

H.O.S.T. NEWS

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Issue 4 August 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the latest HOST newsletter, the first for 2005. This is a time of change, both in the Probation and Welfare Service (PWS) and the homelessness services field. Mr. Michael Donnellan, takes up the post of Director of the Probation Service, from the 5th September. The review of the homeless strategy, commissioned by the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness, is due to be completed soon. The issues posed by and for homeless offenders are being addressed in increasingly effective partnerships and through improved interagency co-operation. The lessons from emerging research (see item on 'Research Reports' below) must be taken on board in developing responses and interventions to prevent and reduce homelessness among offenders. Appropriate long term accommodation is essential in reducing risk of re-offending and improving public safety. It is also opportune to remind readers of the availability of the Department of Social and Family Affairs information booklet for prisoners – 'What Now? Useful things to know before and after your release.'

Vivian Geiran

PROBATION RESIDENCES FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

The Project Team established by the PWS to review standards in Probation Hostel Residences for Young Offenders, under eighteen years of age, has completed its task of developing Draft Standards, to meet the requirements of the Children Act, 2001, (Probation [Residential Supervision] Orders). The Standards are based on best practice in the field of residential care for children. The work entailed consultation with management of the three Probation Residences for Young People in Cork, Waterford and Dublin.

Two documents have been drafted as a result.

- Draft Standards for Young People's Probation Hostel Residents and
- Draft Criteria related to the uses made of hostel placements certified, approved and/or funded by the Probation and Welfare Service.

PADUA HOUSE



Bond Residential at Padua House

Padua House was officially opened by Michael McDowell TD and Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform on the 13th May 2005. The PWS was represented by David O'Donovan, APP&WO, Ciaran Kennedy, APP&WO and Brian Santry, SP&WO. The gathering was addressed by Catherine Durkan, Chairperson, BOND Project, Pat Doyle, Manager of the BOND Project, Alan Carthy, Fingal County Council and the Minister.

Padua House is the residential component of the BOND Project, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. It provides transitional accommodation (normally 3 to 12 months) for up to 8 young male offenders engaged in the BOND Project Day Programme and who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness, from the Dublin 15 area.

At the time of writing there are seven residents in Padua House. Of those in residence in 2004, three went into private rented accommodation and the remainder returned to the parental home.

*Homeless Offenders Strategy Team – H.O.S.T.
A multi-agency initiative to address homelessness among offenders*

**HPU INITIATIVE - Derek Dockery
Innovation Awards**



At the Derek Dockery Awards Ceremony were from left to right: Mark Wilson, Mountjoy Prison, Henry Fottrell, Homeless Persons Unit, Beatrix Sheehan, Homeless Persons Unit and Brian Connell, Mountjoy Prison.

The Homeless Persons Unit and the Probation and Welfare Service Pilot In-Reach Service to Mountjoy Prison were nominated in a section of the Eastern Regional Health Authority Derek Dockery Innovation Awards. The Awards seek to reward initiatives in health and personal social services that have improved the quality of services through innovation and enhancement. Entries were considered by a judging panel which was chaired by Justice Catherine McGuinness.

The team involved in the In-Reach Initiative attended the Award Ceremony which was held in Stewart's Hospital, Palmerstown. The team were very pleased to see the initiative selected in the final three within its category from a total submission of thirty-nine entries.

Community Welfare Officer, Beatrix Sheehan said: "We were delighted to be nominated for the Award; it's great that the initiative was recognised in this way".

The initiative targeting commenced targeted prisoners granted Christmas Temporary Release (TR) in December 2002. A broader service developed during 2003. The HPU also provided information services to prisoners who attended PWS group programmes. The Christmas TR initiative was repeated in December 2003.

A total of 257 prisoners benefited during the 12 month period. Assistance provided included; a

weekly payment; provisional accommodation; clothing allowance; medical card application; disability allowance; and registration with DCC as being homeless.

This initiative continues in Mountjoy and is currently being assessed.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

At the HOST Regional Conference held in April 2005, the issue of how the PWS works with No Fixed Abodes (NFA's) referrals from the Courts was considered. Following this, Mr. Vivian Geiran, Director HOST, made a presentation to the Senior Management Team, PWS, who approved of the establishment of a Project Team to address the needs of the NFA's.

In brief, the Project Team is to consider the introduction and development of a designated team to work with no fixed abode referrals from the Courts.

The terms of reference for the Project Team are:

- *Examine the efficiency and effect regarding: existing structures, procedures and of mechanisms within the PWS for dealing with no fixed abode offenders referred by the Courts.*
- *Document the risk/needs of said offenders and how they can be best addressed.*
- *Set out a clear plan of action to develop and implement any necessary changes identified.*

The Team is to report back to the Senior Management Team by autumn this year.

HOST would welcome any submissions from colleagues with experience in this challenging area which may assist and inform the project team in its deliberations.

