

THE PROBATION PRESS

Newsletter of The Probation Service

August 2009

Probation Service develops Community Service Graffiti Removal Project

Graffiti has been an issue for many years, defacing every surface imaginable from public buildings to private homes, children's playgrounds to bus shelters. Nowhere is immune. The negative impact of graffiti should not be underestimated. Whole neighbourhoods feel the demoralising effect as their area is daubed in unsightly graffiti and clean up is costly.

In 2007, the Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government expressed their desire to address the increasing problem of graffiti in Dublin. Having reviewed the established systems for combating the problem, the Probation Service developed a comprehensive response through the use of Community Service.

"The appearance of a community is a key feature in encouraging social and economic activity and in identifying it as a desirable place to live, work and do business in."
Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government,
Mr. John Gormley T.D.

What is Community Service?

Community Service is a sentence imposed by the Courts as a direct alternative to custody. The Community Service order consists of two elements: (i) the number of hours unpaid work to be performed by the offender and (ii) the custodial sentence the offender will be required to serve should they not complete the ordered hours. The aim of Community Service is to get offenders to pay back to the community in a positive way for the damage caused by offending. Every year thousands of unpaid hours of work are completed, benefiting many communities and voluntary groups.

What is the Community Service Graffiti Project?

The Community Service Graffiti Removal Project is a Probation Service initiative which aims to combat the growing problem of graffiti through the use of unpaid work by offenders ordered by the Court as redress for their offending behaviour. The project, piloted in the South Dublin County Council Area, works in close co-operation with the local authority. The Project operates as follows:

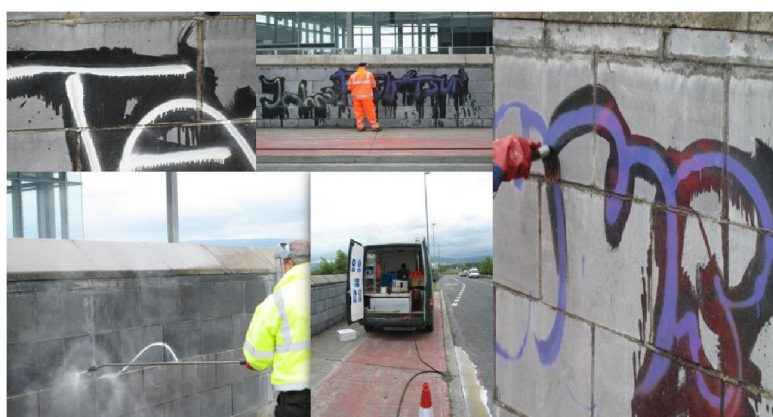
- The Council litter warden advises the Council of sites damaged by graffiti.
- The Council notifies the Probation Service Graffiti Removal team.
- The Community Service team travel to the affected site removes the graffiti and cleans the associated area based on an agreed work schedule.

The removal of the graffiti is performed by offenders on Community Service orders supervised on site by Probation Service Community Service Supervisors.

Has the initiative worked to date?

The Community Service Graffiti Removal Project in South Dublin has been an overwhelming success to date generating huge interest from councils and communities. The Probation Service are currently exploring the possibility of expanding the Project to other areas. There are a number of significant benefits:

- It is cost effective.
- The Project has the potential to offer significant savings for Communities.



- It increases Probation Service capacity to complete Community Service Orders promptly and efficiently.
- It has a positive and visible benefit for communities.
- It engages the offender in a disciplined and structured routine similar to regular employment improving their readiness for employment.
- Community Service Supervisors and Offenders have provided positive feedback on the Project referring to it as innovative, stimulating, and giving a job perspective and a sense of active contribution.
- Communities have applauded the work of the Community Service Project team and appreciated the value of the work to their environment

19 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 to sample third level study. The course administered by the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) which is delivered through a combination of distance learning and seminars is aimed at staff who have never undertaken a third level qualification.

