

The Development of Restorative Practice with Adult Offenders in the Probation Board for Northern Ireland

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Summary: This paper charts the development of restorative practice within Northern Ireland, and more specifically within the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) from the establishment of the PBNI Victim Information Scheme in October 2005 through to the development of the 2014 Restorative Practice Strategy and plans to develop and pilot a restorative approach to adult offenders.

Although there is no specific legislation in Northern Ireland in relation to adult offenders, the PBNI currently provides a range of restorative interventions in adult offender cases. Evidence suggests restorative interventions can help reduce reoffending and make savings across the criminal justice system in terms of reduced reoffending and victim costs. The PBNI developed a Restorative Practice Strategy 2014–2017 (PBNI, 2014) to take forward this work. To assist in the implementation of the strategy the author applied for and received a Winston Churchill scholarship in 2014 to look at international best practice on restorative practice. The paper considers the learning gained from the Winston Churchill Fellowship Project and how it will help shape restorative practices in the PBNI in the future.

Keywords: restorative practice, the victim/offender restorative continuum, victim, offender, community, reparation, community service, community restorative justice organisations, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, Probation Board for Northern Ireland.