

Editorial

Welcome to the sixteenth edition of *Irish Probation Journal (IPJ)*: a unique cross-border collaboration between two Probation Services, North and South, working through an editorial committee that consists of experienced practitioners and academics. The contributions reflect policy and practice developments within probation and the wider criminal justice field. Our aim is to provide high-quality articles, practice pieces, research, evaluations and reviews that stimulate debate, share innovative and best practice and contribute to criminal justice policy development. We welcomed the opportunity to present a paper on the vision, development, themes and research initiatives that constitute *IPJ*, as part of a stimulating programme in the 11th North South Criminology Conference hosted by the Institute of Criminology at the School of Law in University College Dublin.

In a first this year, the journal was nominated under the research category of the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) 2019 probation awards. The editorial committee are delighted that the journal was 'highly commended' in this category. This recognition and validation further demonstrates *IPJ*'s respected position in the wider criminology community, with a national and international readership.

This year's journal again has contributions from authors in academia and practice from both a local and an international perspective. Themes include: mental health; drug misuse; restorative justice and victims; mentoring; the challenges faced by the Travelling community in custody; and an examination of culture within criminal justice. While some of those themes have been the subject of discussion and debate within criminal justice for many years, emerging trends are introduced here – the purpose and ethics of data analytics in criminal justice; strategies on trauma-informed practice to respond to the impact of adverse childhood experiences; legislative development in relation to safer injecting facilities; and an exploration of human trafficking and its interface with the criminal justice system.

Both practitioners and academics will have an interest in the article, from the series of Martin Tansey memorial lectures, examining current culture in the Irish

criminal justice system. It considers four cross-cutting traits in the system: the use of discretion; a disjuncture between policy and practice; the primacy of agency; and humanitarianism. It argues that recent critical scrutiny of organisational cultures has led to a criminal justice system that is more self-aware and reflexive, leading to a new receptiveness to change and European influences.

In contrast to this very contemporary article we have a historical paper that describes the development of the management of 'convicts serving penal servitude sentences' in the 1850s in Ireland. This piece provides an overview of the political and social context of that period within which the Irish 'parole' system developed, and the contributions made by key players. *Irish Probation Journal* is committed to the inclusion of articles that deepen understanding of penal trajectories and that acknowledge and remind us of the effective and visionary work of pioneering colleagues from the past.

An article on the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland considers the impact of mental illness, learning difficulties, and speech and language difficulties on individuals subject to probation and within custodial environments. This commissioned study, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland, examines the salience of these issues and highlights the dangers of objectification and the need to adopt a person-centred perspective. Some of these themes are highlighted again in the 'practitioner's response' to the 2018 article on 'Resilience in the Face of Trauma: Implications for Service Delivery'. Drawing from experience from Northern Ireland, the author highlights the importance of a best-practice, holistic approach in working with trauma, mental ill health and related issues using an individualised approach in order to understand the needs of service users and to support them to desist from criminal behaviour.

Importantly, the area of victim services and restorative practice is explored in two articles. A piece from Northern Ireland describes the development of PBNI's approach to dealing with victims and ensuring that their voices are heard within the criminal justice system. The paper on restorative justice outlines the key features of the recently published Council of Europe recommendation on restorative justice and provides a thoughtful and optimistic assessment of the current prospects for the expansion of restorative justice in the Irish criminal justice system.

The international reach of the journal is critically important, and this year we are delighted to have a contribution from the United States on the evolving area of artificial intelligence (AI). The article highlights that AI technology offers unprecedented opportunities to learn from past cases, to make probation more efficient and to further several public interests. It also

sets out the limitations to the technology. It will be of interest to all criminal justice organisations that are considering piloting AI technologies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of probation services.

Continuing the theme of new and evolving policy development, a paper on safer injecting facilities provides an interesting discussion of the policy and legislative developments in Ireland, drawing from the international experience and a small-scale research project.

Often described as being ‘hidden in plain sight’, trafficking victims are commonly exploited physically and sexually and are some of the most vulnerable people in society. Despite knowledge of the social, economic and individual harm caused, there is a lack of research into the prevalence of this crime and the needs of victims. We are pleased to include a paper on human trafficking, based on learning from an inter-agency secondment, to increase understanding and knowledge, particularly in the context of probation practice.

Two evaluations in this edition of the journal highlight the importance of mentoring in assisting people to stop reoffending. The *Aspire* article outlines how a combination of probation supervision and mentoring from the community and voluntary community is having extremely positive outcomes with young men. Similarly, an article that draws on a 2016 evaluation of *Le Chéile* mentoring services in the Republic of Ireland highlights the range of benefits mentoring provides, including reported reductions in offending behaviour.

An article on the experience of Irish Travellers in prison in England and Wales provides insights into the perceptions of the custodial experiences of Travellers, drawing from the author’s research and wider literature on this subject.

Don’t miss out on three very interesting book reviews that will stimulate further reading on these subject areas.

Our thanks to the Editorial Committee and the advisory panel for all their efforts over the past 12 months. Thanks also to both Probation Services for their continuing support. Without that combined commitment and support it would not be possible to provide a journal of such quality.

Finally, we want to thank all our contributors. We look forward to working with many of the authors again and, as always, are keen to hear from new authors who wish to submit an article for the next edition. We hope you enjoy this sixteenth *Irish Probation Journal*.