

Editorial

This year is the centenary of the path-finding Probation of Offenders Act 1907. It is recognised as a significant landmark for probation on this island, and those who are or have been involved in delivering probation services have much to be proud of. Over the past one hundred years, generations of dedicated staff have worked with individuals and their families, as well as with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies in the community, to manage, rehabilitate and (re)integrate offenders into society. Their innovative and caring spirit firmly established probation as meeting a significant social need and enabled probation to adapt to the changing expectations of the judiciary, other criminal justice stakeholders and the public. This spirit continues and probation is now recognised as the lead agency in the supervision of offenders.

The articles in this fourth volume of the *IPJ* both reflect the achievements of the past and highlight current best practice. Gerry McNally outlines the history of the Probation Service, how it grew and developed, adapting to challenges over the years. Shane Kilcommans and John Considine examine the evolving state intervention in the operating model of criminal trials. Such reflections can help us shape our future direction at a time when probation in both jurisdictions is facing significant change: in Northern Ireland, with the introduction of a new sentencing framework within a devolved criminal justice system; and in the Republic of Ireland, with the completion of Probation Service restructuring and of updated working relationships with courts and prisons.

We can also learn from what is happening elsewhere. For example, Brian Stout looks at the introduction of NOMS in England and Wales, and considers its possible implications for Northern Ireland. Two further articles outline the origin and principles of the contrasting risk assessment instruments used in our two jurisdictions.

Probation today, as the remaining articles in this volume demonstrate, is responding to a variety of challenges and core concerns such as the needs of victims, effective probation practice with offenders presenting a diversity of problems to be addressed, the role of community service and how projects can facilitate probation 'intervention' in an evolving multicultural society.

The Editorial Committee wishes to thank all the contributors as well as the PBNI and Probation Service for making this journal possible. We continue to receive good advice from our Advisory Panel as well as financial support from the NI Statistics and Research Agency. We also acknowledge the co-operation of our publishers, who have assisted us with their expertise and produced again a high-quality publication.

There have been changes to the Editorial Committee since the last volume as the two former editors – Paul Doran and Vivian Geiran – have taken up new responsibilities. We would like to thank Paul and Vivian and all other committee members for their hard work in establishing this journal.

Finally, as this is the fourth volume, we would welcome learning of your response to the journal. We have therefore included a short questionnaire and ask all our readers to take a moment to complete and return it to us. Such feedback is essential if the *IPJ* is to meet its aims in reflecting the richness and diversity of practice within probation as we move into the next one hundred years.

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