

# Probation *works*

Newsletter of the Probation Service (Ireland)

July 2013

**In this edition:** *A Day in the life of a Community Service Supervisor, Being On Probation: Michael's Story, European Initiatives in Probation, Crunching Numbers.*

## Message from Director

The front-line services provided by our staff across the country, as well as our interagency work and development of probation practice in the international forum, are all highlighted in this edition of Probation Works. The day to day work and experience of a Community Service Supervisor, as told by Gerry Condon (Dublin), the report on restorative practice in Limerick, and the report from Tony Kelly, Dun Laoghaire based Probation Officer, on new anger management programme training, all illustrate the range and depth of our service delivery and practice development. In addition, the front-line service user experience of one young person on probation is reflected vividly in 'Michael's Story.'



Interagency co-operation is fundamental to the work of the Probation Service. We continue to develop a number of initiatives in co-operation with the Courts Service (e.g. faster delivery offender assessment reports) and An Garda Síochána (e.g. Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management [SORAM]) and will update you further on these in due course. Since the launch of the joint Probation Service-Irish Prison Service Strategy in May 2013, work has progressed across all areas of Probation-Prisons focus - sentence management, Community Return, short-sentence prisoners, women and young offenders, as well as data and statistics co-operation. We held our annual joint senior management team meeting with our counterparts in the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, in Dundalk on 30-31 May, to co-ordinate our co-operation with our colleagues in Northern Ireland and plan for the coming twelve months. We also hosted a very successful EU/Justice Co-operation Network (project on management of high risk offenders) workshop meeting in Haymarket - see summary report below. While continuing to forge ahead with our organisational reform programme, we continue our commitment to building and developing the Probation Service's uniquely valuable contribution to making communities across Ireland safer. Interagency co-operation with all our partners continues to be a vital element, of this work.

*Vivian Geiran, Director*

## Restorative Justice in Limerick

For over 200 years a magnificent oak tree grew and flourished in what became the grounds of the local hospice, Milford Care Centre, in Limerick. Every Christmas the people of the Mid West put thousands of lights on the tree in memory of their loved ones who had died.

In 2011, at the end of a long life, the wood of the oak tree was donated to PALLS, the Probation funded project for adults in Limerick. In a restorative justice initiative, PALLS staff and trainees, in conjunction with Br Ciaran Forbes, Glenstal Abbey and Tim Durkin, used the wood to create a series of Memory Bowls. The bowls were then presented as tokens of thanks and appreciation for key note guest speakers at the 3rd International Public Health and Palliative Care Conference, which was hosted in Limerick recently by Milford Care Centre and the University of Limerick (pictured above).



The Memory Bowls were a fitting reminder of the creativity and dedication of the people of the Mid-West and of all who contributed to the conference. PALLS and Milford Care Centre are now working together on plans for the remainder of the wood, which will give further opportunity for the trainees at PALLS to contribute to their city.

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## Meet Gerry Condon, Community Service Supervisor, Dublin Community Service Team

**Introduction:** Gerry Condon, is relatively new to the Probation Service, joining in 2011. A carpenter/joiner by trade, Gerry worked in the construction industry all his working life. He finished up as a Project Manager with a development company when the economy took a downturn. He says he has no regrets and loves his job as a CS Supervisor. A father of two young children, Gerry's other biggest interest outside of work is being a proud member of the Dublin – Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team. A lifelong keen mountain climber, Gerry is on call and may at any time be tasked by An Garda Síochána to assist in mountain rescues and searches in the Dublin and Wicklow mountains. While usually ending in happy outcomes sadly, Gerry comes in contact with some tragedies. But regardless of the experiences he has encountered on the mountains he says of his current work "I thought I'd seen most things until I came to work in Probation Service"!! We asked him to elaborate.



Gerry Condon,  
Community Service  
Supervisor

**How did I join the Probation Service?** : I saw an advertisement on the FAS website one night. In the past I had sought work as a teacher in Youthreach, the role of a Community Service Supervisor seemed similar. I was called to interview on the day of the big snow in 2011 and walked from Tallaght to the city centre in snow shoes for the opportunity. Luckily I was accepted!

