

Probation *works*

Newsletter of the Probation Service (Ireland)

November 2015

In this edition of Probation works: Minister launches JARC, PPAG 2015, IPJ 2015 published, PS/PBNI present to Oireachtas and Stormont, European Probation Directors' meeting, CoE Update, Criminal Justice Inspectorate - Open Policy Debate, Social Entrepreneur Ireland Awards, CEP and EuroPris newsletters, Scottish Justice Matters journal published, Community Return shortlisted for Innovation Award, Criminal Justice Research Opportunities.

Message from Director

The Joint Agency Response to Crime, comprising four new interagency initiatives in Dublin, targeting and working with a range of prolific and high impact offenders, to reduce their offending, was formally launched by Minister Frances Fitzgerald TD today. JARC builds on existing interagency structures for co-operation in Criminal Justice and focuses on prolific offenders, including those involved in persistent burglary and violent offending.



The JARC initiative builds on existing co-operation between the Probation Service, the Irish Prison Service and An Garda Síochána, and brings it to a whole new level. As well as improving interagency information sharing and other co-operation between these three Justice organisations, the initiative also draws together a more focused and co-ordinated combination of community based resources, including accommodation, addiction treatment and income maintenance, which can all contribute to reducing risk of reoffending.

There is also a cutting edge ICT solution being developed by the Department of Justice and Equality, to facilitate interagency co-operation in JARC. The JARC initiative will be evaluated for effectiveness, with lessons learned and applied in future developments to help create safer communities and fewer victims.

Great credit is due to all those involved in developing and delivering the JARC projects so far, particularly in putting in place sound practice and co-operative systems to make it a success. The need for interagency co-operation was never greater, particularly in the context of developments in mobile serious crime, nationally and internationally, and including terrorism and other violent crime.

I would also like to congratulate Una Doyle on her recent success in the open competition for the post of Deputy Director in the Probation Service. Una takes over responsibility as Director of Corporate Affairs in the Probation Service with immediate effect.

The next edition of Probation works will be published in January 2016.

European Probation Directors' Meeting

The biennial meeting of Directors of Probation in Europe was convened by the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) last week (26-27 November). The meeting was hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security at their offices in The Hague, and covered a wide agenda of issues, including radicalisation, foreign national offenders, implementation of EU Framework Decisions, and probation's interface with the media as well as an update on desistance research and its implications for staff training and practice.

Vivian Geiran attended the meeting and took part in a panel discussion on 'Alternative Models of Providing Probation Services.' The other panel members leading this discussion were Mr. Colin Allars, Director of the National Probation Service, UK and Mr. Christoph Koss, Neustart, Austria. The papers and presentations of the CEP conference are available [here on the CEP website](#).



Pictured above: CEP Board Member Gerry McNally (2nd from right), with delegates from Turkey, Estonia and Finland, at the CEP conference in The Hague last week.



Council of Europe Update

A range of issues affecting probation and prison services across Europe, including radicalisation to violent extremism, prison overcrowding, probation supervision, and comparative European statistics, were discussed at the 5th Plenary Meeting of the Council of Europe's Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP), on 17-19 November 2015, in Strasbourg. Vivian Geiran, who is a member of the PC-CP Working Group, participated in the meeting. A minute's silence was observed at the start of the meeting, in remembrance of the victims of the previous week's terror attacks in Paris.

A report on the recent PC-CP meeting is available at the following link: [PC-CP meeting November 2015 Executive Summary Report](#)

The next meeting of the PC-CP will be held in January, 2016.

Minister Fitzgerald launches the Joint Agency Response to Crime Initiative

The Minister for Justice and Equality, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. today launched the Joint Agency Response to Crime initiative (J-ARC). J-ARC is a joint strategy between the Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service.

