Assistant Directors and Michael McCracken as Head of Psychology and Programmes. We will continue to build an organisation that is fair and inclusive where everyone feels able to put forward their views and feels valued for their contribution. We are also continuing to make progress working with the Department of Justice to take forward a programme of pay modernisation.

Our Corporate Plan 2023-26 is now in the final stages of development, and I would like to thank our staff, Board members, partners and other organisations who took the time to participate in the consultation. These views have informed our strategic priorities over next three years and key areas of work.

There are of course many challenges ahead, but I believe that the new Corporate Plan will provide the basis for us to develop our people and services and with confidence to ensure we continue in our aim of changing lives for safer communities.

Amanda Stewart OBE
Chief Executive

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION



It's difficult to believe that a year has passed since I took up post as Board Chair on 1st March 2022. It's been a fascinating and engaging year for me and my fellow Board members, getting to know each other and the organisation especially the people. From our visits to local offices and business units, it is self-evident that Probation staff are resilient, conscientious and enthusiastic in delivering an effective public service which changes lives across Northern Ireland for safer communities.

The Board have in the past year developed the Corporate Plan 2023-26 which will be presented to the Department of Justice shortly. Of course, in the absence of a working Executive and Assembly at Stormont we also do not have a Justice Minister as yet to approve the Corporate Plan or indeed allocate a budget for 2023-24. It's not unreasonable to presume that there are uncertain times ahead, indeed that would be an understatement. I am all too aware of the challenges uncertainty brings, particularly to staff and service users, and with an ongoing cost of living crisis at this current time.

I am delighted with the Corporate Plan drafted following extensive internal and external engagement over the past 6 months to consult on its contents. Partnership working is a key part of our Plan, and we invited our Justice, Community and Voluntary sector partners, as well as staff and service users to help shape the future of probation services in Northern Ireland. We held consultations in person across the regions and invited submissions remotely and online.

The pace of recovery from the pandemic and clearing back logs within the Justice system, is highly likely to increase demand for probation services and how this is being planned for, managed and resourced is an important element of this Corporate Plan 2023-26. Likewise, the response to the pandemic also identified innovative and new ways of working to deliver services and these are embedded in this Plan.

The consultation took place during a period of political, economic and operational uncertainty. Like all public services, Probation is likely to face reductions in its budget over the coming three-year period. Any reduction in budget is likely to impact upon our service delivery and it is imperative we try to mitigate the impact of budget cuts on our front-line delivery as much as is feasibly possible.

Probation's caseload has increased, and staff are working with people whose needs are becoming increasingly complex. Many of those who are supervised by Probation are suffering from poor mental health, addictions and some have experienced multiple childhood adversities and suffer from intergenerational trauma. Our operational staff have been trained to deliver trauma-informed practice and delivering this holistic approach on an individual basis takes significant time and effort. Some of those challenges will be discussed at the planned conference on 28th March.

There remain a number of significant workforce issues which will continue to be relevant over the coming Corporate Planning period.

In particular, there is a need to progress the business case for changes to pay structures to enable us to retain and attract social work staff. The Board is conscious of the pressures on staff managing increased caseloads and the potential impact of deviating from standards that reduces the level of engagement with service users.

From the Board's perspective, we want to present a plan that reflects our desire to continue to be an organisation which is innovative, creative, collaborative and solution focused. Working alongside our partners we want to implement learning from the last three years and improve our services to provide a high quality, professional service to all.

On a sad note, I attended the funeral of our colleague Geraldine Braniff in February. Geraldine had worked in Probation for 44 years. It was an extremely moving service and one could not help but feel for the family. At our Board meeting we held a minute's silence and on behalf of the Board I would extend the Board's condolences to husband Sean and the wider family circle.

Finally, I want to congratulate the Chief Executive Amanda Stewart on being awarded the OBE by His Majesty King Charles recently at Windsor Castle. This is a significant Honour for Amanda and well deserved.

Max Murray CBE
Board Chair



CHIEF EXECUTIVE AMANDA STEWART HOSTS SENIOR LEADERSHIP PLANNING DAY

Probation's Senior Leadership Team (not pictured are Head of IT Pauline Sommerville and Principal Psychologist Michael McCracken)

Chief Executive Amanda Stewart hosted a planning day for the Senior Leadership Team to establish effective leadership, prioritise Probation's core work & support Probation staff going forward.

This is to reflect on the priorities within the 2023-24 Business plan which are stabilising the organisation, supporting our people, focusing on service delivery and building effective partnerships.

There have been a number of changes to the Senior Leadership team over the last year and the team has now been designed to reflect changes in key operational areas. Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery has responsibility for Community and Courts while Director of Operations Stephen Hamilton is responsible for Prisons, Programmes and Public Protection. There are five Assistant Directors reporting to the Directors of Operations covering these different areas of work.



