

THE PROBATION PRESS

Newsletter of The Probation Service

May 2010

Probation Service host CEP Conference

Implementation of the EU Framework Decision on the Transfer of Probation Supervision



On the 8th and 9th October 2009 the Probation Service in Ireland in collaboration with the CEP (The European Organisation for Probation), hosted an expert meeting on the 'Implementation of the EU Framework Decision on the Transfer of Probation Supervision'.

This Framework Decision will allow Courts to impose a non custodial order with conditions, including supervision, to be implemented in the home country of an offender convicted abroad, thus improving the prospects of rehabilitation.

The Framework Decision, which came into effect on 16th December 2008, obliges all Member States to take the necessary measures to comply with it by 6th December 2011.

The meeting was held in the Probation Service Office, Haymarket, Dublin 7 and had the following aims:

1. To give an overview of the activities undertaken in several EU Member States with regard to the implementation of the Framework Decision.
2. To increase participant understanding of the implications of the provisions of the Framework Decision for Probation policy and practice within their own jurisdiction.
3. To build a network and establish relevant links between countries.
4. To create a forum for effective dialogue with a view to exploring options for implementation.
5. To develop a template for action plans which can be adapted for each country.

The meeting was attended by 41 delegates from 23 countries, typically with one nominee per country representing policy makers from the relevant ministry and one nominee representing the key Probation organisation.



Managing services in changing times

As we are all aware we live in changed times. Fiscal restraints caused by the global economic crisis present new and difficult challenges to us all. Navigating through the Public Service moratorium whilst continuing to maintain service levels presents new challenges at all levels.

In October 2009 the Service set out its operational priorities, a blueprint for positive action in the context of ongoing demands while overall staffing resources are reducing. Our overall priority in assessment and supervision will be cases in which the Service has a legislative responsibility. Supervision and interventions based on assessing and managing risk of reoffending and risk of harm will be prioritised.

In 2009, the Probation Service Human Resources unit worked closely with all staff in managing and implementing the Incentivised Government Schemes such as the incentivised career breaks, early retirement options and shorter working year. A significant number of staff availed of these schemes. It has been a challenge for the Service to facilitate staff to avail of these opportunities while at the same time having regard to the organisation's operational and business needs.

New Model of Community Service

VFM Report 2009

The value for money and policy review of Community Service carried out during late 2007 and 2008 and published by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2009 provided important data and recommendations on the operation of the Community Service Scheme. The Probation Service has used the findings of the VFM report to develop with all stakeholders a far-reaching and innovative model of Community Service to bring increased efficiencies, practical solutions and new energy to Community Service in the 21st century. The new model of Community Service is being piloted in the Dublin area since January 2010 with a view to introducing it across all areas later in the year.

Community Service as a Process

Key to the new model of Community Service is understanding Community Service as a process. Tasks in Community Service have been identified as steps in a process through the Order from assessment to completion as outlined. The individual on Community Service engages with relevant people at appropriate points as they move through their assessment, induction, work and completion.

Responsibility for each task or step in the process is allocated to the appropriate person as part of the team. The assessment is completed using a standard assessment format enabling a consistent and comprehensive report. The report to Court is based on a standard format meeting the requirements of the legislation. A new innovation is the use of standard induction meetings (group or individual) on a fixed day each week. All new Orders are inducted, assigned with a work timetable and onsite promptly.

Offenders on Orders are treated as unpaid workers with obligations to attend, work well, complete their allocated hours without delay and be accountable for their performance.



Probation Service staff awarded IPA Diploma in Justice Studies at a ceremony in Dublin Castle

The course in Justice Studies was introduced by Sean Aylward, Secretary General to give staff the opportunity for further studies and to get an overview of the working of the Department and its associated offices. Suzanne Vella, Deputy Director attended the ceremony and acknowledged the great effort and achievement of nineteen of our staff who successfully completed this programme. All nineteen were awarded their diplomas at a ceremony in Dublin Castle on 5th March 2010.

The diplomas were awarded by the IPA and the ceremony was attended by Sean Aylward, (Secretary General), Noel Waters (Assistant Secretary) and John Cullen, (Director General of IPA).