**What do I do and how do I do it?** 'As a Community Service Supervisor I essentially have a group of eight offenders who have either been sentenced to community service from the courts or are on the Community Return scheme serving part of their prison sentence in the community. Put simply my job is to help the lads, (it is nearly always lads), get through their orders but in a way that allows them pay their debt back to society and maybe learn new skills along the way. That is the hope anyway. It is all about respect, treating people as human beings. I treat the lads like they're proper workers. I am firm but fair. I do not tolerate messing. They are expected to start on time and they do. They are here to work but unfortunately for them, they do not get paid. Now, in saying all that, my job is about people management and motivation. We do a mix of painting and decoration, restoration and gardening. For the past year and a half we have worked with Focus Ireland in the renovation of some of their accommodation facilities. I get lads that are skilled and unskilled and obviously I focus more on the unskilled lads. Guys who have a history of working just want to get on with it and enjoy taking on the tasks. Others have to be coached and I hope they finish their time with me with a sense of confidence in their ability to do some tasks and that this will benefit them in the future'.



**Biggest Challenge:** 'Every day I come to work is different. I never know what I am going to face. New clients can be allocated regularly. A lot of the lads are very vulnerable given their backgrounds and life experiences. I undertook the suicide awareness training 'ASSIST' and it helps in being open and available to the lads. I try to have a positive approach and they know that if they are troubled they can make contact with me'.

**Best things:** 'The support from the Community Service team of Probation Officers, other supervisors and support staff, and the organisation in general, is great. I find the opportunities for me to develop are there.

Meeting new people, whether it's the clients or the host agencies, and the new experiences. Since starting work as a Community Service Supervisor I realise how fortunate I am and I have a real sense of what is going on out there, where, homelessness and drugs and all that goes with those situations are cruel realities'.

**Last Word:**'I have a changed outlook and perspective on life since I started this job. I talk differently to people, I give and get respect, and I think I help people, I like that'.

## Being on Probation: Michael's Story

\*Michael, (17 years of age at the time) was first referred to Young Persons Probation in February 2011 after appearing in the Circuit Court on serious charges of assault and violent disorder. He was one of a number of youths involved in an incident in his local town centre fuelled by an evening of heavy drinking. Although Michael was well known to the Gardai he had never been involved in anything of this nature before.



On her first home visit the YPP Probation Office (Jane\*) arrived to find Michael and his mother feeling extremely distraught and overwhelmed with anxiety as to what the future might hold. Jane's immediate concern was to offer reassurance, explain her role and begin to explore how they might work together over the coming weeks and months. Recalling this first contact Michael's mother said "the Probation Officer put me at ease straight away. I felt a weight come off me from our first meeting."

It was clear from Jane's assessment that the main risk factors were the negative influence of some of Michael's friends and his lack of commitment to his education, which meant that he had a lot of spare time on his hands. Jane was also concerned about his use of alcohol. This was exacerbated by the fact that he was consumed with guilt because of the harm he had caused. As a single parent faced with these difficult circumstances, Michael's mother also needed a great deal of advice and support. At the next Court hearing, Michael was placed on probation supervision and a plan was agreed with the family to address these issues.

His Probation Officer arranged the assignment of a mentor from the Le Cheile Mentoring project for Michael. Care and attention was taken to ensure that Michael was matched with someone he could get on with. The mentor's role is to support the young person, spend time with them in sport and leisure activities, thereby providing a positive alternative to offending. This felt a little strange to Michael at first but once he overcame this his mentor a young woman, in her twenties quickly became a trusted support and someone he could confide in.

Working with the local Restorative Justice Project, Michael completed a Victim Empathy Programme to help him to fully understand and appreciate the impact of his behaviour on the victim, his family and the wider community. Reflecting on this experience Michael commented "I was very much inside myself, depressed, feeling so bad about what I had done. It helped me to like myself again. It really lifted me to a better place. I was sorry about what I had done but I learned to accept it."

Michael's mother was linked up with a parent mentor and also attended the Parents Plus programme. "I've learned things that have helped with my own children but also with my grandchildren. I'm much calmer now. It was great to have the mentor to confide in. I think she will always be a friend. The best thing (about the course) was meeting other people in the same boat who understood what I was going through."

Jane concentrated on working with Michael, through his supervision on probation, on his alcohol misuse and liaised closely with staff at the local training centre to get Michael's education back on track.

Two years on, Michael and his family are in a very different place. Having steered clear of any further trouble, his case was recently finalised by way of a suspended sentence. He has completed his leaving cert applied and with help from another Probation project he has passed his driver theory test. He is looking forward to the future and hopes that at some point he may be able to use his experiences to help other young people in similar circumstances... "for the first time in my life I have choices. I'm about to take the next step. It's scary in a way but it's also great." Michael's mother also spoke with great relief after the final court outcome "I don't know where we would be today had the court not referred us to your service. The whole family have benefitted and I am so proud at how well my son has done."