Over the past two years a significant number of the administrative staff in the Probation Service have completed this course. On 8th May 2009 at a ceremony in Dublin Castle staff who completed the programme for 2008/2009 were awarded their diplomas. This ceremony was attended by Sean Aylward, (Secretary General), Noel Waters (Assistant Secretary) and John Cullen, (Director General of IPA). Also in attendance were Michael Donnellan, Director, Probation Service and David O'Donovan, Deputy Director Research, Training and Development. Congratulations to Brenda Aughney; Dot Callery; Frances Comerford; Catherine Feighery; Mags Gavagan; Lilibeth Higgins; Sarah Kelly; Eileen King; Suzanne Lynagh; Patricia Mansfield; Marina Marlborough; Monica Martin; Siobhan Murphy; Marian O'Grady; Karen O'Keeffe; Jennifer O'Riordan; Mary Quane; Vincent Reid; Brenda Smith.



Martin Tansey Lecture Series

In 2008 the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD) established the Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture. The lecture for 2009, hosted by the Probation Service, took place on Thursday May 7th 2009 in Haymarket. The 2009 lecture entitled Probation, Rehabilitation and Reparation was delivered by Fergus McNeill, Professor of Criminology & Social Work, Glasgow University.

Professor McNeill's lecture placed Probation Practice developments in Scotland, England and Wales in historical context exploring how rehabilitation has been understood, practised, celebrated and criticised over the course of Probation's history. The lecture examined aspects and forms of rehabilitation we should seek to defend and retain, and forms of reparation that are most consistent with Probation's traditions and values and most likely to be effective in delivering justice and reducing crime.

The lecture was extremely well attended and Professor McNeill's lecture was very well received. An article by Professor McNeill based on the lecture will be included in the Irish Probation Journal 2010.

Revision of Customer Service Charter completed

The Report of the Task Force – Transforming Public Services was published in November 2008. This Report sets out a challenging agenda for change in the Public Service over a three year timeframe. One of the key commitments in this Report is in relation to improving Customer Service. In keeping with this commitment and the Probation Service Strategy Statement for 2008 – 2010 the Customer Service Charter and Action Plan for the Service was reviewed earlier this year. These documents are available on the Service Portal and on the internet at www.probation.ie

Over the coming months emphasis will be placed on implementing the Customer Service Action Plan. Any issues in relation to Customer Service can be emailed to a dedicated mailing address at customerservice@probation.ie or addressed to the Customer Service Officer, Corporate Affairs, 3rd Floor, Haymarket, Smithfield, Dublin 7.



Standard Risk Assessment
System for the Supervision and
Management of Sex Offenders
Introduced

The Probation Service has committed to delivering a standard risk process for the risk assessment of sex offenders in keeping with Governmental / Intergovernmental Policy. The use of a standard approach is in line with the system currently being implemented on a multi agency basis in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Close working relationships are being maintained with colleagues in Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána to ensure shared learning and to maximise the use of scarce resources. The application of this consistent approach by different agencies and across jurisdictions will add considerably to public safety.

The introduction of this risk assessment system will mark a significant step for the Probation Service in the supervision and management of sex offenders. The use of a static risk assessment instrument will assist the Probation Service to identify those offenders that pose a greater risk to public safety and on whom interventions should be focused, thus promoting the efficient use of resources. In addition, the use of a dynamic risk assessment instrument will assist the Probation Service in identifying specific risk areas for targeting during supervision thus ensuring a more effective risk management of sex offenders.

Training in the use of sex offender risk assessment instruments was completed in January 2009 with over 120 Probation Service staff based both in the community and prison.

Upcoming events

August 2009 – The Probation Service is facilitating a delegation study visit from the Latvian State Probation Service.

September 2009 – The Probation Service will host a Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB) meeting to be attended by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr. Barry Andrews, T.D.

October 2009 – The CEP , (European Organisation for Probation), in collaboration with the Probation Service will host an expert meeting in Dublin on the implementation of the EU Framework Decision on the Transfer of Probation Supervision.

November 2009 – The Probation Service will host the Risk Management Network Meeting which is organised by the State Claims Agency.