Submissions to *Pat Jennings, SPWO, HOST, Smithfield Chambers, Dublin 7. Or e-mail pajennings@pws.gov.ie*

Probation & Welfare Service, Irish Prison Service, Dublin City Council – in partnership with other statutory and non-statutory agencies, addressing homelessness among offenders and ex-offenders.

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**MULTI AGENCY GROUP ON
ACCOMMODATION FOR
HOMELESS SEX OFFENDERS
(DUBLIN)**

Under the aegis of the Homeless Agency a Multi Agency Group involving the relevant agencies has been established to address the issues associated with the accommodation of sex offenders who are identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness on release from custodial sentences in the Dublin area.

The group is convened and facilitated by the Probation & Welfare Services and comprises representatives of the following agencies:

The Probation and Welfare Service, Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána, Health Service Executive, Relevant Local Authority Services, National Forensic Psychiatric Services (Central Mental Hospital), Voluntary/Social Housing Body representative.

Its purpose is to plan prior to release the accommodation of sex offenders for whom housing has been identified as a critical resettlement issue.

Criteria for referral to the Multi Agency Group is as follows:

- Prisoners in Dublin Prisons or in the Midlands Prison as well as the Central Mental Hospital, who are expected to be homeless on release and
- Who express preference for living in the geographical area covered by the four Dublin Local Authority administrative areas.

Prisoners from the following institutions are included: Arbour Hill, Training Unit, Wheatfield Place of Detention, Cloverhill Remand Prison, St. Patrick's Institution, Mountjoy Prison, Midlands Prison as well as the Central Mental Hospital.

The timescale for the Case Management Process is approximately nine months

Referral forms to the Multi Agency Group can be obtained through the Senior Probation and Welfare Officers in the aforementioned prisons/central mental hospital.

**SEMINAR : HOMELESSNESS AND
WOMEN OFFENDERS**

HOST co-hosted a seminar with the Homeless Agency on the 13th January 2005 at Parkgate Hall, Conyngham Road, Dublin entitled:

***Homelessness and Women Offenders:
Developing and delivering an integrated and
comprehensive response.***

The seminar was organised to identify the needs of homeless women offenders for the purpose of generating solutions to outstanding issues and to draw on the existing pool of knowledge and experience. The seminar was well attended by the many agencies and individuals working in this area.

It focused on women prisoners who present particularly demanding challenges, arising out of their offending, homelessness and other issues, to a range of service providers.

The seminar identified a number of issues that need to be addressed, in particular, the difficulty in accessing suitable accommodation and appropriate support services. These are a small group of women that have serious issues in their lives such as addictions, mental health issues, challenging behaviours and repeat offending patterns, as well as homelessness.

As a result of the seminar the Homeless Agency and the Probation and Welfare Service are to plan and develop, in co-operation with other agencies as required, a care and case management system for homeless women offenders.

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Access Housing Unit:

A key action under the **Homeless Agency's Action Plan 2004-2006**, "Making it Home" is to extend the availability of the service of the **Access Housing Unit** which sources individual tenancies in the private sector so that the **Probation & Welfare Service & the Irish Prison Service** can on behalf of prisoners access this service to help avoid discharge into homeless services. Since January of this year the Access Housing Unit have provided a pilot in-reach service to Mountjoy prison, more recently the service has been extended to the Dochas Centre (Women's Prison) and the Training Unit, Mountjoy. The purpose of the service is to improve the prevention of homelessness through making private rented accommodation available to people either on discharge from prison or near the end of their sentence, as an alternative to temporary or homeless accommodation. Tenancy support services are available as necessary to enable ex-offenders maintain their tenancy.

Other key agencies involved in facilitating these in-reach services are **Dublin City Council & the Homeless Persons Unit, Health Services Executive.**

Information & Research Reports

Three particular research reports, published recently, have a bearing on services to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The reports are as follows:

- **'A Study of the Number, Profile and Progression Routes of Homeless Persons before the Court and in Custody'**

Copies of this report, carried out by Dr Mairéad Seymour and Ms. Liza Costello at the Centre for Social & Educational Research at DIT, are available from Susan Shields, HOST, Smithfield Chambers, Dublin 7.

The report will also be available on the PWS website: www.pws.ie.

The National Advisory Committee on Drugs:

- **'Drug Use among the Homeless Population in Ireland'**

The National Crime Council in association with the Economic and Social Research Institute:

- **'Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland: Report on the National Study of Domestic Abuse'**

Information leaflets on HOST are also available from Susan Shields.

HOST Staff News

Susan Shields, C/O took up duties with HOST May 2005.

Karen Henley, P.W.O. commenced work with HOST in June 2005.

Laura Wason P.W.O. commenced work with HOST on the 2nd August, 2005.

FEEDBACK

If you are interested in finding out further information on any of the items mentioned, or wish to make a submission, please contact

Susan Shields, HOST, Probation & Welfare Service, Smithfield Chambers, Smithfield, Dublin 7

Ph: (01) 817-6505

Email: snshields@pws.gov.ie

