

Making the Difference That Makes a Difference: Leading Probation on the Island of Ireland

Cheryl Lamont and Vivian Geiran*

Summary: What does it take to be an effective leader in the public sector, and specifically in probation organisations, today? Why does it matter? Many books and articles focus on the subject of leadership, the changing context and the demands that require leaders to select, at different times, a variety of responses and adopt a range of roles in order to be effective. Since its inception on the island of Ireland, leaders of probation – North and South – have led their organisations through the challenges of their times. This article briefly reviews the wider functions of leadership, provides an overview of the organisations and explores some of the challenges and opportunities for the current leadership of probation, North and South.

Keywords: Leadership, change, management, probation, criminal justice, public sector, challenges, budget, transformation, Ireland, Northern Ireland.

Introduction

Kotter (1999: 10) described *leadership* as: ‘the development of vision and strategies, the alignment of relevant people behind those strategies, and the empowerment of individuals to make the vision happen, despite obstacles’. While emphasising the critical role of leadership in organisations, Kotter (1999: 11) was at pains to point out that both *leadership* and *management* functions are important, stating that:

The fundamental purpose of management is to keep the current system functioning. The fundamental purpose of leadership is to produce useful change, especially non-incremental change ... Strong leadership with

* Cheryl Lamont is the Chief Executive of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) (email: Cheryl.Lamont@pbni.gsi.gov.uk). Vivian Geiran is Director of the Probation Service (email: vmgeiran@probation.ie).

no management risks chaos ... Strong management without leadership tends to entrench an organisation in deadly bureaucracy.

Other commentators, including Heifetz and Laurie (2011: 77), have advised of the need to see leadership as *more* than the 'prevailing notion ... of having a vision and aligning people with that vision ... because it continues to treat adaptive situations as if they were technical'. *Adaptive work*, according to Heifetz and Laurie (2011: 57) 'is required when our deeply held beliefs are challenged, when the values that made us successful become less relevant, and when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge'. Adaptive situations or challenges, from this viewpoint:

are hard to define and resolve precisely because they demand the work and responsibility of managers and people throughout the organisation. They are not amenable to solutions provided by leaders ... [but] require members of the organisation to take responsibility for the problematic situations that face them. (Heifetz and Laurie, 2011: 77)

Examples of technical leadership in probation work can include putting appropriate staffing and other structures in place and ensuring adequate funding, training and supportive infrastructure (e.g. offices and technology) to enable work to be done. Adaptive challenges emerge when fundamental practices are changed, or new priorities or ways of working are introduced.

Leadership, across all the above definitions and manifestations, is no less important in criminal justice organisations, including probation services, than in the private sector, or indeed in any business, enterprise or organisation. This requirement for effective leadership is more of a reality than ever for public-service organisations because of four particular factors:

1. increased expectations on public services in relation to general efficiency, transparency, customer service, strategic alignment, organisational reform, accountability and governance, and improved outcomes for citizens
2. the need for probation organisations in particular to incorporate more evidence-informed interventions (focused on public protection and reduced reoffending) in their practice

3. the heightened value-for-money imperative, particularly that generated in recent times by the economic downturn
4. the increasing expectation of achieving a more joined-up criminal justice system, through better interagency working.

The Council of Europe (2010) has set out, in its European Probation Rules, standards by which probation organisations should carry out their functions. These include basic principles, such as the need for a legislative basis for probation work, accountability, good practice and the highest professional standards. The Rules also require that probation organisations have ‘formal policy instructions and rules’ and that ‘The management [of probation agencies] shall ensure the quality of probation work by providing leadership, guidance, supervision and motivation to staff.’

The authors share the view that while it is important to develop our own individual leadership skills and capacity, it is also critical to maintain a systemic perspective on our own and our organisation’s situation, within our respective jurisdictions. There is a clear and established political commitment to cross-border co-operation in a range of governmental responsibilities, including criminal justice.¹

This, allied to the all-island mobility of some offenders, the shared goals and objectives of our ‘business’ and the fruitful North–South co-operation established over many decades, is an important imperative for our continued collaboration on the island of Ireland. In this way, we will continue to co-operate on the cross-border assessment and management of offenders, and to learn from and share with each other as leaders and as learning organisations, in order to be the best we can be.