Launching J-ARC the Minister said that, *“While it is well known that I am particularly committed to strengthening support for the victims of crime, as Minister for Justice and Equality, I would also like to oversee a system which aims to reduce the number of victims by a reduction in offending. The launch of J-ARC today is an endorsement of the work done by criminal justice agencies and community organisations together in challenging offending behaviour which has at its centre the needs of victims to feel safer in their communities.”*

The J-ARC strategy aims to implement a multi-agency approach to the management of crime, prioritise certain prolific offenders and develop specific initiatives which will address their behaviour and reduce crime thereby increasing community safety. J-ARC provides the framework for the programmes that will be part of Operation Thor to help reduce re-offending by prolific offenders.



Probation Service and PBNI make presentations on North-South co-operation in the Oireachtas and Stormont



Pictured at Stormont: Paul Doran, Dep. Director, PBNI Cheryl Lamont Acting Director, PBNI Ita Burke and Una Doyle, Deputy Directors, Probation Service



Pictured above: Ita Burke, Director of Operations, Probation Service presenting at Stormont

Joint presentations on North-South co-operation in probation were made earlier this month by the Probation Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI).

On November 18th Cheryl Lamont, Acting Director (PBNI) and Ita Burke, Deputy Director (PS) accompanied by Paul Doran, Deputy Director (PBNI) and Una Doyle Deputy Director (PS) gave presentations in Stormont. While on Wednesday 25th November, Probation Service Director Vivian Geiran with Cheryl Lamont, accompanied by Ita Burke and Paul Doran, made the presentation to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

On both occasions, the quality of the joint cross-border working by the two Services the presentations was acknowledged and positive discussion followed.

Public Protection Advisory Group Seminar 2015

The sixth annual Cross-Border Public Protection Advisory Group Seminar took place in Belfast on Friday 20th November 2015. The Seminar themed "Innovation for Safer Communities" brought together representatives from police, prison, probation and government departments in Ireland North and South to consider new and innovative practice and explore ways to further develop and enhance partnership working.

The Seminar was attended by the Northern Ireland Justice Minister, David Ford. Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, TD, was represented by Vivian Geiran, Director of the Probation service. Speaking at the conference, Mr. Geiran said:

"The annual PPAG seminar provides a valuable forum for bringing together from both our jurisdictions representatives from police, prisons, probation and Government Departments, so that we can share experience and methods of working with offenders in our communities. This year's seminar will again, provide an opportunity for the various agencies to discuss and further explore innovative approaches and solutions to common problems and in doing so contribute to making our communities safer by reducing crime and addressing offending behaviour"

Ms. Cheryl Lamont, Director of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (Acting), said she was delighted to host the seminar adding:

"Collaboration has always been central to the work of both probation services on this island. There has been significant recent co-operation on a range of operational areas of work including; the supervision of sex offenders, the assessment and management of female offenders and providing pre-sentence reports."

The twelfth edition of the Irish Probation Journal was also launched at the Seminar. The Journal plays an important role in providing a forum for debate and dialogue and promoting the sharing of good practice in the broad criminal justice and social policy fields. The Conference was well attended by staff from across the regions.

Irish Probation Journal 2015 (Volume 12)

The twelfth edition of the Irish Probation Journal was launched at the North-South Public Protection Seminar at City Hall Belfast on 20th November 2015. *Irish Probation Journal* has, since 2004, been jointly published each year by the Probation Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI). The *Irish Probation Journal* seeks to ensure that each edition features a range of research studies, practice reports, policy commentaries and book reviews of relevance and interest to practitioners, policymakers, academics, legislators and students in the broad criminal justice and social policy fields.



Irish Probation Journal plays an important role in stimulating innovative thinking, providing a forum for debate and dialogue and promoting the sharing of good practice. It provides a valuable peer-reviewed opportunity for academics, researchers and practitioners to present their knowledge, research findings and examples of innovative practice. It offers a forum for continuous learning and development not only for authors and readers within the two services but also for the wider criminal justice readership; international colleagues and authors.