Congratulations to Kim Alright; Kenneth Barry; Natasha Brennan; Laura Byrne; Yvonne Cummings; Leah Hensey; Theresa Gaye Lynch; Lisa McPartlan; James O'Grady; Rachael O'Reilly; Enda Ward

Results of change

An important outcome of this approach is that clarity and transparency in work management has improved. Each participant in the process, including the offender, understands their tasks, responsibilities and accountability. A dedicated team based in Haymarket comprising Probation Officers, Community Service Supervisors and administration has been established to manage all Community Service in the Dublin area.

The intention is that the finalised model of Community Service will be available in manual format with all stages outlined, tasks identified, processes documented, requirements and obligations outlined and all questions answered. This will be a 'living' document available online and to all. It will be constantly reviewed and updated as improvements and new developments arise. The new model in operation will enable the Probation Service to increase the number of Community Service Orders, manage performance and deliver an efficient, effective community sanction that adds measurable value to communities, enables offenders to make reparation to the community for their wrongdoing promptly and with accountability.

Early indications are that the new Model of Community Service has been welcomed by Courts and shown real results in operation. There are major benefits in more efficient assessments, prompt starting on Orders, increased attendance on worksites and an increased number of Orders being made.

Overall the future for Community Service is promising and the innovative change in Community Service will enable an efficient, effective and growing use of Community Service as a sanction and asset in communities.

Risk Matrix 2000 and Stable & Acute Instruments

As part of the development of our all island approach to sex offender assessment, training has now been completed in the Risk Matrix 2000 and Stable & Acute instruments. Information sessions were held on 29th January for managers who were not trained in the use of these to ensure senior managers have a clear understanding of their use. Reflecting the close working relationship between our Service and An Garda Síochána



Pictured: Ursula Fernee, Assistant Principal, Staff Training and Development Unit; Supt Mary Gormley, Garda Training College; Barbara Farrand, National Training Co-ordinator, Criminal Justice Services, Scotland; Ann Reade, Senior Probation Officer, High Risk Offender Management Team.

Health & Safety in the Probation Service

The Probation Service Health and Safety Statement was reviewed and published in September 2009. The Statement which is available on the Service Portal and Website www.probation.ie was distributed to all service offices for inclusion in all office Health and Safety folders.

The Probation Service National Health and Safety Committee, which has full staff representation, met on two occasions during 2009. The Service also had representation at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Health and Safety Steering Committee meeting and has participated actively in the State Claims Agency Risk Management Network Meetings, hosting the November meeting in Haymarket. This meeting was attended by representatives from up to 24 other Government Departments and Agencies and included presentations from the State Claims Agency, The Road Safety Authority and the Probation Service.

Following on from the November meeting the Service participated in a Fire safety Survey conducted by the State Claims Agency. In total 41 responses were received to the survey. In time the State Claims Agency will provide an analysis of the data submitted. As part of the Probation Service commitment to ensuring Fire Safety, a week in February (beginning 22nd) and a week in October (beginning 4th) have been designated as Fire Safety weeks



BallyRunners initiative proves to be a great success



As is commonly known the summer months can lead to increased criminal activity as young people are without educational and training placements. In an effort to tackle this issue, the Probation Service devised a simple group work idea that focused on Health and Fitness. Many young people engaged with the Probation Service express a keen interest in attending the gym. Building on this it was proposed that a small group attend the local Dublin City Council gym one day a week and attend information sessions on another day.

Young Persons Probation, a division of the Probation Service, have developed extensive links with other agencies in the Ballymun area and after close liaison with the Ballymun Job Centre it was agreed to utilise the Equal Youth Initiative to help realize the potential of the initiative.

The 'BallyRunners' Group was founded by the Equal Youth Committee during the summer of 2009 in response to the identified need for the young people in Ballymun to participate in constructive activity. "BallyRunners" was a 12-week health, fitness & well-being course run by The Equal Youth Committee targeting young disadvantaged early school leavers, not actively engaged in training or education, some of whom were involved in drug misuse and criminal activity. This interagency initiative led by Ballymun Job Centre comprises various local agencies: The Probation Service, Social Welfare, BRYR, HSE, Youthreach, Ballymun Adult Write and Read and Ballark Training Centre.