Probation in Northern Ireland

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is a Non-Departmental Public Body within the Department of Justice. Established in 1982, PBNI’s devolved identity as an ‘arm’s length’ agency has enabled it to establish its own purpose and priorities and devise a set of strategic aims and objectives, which includes the ability to fund voluntary and community organisations. PBNI has the leading role in delivering offender rehabilitation in Northern Ireland. It does this by helping people

¹ The Intergovernmental Agreement on Co-operation on Criminal Justice Matters (IGA). See http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/criminal_justice_co-operation

who have offended to change their behaviours. The result of such changes is less reoffending with fewer victims.

PBNI staff use their skills and abilities to facilitate rehabilitation and to tackle the root causes of offending. By doing so, they help change lives and contribute to safer communities. Those wide-ranging skills include making professional assessments about addressing risks and influencing positive change to reduce reoffending. PBNI practice is guided by social work principles. Probation Officers in Northern Ireland are registered by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council² and develop respectful and honest relationships with individuals who offend as well as promoting the rights of victims. Probation staff work closely with colleagues from psychology, corporate services and other professional backgrounds to provide an effective and evidence-based service to people who offend.

The operating environment for PBNI has changed over recent years. PBNI's work is now focused, due to legislative requirements, primarily on adults who have offended and more serious offenders. The Criminal Justice Order (2008) had significant implications for PBNI, including increased responsibility in post-custodial supervision through the introduction of public protection sentences. It also strengthened the supervisory process by introducing the power to use curfews and electronic monitoring, as well as putting the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) on a statutory footing (Baillie, 2008).

Collaborative working has also developed significantly over the past 15 years, partly in response to the legislative requirements outlined but also, more recently, because of budget reductions and initiative-based funding streams. In Northern Ireland, this has seen operational projects established such as Reducing Offending in Partnership, a partnership that tackles prolific offending (Doherty and Dennison, 2013), and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC, n.d.), which addresses domestic abuse. The focus of this partnership work is on ensuring improved sharing of information to enable organisations to better manage risk reduction together. In these changed circumstances, there are very clear opportunities and challenges for PBNI.

² NISCC manages standards in social work by registering social workers, setting standards for their conduct and practice and supporting their professional development <https://niscc.info/>

Probation in Ireland

The Probation Service is an agency of the Department of Justice and Equality, although it operates independently, in its delivery of operational services, in the community and in prisons. The Director is a member of the Department of Justice and Equality's Management Board and reports to the Secretary General. The Probation Service is the lead agency in the assessment, supervision and rehabilitation of offenders in Ireland. As in Northern Ireland, probation practice is guided and informed by social work skills and values. While it is not compulsory for Probation Officers to be registered as social workers with CORU (the Health and Social Care Professionals Council),³ most are qualified social workers.⁴ Probation Service staff are also civil servants.

The history of the Probation Service has been documented in published papers by Geiran (2005) and McNally (2007, 2009). While probation in Ireland has existed since before the foundation of the State, over 100 years, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century (particularly from the 1960s onwards) that what we now understand as the Probation Service evolved and developed in any recognisable way. The Probation Service is a nationwide service assessing and working with offenders in the community and in custody. Staff work with clients who have committed offences all along the spectrum of seriousness, across all age groups, and carry specific responsibilities under the Children Act, 2001 for work with young people who offend.

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on multidisciplinary and interagency working in offender assessment and management, to maximise collective effectiveness, particularly in reducing reoffending and improving public safety. Examples of this interagency co-operation include the Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management (SORAM) (Wilson *et al.*, 2013) structure, the co-located (joint prison–Probation staffed) Community Return Unit, based in Probation Service Headquarters in Dublin, and the Joint Agency Response to Crime (JARC).⁵

JARC incorporates inputs from An Garda Síochána (police), prisons, Probation, and Department of Justice and Equality, focusing on intensive, targeted interagency management of prolific offenders, particularly those with a history of committing burglaries and violent crimes. These

³ <https://www.coru.ie/>

⁴ The Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill, 2014, proposes that Probation Officers in Ireland be registered social workers. <http://bit.ly/N2BvAp>

⁵ See the Joint Strategy on the Management of Offenders, available at <http://bit.ly/2fE01ZA>

interagency initiatives are underpinned by joint strategies involving the Department of Justice and Equality and the participating services (Department of Justice & Equality *et al.*, 2016; Irish Prison Service and Probation Service, 2015).

