



A transformed country.  
A transforming service.





## The Probation Service\*

\* While we are using our new brand, logo and name for the Service (“the Probation Service”) since the middle of 2006, it should be noted that in 2005 we were still “the Probation and Welfare Service.” The new title will be used however, throughout this report.

We are an agency within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. We play an important role in helping to reduce the level of crime and to increase public safety by working with offenders to change their behaviour. Probation work is successful in providing effective community-based sanctions and in helping offenders to avoid re-offending.

It’s a tragic reality that crime results in hurt and damage to individuals, families and communities. It must be met by effective sanctions. Probation emerged over a hundred years ago as a humane but effective approach to helping offenders change. To be ‘on probation’ means you are given an opportunity to prove yourself after committing an offence.

The Probation Service believes that, where appropriate, community sanctions are more effective in reducing re-offending than custody. We believe that by engaging with neighbourhoods, through a restorative approach, we can improve public safety and reduce offending.

### The Probation Service

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CHANGE IN IRELAND.

CHANGE IN THE PROBATION SERVICE.

CHANGE IN PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR.





## Director's Report

*Working for change in changing times.*



Michael Donnellan *Director*

### Countless silent successes

Crime hurts. It hurts victims, their families and friends. It hurts communities. Reducing crime and protecting citizens is vital work. It is carried out by many different key agencies, organisations and partners and it happens on many different levels. I believe that the Probation Service's success in helping to reduce the level of crime and increase public safety is one of the best-kept secrets of the criminal justice system. That's because the work we do, by its nature, is frontline, behind-the-scenes, sensitive work with offenders, communities and the criminal justice system. Our new strategy is about achieving real results – working with offenders to turn their lives around, to help them stop re-offending and make better choices. And having fewer offenders will mean fewer victims.

All this work is happening at a time of enormous transition in Ireland and for the Probation Service. In parallel with our economic transformation, the country is changing socially and culturally as well. The nature of offending is altering. People now understand that there must be multi-layered responses to offending and to the causes of crime.

Take for example, children and young people. They are Ireland's greatest asset. They will brighten, shape and protect our future. Because of a range of difficult life circumstances, some young people find themselves making bad life choices, causing harm and hurt to themselves and others. The Probation Service believes – and we've learned from experience – that change is possible when young people are held accountable and encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour. So many of our dedicated, hard-working staff have helped people turn away from bad choices and break a pattern of repeat offending. That's why change is such an important theme in this report. Change in Ireland. Change in the Probation Service. Change in people's behaviour. That's why we've developed Young Persons Probation as a separate but integrated division of the Probation Service.

But there's been so many other developments and changes. That's why I am proud and delighted to present our 2005 Annual Report, my first for the Probation Service.

This tells the story of our work and it also marks the outstanding contribution and dedication of our staff all over Ireland who make that crucial change happen day in, day out. For that, I want to say a big thank you. I am proud to lead such a skilled team of staff.

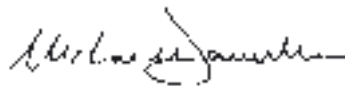
Since I took up office as Director of the Probation Service on 5th September 2005, I have also been conscious of the strength of the relationships with our partner agencies, built and developed over long years of co-operation before I arrived.

These include the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, which has led and supported us in our new strategic direction with partner agencies including the Courts Service, the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Youth Justice Service and other statutory services, as well as the voluntary and community sector and our funded projects.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my immediate predecessors who, as Principal Probation Officers, brought the Service to its current position as a key and effective component of the justice system.

This is a transformed country and a transforming Probation Service. My staff and I realise that we have an important job to do. But we are ambitious for positive change. We are ambitious for Ireland's communities. This Annual Report is part of the task of delivering on our remit of being 'in service' to our citizens.

Of being accountable to you in how we fulfil our vital role in helping to make Ireland safer, reducing crime and working with offenders to turn their lives around. In that positive sense, the Probation Service is 'on probation' to the Irish people all year round. And we're proud to be so.



Michael Donnellan

*Director*

*Probation Service*







## SECTION 1

Summary of our work and key  
achievements



AT ANY ONE TIME, THE PROBATION  
SERVICE IS SUPERVISING AND/OR  
ASSESSING UP TO 6,000 OFFENDERS  
IN THE COMMUNITY

## Summary of our work programme.

### A modern service for positive change

On behalf of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform we work closely with offenders, families, the Courts Service, the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána and with many organisations in the community.

