

Editorial

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of Irish Probation Journal. One of the strengths of probation across Europe is its willingness to promote and seek out academic and practitioner based research to inform effective practice which supports desistance and the shared goal of safer communities and fewer victims.

Over the past thirteen years *Irish Probation Journal* has established itself as a recognised forum for criminal justice related research, with contributions from experienced and new researchers. A commitment to research and evaluation not only within probation but in the wider field of criminal justice helps to improve operations and to ensure that services maintain their ability to address new challenges and explore new opportunities as well as to bridge gaps and improve performance.

The return of the North–South Criminology Conference this year and the successful Criminal Justice Agencies Conference on *Evidence-Informed Decision Making: Putting Research into Practice in Criminal Justice* in Dublin Castle are indicators of the vibrant and growing criminology community in Ireland. It is important that criminal justice agencies, policy makers, practitioners, researchers and the academic community in Ireland and internationally continue to maintain this visible and positive momentum.

Irish Probation Journal will continue to encourage and support dialogue and debate as well as providing a forum for practitioners to share lessons from practice.

In this edition of *Irish Probation Journal* readers will find research, evaluation, analysis and lessons from practice. Themes include the assessment and management of sexual offenders, restorative practices, rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration of offenders in the community, engagement with probation service users, diversity, the experience of desistance and working with older people on probation. There are also articles on wider issues in criminal justice including the role and contribution of social enterprise, lessons from the life stories of persistent

offenders, prison system comparison, and perceptions and reporting of minorities in the justice system.

Underpinning many contributions is the commitment to learning how probation and criminal justice can better and more effectively support and encourage offenders in their journey towards desistance. The research and commentaries explore how and why people stop offending and consider the role of individuals, practitioners and society in supporting offenders on that sometimes rocky road.

Irish Probation Journal would not be possible without the support of the Directors and senior management teams of the Probation Service and Probation Board for Northern Ireland. Their support and encouragement is sincerely appreciated. The Editorial Committee has provided invaluable advice, guidance and support in the development of *Irish Probation Journal*. We also want to thank the members of the advisory panel and those who provided peer reviews, advice and guidance.

Finally, *Irish Probation Journal* is indebted to the authors who have shared their knowledge and expertise. The calibre of authors and quality of writing in *Irish Probation Journal* will ensure that it continues to be held in the highest regard by academics, policy makers and practitioners, and that it makes a real contribution to better practice and outcomes in probation and criminal justice.

Gerry McNally
The Probation Service

Gail McGreevy
The Probation Board for
Northern Ireland