Probation Service 2008
Annual Report Published

The Probation Service has recently published its 2008 Annual Report. The report outlines the work of the Service during 2008 and provides relevant material and statistics. The report is available on the Service intranet portal or can be accessed on the Probation Service website – www.probation.ie/publications

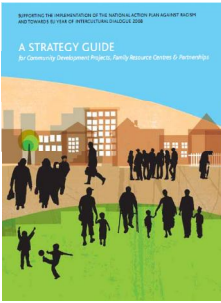


Inter-cultural awareness training

Included in the Probation Service work plan for 2009 is a Multi Cultural strategic goal which seeks to recognise and value the culturally diverse nature of the society and communities within which we all live and work – “We will positively embrace cultural diversity and promote the development of cultural awareness and good practice throughout the service.”

The delivery of Intercultural awareness training to all Probation Service staff is, not only pivotal to underpinning this important goal but also supports the commitment given by government to provide a strategic framework for developing a more inclusive, intercultural society in which racism is effectively challenged.

The Service is now delivering on this strategic objective by providing an Intercultural Training Awareness programme for all Service staff.



Responding to a changing Ireland – Census of
foreign national service users

Given the increasingly multicultural nature of Irish society, it is important for The Probation Service to be aware of the various nationalities and ethnic/cultural backgrounds of its service users and to be sensitive to the implications of these for service delivery.

The Probation Service and Probation Board of Northern Ireland have conducted a snap shot survey to update their respective organisation’s knowledge of the profiles of their foreign national service users.

Objectives of Survey:

- Clarification of number and nationalities of foreign national service users.
- Current geographical spread of these service users
- Identification of key languages required for interpretation services and other relevant materials (i.e. printed media) for service users.
- Identification of the main ethnic groups with a view towards increasing our awareness of the relevant issues that could impact on service delivery.
- Identification of any other trends not previously recognised.

Definitions: For the purposes of this survey a “Foreign National” is deemed to be any offender on the caseload whose nationality **and** ethnic / cultural background is not of the Republic of Ireland or United Kingdom. The inclusions are those that were on the caseload at 7:00am on Friday 1st May 2009.

Summary of Findings:

The process for conducting this survey proved extremely successful with a 100% response. This in itself is significant and all staff involved are to be congratulated

1. 268 foreign nationals from a total of 8,246 on the case-load on the 1st May 2009. This represents a percentage of 3.26%.
2. There are 42 countries in addition to Ireland and the U.K. on the caseload.
3. Over 60% of foreign national offenders were from 5 countries. The highest represented countries are Romania (19.8%) and Poland (19.0). Each of these is approx 0.6% of the overall caseload.
4. Regarding Geographical spread, the highest numbers are in Dublin followed by the Midlands and South East region.
5. 83% of the total numbers of Romanians are in the Dublin area. Romanians are by far the highest represented group in YPP.
6. In the case of adult offenders the gender breakdown is approx 90% male, 10% female. In the case of YPP the gender breakdown is 59% male, 41% female.
7. With regard to standard of English spoken, 35% of foreign national offenders had a level of English that is regarded to be a barrier to engaging with the Probation Service. Polish was the 1st language of 23% of that 35% and Romanian was the 1st language of 22%.
8. Consistent with the nationality breakdown, the majority ethnic background is White European.



Cycle to work scheme rolls out
in the Probation Service

The recently announced incentivised cycle to work scheme which facilitates employees to purchase a bicycle for travel to and from work has received a great response in the Probation Service. The new bike scheme covers bicycles and accessories up to a maximum cost of €1,000. The bicycle must be purchased by your employer but the scheme can then operates by way of a salary sacrifice agreement (like the existing travel card scheme) in which you pay for it, tax free, over 12 months.

Centralised Criminal Records
Office

A centralised system for accessing criminal records nationally was established in our head office in Athlumney House, Navan, where Probation Service contact with the Garda Vetting Unit is co-ordinated. This system is proving to be highly effective and efficient, resulting in more streamlined communication between services with the records available within significantly reduced timeframes. It is expected that up to 10,000 requests may be made through this process in 2009