We deliver services to help protect the public, improve communities and to support offenders to change. Specifically, we provide probation supervision, community service, anti-offending behaviour programmes and specialist support services, to both adult and young offenders, which aim to stop them committing further offences.

We also provide related service to the courts and to prisons and places of detention. The work involves preparing assessments for the courts, supervising offenders in the community and providing a counselling service to offenders and their families.

We work across the entire country. While our services are organised nationally, they are delivered locally. We have over 430 staff in offices in more than forty locations nationwide.

At any one time, the Probation Service is supervising and/or assessing up to 6,000 offenders in the community, including offenders subject to supervision orders from courts, prisoners on life sentences and other prisoners on temporary release.

The Probation Service is the lead agency in the assessment and management of offenders in our communities. We will deliver a new strategy to ensure that we continue to effectively tackle and achieve even more success in helping to make our communities safer, promoting positive change in the behaviour of offenders and breaking the cycle of crime and victimisation.

## 8 Key successes 2005.

2005 was the Probation Service's busiest year so far. It was also a time of huge change and development. With that change came many key successes. Some of these were:

### 1. The Probation Service appoints its first ever Director

As part of our dynamic restructuring programme, for the first time in the history of the Service, the key senior role of Director has been established. This will ensure strong leadership, dynamic growth, a united vision and increased effectiveness, as part of our new strategic direction, led by the Minister and Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

### 2. The organisation reports huge improvements in service delivery

In the face of increased demands from courts and prisons, officers of the Probation Service met the challenge across all sectors, including assessments and reports on offenders, community supervision and prison programmes.

### 3. Pioneering Young Persons Probation is developed

The Service implemented provisions under the Children Act, 2001, including Family Conferences and a mentoring programme for young offenders. Young Persons Probation was established as a separate but integrated strand of our work programme.

### 4. Improved organisational performance achieved

Following a staff survey, the Service carried out an organisational review. Arising from the findings of this review, we set in train a number of landmark initiatives that have improved organisational performance by refocusing and enhancing internal structures and systems.

### 5. Evidence-based risk assessment is introduced

The Probation Service has introduced evidence-based assessment nationally in all its dealings with referred offenders.

This initiative provides critical information on the risks to public safety posed by offenders and the interventions needed to help them turn their lives around.

### 6. North-South best practice co-operation is developed

PROTECT North&South, a co-operative initiative by the Probation Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, hosted six milestone seminars aimed at enhancing the sharing of information and promoting best practice.

The initiative also hosted a national conference in Dublin attended by 120 probation practitioners and representatives from partner organisations.



#### 7. New information technology and tracking systems installed

A range of cutting edge IT improvements were introduced to enhance our information systems and customer service. A local human resource management application was devised.

Our offender case tracking system was further developed. Work also commenced on the design and development of a new user-friendly and customer-responsive website.

#### 8. Pioneering research is published

A major study on homeless offenders was commissioned and published by the Probation Service and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, entitled: *A Study of the Number, Profile and Progression Routes of Homeless Persons before the Court and in Custody*.

The research uncovered valuable information about the quantity, circumstances and patterns of homeless persons in custody and appearing before the courts in Dublin.



“For many people, Community Service works well. Most are very anxious to make up for what they’ve done and they apply themselves. The work can be very rewarding. Especially when you see someone who has been struggling with an addiction or a behaviour that’s causing big problems and then they turn the corner. They’re saying ‘yes I want to change.’

And you actually witness that person changing. You can see their values and beliefs altering and they’re seeing how their behaviour has affected people and they’re taking responsibility. Hearing them thank you and saying that we really helped them – that makes the work so worthwhile.”

SUSAN COMMINS, PROBATION OFFICER  
(COMMUNITY SERVICE)





## SECTION 2

Probation in action  
Our work programmes 2005



WE FUND PROJECTS AND OFFER OUR  
EXPERT SERVICES TO ENHANCE  
NEIGHBOURHOODS, INCREASE  
SAFETY AND SUPPORT OFFENDERS  
AND THEIR FAMILIES

## Service to the community.

### Making neighbourhoods safer.

The Probation Service is not just an organisation that works from a distance with community partners – we see ourselves as a necessary and embedded part of community structures. Therefore the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, through the Probation Service, fund projects and we offer our expert services to enhance neighbourhoods, increase safety and support offenders and their families so that real, lasting change can happen.