For the greater part of the past decade, the Probation Service has had to deal with, and operate in, an environment characterised by economic recession, the accompanying budget cuts, and a moratorium on staff recruitment. The justice sector in general has been subject to close examination and critique over the same period in relation to a number of issues, including leadership and governance. A key milestone within this discourse was the 2014 review of the Department of Justice and Equality and its agencies, known as the ‘Toland⁶ Report’ (Department of Justice and Equality, 2014a).

The report of the Strategic Review of Penal Policy (Department of Justice and Equality, 2014b), published by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald TD, set out a roadmap for penal policy in Ireland for the foreseeable future. It emphasised the need to promote and increase use of supervised community sanctions, including Probation and community service. These developments followed years of Irish criminal justice policy characterised by some as incorporating a perceived ‘unchallenged non-accountability’ (O’Mahony, 1996: 272) with ‘poverty of thought’ (O’Donnell, 2005: 102) and ‘drifting along ... with reform slow and piecemeal’ (Rogan, 2011: 214).

Challenges for probation, North and South

The past decade has posed unique socio-political-economic challenges for probation. These have included political, economic and budgetary issues, as well as wider issues of workload demands and legitimacy, among others. The uncertain economic conditions have been described by Kelly and Hayes (2010: xviii–xix) as ‘turbulent times’ with ‘powerful forces for change ... the corporate equivalent of headwinds ... which must be faced and navigated by leaders and those they lead’; these authors state that the current leadership challenge is about: ‘learning to fly with such an all-embracing turbulence’. This would seem an appropriate description of the conditions and context, economic and otherwise, faced by criminal justice and other organisations, including Probation services, in recent and current times.

⁶ Named after Kevin Toland, chair of the Review Group.

Political landscape

Operating against a backdrop of constant political change in Northern Ireland has been a major challenge for PBNI. In January 2017, after a decade of power-sharing government, the political institutions in Northern Ireland collapsed. This meant that the Northern Ireland Executive, including the then Minister of Justice, had to stand down, leading to an extended period of political uncertainty. During her tenure, the Minister of Justice had articulated proposals for reform in a number of important justice policy areas. The Northern Ireland Assembly Justice Committee had indicated policy areas that it wanted to see prioritised, including domestic violence and crimes against the most vulnerable. A Programme for Government had been negotiated, but that was still only in draft form at the time of the collapse.

Those policy changes and priorities could not be implemented during the period of extended political talks to resolve issues. Many significant policy decisions have been further postponed, to await a political resolution. As civil servants are, on an interim basis, administering Northern Ireland's finances and policy decisions, it is difficult for organisations to plan and prioritise service delivery. PBNI needs to develop its Corporate Plan during this period. The PBNI Board's strategic priorities should be linked directly to the Programme for Government. However, as that remains in draft form, it is difficult to do so. Indeed, the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Declan Morgan, was moved to speak publicly about the impact of the political uncertainty on justice bodies:

These are uncertain times. The current political situation, and in particular the delay in setting budgets, inevitably creates a difficult backdrop for front line organisations such as the Probation Board and our third sector partners. (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2017)

The other political development likely to prove challenging for probation work on the island of Ireland is the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union – so-called 'Brexit'. This raises concerns, including for those working in criminal justice, about how existing public protection and community safety measures will be managed in the future. Probation, North and South, has worked extremely hard to develop links with justice partners in the neighbouring jurisdiction and to ensure effective management of offenders who move from one

jurisdiction to the other. It is essential that these links and processes are sustained and developed, notwithstanding 'Brexit', to ensure that there is no reduction in the efficiency of cross-border management of offenders.

North–South co-operation in Probation

The two Probation organisations on the island have a long and extensive history of cross-border co-operation (Doran, 2015). As part of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Co-operation on Criminal Justice Matters (IGA),⁷ a Public Protection Advisory Group (PPAG) was established in 2008 (Donnellan and McCaughey, 2010). The PPAG is jointly chaired by the two Directors of Probation and includes representation from the police, prisons and justice departments.

The PPAG meets twice each year and agrees a set of objectives reported to both Ministers as part of the Intergovernmental Agreement (Doran, 2015: 43–44). It has proved to be very successful in taking cross-border co-operation to a new level. The links between the two Probation services have served as an exemplar for co-operation for other criminal justice services. Over the past six years, the PPAG has organised annual seminars to showcase good practice, which have received ministerial support, North and South, and has hosted the annual launch of *Irish Probation Journal*, a joint publication by the two Probation services. It is imperative that this work continues in the face of changes in the UK's, and Northern Ireland's, relationship with their EU partners.