Irish Probation Journal 2015 features original and important papers on criminal justice themes and issues which have not previously attracted the examination and study in Ireland that they merit. Papers examine sentencing trends in Irish Courts, work with offenders with mental illness, the operation of criminal networks, supervision of non-Irish nationals, information exchange in the supervision of serious offenders moving around Europe and the historical role of literacy and education in Irish reformatory schools among many other important themes and subjects.

Irish Probation Journal 2015, as well as all previous editions and individual articles, is available online on the publications page of the Probation Service website at www.probation.ie and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland website at www.pbni.org.uk and on EBSCO host in colleges and libraries across the world. Hard copies of Irish Probation Journal 2015 and most Irish Probation Journal issues can be requested, subject to availability, by sending an email to mcboland@probation.ie



Open Policy Debate on proposals for a Criminal Justice Inspectorate

On Monday 23rd November 2015, the Department hosted an Open Policy Debate on Proposals for a Criminal Justice Inspectorate which was attended by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald T.D.



The idea behind such debates is to promote a culture of innovation and openness through involving greater external participation and consultation in policy development. The potential establishment of a Criminal Justice Inspectorate has received some attention recently, including a recommendation for such a body by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence. The Minister earlier this year indicated her intention to consult widely on the issue. The Debate also included discussion on the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on Torture

The speakers at the Debate were:

- Deirdre Malone – Executive Director, Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Judge Michael Reilly - Inspector of Prisons
- Mark Toland – Deputy Chief Inspector, Garda Inspectorate
- Vivian Geiran – Director, Probation Service
- Brendan McGuigan - Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland who provided insights on the Northern Irish experience of criminal justice inspection and on his inspection role for the OPCAT (Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment)

The large attendance at the debate was drawn from a variety of sectors including NGOs, academia and the wider public service. There was also a good level of interest and participation from within the Department of Justice and Equality. Everyone attending this Open Policy Debate actively participated in the discussions. The Open Policy debate is just part of a process of consultation which the Department is undertaking.

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awards 2015

The 2015 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland awards were held in the Mansion House on Tuesday 13th October. Presented by Norah Casey (Entrepreneur and formally one of RTE's Dragon's Den programme presenters), the awards help individuals and organisations to increase their impact by providing funding alongside mentoring, and in-depth practical supports.

This year, two organisations and entrepreneurs with links to the Probation Service were each awarded €140,000 as part of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland's Impact Awards: Gary Doggett, of the Pro-Social Drivers Programme, based in Letterkenny, Co Donegal, and Stephen Plunkett of U-Casadh, in Ferrybank, Co Waterford.

The Pro-Social Drivers Programme was established in 2012 when the organisers Pro-Social Ireland Limited were approached by representatives of the criminal justices system in Letterkenny about the possibility of setting up a driver rehabilitation programme which would address the high instances of antisocial driving in the county. Since November 2012, the project has run 13 driver rehabilitation courses with approximately 120 clients taking part in the programme.

U-Casadh meaning U-turn is an integration project and registered charity based in Waterford, set up in 2008 by Stephen Plunkett and Waterford Area Partnership, through Probation Service funding. In 2011 they were the recipients of the prestigious Arthur Guinness Fund award. Mary Goode (Senior Probation Officer in Waterford) currently serves on the Board of U-Casadh.

U-Casadh receives €95,000 per annum from the Probation Service to support the work of the Probation Service by assisting in the provision of community sanctions as an alternative to custody, and to assist in the reintegration of offenders into their communities. U-Casadh normally receives over 20 new referrals annually from the Probation Service and over 50 Probation Service clients would generally engage with the Project's services at any one time.