One of the most effective ways of reducing crime and reducing fear is to stop patterns of re-offending. That means getting involved in, and resourcing, a complex process of cooperation with many different partners - but it's a tried, trusted and proven remedy.

The Probation Service engages with a variety of community based projects and programmes. In fact, here in Ireland, the Probation Service has developed a unique model. Through the years, we've nurtured, tested and improved it.

Many of the offenders that come under the supervision of the Probation Service lead chaotic lives, have poor educational and work skills, are unable to access employment or training. Many have serious drug and alcohol addiction problems and very poor life skills. It's a tough but winnable challenge.

These offenders require a broad range of support and assistance if they are to recognise and make better choices for themselves and for the safety of their communities. 2005 has seen many lives turned around. These countless silent successes don't register on the media radar but they happen.



## A. Work with the Courts and Community.

### Assessment and supervision.

Society needs a range of sanctions for those who offend. The task of assessing the danger a person poses to society is a difficult and specialised one. When a person is supervised on probation or released from prison on certain conditions, they must be monitored, supervised and supported not to re-offend. And if that person manages to finally move away from crime, society needs an expert agency that can firstly identify that change as genuine and secondly help them to re-integrate and assist them to make their contribution. The Probation Service is that expert agency.

With public safety and people's ability to transform their lives at stake, this is an enormously important core part of our task.

In summary, the responsibilities of our Officers in their work with adult offenders referred through the Courts and the Irish Prison Service are:

- To provide the Courts with advice and information to assist in sentencing decisions through the provision of Pre-Sanction Reports. These crucial reports assess a person's risk of re-offending and the capacity and motivation of an offender to address and change their offending behaviour. The Service introduced a new, ground-breaking risk-assessment tool for adult offenders (the *Level of Service Inventory – Revised*, or *LSI-R*) throughout the country in 2005, to be used in parallel with our other professional assessment methods.
- To implement and enforce community sanctions passed by the Court.
- To design, provide and promote effective programmes for supervising offenders safely in the community to ensure protection of the public.
- To work with offenders, before and after release, to lead pro-social lives which minimises the risk to the public.

- **Pre-sanction assessments**

When requested by judges in the criminal courts, the Probation Service undertakes pre-sanction (before sentencing) assessments and reports on offenders. The purpose of a pre-sanction report is to provide the courts with incisive and reliable advice and information to assist in sentencing decisions.

Pre-sanction reports provide an assessment of a person's risk of re-offending and the capacity and motivation of an offender to address their offending behaviour. These reports address public safety, victim and community integration issues.





- **Community Service Assessments**

If the Court is considering a Community Service Order, whereby an offender is required to do unpaid work in the community as a direct alternative to a custodial sentence, the Court is required to request a Community Service Report from a Probation Officer.

- **Victim Impact Reports**

The Probation Service also prepares Victim Impact Reports for the Courts when required. These reports assess the impact of offending on victims of crime - usually violent crime. They also assist judges in deciding how to deal with the case. Victim Impact Reports afford victims of crime the opportunity to describe to the Court the effect the offence has had on them and their family.

- **Probation Supervision**

Probation Supervision is where an offender must remain under the supervision of a Probation Officer for a period of time decided by the Court. The Court can include extra conditions of supervision, aimed at reducing the risk of offending, as indicated by the initial clinical assessment and supported by the risk assessment tool.

- **Community Service - an example of Restorative Justice**

Where the Court has imposed a Community Service Order, an offender is required to do unpaid work in the community for the hours specified by the Court (40 – 240 hours) to repay the damage caused by their actions. Community Service is an example of Restorative Justice principles in practice, with offenders making recompense to communities for the damage their offending behaviour has caused.

- **Temporary Release**

Supervised temporary release is where an offender is supervised by the Probation Service on early release from prison.

- **Consultations**

During 2005, consultations with the Judiciary and the Court Service continued as part of our review of practice, procedures and standards to ensure an efficient and effective service to all customers and stakeholders.

### **Demands on our services**

In 2005, the demand for services from the Courts continued at pace. Probation Officers prepared 6,385 Pre-Sanction Reports and 2,040 Community Service Reports and 46 Victim Impact Reports for Courts during 2005. The Service supervised over 6,500 people on Probation type supervision, 1,167 on Community Service Orders and 81 sex offenders on Post-Release Supervision Orders.