As part of the programme, and with much support from the local community, the participants trained for and completed the 5-mile Simon Fun Run. The "BallyRunners" raised 2,245 Euros for Simon and presented them with the cheque on the 23rd of February 2010. Mr. Pete Mahon (St. Patrick's Athletic FC) who helped with the delivery of the course joined with the participants, trainers and local workers to help mark the happy occasion.

Reducing our Footprint



Audit of energy usage

The Probation Service are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and minimising our impact on the environment. In late 2009 the Service conducted a targeted energy usage audit throughout our 26 sole occupancy offices. The results of the audit produced some thought provoking results which led the Service to liaise with the Sustainable Energy Ireland, (SEI) mentoring service.

In Remembrance

Eileen Holly

Eileen Holly, Probation Officer, passed away suddenly at her home in Tarbert, Co. Kerry on 30th January 2010.



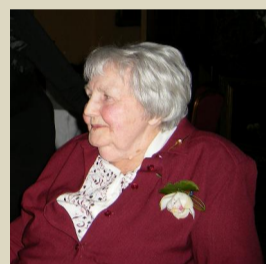
Eileen, a social science graduate, joined the Probation Service in 1978. Throughout her long and distinguished career she worked primarily in the South West Area of the country on the Kerry, Clare and Limerick teams. At the time of her death she was a member of the County Kerry and County Limerick team and had responsibility for part of the West Limerick area.

Eileen was a highly professional officer who was diligent and fully committed to her job. She took a huge interest in her clients and invested a lot of herself in helping them address their issues. Eileen was kind, courteous and sensitive to all who dealt with her. She was very well regarded among her professional peers both inside and outside the Probation Service. Tributes were paid to her in Rathkeale District Court following her death highlighting the positive impact she had on those who came in contact with her.

Ar dheis De go raibh a hanam.

Kay Kinsella

Kay Kinsella, retired Senior Probation Officer, passed away peacefully on 31st December 2009 at St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin after a short illness.



Kay joined the Welfare Service of the Department of Justice in 1969 as a Welfare Officer and in 1971 was one of the first Senior Welfare Officers (with Martin Tansey and Noel Clear). Kay Kinsella retired from the Service in January 1979 after 40 years of public service. Kay was particularly pleased by the energy and commitment of the Officers and that the legacy of herself and others was, in her words, in the good hands of people with good in their hearts. May she rest in peace.

Probation Service Project scoops award

Cox's Demesne Gaining Ground Project

The Gaining Ground Probation Project is just one of the services/projects being delivered by Cox's Demesne Youth & Community Project Ltd. The Gaining Ground Project entered the OMCYA & CAAB National Awards for Services to Children and Young People under the Youth Justice category. They were runners up on the day.

The Gaining Ground Probation Project targets 16-18 year olds who have been referred to the Probation Service via the Courts, for the purpose of training and activities orders and community service. The Gaining Ground Probation Project was established in 2008 as additional and further development to the work with young people already undertaken by the Cox's Demesne Youth & Community Project in partnership with the Probation Service. It was established to assist the Probation Service in its management and implementation of orders under the Children Act 2001, (as amended) and in line with Young Persons Probation objectives.



Pictured at the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs award ceremony in Dublin Castle are Rachel O'Malley, Probation Officer; Clodagh O'Mahony; Orla Callan and Leonita McDonald

Regulator for Public Service recruitment gives favourable report to Probation Officer Recruitment Campaign

The Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) published an audit report of recruitment and selection policies and practices operated by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on its website in October 2009. This report included an examination of the recent recruitment campaign for Probation Officers in the Probation Service. The audit reported that this appointment process was conducted to a high standard with the core values expressed in the CPSA's Code of Practice reflected throughout each stage of the process.



Upcoming events

June 2010 – Training for Designated Contact Persons

July 2010 – RM2000 Risk Assessment Instrument Refresher Training

November 2010 – Public Protection Advisory Group Seminar, Haymarket, Dublin 7.

February 2011 – CEP Directors of Probation Conference, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2.