Budget

The Probation Service budget has recently seen increases, after several years – during the economic downturn – of reduced budgets and a moratorium on recruitment, in common with the wider civil and public services in Ireland. It was against that backdrop of budgetary cuts that a fundamental review and reorganisation of the Probation Service structure was undertaken (Geiran, 2012). Those budget cuts and reduction in numbers of serving staff, over several years, also saw rationalisation in spending on the Service's estate and operational expenditure.

Meanwhile, reductions in public expenditure in Northern Ireland have affected PBNI. Since 2010/11, PBNI's budget has been reduced by 17.6% (£3.5m), although some limited, additional short-term funding has been provided for specific projects and initiatives. To date, the

⁷ See http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/criminal_justice_co-operation

protection of PBNI frontline services has been prioritised and back-office costs have been reduced.

At the start of the business year 2017–18, Government Departments in Northern Ireland were directed to plan for a further 4% reduction on the current baseline that, for PBNI, with existing unavoidable pressure, means a potential reduction of 6.8%. These budget reductions mean that organisational structures and service priorities must be revised to ensure alignment with available resources. Probation practice has to change fundamentally.

Maintaining services and staff morale, with budget cuts of 17.6% over five years, is a challenge. The closure of Probation office facilities, North and South, including up to 33% of the PBNI estate between September 2013 and March 2017, has enabled more efficient service delivery as well as savings.

Probation, North and South, is a ‘demand-led’ service. Demand depends on a number of factors, including the levels and nature of crime and offending, and – especially – decisions by the courts to refer offenders to Probation for assessment and supervision. In addition, from time to time, certain categories of offending (e.g. burglary or violent offences) receive heightened public and political attention, and there are calls for greater focus by relevant agencies, including Probation.

In both jurisdictions workloads have remained reasonably steady in recent years, with small fluctuations (Probation Service, 2015–2016; PBNI, 2016–17). However, there is no evidence that the complexity of probation work across the island, as reflected in persons presenting with poor mental health and substance misuse issues, is diminishing. Offenders at high risk of reoffending and of causing serious harm, and offenders with complex needs, require a comprehensive and resource-intensive response if we are to effectively reduce reoffending and help make our communities safer. The level of commitment and resources necessary to manage and reduce such risk needs to be maintained.

Sometimes, ‘new’ categories of offending such as cybercrime emerge or assume greater prominence or priority. There are also new obligations, for example through the Fresh Start Agreement⁸ for PBNI to manage oversight of offenders sentenced for offences under terrorism legislation and to develop diversion responses to paramilitary activity.

⁸ *A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan* builds on previous political agreements in Northern Ireland. It contains plans to combat paramilitary activity. See <http://bit.ly/1V6IcRs>

Responding to challenges/grasping opportunities

We suggest that a number of leadership approaches, as well as contextual factors, have been significant in effective responses to recent and current challenges faced by our respective organisations. New responses will also be required to deal with the emerging and future challenges. Although Chief Executives are not the only significant leaders in any organisation, they have a particular role in managing effective organisational change (Kotter, 1999). The authors have undertaken formal management training and qualifications⁹ to inform and support their leadership.

Aside from individual capability and approaches, some effective responses involve being proactive and grasping opportunities when they present. ‘Great opportunities don’t come around too often,’ and sometimes a downturn can ‘lead to a fantastic opportunity ... [for] the rediscovery of the organisation as a team and you as a team leader’ according to van Dijk (2010: 111). The Probation Service restructuring (Geiran, 2012) was conducted for a range of reasons, including implementation of better practice. Nevertheless, the change involved was, if anything, enabled – as much as required – by the then worsening economic context, which acted in the first instance as a significant driver for improved efficiencies.

Scarcer availability of more contested resources can contribute to sharper innovation in service delivery. In April 2015, PBNI was successful in an Executive Change Fund (2015) bid. The aims and objectives of the Executive Change Fund are to encourage innovation in the public sector; improve integration and collaboration between Departments, its related agencies, the private sector and the third sector; support a decisive shift towards preventive spending with a focus on improving outcomes for citizens; and support transformational change required to sustain medium- to long-term efficiency measures. The funding enabled development and delivery of a highly successful and independently evaluated innovative project known as Reset (Hamilton, 2016), an adult mentoring project which was delivered in partnership with NIACRO,¹⁰ a voluntary sector partner.