Offender Assessment Reports completed	
Pre-Sanction Reports	6,385
Community Service Reports	2,040
Probation Type Supervision	
Probation Orders made	1,274
Orders for Supervision During Deferment of Penalty	5,230
Number of sex offenders supervised in the community who did not receive a custodial sentence	124
Community Service	
Community Service Orders	1,167
Total number of Community Service hours ordered to be done	122,000
Total alternative sentence in person-years (would have to have been served if not replaced with Community Service)	350
Supervision of Ex-prisoners	
Number of life sentence prisoners supervised in the community	57
Number of sex offenders supervised on Post Release Supervision Orders in the community	81
Victim Impact Reports	
Total number of reports Completed	46

#### Other key actions and programmes in the community

In an era of enormous change, the Probation Service has adopted a range of innovative approaches to meet emerging needs by:

- i) Engaging local communities and groups nationwide in the development of projects and programmes in their areas.
- ii) Developing partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies.
- iii) Purchasing of targeted placements in existing services.
- iv) Establishing links with employers and employment organisations to promote work placement for offenders.



- **Funding community projects**

The Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform substantially or partially funded 69 community or partnership programmes through the Probation Service. Over €15.5 million was allocated to fund these services, which amounted to approximately 40% of the Probation Service budget.

In 2005, over 2,960 referrals were made to the projects, with many offenders engaging in programmes for up to two years.

- **Reducing alienation**

The Probation Service recognises the key role that the community can play in reducing levels of alienation experienced by offenders and demonstrates the benefit of statutory and voluntary agencies working together in partnership.

### Projects

For details of our funded projects, including contact details and location, please refer to our website: [www.pprobation.ie](http://www.pprobation.ie)

## B. Young Persons Probation.

### Better choices and less offending.

Life in Ireland today for young people offers so many positive possibilities. But there are also far more pressures, dangers and challenges in young people's lives than ever before. That so many thrive and make such a huge contribution to society is a testimony to their talents and resilience and to their families and communities. Some young people - as well as fighting poverty and exclusion - daily face criminal influences, trauma and chaos arising out of violence and addictions. For them, positive life choices can seem far from their grasp. However, every young person is someone's son or daughter, and they deserve the opportunity to turn their lives around. In fact, this must happen to ensure stable and safe communities. In order to answer this challenge and to deliver on our responsibilities under the Children Act 2001, a dedicated Young Persons Probation Division of the Service was developed with the objective of delivering a range of supports, sanctions and activities for young people. This is one of the most exciting initiatives of 2005.

### Achievements in 2005:

- A Children Act implementation plan was developed for the Service, with increased emphasis on supervised community sanctions for young offenders.
- Imprisonment and detention are sanctions of last resort. However, where this sanction was imposed on young offenders, the Service delivered 5 group programmes and conducted over 2,300 interviews with young offenders in detention, to reduce re-offending and aid reintegration.

- Inspections of two Service-funded residences were undertaken as a preliminary step towards commencement of the Probation (residential supervision) Order.
- As a key component of the proposed plan for each young offender, a new 'risk assessment tool' (the Youth Level of Service – Case Management Inventory, or YLS-CMI) was used with each referral for a Pre-Sanction report.
- The Children Act 2001 makes provision for the Probation Service, in special cases, to convene a Court-ordered Family Conference. This section of the legislation was commenced on 29th July 2004. A Family Conference is based on principles of restorative justice which, in essence, means making good the harm done to victims, while holding the offender accountable for his or her actions. The aim of the Family Conference is to divert a young person who has accepted responsibility for their behaviour, away from the spiral of court, conviction and custody, and from committing further offences.
- We received 47 referrals from the Courts for Family Conferences in 2005.

## C. Custody and Detention.

### Assessment, counselling, advice and turning lives around.

People in prison and in other kinds of custody are at a crossroads. If prison and detention are to work for society and for prisoners themselves, it's vital that those in custody are encouraged and supported to make reparation and open a new chapter in their lives. Assessing the potential for that change - and assisting in making it happen - is a vital part of our work.

#### • Staffing levels

During 2005 staffing levels of Probation Service personnel assigned to all prisons and places of detention across the country accounted for a significant part of our resources.