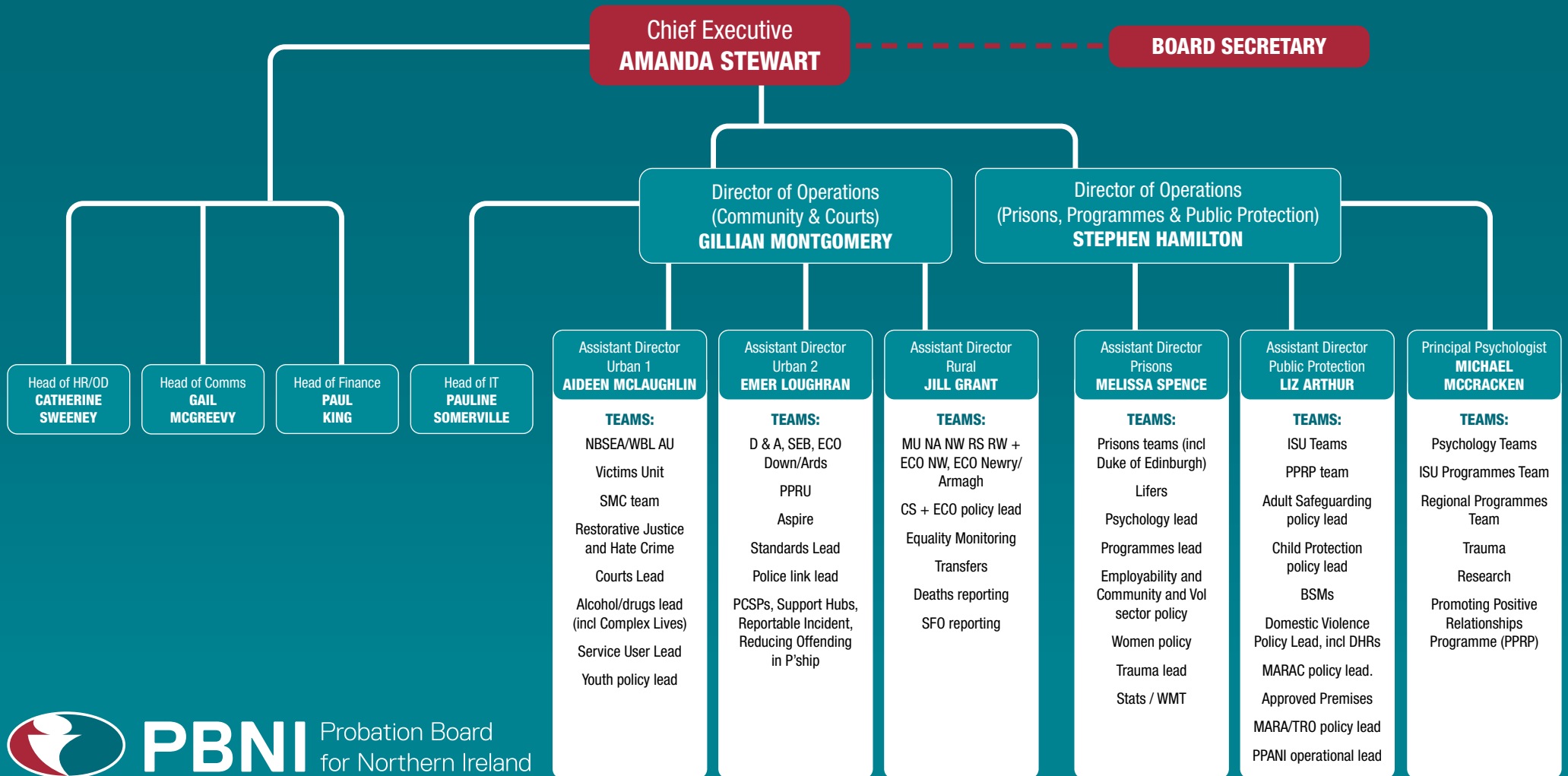
Liz Arthur, Assistant Director (Public Protection), and Melissa Spence, Assistant Director (Prisons; Programmes), will report to Stephen Hamilton, Director of Operations (Prisons, Programmes and Public Protection).

Emer Loughran - Assistant Director (Urban South & East; Practice Standards and Aspire), Aideen McLaughlin - Assistant Director (Urban North & West; Courts and Victims), and Jill Grant - Assistant Director (Rurals; Community Service and ECOs) will report to Gillian Montgomery, Director of Operations (Community and Courts).



