

# Probation *works*

Newsletter of the Probation Service (Ireland)

Sept 2016

IN THIS EDITION OF PROBATION WORKS: Launch of Inter-agency Strategy for Offender Management, Cork Alliance Conference - "Narrowing the Disconnect: The Ethics of Supporting Desistance from Crime". New Director of Probation in England, PC-CP News, Northern Ireland Prison Service Director steps down, International Seminar on Working with Young Adult Offenders, CEP News, ACJRD 19th Annual Conference, Probation in numbers, New Probation Service Website, EuroPris News, International Overdose Day, Spent Convictions Bill, PS and PBNI Meeting, Profile Interview with Tommy Groome, IASW - Research Connect.

## Message from Director

The Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald TD, launched a new four-way (Justice Department, Probation, Prisons, and Police) strategy on offender management, at an event in the Irish Prison Service Training Centre, Brian Stack House, Portlaoise, on Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September. The launch of this strategy marks the heightened focus and commitment to working more closely together, across the Justice agencies, to help create a safer and fairer Ireland. The strategy launch took place at the same event where the Tánaiste also announced the expansion of the Joint Agency Response to Crime (JARC) project to three new areas outside Dublin (see separate news item below), further evidence of the increasing commitment to collaborative working, to reduce victimisation and foster desistance from crime.



The Probation Service is fully committed to working in an interagency and multi-disciplinary way, to achieve our shared goals. Initiatives such as JARC, which has been operational for a little over a year, are already achieving positive outcomes in much reduced levels of offending among the group of prolific and persistent offenders targeted by the initiative. What we need to do in the future is to continue to build on the existing excellent interagency co-operation, particularly in the context of the uniquely valuable contribution that each agency brings to the process, to help offenders achieve and maintain desistance from crime. I am confident that, building on the established skill and experience of our staff, allied with the new staffing and other resources now coming on stream, the Probation Service will continue to punch well above our weight in what we bring to the interagency table. With that growing commitment, combined with that of our partner organisations, the future is bright for continuing to jointly make a positive impact in making Ireland safer.

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

## Vivian Geiran, Director



**Pictured left:** Michael Donnellan, Director General of the Irish Prison Service, Assistant Garda Commissioner DMR, Jack Nolan, Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality Frances Fitzgerald, Vivian Geiran, Director of the Probation Service and Peter Mullan, Assistant Secretary at the Department of Justice and Equality.

## Launch of the Joint Strategy on the Management of Offenders

The Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald TD, launched the 'Joint Strategy on the Management of Offenders, 2016-2018' on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016, in an event at the Prison Service Training Centre – Brian Stack House, Portlaoise. The strategy sets out a range of commitments and actions to be undertaken by the Department of Justice and Equality, Probation Service, Irish Prison Service and An Garda Síochána. The plan acknowledges that "...a joint approach to our work is vital" and sets out to "...build on existing multi-agency responses to those who are convicted and sentenced in our Courts". Speaking after the launch, Probation Service Director, Vivian Geiran said: "This strategy reinforces our existing commitment to joined-up interagency working in criminal justice. It helps us to combine and build on the unique added value that our different agencies bring to offender management. It also puts us in a great position to build further synergies in reducing victimisation by helping offenders – even those who have long histories of offending – to turn their lives around." The strategy document will be available on our website: [www.probation.ie](http://www.probation.ie)

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**J-ARC**

In addition to the launch, The Tánaiste and Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, opened the J-ARC Training Seminar in the Irish Prison Service Training Centre, Portlaoise on 22/09/2016 and announced the extension of the burglary related initiative, ACER 3, to three new locations in Dundalk, Limerick City & Waterford City. A disproportionate amount of property crime, some 75 % being linked to 25% of offenders. Thus targeting this cohort of repeat offenders has the potential to significantly reduce the number of burglaries being committed.

This extension builds on existing Dublin based Initiatives, Ballymun Strive, ACER 3 and the Bridge Change Work Programme. J-ARC is an Inter-agency response to prolific crime and the J-ARC strategy is an agreement between An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service which aims to

- Develop and further strengthen a multi-agency approach to the management of crime,
- Prioritise offenders in order to develop initiatives which will address their behaviour
- Reduce crime and increase public safety in local communities.

In order to reduce crime and enhance public safety, nominated prolific offenders are managed through the co-ordination and integration of policy, practice and research between the organisations.

J-ARC is a key part of the Justice agencies 'Joint Strategy on the Management of Offenders'.



Pictured above: Sonia Crozier, Director of the National Probation Service (NPS) of England.

**New Director of Probation in England**

Congratulations to Sonia Crozier on her recent appointment as Director of the National Probation Service (NPS) of England. Sonia was previously Chief Executive of Surrey and Sussex Probation Trust, before taking up the role of Director of Operations with London Probation Trust. Since 2014, she has been Deputy Director South East and Eastern region of the English NPS.



**Probation in numbers**

This month (September) there are:

**8,259** Persons under Probation Service Supervision in the community;

**1,528** Prisoners receiving probation assistance in custody;

**1,961** People on Community Service;

**1,204** Persons on various types of post-release supervision;

**1,173** Women on Probation Supervision in the community, and

**289** persons under eighteen years of age under probation supervision in the community.

The monthly Probation Service 'snapshot' statistical table is available by clicking on the icon below.