⁹ Cheryl Lamont is a qualified social worker registered with the NI Social Care Council. She also holds an MBA in Business Administration and a BA Honours in Social Work. Vivian Geiran is a qualified social worker, registered with CORU (Health and Social Care Professionals Council), and has a Master’s degree in social work and social policy, as well as a diploma in leadership and management.

¹⁰ NIACRO, Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, <https://www.niacro.co.uk/>

In the South, the innovative interagency Community Return programme (McNally and Brennan, 2015), providing supervised early release for prisoners serving between one and eight years' imprisonment, was introduced in 2011, specifically as an alternative response to a decision not to build a new 'super-prison' in North County Dublin, due to the deteriorating economic climate.

New initiatives for women and for young people, and the maximisation of the rehabilitative potential of Community Service Orders ('integrated community service'), are being progressed in response to the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review Report (Department of Justice and Equality, 2014b). Such changes, combined with the implementation, North and South, of videoconferencing and the development of e-learning and revised Practice Standards, mean that Probation staff are more able to deliver on priorities. The senior leadership is proactive in seeing possibilities in adversity, and mobilising – and sometimes reconfiguring or redirecting – available resources and strategic priorities to achieve worthwhile change.

Changes of personnel in the (Probation Service) Director and (PBNI) Chief Executive roles, in August 2012 and September 2013 respectively, provided opportunities for new approaches to extend engagement, communication and co-operation with a range of key stakeholders. Both organisations have established clear directions, through strategic planning (Probation Service, 2015; PBNI, 2017) and by aligning the workforce to key priorities through open, transparent and visible leadership. Such measures also include the establishment of an Executive Management Team in both organisations, enabling more effective, timely and robust decision-making capabilities in line with increasing demands from the respective Justice Departments and others. More streamlined and engaged senior management teams have thus been able to focus on the operational delivery priorities, as well as contributing as required to strategic initiatives.

Key features of effective leadership include openness, collaboration, flexibility and commitment. These are visible, in both organisations, through an increase in the level of general openness and through greater focus on communication, internally and externally. For example, communiques from the Chief Executive, Organisational Development Updates for staff and a range of stakeholder newsletters were introduced by PBNI to explain to the whole organisation and stakeholders the changes that were taking place. The Probation Service introduced

monthly newsletters for staff and external partners and stakeholders from January 2013.

Other initiatives include local team visits and a series of staff engagement events which are part of a considered communication strategy enabling the delivery of key corporate messages and providing an important opportunity to listen to staff concerns.

Successful implementation of specific change programmes often benefits from structured approaches to the change process. As Woodman (2014: 470) has pointed out, ‘there is always a “diagnosis” before any real organisational change ... there is no such thing as a model-independent reality ... even if it is nothing more than the thought: “Things could be better”.’

There are a number of what have been described as ‘*n*-step guides for change’ (Cummings *et al.*, 2016: 49). These include Kotter’s (1996) eight-step model, and Schein’s (2010) model of change, for example. Many of these ‘*n*-step’ models claim heritage back to Lewin (1951), although a supposed origin in change as a three-step process (CATS) is strongly rebutted by Cummings *et al.* (2016). Nevertheless, that is not to deny their applicability in organisational change scenarios such as are experienced by probation organisations. Geiran (2012) provides one example of this approach, in action, in the probation setting.

Leading for the future

According to the Centre for Effective Services (2016: 48), ‘There has been a focus in public service reforms globally on increased and improved performance measurement’, to find out what works, determine relevant competencies required and support democratic accountability.

One of the major and enduring challenges for Probation into the future will be more effective and consistent implementation of evidence-informed policy and practice, to create ‘deliberate change – in the target group and in the system – to better achieve public value results’ (Sandfort and Moulton, 2015: 225). While we have a reasonably clear view on ‘what works’ in probation practice (e.g. Burnett and Roberts, 2004; Healy, 2010; Mair, 2004), this view is becoming increasingly refined and nuanced (e.g. McNeill *et al.*, 2010, 2016; Robinson and McNeill, 2016). That does not take away the need for leaders in Probation to continue to interpret and apply what we know, as best we can, and as far as evidence-informed practice is concerned.