PROBATION'S SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

The new structure will enable SLT to provide the most effective leadership over the coming years and stabilise the organisation while prioritising core statutory work and supporting the workforce.



PUBLIC PROTECTION ADVISORY GROUP HOLD SEMINAR AND PUBLISH IRISH PROBATION JOURNAL



Probation Board Chief Executive Amanda Stewart and Probation Service Director Mark Wilson launch the 19th edition of the Irish Probation Journal in Dublin

The 13th Annual Public Protection Advisory Group Seminar, jointly chaired by the Chief Executive of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Director of the Irish Probation Service, was held in the Probation Service headquarters in Smithfield, Dublin.

The theme of the seminar this year was “Delivering quality front line services to make communities safer” and consisted of presentations by each of the PPAG member organisations and featured a mix of subject approaches on a range of topics. The presentations whilst diverse had the common thread of the overall seminar theme of front-line service delivery to pull them together. Detective Superintendent Derek Maguire from An Garda Síochána provided a fascinating insight into the investigations into human trafficking while Hollie Murray,

Senior Officer NI Prison Service spoke about the rehabilitative education and vocational programmes in Hydebank Wood. PPANI Co-Ordinator Julie Smyth described Public Protection Serious Case Reviews in Northern Ireland while Dr Sarah Jane Winders from the Irish Prison Service took a psychological approach as she delivered an evaluation of the 'Building Identity' Programme. Finishing off the day was Tracey Carroll, Probation Service Probation Officer who spoke about a complex individual case to detail the work involved and its impact and Probation Board's Emer Loughran who gave a fascinating view into how Probation works in and responds to the complex community of North Belfast.

It was also an opportunity to launch the 19th edition of the Irish Probation Journal.



PERMANENT SECRETARY VISITS PROBATION BOARD MEETING

Board Chair Max Murray, Chief Executive Amanda Stewart, and Deputy Chair Eileen Patterson welcomed Department of Justice Permanent Secretary Richard Pengelly to the Probation Board meeting to hear about some of the challenges and plans for the organisation.

PROBATION WORKS IN PARTNERSHIP TO END DOMESTIC ABUSE

Throughout each year Probation works with a number of partners like Women's Aid and Victim Support NI to tackle Domestic abuse and takes full opportunity to highlight the issue through participating in the United Nations campaign "16 Days of Action for No Violence against Women and Girls Campaign", European Victims of Crime Day and International Women's Day.

Probation Chief Executive Amanda Stewart said: "One of the most critical elements of our role is working with those who have committed sexual and violent crime. We carry out this role in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Prison Service and others in order to reduce the number of victims of crime."

Probation works all year round to tackle Domestic and Sexual Violence through support for victims of domestic abuse who have registered with our **Victim Information Scheme** and through challenging and holding to account perpetrators of Domestic and Sexual Violence through our **Programmes and Interventions**.



Amanda, along with Head of Communications Gail McGreevy, met with Sarah Mason, Sonya McMullan and Sharon Burnett to talk about future opportunities and enhancing partnership work to tackle domestic abuse.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECEIVES OBE AWARD

Last year, our Chief Executive Amanda Stewart was recognised on the Queen's Birthday Honours list receiving the Order of the British Empire (OBE). You can read more about this on [our website](#). Amanda was delighted to have the opportunity to attend a ceremony at Windsor Castle to be presented with her well-deserved award by King Charles III.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE ATTENDS BAR OF NORTHERN IRELAND CONFERENCE ON DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT

Chief Executive Amanda Stewart was delighted to attend the Bar of Northern Ireland conference “Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021, One Year On - Review & Renew.” Amanda had the opportunity to also take part in an engaging panel discussion on Domestic Abuse alongside partners in the Public Prosecution Service, Police Service of Northern Ireland, and Foyle’s Women’s Aid.



Chief Executive Amanda Stewart met with Criminal Justice Inspectorate Chief Inspector Jacqui Durkin, Social Worker and Academic John Devaney, and Leonard Consulting’s Marcella Leonard at the Bar of Northern Ireland event on the Domestic Abuse & Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021.

PROBATION HIGHLIGHTS WORKING WITH VICTIMS OF CRIME

Probation recently marked European Victims of Crime Day with a social media campaign and an internal campaign which included introducing Probation's Victim Champion, Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery.

Gillian's role as Victim Champion is to promote the importance victims in Probation's day-to-day work and ensure their needs are considered at every stage of the Criminal Justice process, including strategic level, policy, corporate and operational. It is important to Probation the service that victims of crime can expect from Probation are enhanced and they receive the quality of support they deserve.

Gillian said: "My role as Victim Champion is to ensure the needs of victims of crime are considered throughout Probation. Our staff - whether they are working in courts, in the community or in custody - places the victim at the centre of their work.