#### • Interviews, assessments, advice and counselling

Probation Officers in prisons conducted initial interviews with prisoners examining issues like risk, offence-related assessment, one-to-one advice and counselling dealing with personal issues, offending behaviour, re-settlement and family matters.

The Probation Service also delivered a broad range of group and individual programmes addressing addiction, sex offending, anger management, offending behaviour, group skills and life sentence orientation programmes. This is a vital component in the continuing development of multi-disciplinary and inter-agency initiatives.



Work with prisoners	
The number of interviews by Probation Officers with prisoners in custody	17,082
The number of group programmes run in prisons nationally	54
The number of parole board reports prepared	104
The number of repatriation reports prepared	28

- **Work for the Parole Board**

During 2005 the Probation Service prepared a total of 104 assessment and home circumstances reports for the Parole Board. Probation Service assessment and home circumstances reports are important elements in the Parole Board's case consideration process.

- **Repatriation Reports**

Under the Transfer of Prisoners Act 1995 and 1997, the Service provided 28 reports to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in respect of applications for foreign prisoners in Irish prisons who wanted to be repatriated to a prison in their home country, as well as applications by Irish prisoners abroad who wanted to be repatriated to an Irish prison.

- **Supervision of Life Sentence Prisoners**

The reintegration of offenders on release from custody is an important strand of the work of the Probation Service. In addition to the supervision of prisoners with defined sentences on planned temporary release, the Service managed 59 life sentence prisoners on temporary release with specific conditions requiring compliance and co-operation. Life sentence prisoners on temporary release supervised by the Probation Service remain on supervision for the duration of their sentence unless a specific variation in the order is approved by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

- **Homeless person provision in partnership with the HSE**

The Probation Service initiated an 'In-Reach' programme at the Mountjoy Prison complex in partnership with the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) of the Health Service Executive (HSE). This provides accommodation placement and income maintenance support services to prisoners at risk of homelessness on release. This has proved a valuable and effective resource and has been expanded during 2005 to all Dublin Prisons and to the Midlands Prison. It has now become an established model of cross-agency, quality practice. The in-reach service is provided by the HPU in collaboration with the Probation Service, Irish Prison Service and other partners.



- **Access Housing Initiative**

A new pilot initiative commenced in early 2005 to help prisoners secure and maintain tenancies in the private rented sector on release. The Probation Service, Irish Prison Service and the ACCESS Housing Unit of the Threshold organisation are the partners in this initiative. This will be evaluated after year one in order to consider its appropriateness for expansion.

## D. Research.

Quality information and analysis means quality service.

To be truly professional and responsive to a fast-changing society and to altered patterns of offending, we need to be aware of the changes as they happen but also to be able to predict where the new pressures and challenges will emerge.

Also, to be solution-makers and problem-solvers, we need to better understand the nature of offending, the social and cultural circumstances of offenders and the impacts on victims. We also need to collate best practice from around the world.

### Research on Homeless Offenders

A major study on homeless offenders before the courts and in custody, commissioned by the Probation Service and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, entitled: *A Study of the Number, Profile and Progression Routes of Homeless Persons before the Court and in Custody*, was published in July.

The research was carried out by Dr Mairéad Seymour and Ms Liza Costello of the Centre for Social and Educational Research at Dublin Institute of Technology.

This project provided accurate information about the numbers, profile and progression of homeless persons appearing before the Courts and those in custody in Dublin. Findings included:

- 9.3% of those referred by the Courts to the Probation Service (over a six week period) were homeless,
- In the prison sample, 54% had experienced homelessness at least once prior to imprisonment, with many experiencing lengthy periods of homelessness,
- 25% of prisoners were homeless on committal to prison,
- Homeless offenders rated highly on a range of indicators of disadvantage, including poor education, employment, accommodation, lack of family and other supports, drug and alcohol misuse, and mental health issues,



- 64% of prisoners who experienced homelessness had first done so before 19 years of age,
- Many offenders experienced difficulty accessing accommodation and other services.
- Homeless offenders were found to have relatively high rates of arrest, charge and conviction recorded, and were more likely to accumulate higher numbers of charges than other (non-homeless) offenders, although the offending by the homeless sample tended to be of a less serious nature. Homeless prisoners tended to have spent significant periods of time in custody. Almost half of those had previously been on Probation supervision.
- Challenges in the reintegration of homeless prisoners after release were also highlighted, as were particular issues identified by respondents in accessing homeless services.
- The report makes a range of recommendations aimed at assisting and informing the development of policy and practice and highlights the need for reintegration planning to begin at the earliest stage where an offender receives a custodial sentence.
- The full report is available in pdf format on our website: [www.probation.ie](http://www.probation.ie)

“I think you can make a significant difference in young people’s lives. These youngsters have been marginalised from the start. They’ve poor qualifications or none at all. And part of the work is encouraging them back in to get those qualifications.

