

Probation & Welfare Service

Guide to the Bridge Project

An Intensive Supervision Scheme for the Greater Dublin Area



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The Bridge Project

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Introduction

Bridge is a limited company with charitable status, funded by the Probation and Welfare Service, the city of Dublin VEC and the Irish Youth Foundation.

Established in 1991, Bridge is an intensive probation supervision scheme in which young adult persistent offenders from the Dublin area are engaged in a demanding community based programme. Bridge aims to prevent re-offending by these young adult offenders who would otherwise serve substantial prison sentences by:

1. reducing the incidence of criminal behaviour by participants; and
2. Helping them become re-integrated into communities.

Bridge offers the court and prison authorities an alternative community based sanction through the provision of a high level of worker client contact, group work programmes, as well as internal and external support services to reduce re-offending and thereby enhance the process of social inclusion.

Providing this integrated and holistic approach to working with offenders requires a network of partnerships. The work of Bridge is greatly enhanced by the partnerships between the key agencies in the day to day delivery of the service – In addition to Bridge staff; the project is also currently staffed by the Probation and Welfare Service and the City of Dublin VEC. The Bridge Project works in partnership with FAS, the Irish Youth Foundation, the Social Partners, the Judiciary and An Garda Síochána, who are represented on the Management Board. Bridge also receives support from the Economic and Social Research Institute to the ongoing development of the initiative.

Members of the Board of Management include:

Mr Peter Murray (Chairperson)
Mr Liam O Dwyer, Irish Youth Foundation (Vice chair and Treasurer)
Mr Brian Dack, Probation and Welfare Service (Secretary)
Judge Yvonne Murphy, Dublin Circuit Court
Chief Superintendent Pat Cregg
Mr Sean Quigley, Business Consultant
Ms Breda O'Brien, City of Dublin, VEC
Professor Philip O'Connell, Economic and Social Research Institute
Mr Justice Michael Moriarty (Patron)

Mission and Values:

Our mission is to help reduce the frequency and gravity of offending for the community by providing an intensive community based programme as an alternative to custody. We are committed to create a safe and respectful environment that places people at the centre of what we do. The programme offered is multi-modal, addressing and challenging the underlying aspects of offending for participants, as well as assisting the process of social inclusion. Bridge is committed to believing in people's capacity to change through the provision of challenging, demanding and professional interventions that will facilitate the change.

The Bridge Experience – service delivery:

The key objective of the Bridge programme is to challenge participating offenders to examine critically and better understand the effects of their offending behaviour, and to enable them to develop constructive personal and social skills. Committed to best practice and the delivery of effective interventions, the structure and content of service delivery has been gradually modified over time to provide an integrated programme, however it continues to address key areas significantly associated with cognitive skills, offending and desistance from crime. These include thinking skills, offending behaviour, anger management, addictions, drug and alcohol usage, interpersonal relationships, activities and creativity. Integral to the programme are opportunities and choices in education, training/ employment.

Critical to the delivery of a service at Bridge is the commitment to programme design and integrity. To this end, over the Years Bridge has developed effective working relationships with imminent experts and key agencies in the area of risk assessment, risk management and programme delivery. Bridge has championed a number of initiatives in the delivery of intensive supervision programmes for high risk offenders.

Bridge is committed to forwarding a programme, the 'Bridge Experience' - an individualised / tailored multi-modal approach. The programme is responsive to client need, commencing with a comprehensive cross disciplinary assessment. This facilitates a tailored programme centered on one-to-one case management with core and elective group work modules and a responsive support in education, addiction, accommodation and primary healthcare.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

At the establishment of Bridge in 1991 the original planners identified that evaluation as one of its primary objectives. This objective has been realised through a number of evaluations since 1994. In response to the changing environment, the Board of management commissioned Professor Colin Roberts, Centre for Criminology, Oxford University to undertake, An Independent Strategic Review of Bridge in 2004. The Review identifies the strengths of Bridge in delivering an intensive programme to persistent offenders. It also concludes, that Bridge needs to become more “multi modal” in its approach, providing individualised tailored programmes for those presenting as high risk and high need. To this end, in 2005, Bridge commenced the process of forwarding a new programme, the ‘Bridge Experience’. This has been advanced in our implementation plan, ‘Bridge – Setting Future Direction’.

Bridge is committed to continuing to take an evidence based approach to ensure effectiveness. We are committed to monitoring and evaluating our performance within the context of service provision, including added value and our financial perspective. In doing so Bridge is also committed to incorporating our customer(s) perspective as well as monitoring and evaluating our learning and growth perspective.