Work that not only includes challenging criminal behaviour but also addresses the impact of crime on the victim.

Our Victim Information Unit plays an important role in keeping registered victims informed about the justice process, while providing them support to begin to address the trauma they have been through. We will continue to take every opportunity to ensure the needs of victims of crime are addressed as we work in partnership to change lives for safer communities."

Read more about **Probation's Victim Information Scheme** on our website.

If you have been a victim of crime, or know someone who has been a victim of crime, you can register online for our **Victim Information Scheme**.

Read our **Victim Stories booklet** which has information on how the scheme works as well as stories from victims who have benefited from the scheme.

The purpose of the Victim Information Scheme is to give victims information about the Criminal Justice System and key stages of the sentence of the person who has offended in a manner which is accessible, understandable and supportive.

Probation's Victim Information Scheme provides information to registered victims about what it means when someone is sentenced to a Court Order which requires supervision by Probation. A member of staff based in the PBNI Victim Information Unit will explain what the Court Order means and what the individual who has been sentenced must do as a result of the order. This can include explaining the length of the sentence and the type of work they are undertaking as part of the order. PBNI Victims Unit can also facilitate restorative interventions at the request of the victim and in appropriate circumstances.

Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery talks about her role as Probation's Victim Champion.

Victim Support NI Chief Executive Janice Bunting talks about how partnership working supports victims of crime.

Assistant Director Aideen McLaughlin talks about the Victim Information Scheme.

Probation holds Victims Roundtable for staff

Probation marked European Day for Victims of Crime by holding a staff Roundtable with the Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime NI Geraldine Hanna as the main speaker. The attendees, including Chief Executive Amanda Stewart, Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery & Assistant Director Aideen McLaughlin, discussed with Geraldine how partnership working can improve victim services.



PROBATION AS A CAREER

Over the past number of months, Probation has been attending numerous career fairs and employability fairs run by Queen's University and Ulster University. Each time our staff find themselves very busy at these events fielding questions from interested Social Work students and explaining to them that working as a Probation Officer is a great career path.

All Probation Officers are Social Work Qualified and registered with Northern Ireland Social Care Council, however there are many positions within Probation that are well suited to changing lives for safer communities, such as Probation Service Officers or Community Service Supervisors. Probation also needs people on the corporate side, to support operational staff in their duties.



CONTACT PROBATION AT

PROBATION HEADQUARTERS

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Communications Unit 028 9052 2522

SPECIALIST TEAMS

ISU Alderwood House

Hydebank Wood, Purdysburn Road, Belfast, BT8 7SL 028 9025 7340

Aspire

4th Floor, 41-43 Waring Street, Belfast, BT1 2DY 028 9031 6436

Programme Delivery Unit

1st Floor, 80-90 North Street, Belfast, BT1 1LD 028 9052 2585

Public Protection Team

PSNI Seapark, 151 Belfast Road, Carrickfergus, BT38 8PL 028 9025 9576

Victim Information Unit

4th Floor, 41-43 Waring Street, Belfast, BT1 2DY 0300 123 3269

AREA TEAMS

West Belfast and Lisburn

Glenshane House, 202a Andersonstown Road, Belfast, BT11 9EA 028 9030 6630
Unit 4, Wallace Studios, 27 Wallace Avenue, Lisburn, BT27 4AE 028 9262 3456

North Belfast and South East Antrim

2171 – 179 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GE 028 9034 7474

South and East Belfast

297 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1AG 028 9052 6655
330 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 2GE 028 9054 1444

Down and Ards

15 Castle Street, Newtownards, BT23 3PA 028 9185 8282
Downshire Civic Centre, Ardglass Road, Downpatrick, BT30 6RA 028 4461 8281

North Antrim

3 Wellington Court, Ballymena, BT43 6EQ 028 2566 2345
19/20 The Diamond, Coleraine, BT52 2DN 028 7034 6880
1 Curran Road, Larne, BT40 1BS *Contact Ballymena*

North West

25 Shipquay Street, Londonderry, BT48 6DL 028 7131 9670

Rural South

1d Monaghan Street, Newry, BT35 6BB 028 3025 3030
12 Church Street, Portadown, BT62 3LQ 028 3839 7575

Rural West

Sperrin Centre, 1 Market Street, Omagh, BT78 1EE 028 8225 4872
Cathcart Square, 14 Dublin Road, Enniskillen, BT74 6HH 028 6634 3345

Rural Mid Ulster

9 Kirk Avenue, Magherafelt, BT45 6BT 028 7930 2115
25 College Street, Armagh, BT61 9BT 028 3752 9876



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and on “**Changing Lives**” app