But a lot of the time we’re working against a state of mind that society has imposed - that means they’ve very low expectations and low confidence. Maybe they’ve chaotic family circumstances.

If we make a good intervention they can begin to access jobs and careers. But you have to build up trust. I believe it has to be a co-ordinated approach working with other services. I work closely with Youth Workers who generally know the circumstances of the young person well. If the young person believes that what you want for them is to do well – then you can get some real breakthroughs.”

ROB PICKLES, YOUNG PERSONS PROBATION





## SECTION 3

Probation in partnership  
Partnership in practice





MAKING NEIGHBOURHOODS SAFER  
AND HELPING OFFENDERS  
TURN AWAY FROM BAD BEHAVIOUR  
IS A MULTI-AGENCY,  
CROSS-SECTORAL TASK



## A. Partnership.

### Internal and external.

Our strategic plan and vital work programmes wouldn't succeed without partnership. And that means real, negotiated and effective arrangements and understandings within and outside the Service. Making neighbourhoods safer and helping offenders turn away from bad behaviour is a multi-agency, cross-sectoral task. It also involves a meaningful partnership with communities and families.

#### Internal partnership

The Probation Service continued in 2005 to conduct its internal business in that spirit of partnership. The Service's partnership committee work plan for 2005 focused on the following:

1. Implementation of commitments under Sustaining Progress
2. Communications within the Probation Service
3. Partnership training – advancing the partnership culture and approach within the organisation
4. Partnership working sub-groups on a range of issues
5. Extension of the partnership base

#### External partnership

Being a major service provider to society, most of our work, by definition, is partnership work. Partnership is intrinsic to what we do. The wider family of criminal justice organisations, agencies, and services are also vital players within that co-operative structure. It's crucial that we hold our independence and fulfil our remit - and we do - but real change comes from working closely with other key partners: The Minister and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, The Courts Service, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Prison Service, the Irish Youth Justice Service, the HSE, social service, education, training and employment providers, key professional and importantly, community organisations, families and individuals.

## B. Developing an All-Island Approach.

### Cooperation, management of offenders and best practice

The PROTECT North & South Project is a joint initiative by the Probation Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI). It was developed in response to the Belfast Agreement and the subsequent Criminal Justice Review. This highlighted the need for the development of co-operation between criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The project was funded by the Special EU Programmes Body for 2 years under Peace and Reconciliation Priority Measure and formalises the longstanding strong informal links between PBNI and the Probation Service.

The key goals of PROTECT North & South Project have been:

- The development of cross-border approaches to the management of offenders.
- The dissemination of best practice in Probation work.

In 2005 the Project has concentrated on six offence/offender areas

- *Domestic Violence*
- *Alcohol Related Offending*
- *Dangerousness*
- *Sex Offending*
- *Drug Dependent Offenders*
- *Youth Offending*

Six offence-focused seminars have been delivered in relation to best practice in these areas. The *Irish Probation Journal* is another joint initiative of the Probation Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, and is a practical vehicle for sharing theory and best practice in probation work, North and South. The second edition of the Journal was published in September 2005.





## SECTION 4

Inside the Probation Service  
Staff, finance, IT and customer care

The background is a collage of four images, all with a red tint. The top-left image shows a brick building facade with arched windows. The top-right image shows a cobblestone street. The bottom-left image shows a group of people, with a young man in the foreground. The bottom-right image shows a city street with a river and a bridge.

THE PROBATION SERVICE HAS ONE OF  
THE MOST SKILLED TEAMS IN THE  
PUBLIC SERVICE. ITS WORK IS  
PRESSURED, OFTEN HIGHLY SENSITIVE  
AND ALWAYS DEMANDING.

## A. People: Our Greatest Resource.

### Recruitment, staffing and training.

The Probation Service is lucky to have one of the most skilled, dedicated and enthusiastic teams in the public service. Their work is pressured, often highly sensitive and always demanding. The team's on-going workload coupled with the need to embrace major change has meant extra demands but these have been shouldered with eagerness and professionalism.