\* While events described here are real, the names have been altered, to protect confidentiality.



European news

## Probation in Europe

### Setting Standards: The work of the Probation Service in Europe

The Probation Service has a proud tradition of working with our European justice partners to promote the use of non-custodial sentencing options. As a founding member of CEP (the European umbrella body representing probation agencies across Europe) in 1981, the Service is committed to advocating for and developing probation at an international level. Building effective partnerships across the criminal justice sector in Europe enables exchange of knowledge and improves the quality of policy and practice on a national and European level. Ireland leads the way in professional probation practice and we have recently collaborated on a number of significant projects with our European neighbours.

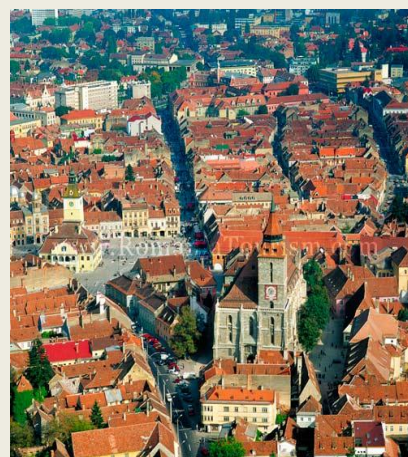
**EU Framework Decision 947 - Mutual Recognition:** EU Framework Decision 947 provides for mutual recognition of probation decisions across all EU member states which, when fully implemented, will make it possible for a community sanction made in one EU country to be fully applied and enforced in another. Sharing best practice, mutual understanding and experience among the Probation organisations in Europe are important steps in preparing for the movement or supervision across Europe.

In preparation for the full implementation of the Framework Decision, the Probation Service actively engaged with our EU partners on the following projects:

**Mapping the route to EU Framework Decision 947:** In 2011 the Ministry of Justice of Romania, in partnership with the Probation Service and the Italian Ministry of Justice, initiated an EU funded project to prepare for the recognition and transfer of non-custodial sanctions and measures among member states. The objective of the project was to develop a working model which aligned the probation systems, measures and community sanctions between the three member States which could be expanded and adapted for use by the other countries.

The work of the project included the development of detailed written descriptions of the national probation systems, types of probation measures and community sanctions. This involved an in-depth analysis through the exchange of detailed papers, real-case testing and a series of meetings comprising project partners and national experts in each of the jurisdictions.

The project was concluded at a very successful final conference in Braşov in Romania in May 2013 attended by delegates from the partner states and other related experts and interests. Gerry McNally, Emer Hanna and Catherine Gill represented the Probation Service at the conference where Gerry McNally presented a paper on transfer of supervision orders between jurisdictions. Progress and achievement on the objectives of the project were reviewed and key learning and actions were examined at the conference. Throughout the project the sharing of knowledge, experience and learning increased mutual understanding, and communication was visible in the collegiality and common bond among the partners in the course of the project and at the final conference



Braşov, Romania

## Developing a common Anger Management Programme

As part of an EU funded project, involving Romania, Italy and Ireland, a one-to-one structured anger management programme was commissioned by the partners for common use. The two week training programme was completed in Bucharest during April and May this year.

Tony Kelly, Probation Officer in Dun Laoghaire, was one of eight Probation Officers who participated in the training. Tony tells us about his experience:

**PROGRAMME NAME:** I-MAP, Individual Managing Anger Programme

**DEvised AND PRESENTED BY:** Gillian Johnson and Linda Gast, U.K. (Trainers and facilitators)

### COMPONENTS:

**Week One:** The first training week introduced us, with our Romanian and Italian colleagues, to the I-MAP programme. It was a challenging experience to train with Probation Officers from the other two states with some language barriers and interesting cultural differences.

I-MAP is to be used with a specific target group, males over the age of sixteen on Probation Supervision with acknowledged anger problems. The presenters were keen for us to learn the language associated with the programme. One example of this is the use of "Participant" for the client and "Facilitator" for the Probation Officer.



Training in the newly developed common Anger Management Programme was delivered in Bucharest, Romania during 2013

I-MAP is a nine session programme of about ninety minutes per session and, as a hybrid, contains practice approaches that Probation Officers will be familiar with such as the Cognitive Behavioural, the Best Behaviour and the Communications models. An innovative and challenging approach included in I-MAP is Mindfulness, which involves working with the Participant using, among others techniques, breathing skills to place the individual in the 'here and now'.