Supporting Continuous Professional Development in the Probation Service

The Probation Service has been liaising with CORU and supporting staff with CORU's Continuous Professional Development in Social Work. The following actions have been agreed:

1. CPD working group to be established.
2. CPD information sessions to be held.
3. Updates to be published in the Probation Service newsletter.
4. The Provision of a stamp to confirm attendance at training.
5. Monthly Lunch and Learn sessions to take place.
6. Support to be given to the IASW special interest group.
7. The development of a Probation Service Sample Portfolio with CORU.
8. The availability of a Social Work Registration and Continuous Professional Development area on the Service's internal staff portal

The first 6 of these actions have taken place and it is expected that the final two be completed in the coming weeks.

An information session was held in Haymarket on Wednesday the 18th of November 2015. This presentation was also video linked to our Cork and Sligo Probation offices. A second session took place in the Irish Prison Service Training College in Portlaoise on Tuesday the 24th November.



Latest Edition of Scottish Justice Matters published

Poverty, Inequality & Justice Scottish Justice System 'punishes poorer people'

Scotland's criminal justice system punishes poorer people and makes it difficult for them to escape poverty, according to an academic study. The findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, by the University of Edinburgh's School of Law, have been published in the [latest edition of the Scottish Justice Matters journal](#). The study has tracked 4,300 young people in Edinburgh since 1998 to better understand changes in their behaviour and lifestyles. It has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Nuffield Foundation and the Scottish government.

Report author Prof Lesley McAra said: *"Our findings highlight a very destructive dynamic - poverty increases the risks of violence. Contact with juvenile justice system increases the risks associated with poverty. As a result, contact with the very agencies meant to stop offending is inadvertently reproducing the conditions in which violence can flourish."*

Guest editors of Scottish Justice Matters, Lesley McCara, Susan McVie, and Maggie Mellon give an overview of the theme articles arguing that *"In almost all policy debates about justice, poverty is acknowledged as the backdrop to inequalities [. . .] yet successful transformation of both its causes and consequences remains elusive."*

- It found children from deprived backgrounds were twice more likely to face police action than better-off children who commit the same crime.
- Living in poverty also increased the likelihood of violence among both boys and girls.
- The government has said Scotland is becoming a safer place to live.
- The study was carried out by University of Edinburgh researchers.
- They found that a history of being in trouble with the police was the strongest predictor of whether a young person was not in education, employment or training by the age of 18.
- Poorer young people were also about five times more likely to be placed on statutory supervision than their better-off counterparts.

Risk factors

Household poverty was identified as an exacerbating factor that increased the likelihood of young people offending. This was the case even when a range of other risk factors have been taken into account, the researchers said. They found that people who lived in extreme poverty were much more likely to be the victims - and perpetrators - of crime.

The study also identified gender as one of the most powerful predictors of violence, with boys being three times more likely than girls on average to engage in violent acts. Girls from poorer backgrounds were twice as likely as girls from more affluent households to be involved in violent crime, the authors said. This was the case even after other factors - such as truancy, substance abuse and poor parental supervision - were taken into account.

Health problems

Scottish Justice Matters also published a report that showed the recent fall in crime rates in Scotland has not benefited areas with the most chronic rates of crime. A study by Applied Quantitative Methods Network (AQMeN) Research Centre - also based at the University of Edinburgh's Law School - suggested that victims experiencing the most crime continued to be within the most deprived communities.

Half of the communities with the highest crime rates were found in the top 20% of areas with the highest levels of chronic health problems, the report showed. A third of the communities with the highest rates of crime were in the top 20% of areas with the highest levels of unemployment. Lead researcher Prof Susan McVie said:

"The findings are important as they suggest that crime tends to be highly concentrated amongst poor people and within poor neighbourhoods, and this has not changed despite crime being at its lowest level for decades. This raises important questions about whether inequality is being adequately tackled by the Scottish government."

