

Editorial

As we welcome readers to the seventeenth edition of *Irish Probation Journal* (*IPJ*), on the cusp of its third decade of publication, we acknowledge the personal and professional challenges wrought by COVID-19 over the course of 2020. In the midst of the uncertainty and shifting scenarios, those working in the field of criminal justice have endeavoured to review, revise and adapt practice to ensure the continued delivery of humane, accountable and integrated services. Policymakers, practitioners and researchers have reached across borders to share experiences, frustrations and opportunities. Ironically, at a time when the mantra of 'social distancing' continues to reverberate, the sense of togetherness is palpable and will hopefully be a positive legacy from a pandemic that has yet to subside. In keeping with the journal's commitment to shared learning, we are delighted that this edition includes two practice articles from both Probation Services that provide an important record of interventions at a time of unprecedented health and social crisis. The authors reflect on the rapid and necessary adjustments to procedural practice, the expanded use of technology, the personal impact of remote working, challenges for the worker/service user relationship and important learning for the future.

The journey towards the publication of *IPJ 2020*, which began before the onset of COVID-19 has been exciting and stimulating, with an increased level of interest from potential contributors, some of whom will feature in next year's edition. Within the criminology community, *IPJ* continues to provide a platform to inform learning and stimulate debate and critical analysis. We are pleased and privileged that this year, in addition to three book reviews, there are fourteen articles on a range of themes that draw from policy and practice developments and outline and discuss findings and recommendations from research. These include mental health, intimate partner violence, substance misuse, gender-informed initiatives, the role of community in the reintegration of those convicted of sexual offences, and four papers that provide insight into work in the prison context.

An increasing strength across Probation is the willingness to engage with research to inform effective practice that supports and sustains desistance.

The opening paper, based on the findings of a 'state of the art' review of the evidence pertaining to recidivism shares valuable lessons in relation to realistic goal setting, programme design and implementation, and research infrastructure. We are reminded of the importance of high-quality evidence in demonstrating the effectiveness of non-custodial penalties. That commitment to evidence-informed practice is central to the paper that provides an introduction to the new Irish Offender Supervision Framework. Theoretical underpinnings and the whole-of-organisation approach to inform and agree the model are outlined.

An article based on the findings from groundbreaking ethnographic research conducted in Irish prisons provides insight into the role played by occupational culture within the prison institution. It will stimulate wider reflection on occupational culture across the criminal justice system and its role in shaping identity, attitude values and practice. Cultural diversity is the theme of an article based on a small research study which focused on prison officers' and Probation Officers' engagement with the Traveller and Roma communities in the custodial setting. The developments and related benefits of collaborative working across disciplines in the prison systems are discussed in two articles, both focused on reintegration and resettlement, one regarding young adults and the other on the management of those serving life sentences.

Readers recognise the many challenges for the reintegration of those who sexually offend. Two papers on sexual offending draw from recent and previous research studies to explore models that have demonstrated some success in meeting these challenges. The articles on intimate partner violence and mental health are apposite, providing important insights for these priority areas of practice. In 2008, we included an article on the development of problem-solving courts. We are pleased to publish a second paper from the same author that demonstrates the application of the earlier learning and provides valuable and positive messages for the implementation of interagency projects. The voices of the women resonate throughout the article on the 'wounded healer' — those voices provide a timely reminder of the centrality of lived experience, life narrative and pathways to redemption for all rehabilitation endeavours.

We wish to thank contributors for maintaining momentum over the year and providing a range of varied and stimulating papers for *IPJ 2020*. Our appreciation to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Probation Service for their support and encouragement. We take this opportunity to

welcome Mark Wilson to the role of Director of the Probation Service and wish him every success. The publication of the journal would not be possible without the sterling work of the editorial committee and the advisory panel; thank you for sharing your time and expertise.

We hope that you will consider contributing to next year's edition — on a particular area of interest, sharing your experience of a particular project or your critique of a recent publication. In the meantime, enjoy *IPJ 2020* and, as always, any feedback is welcome.

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