I-MAP is a user friendly programme which is both literally and visually effective. All Participants are given a Handbook which they keep for the duration of the programme which contains exercises and homework. What is essential to I-MAP is that the Participant must be willing and able to commit to the programme.

**Week Two:** The second training week, entitled 'Training the Trainers' involved learning how to train our colleagues in our home countries in the application of I-MAP with their prospective Participants. This was a 'learning by doing' week where we were teamed up with another colleague to plan and present certain models and sections of the I-MAP as though we were already in situ; training. This exercise posed its own challenges as we had to present and be critiqued in front of, not only our Romanian and Italian colleagues, but also our Irish colleagues.

Feedback was an essential part of this exercise and in many ways it acted as an ice-breaker and group builder at the end of two weeks together. We left the second weeks' training with the phrase 'All feedback is gift' ringing in our ears.....that and the 32 degrees outside were memories to bring home.

Overall, the I-MAP training was a valuable experience. We all learned new and beneficial skills to be used in supervision with our clients or Participants. It was an opportunity to explore differences and similarities in our practices and to share the experience and the mutual learning in the I-MAP programme.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in the future you can unsubscribe by emailing us on [psinfo@probation.ie](mailto:psinfo@probation.ie) including the word *unsubscribe* in the subject line.

## Managing the transition of high risk offenders from custody to community: An EU Project

Among higher risk prisoners leaving custody there is a particularly high potential of their return to offending behaviour and ultimately harm to the community. Effective resettlement work with high risk offenders can assist the

prevention of further offending, the reduction of victimisation and harm to the community.

The Probation Service is driving the development of best practice in this area, through an exciting Justice Co-operation Network initiative.

Under the umbrella of the Justice Co-operation Network, Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Germany), with the University of Greifswald as advisers, are partners in an EU funded project to examine and develop best practice in the transition management and supervision of high risk offenders leaving custody. The project will also focus on developing a body of knowledge and creating an EU network of expertise. Ireland is represented in the project by the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service.

The first project workshop in Tallinn, Estonia in March this year focused on the clear definition of who are high risk offenders. It was agreed that, for this project, a high risk offender is a violent or sexual offender who presents a high probability to commit crimes which may cause very serious personal, physical or psychological harm. The second project workshop was held at the Probation Service, Haymarket, Dublin 7 between 12th and 15th June 2013 and looked at current practice, issues and challenges in managing the transition of high risk offenders from custody to the community in each of the jurisdictions.

In addition to partners from Estonia, Finland, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and the University of Greifswald the attendance included delegates and experts from, the Probation Service, Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána, HSE, Homelessness Services and community organisations and interests.

The workshop programme featured presentations on identifying high risk offenders, interagency management of sex offenders (SORAM) and interventions in custody as well as lively and valuable discussion groups and prison visits. Thanks are due to the many Probation and Prison Service personnel who contributed to making the workshop a smoothly run, welcoming and very successful international event.

A report entitled "Transnational Comparative Analysis of Transition Management Strategies" will be completed as part of the report from the Dublin workshop. An information leaflet on the work of the project is available [here](#)



Professor Frieder Dünkel delivering his presentation at the recent JCN workshop

## Inspector of Prisons Annual Report for 2012 published

Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Mr. Alan Shatter TD, published the [Inspector of Prisons Annual Report for 2012](#) on 3rd July 2013. The Minister also took the opportunity to publish the Inspector of Prisons Report entitled [An Assessment of the Irish Prison System](#). Copies of the both reports are available on the Department's website or by clicking on the appropriate link above.

## Diverting the mentally ill away from the criminal justice system:

The work of a very successful interagency forensic mental health prison in-reach and court diversion programme, based in Cloverhill Prison, Dublin, was reported on in an article (by McNerney, C. *et al*) published in the International Journal of Mental Health Systems (2013, 7:18) last month. A copy of the article, which found "consistent levels of diversion from the criminal justice system to appropriate mental health services," is accessible here: [Diverting the mentally ill away from the criminal justice system article](#)

## The Probation Service in Numbers

**2,952** reports, assessing offenders' suitability for Community Service, prepared for Courts by Probation Officers in 2012.

**963** Community Service assessment reports prepared on the same day they were requested in 2012.

**55** Victim Impact Reports prepared for Courts in 2012

**34%** Probation Service savings since introducing new fixed line telecommunications contracts.

**30%** savings on contract cleaning services, since we introduced regionalised tendering.

**14%** savings on expenditure on stationery since centralised purchasing arrangements implemented by the Probation Service