Editorial

This is the sixth year of publication of the IPJ. Once again, the Editorial Committee extends its appreciation to all our contributors and stakeholders – the two probation agencies for their continued support; our advisory panel and publishers; and not least you, the readers.

This edition has topical and focused contributions to engage a range of interests. Fergus McNeill develops on his recent Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture by painting the bigger picture of where he sees probation going within the criminal justice system, which in turn is linked to the Sentencing Framework implementation programme in Northern Ireland, and how desistance theory can guide and animate work with offenders in current strained socio-economic circumstances. When resources are scarce, they must be applied to best effort, hence there will be interest in the articles on the value of risk assessment, inter-agency working and programmes to address offending behaviour. Many such intervention strategies have been developed and structured over the years and now form an indispensable part of modern probation practice. If we ever start taking them for granted, we have only to read the article on the history of probation in North-East Ireland to see how much effort has been made over decades to establish the case for properly organised and adequately resourced services. (The concluding article on probation’s history in the Republic is too lengthy for publication in this year’s edition so will be considered for 2010.)

A key role of the IPJ is to provide a forum for sharing good theory and practice. In addition to the articles already mentioned, we include a discussion of ethics and criminological research and an updating of developments within the Garda Síochána Special Projects Unit. The journal also details current developments such as the EU Framework Decision, which is to be the subject of a major CEP conference in Dublin in October, and managing curfews by electronic monitoring, one of several initiatives introduced to Northern Ireland as part of the 2008
Criminal Justice Order. It is too early to appraise their significance or evaluate their impact but we look forward to including features on these and similar developments (e.g. revisions to the assessment of risk of serious harm and public protection sentences) in future editions. The *IPJ* will continue to function as a vehicle for the articulation and teasing out of ideas and new practices.

Since last year’s edition there has been extended contact with universities in both jurisdictions, and we hope both staff and students will find the contents of the journal stimulating as well as informative. Already these are available on the websites of the two agencies, www.probation.ie and www.pbni.org.uk.

Where we can, we will endeavour to make articles more widely available electronically. Potential authors of articles for the *IPJ* are invited to reflect on the implications of an expanding readership. Probation, like so much else in our society, is rapidly evolving and those involved in planning or leading change have an opportunity to explain to us all what they are about. Over to you!

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Probation Service                    Probation Board for Northern Ireland

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