The staffing complement in 2005 was 436, representative of all grades.

- In relation to staffing generally, there were some 17 vacancies for Probation Officers at the beginning of the year with further vacancies occurring during the year. Most of these were filled from a panel of candidates interviewed in December 2004.
- In line with Government family-friendly policies, 25 staff availed of term time leave in 2005.
- On a daily basis, Community Service Supervisors oversee offenders who are in community-based unpaid work programmes as a sanction from the court. Supervisors were further incorporated into the Probation Service during 2005, through their inclusion on a standardised salary scale for the first time, and through provision of further training opportunities to them. The role of Community Service will be reviewed in 2006 and in line with that review the role of Community Service Supervisors will also be reviewed.

## B. Information Technology.

More efficient, more communicative and more integrated.

2005 was a vital year in the professionalisation of our service. To this end we've made a huge financial and staffing commitment to improving our IT systems.

This programme is about being more efficient at what we do, being better communicators with our partners and being more integrated and accountable. The Service's world-class IT development project took a leap forward during 2005 and included:

1. An enhanced offender case tracking system
2. Initiation of the design and development of a new website
3. The introduction of a new human resource management application
4. The introduction of a new asset register application.





## C. Customer Service.

### Best practice in service provision.

We provide a vitally-important service to many different people, organisations and agencies. In a sense, Ireland is our customer and Irish people deserve the best from all of their public services. When community safety and the opportunity to turn people's lives around are at stake, that culture of excellent customer care is even more vital. The Probation Service takes this challenge very seriously.

That's why over the course of 2005, the Probation Service set itself the task of reviewing its Customer Charter and devising a new Action Plan which sets key objectives and performance indicators using the principles of customer service. These documents are available on our website [www.probation.ie](http://www.probation.ie).

- Some examples of actions achieved include:

#### Customer Satisfaction Surveys

The Probation Service undertook two surveys, one in a custodial setting – Mountjoy Prison, and one in a community setting.

The findings from these surveys reflected satisfaction among our peer professionals and also from one of our client groups in the community. While generally very positive, the results identified some areas of service delivery that are in need of improvement. These are the targets for new initiatives and programmes going forward.

#### Communications and feedback

Provision of clear and accurate information to all our stakeholders is crucial. The development of the Website [www.probation.ie](http://www.probation.ie) has helped realise this objective, by providing a facility to feedback to us on-line.

## D. Staff Training and Development.

### Investing in knowledge, skills and personal development.

- The Staff Training /Development team based in Dublin and regionally in Waterford, Galway and Limerick offered a wide range of learning opportunities during 2005. 112 courses were delivered over 152 days during the year. These events varied in length from half-day information sessions to 2-day training events, and from three-week induction courses to a year-long accredited course. All sessions included a variety of training methodologies and staff trainers combined their own expertise with the expertise of Service colleagues and external trainers.
- The training provided was based on the learning needs identified by the Civil Service centrally, by the Probation Service itself and on the training needs identified by staff at all grades. In addition the training sections delivered a significant number of workshops/information sessions to Social Science undergraduates and to partnership agencies.
- **Risk Assessment**  
95% of staff completed training in the LSI-R risk assessment instrument. Dedicated staff in the Young Persons Probation obtained training in the youth version (YLS-CMI). An LSI-R super user group was identified in early summer and training was completed with these eighteen people by the autumn.

#### Sex Offenders Protocols

In line with the statutory obligations of Part 5 of the Sex Offender Act 2001, extensive training was provided throughout the organisation to ensure familiarisation with the requirements of the protocol.

#### Addiction

Recognising that addictions is a significant factor within the offending cycle, the training section developed a comprehensive targeted and certified training programme as a way of maximizing opportunities to equip staff with the necessary skills in this area. Twelve staff completed the course in the academic year 2004/2005 with a further 12 commencing in October 2005.

- **External Training**

Ten staff members received funding to attend third level or post-graduate training. Five of these were granted leave to attend courses on a whole time basis. Courses included Masters in Social Work; Masters in Drugs and Alcohol Policy; Diploma in Addiction Studies; and BCL.