A Scottish government spokesman said: *"Scotland is becoming a safer place to live with recorded crime at a 41-year low, homicide figures at their lowest level in 39 years and 1,000 extra officers on our streets...the Scottish government has a long-standing record on protecting the poorest and most vulnerable in our society and we are tackling poverty and inequalities head-on through a number of initiatives including a £296m investment to limit the damaging effects of the UK government's welfare cuts."*

- [The latest edition of Scottish Justice Matters is free to download here](#)
- [Individual articles can be downloaded here](#)

Community Return Scheme shortlisted for Innovation Award



The Irish Prison Service - Probation Service's Community Return initiative has reached the final stage of the inaugural Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards. Our interagency initiative is through to the final selection in the 'Innovation and Creativity'

category. Ninety-four projects were nominated for awards by Government departments across the Civil Service. A cross-departmental and cross-grade working group selected thirty-two finalists from those nominated. The finals of the awards, at which the winners in the various categories will be announced, will be held in Dublin Castle on Thursday 3rd December 2015.

Since Community Return commenced in 2011, over 1,500 prisoners have been released early from custody, under Probation Service supervision. The scheme has been really successful, and has enjoyed a compliance success rate of almost ninety percent. More information on the Community Return programme is available on the Probation Service website at the following link: **Community Return**

Employment based Government of Ireland Postgraduate and Employment Scholarship Programme 2016

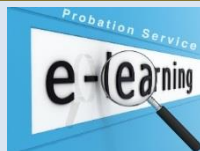
If you are considering an application under the under the above scheme in a criminal justice subject area related to probation, community sanctions, transition from custody, resettlement or similar field please contact the Probation Service at research@probation.ie to explore possible shared research interests and options. The Probation Service will be interested, in particular, in working with researchers and studies in relation to Service strategic priorities, exploring possible employment sponsoring options and assisting with other research supports and assistance. Probation Service Strategy documents, Annual Reports and other information are available by following the publications link on the Probation Service website at www.pprobation.ie

The Department of Justice and Equality commissioned Strategic Review of Penal Policy in 2014 has, in particular, recommended that research into and evaluation of the particular needs and circumstances of female offenders be conducted. The joint Probation Service – Irish Prison Service Strategy 2014-16, *An Effective Response to Women Who Offend*, has, as a priority, research on gender-specific approaches to inform effective delivery of service in the community and in custody.

If you are interested in exploring research options and possibilities with the Probation Service or on an Probation Service related research topic please contact Gerry McNally at the Probation Service email: gpmcnally@probation.ie, phone 01-8173647 or 086 8281230 for further information.

Joint workshop on E-Learning for Staff Training

EuroPris, CEP and the Irish Probation Service have jointly organised a workshop on the use of e-learning methods in the training of Prison and Probation staff to take place on 10-11 December in Dublin. The aim of the workshop will be to learn from experienced e-learning providers as well as from Services who have only recently started (or who are exploring the possibilities) to integrate e-learning methods in their staff training.



In plenary presentations and workshops the why, what and how of e-learning will be discussed. There will also be a 'market place' providing for an opportunity to actually try out existing e-learning programmes that were developed by Prison and Probation Services. More information is available on the EuroPris website.

Service expands its videolink capabilities



The Probation Service now has videolink available in six offices. Haymarket, Cork, Athlone, Sligo, Limerick and Portlaoise. Over recent months we have taken the opportunity to videolink the IASIO launch of its annual report to Cork and training and information sessions to Cork and Sligo simultaneously. Feedback has been very positive.

Probation related PUBLICATIONS



CEP newsletter October 2015 edition published

The October edition of the CEP newsletter has been published and is available by clicking on the icon above.



The CEP also produced a special edition of their newsletter dedicated entirely to EU Framework Agreements. A copy of this newsletter is available by clicking on the icon.

EuroPris newsletter published

The November edition of the EuroPris newsletter has been published and is available by clicking on the icon above.



New Social Work in Ireland book published



A new book which brings together a range of academics and professionals to provide a comprehensive analysis of social work in the Republic of Ireland, including a

chapter on Probation, has recently been published by Palgrave MacMillan. Further details on the book are available on the Palgrave MacMillan website or by clicking on the icon above