Management and staff in Probation have consistently been motivated and committed to achieve good results, which, particularly through innovation and evidence-informed practice, has enabled the organisations to develop operations with a focus on continuous improvement. In this context, workforce modernisation and organisational development remain high on the leadership agenda in both organisations. In PBNI a Programme Board has been established to guide and develop work practices for all grades of staff and teams/units, to maximise efficiencies in outputs.

Ultimately, as Heifetz and Linsky (2002: 12) point out, the: ‘hope of leadership lies in the capacity to deliver disturbing news and raise difficult questions in a way that people can absorb, prodding them to take up the message’. Given the commonality in our experiences as leaders, as well as our organisational similarities, not to mention the political imperatives, we believe that it is essential that our two services continue to collaborate at an interagency level, and on a cross-border basis, sharing good practice and developing creative new initiatives, including in terms of leadership and organisational change and development.

According to Moore (1995: 53): ‘public sector enterprises can create value’ by deploying ‘the money and authority entrusted to them to produce things of value to particular clients and beneficiaries,’ as well as by ‘operating an institution that meets citizens’ (and their representatives’) desires for properly ordered and productive public institutions’. Probation agencies create such public value by helping to reduce reoffending and reintegrating offenders in their communities. As Moore (1995: 55) proposes, ‘managers in the public sector must work hard at the task of defining publicly valuable enterprises as well as producing that value’. This is what Blanchard (2015: 87) describes as the ‘why’ of what any enterprise does, elaborating on this point to state that ‘CEOs think they are in the “what” and the “how” business ... ultimately, though, they are in the “why” business.’ In general terms, as stated by Taxman and Maass (2016: 179–180), probation is an ‘elastic’¹¹ sanction, which ‘offers a three-pronged arena of impact: to the justice system, to the individual offender, and to the community at large’.

In a context of sometimes shifting political and policy requirements, and changing stakeholder perceptions and requirements, leadership in Probation organisations must not only strive to maximise such positive

¹¹ It offers flexible responses and interventions, and can be tailored to individual requirements, for example.

impact. We must also be articulate, resilient, persistent and effective in promoting the value of probation in a context where ‘in the eyes of the system and the community, [it] is not appreciated’ and is not yet ‘respected in the same light as incarceration’ (Taxman and Maass, 2016: 195).

Change has been a major feature of the journey travelled by both organisations in recent years, and will continue to be into the future. As Kotter (2002: 177) points out, ‘Turbulence [for organisations and their leaders] will never cease.’ In the face of such turbulence, opportunities for positive organisational change – including those outlined above – are also presented. The quality of leadership at all organisational levels in probation, and our ability to manage and lead change within our own organisations and across the wider justice system, including maintaining and building systemic, interagency alliances, will continue to be a critical factor in how successful we are into the future.

Positive changes in the economic and political climate will not necessarily eliminate challenges or solve problems, but rather will change their nature and shape, and perhaps the specific response required to address them. We will have to focus not only on our own organisations but on the wider interagency system, and leaders would do well to recognise that ‘Whether they want to or not, in order to be able to function they will have to enter into relations with organisations in their environment’ (Kickert *et al.*, 1999: 59).

Conclusion

Probation across the island of Ireland, in common with the other elements of our criminal justice systems, continues to change and evolve. Leadership within criminal justice, and specifically Probation, therefore needs to continue to adapt in order to meet those evolving challenges. Leaders need to develop their leadership skill-set, resources and alliances, to be ethical and honest, and to foster a culture of creativity.

Those who work in Probation uphold a number of key and core values, including the belief in people’s capacity to change. Those values reflect, support and complement the optimum leadership approaches required in our field of endeavour. It is imperative, therefore, that our leadership style and actions connect meaningfully with those within our organisations, to co-produce positive change.

The challenges faced by Probation on this island in recent times have led to a number of valuable opportunities, such as the possibility to make positive changes in adverse conditions. This paper has sought to demonstrate that appropriate leadership approaches, employed in challenging times, implementing ‘what works’ in probation, and working positively through our criminal justice systems, have brought about positive developmental change in our two organisations for the benefit of the public we serve. Those opportunities can and will continue to be grasped in a context of consistent, ethical and humble leadership, to enable all staff and other resources to be fully aligned with the vision and aims of the organisation, and to work collaboratively to achieve those goals, thereby helping to create safer, fairer and more inclusive communities.

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