## E. Financial Statement.

### Income and expenditure 2005.

All funding for the Service comes from the Exchequer and is provided via the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. For 2005, the Service was allocated funding through subheads E and F of the Prisons Vote (Vote 21). The amounts authorised and the spending outturns are as follows (in €000s).

Sub-head	Budget Provision	Outturn	Savings	Excess
<b>E1.</b> Salaries, wages and allowances	19,893	17,268	2,625	
<b>E2.</b> Operations (travel, telecoms, equipment, office maintenance)	3,975	5,869		1,894
<b>E3.</b> Assistance				
Voluntary Bodies (Current)	14,434	14,129	305	
Voluntary Bodies (Capital)	4,275	1,653	2,622	
Individual/Visits	49	102		53
<b>E4.</b> Juvenile Offending Initiatives	460	187	273	
<b>F.</b> Community Service Scheme	2,140	2,370		230
<b>Totals</b>	<b>45,226</b>	<b>41,578</b>	<b>5,825</b>	<b>2,177</b>

This year we had an extra sub head, E4, for Juvenile Offending Initiatives. However, while much planning and preparation was done, not as much as anticipated was spent, with family conferencing and mentoring (family support) accounting for virtually all the expenditure.

“As a Probation Officer on a Circuit Court team, my colleagues and I work with high risk offenders who have significant patterns of offending. I use a variety of approaches and techniques, including motivational interviewing, to assist offenders address their offending behaviour. Change during the supervisory period is different, depending on each individual.

Something small can be very significant. For example, some offenders can establish a reporting structure with their Probation Officer, achieving some basic goals while addressing identified offence-related risk factors. On a personal level, it can be very rewarding to observe and be part of a process which enables offenders to address their offending behaviour and which assists them to enact positive change in their lives.”

KERRY QUINN PROBATION OFFICER






## SECTION 5

Embracing future challenges

Continued change

Continued improvements





TO DO OUR JOB BETTER WE MUST  
COMMUNICATE CLEARLY THE VITAL  
ROLE WE PLAY IN SOCIETY.  
IT'S CRUCIAL THAT PEOPLE AND  
ORGANISATIONS UNDERSTAND WHAT  
WE DO AND HOW WE CAN HELP.

## Priorities for the Future

We are only beginning our restructuring programme. We are determined to keep making the strategic improvements necessary to deliver a world-class service. Those changes start with senior management and the continued dynamic implementation of our strategic plan. We need to constantly test and evaluate our work practices and our customer service.

Development of Restorative Justice initiatives continues to be a priority. The Service already supports and works closely with two restorative projects, in Tallaght, Dublin and in Nenagh, Tipperary. In 2005 the Tallaght Restorative Justice Project dealt with 112 cases.

The Probation Service will be undergoing major changes again in 2006. It will continue to be revitalised, reformed and restructured. A Strategic Statement of Intent will be drawn up for 2006-2007. Clear targets will be set for the Service and Probation Officers and clear strategic goals and responsibilities will be set for all staff. We will also undertake a major audit and review of all aspects of our operational service delivery, with a view to supporting our staff and ensuring delivery of even more effective and efficient services.

Additional Probation Officers will be assigned to the Young Persons division to implement the relevant sections of the Children Act, 2001. Finally, the Service will actively examine legislative and policy requirements necessary to meet the new circumstances and demands faced by the Service. This will then empower Probation Officers who can then work within a more meaningful legislative and modern framework than hitherto.

The Service intends to develop our administrative structure, including a Corporate Finance Unit in 2006 with a dedicated trained staff, operating electronic methods of payment. It will have the appropriate professional accountancy support to oversee the operation of the unit. The set up of the unit will help streamline the financial operations of the service.

### The Probation Service beyond 2005

2005 has been a landmark year for the Probation Service. But it's the first of a number of years of exciting change. The Minister and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform are helping us drive this change to make Irish communities safer and to assist offenders to change their ways and their lives.

This report is also reflective of that strategic shift. To do our job better we must communicate clearly the vital role we play in society. It's crucial that people and organisations understand what we do and how we can help. It's vital that we are open and accountable. This document begins that task. Of demonstrating our effectiveness. Of telling our story. Of revealing the countless silent successes of our dedicated and skilled staff. And explaining why we're a crucial part of the criminal justice family.

But most importantly, that we're committed to making more landmark improvements and innovations until the Service is truly world-class. We are in service to Ireland and its communities.

2006 and beyond will be dedicated to excellence and effectiveness.







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