

## Editorial

This year we have great pride in launching the tenth edition of *Irish Probation Journal*. When the journal was launched in 2004, the objective of the first editors was that it would be an annual record of issues facing probation staff in the two services and that it would contribute to the development of professional practice. It is fair to say that *Irish Probation Journal* has far surpassed those goals. It has become an established and acknowledged publication read by criminal justice practitioners, academics and policy-makers throughout the island of Ireland and beyond.

The Editorial Committee would like to thank all the contributors and committees over the years for their work in making *Irish Probation Journal* the important and valued forum for knowledge exchange and critical debate on criminal justice issues that it is today. We have an excellent and much-appreciated advisory panel which has provided high-quality advice and guidance. We wish to put on record our thanks to panel members.

In particular, we wish to acknowledge the contribution of Jean O'Neill from PBNI, a member of the editorial committee from its inception in 2004 until 2012 and joint editor of the journal from 2007 to 2012. Jean's work has been invaluable in building the quality and reputation of the journal over the years.

The support by the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland and the Department of Justice and Equality (Ireland) has been a critical factor in sustaining the development of *Irish Probation Journal*. Without the funding, active support and encouragement of the Probation Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Departments it would be immeasurably more difficult to have an open, high-quality and authoritative journal.

In this edition the Honourable Mr Justice Peter Charleton, in his erudite and stimulating Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture, hosted by the

Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development, examines the public perceptions and challenges in the criminal justice sentencing process in Ireland. He explores sentencing in other jurisdictions, questions the role of compensation and highlights the importance of research in informed judicial decision-making. His thoughtful reflections highlight the many factors and interests clamouring to be reconciled in the sentencing process.

In *Irish Probation Journal* we have previously drawn attention to the importance of a critical criminological research community in Ireland and quality studies of criminal justice practice and outcomes. Nicola Carr with Deirdre Healy, Louise Kennefick and Niamh Maguire presents an important review of the current state of research on offender supervision in Ireland, North and South. To develop and support informed policy development and best practice it is essential that quality research be encouraged and supported. The authors make an important contribution in informing this task in their exploration of common themes and identification of avenues for future enquiry.

Following the theme of research on issues with particular relevance to the criminal justice system and wider society, this edition features significant findings by Dr Paula Mayock and Sarah Sheridan on imprisonment, homelessness and marginalisation among a sample of women who had experienced custody.

In the context of a substantial cohort of older prisoners in custody in Ireland, Jan Alvey explores, in a literature review and small-scale study, the specific needs and care issues arising in respect of older male prisoners. In a timely paper, given the previously limited research on reports to court in Ireland, Andrea Bourke examines quality and effectiveness in pre-sanction reports prepared by Probation Officers for courts.

Risk assessment instruments have become key resources for Probation Officers in managing offenders in the community in Ireland. Mary Walker and Margaret O'Rourke examine Probation Officers' experiences in using two risk assessment tools in managing sex offenders in the community. Louise Cooper and Ivor Whitten report on an independent review of the use of the ACE risk assessment tool in Northern Ireland.

The much-travelled Brian Stout, in a thoughtful paper, reflects on his experience as a Probation Officer with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland in the 1990s – before and after the ceasefires and Good Friday Agreement – and his work since in South Africa, England and Australia,

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considering the place of restorative justice, occupational culture and community links along the way.

The criminal justice system and the media have had, at times, an uneasy relationship. Gail McGreevy, in her paper, asks if media and public relations are relevant to those working in criminal justice, and if Probation Services could benefit from managed media and public relations support.

EU Framework Decision 947 provides for mutual recognition of probation decisions across all EU member states and, with other EU-funded criminal justice projects, has contributed to increased engagement and sharing of knowledge among services across Europe. Elena Nichifor, a Probation Counsellor in Romania and contributor to EU probation projects, provides us with an introduction to the work of the developing Romanian Probation Service and how it is establishing itself as a vibrant and professional agency in its criminal justice system.

The increase in multi-agency working and partnerships in dealing with cross-cutting issues has been a welcome and effective development in recent years, with real benefits in community safety and in the reduction in reoffending. Mark Wilson, John McCann and Robert Templeton chart the development of the multi-agency model for Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management (SORAM) in Ireland from its origins in co-working in the management of a small number of very high-risk cases to its establishment as a national action.

On a similar theme, Terry Doherty and Mark Dennison track the development in Northern Ireland of 'Reducing Offending in Partnership', an initiative that brings together criminal justice agencies and specialist services to target those at high risk of offending/reoffending and causing significant levels of harm.

Jane Mulcahy takes a critical look at conditions in Irish prisons in the context of human rights and the impact of increasing committals to prison over recent years. She advocates that policy makers, in reviewing criminal justice policy, should adopt a decarceration strategy as part of a creative approach in penal practice.

The developing engagement between the research and academic community, interest groups, policy-makers and practitioners in exploring issues in criminal justice is a real opportunity for constructive and purposeful partnership. The growing EU-funded promotion of co-operation in criminal matters, to create a genuine European area of justice based on mutual recognition and mutual confidence, is a most welcome

initiative with significant benefits for all partners and communities across Europe.

*Irish Probation Journal* has a role in supporting and encouraging this openness and co-operation as a forum for knowledge exchange, critical debate and dialogue. It recognises the wide-ranging interest in criminal justice issues and the diversity of views as well as concerns. It is solution-focused in the pursuit of principled and effective community sanctions and a fair criminal justice system.

As in this 10th anniversary edition, *Irish Probation Journal* welcomes work by practitioners, researchers, new writers and established authors. With the support of the readership, contributors and funders, *Irish Probation Journal* looks forward to future editions and continued constructive engagement, learning and dialogue.

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The Probation Board for Northern Ireland

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October 2013