

Editorial

Over the past eight years, *Irish Probation Journal* has published many articles on developments in probation practice and the search for innovative and more effective ways to reduce reoffending. Research shows that probation is effective and has an important contribution to make in reducing crime. How and where we apply that research and innovation in practice can make a real difference for the people we work with and the communities in which they live.

This edition explores the theme of positive change, which is a central concept of the work of probation staff in making communities safer. An essential first step in change management is an assessment of the current context and practice.

Vivian Geiran's article reviews the origins and understanding of what supervision means in probation. He challenges us to explain to an eight-year-old what we do in our supervision of offenders. Guy Bourgon, Leticia Gutierrez and Jennifer Ashton take the learning from 'what works' research a step further, asking how we translate it into effective everyday practice. Recognising the implementation and evaluation issues found in the real world, they describe a service delivery model and training approach (STICS) to incorporate that learning consistently into the routine practice of Probation Officers.

Shane Kilcommins, in his paper delivered as the Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture, reviews the application of David Garland's analytical framework in considering the changes that are taking place in our criminal justice system and the determinants that are driving and shaping this change at policy and practice levels. It provides a pragmatic understanding and context for the work of the criminal justice system and the roles of the players within it.

The study of how and why ex-offenders desist from criminal behaviour is a key topic in criminological literature. The contribution of

welfare-oriented approaches to assisting offenders to move away from crime is explored by Brendan Marsh. He examines the application of the 12-step recovery programme with former persistent and drug-addicted offenders and looks at the parallels with desistance literature.

Understanding the context and environment is a central theme in Paul McIlwaine's paper. His equality research outlines the diversity of offender groups, considers their different requirements and suggests areas for consideration in promoting equality of opportunity. One of the areas highlighted in his paper is gender, and this theme is further explored in a number of articles in this edition.

Women offenders and their particular needs and challenges are an area that has not had the attention in research and practice that it deserves. Jean O'Neill's article introduces us to the Inspire Project within PBNI, which seeks to provide a joined-up multi-agency service to women offenders, with promising initial results. Dr Azrini Wahidin examines the needs of older women within the prison system, and Emma Hawthorne describes research undertaken by the Department of Justice on women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland.

Since the 1980s, a network of perpetrator programmes aimed at changing the abusive behaviours of male perpetrators of such violence has been developed by voluntary bodies supported by a combination of charitable and voluntary contributions and State funding. Éimear Fisher discusses programme effectiveness, perpetrator engagement with current programmes and enhanced co-operation and co-ordination as a way forward.

Interest in restorative justice and its possible benefits in the criminal justice system continues to develop within Ireland following the publication of the report of the National Commission on Restorative Justice. David O'Donovan's paper provides a comprehensive background and description of the establishment, key issues and recommendations of the National Commission. Shane McCarthy in his article discusses his survey on the understanding of restorative justice among legal practitioners, and the lessons this has for the development of restorative justice in Ireland.

Increasingly outcomes and results form the basis for funding decisions. Paul Delaney and Michele Weir describe their experience in the application of an evaluation and outcome measurement instrument in a community project working with offenders in Wexford.

This is the eighth edition of *Irish Probation Journal*. The editorial committee acknowledges the importance of articles outlining the academic debates on criminal justice issues and the practice pieces reflecting work on the ground. The engagement of researchers, academics and practitioners is invaluable in having a vibrant, relevant and substantial journal. To continue the development of *Irish Probation Journal*, the editorial committee has decided that all research and academic articles will be subject to peer review and managed accordingly. Practice articles will continue to be considered by the editorial committee.

The editorial committee is grateful to PBNI and the Probation Service for their ongoing support, and to all who contributed to this edition, including the advisory panel and publishers.

Irish Probation Journal wishes to maintain its role and standing in the publication of quality criminal justice research and academic papers, and to continue to contribute to the expanding discussion particularly on the use of community sanctions. Practice articles provide an important opportunity to share and develop best practice.

As well as contributions to the journal, we recognise that expanding access and readership is essential to ensure that *Irish Journal Probation* remains relevant. EBSCO Publishing, one of the leading database aggregators, has agreed to include *Irish Probation Journal* in the EBSCOhost electronic database service. This will ensure greater exposure and readership, and is an exciting development for the journal.

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