Probation Service - Monthly Offender Population Report (July 2016)			
Category	Female	Male	Total
Total	1,173	8,259	9,432
Under 18	289	1,204	1,493
18-24	1,173	8,259	9,432
25-34			
35-44			
45-54			
55-64			
65+			
Total	1,173	8,259	9,432

### Northern Ireland Prison Service Director Steps Down

The Ministry of Justice for Northern Ireland has announced that Ms. Sue McAllister, Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) will step down from her post at the end of next month (October 2016). We want to acknowledge Sue's commitment, while Director General at NIPS, to interagency and cross-border working in advancing offender rehabilitation, her particularly positive strides in progressing prisoner training, education and reintegration, and pioneering initiatives in social enterprise. We also wish Sue every success in the future.



**Pictured (L to R):** Michael Donnellan (Dir. Gen., Irish Prison Service), Cheryl Lamont (Acting Dir., Probation Board for Northern Ireland), Sue McAllister (Dir. Gen., Northern Ireland Prison Service), and Vivian Geiran, at a North-South prisons-probation directors' meeting in December 2015

### International Seminar on "Working with Young Adult Offender"



In late August 2016 the Probation Service was represented in Lillestrøm in Norway at a seminar on "Working with Young Adult Offenders" which was organised by the Confederation of European Probation (CEP). The seminar brought together speakers from around Europe and the US to share their knowledge and experience and to make recommendations for future policy and practice developments in working with young

adult offenders.

A key theme of the seminar was the need for a distinct approach to young adults throughout the criminal justice process, particularly in the light of interdisciplinary research which tells us that; cognitive and psychosocial development continues up to the age of 25, and possibly beyond; roles that are linked to desistance from offending are being completed later in life and early adulthood is a pivotal time in the course of criminal careers.

Presenters described how the special status of young adults has been reflected in criminal justice laws and/or practice in most European countries and, for the most part, this has been achieved by the extension of provisions for juveniles to young adults. Approaches that were tailored to the subjective needs of the individual young adult offender were advocated as being most appropriate and efficacious, with educational provision, restorative justice approaches and interventions that included a focus on family being given particular mention.

Monica Barry, from the University of Strathclyde in Scotland, reported on her research into the views of young offenders in Scotland and Japan about what is needed to promote desistance from offending. Young people identified more holistic approaches, with attention to their broader circumstances and not just on their offending behaviour, as being helpful. Barry spoke about probation as an effective means of supporting desistance, with both Japanese and Scottish samples citing a respectful, non-judgemental and constructive forward looking focus as most beneficial.

The seminar presented a great opportunity to hear about developments in working with young adults who are involved in the criminal justice system in Europe. The theme of the seminar will, no doubt, continue to garner attention from criminal justice agencies, practitioners and researchers in the years to come and will continue to be a major focus for legislative provision and probation practice. Copies of the seminar presentations will be available on the CEP website.

### Communications – New Website for Probation Service

The Tánaiste launched our new website on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> 2016. The aim of new site layout is focus how we deliver



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information over the web, on identifiable 'customer' groups, and (b) making Service information more accessible and user-friendly. While the new site is now 'live,' aspects of it are still in development and content will be updated accordingly. We would love to get your feedback on the website at any time. The website is accessible by clicking on the icon above.

### EuroPris Newsletter September 2016 published

The latest edition of the EuroPris Newsletter has been published and is available by clicking on the icon.



### International Overdose Day

The primary aim of the day is to raise awareness of overdose, to acknowledge the grief felt by families and friends of those who have died due to overdose and to spread the message that the tragedy of overdose death is preventable.



A 'Tree planting event' recently took place in Churchfield Community Trust Garden Café to mark International Overdose Day on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016.



### PC-CP News

Vivian Geiran will chair the upcoming meeting of the Council of Europe's Council for Penological Co-operation (the PC-CP) in Strasbourg this month (September). The PC-CP work programme includes a number of areas of its work, specifically in completing a handbook on radicalisation for prison and probation services, revision of the European Rules on Community Sanctions and Measures, and a White Paper on Prison Overcrowding in Europe. Papers related to the work of the PC-CP are available by clicking on the Council of Europe icon above.



### Confederation of European Probation (CEP)

#### News

[CEP\) General Assembly and Conference on "Alternatives to Detention" \(Bucharest, Romania\)](#)

The Confederation of European Probation (CEP) was established in 1981 as a network to share knowledge and expertise in the field of community sanctions in Europe. CEP promotes the rehabilitation and social inclusion of offenders through sanctions and measures implemented in the community. CEP acts as a voice and leader for probation in Europe and hosts conferences, seminars and workshops to support and develop practice and use of community sanctions.

Every three years the CEP invites all its members for a General Assembly. The General Assembly is the principal governing body of CEP. The General Assembly reviews the work of CEP over the previous three years, examines priorities and actions and plans for the coming period. The General Assembly elects the CEP President, Vice-Presidents and Board members for the next three years. Gerry McNally, Assistant Director, is a member of the outgoing CEP Board. This year, 2016, the General Assembly will consider a proposed new CEP Statute and Internal Regulations to replace the previous Statute which has been in place since the establishment of CEP in 1981.

On 6th-7th October 2016, following the 12th CEP General Assembly, CEP is hosting an international conference titled "Alternatives to Detention" at the Hotel Intercontinental in Bucharest. The CEP Conference will feature plenary presentations including Tim Chapman on Radicalisation and restoration in the community, Dr. Christine Morgenstern on European norms and values related to human rights and Marcelo Aebi on Community Sanctions and net widening in criminal justice among others.

In addition, the CEP Conference will include workshop presentations on Mental Health, Radicalisation, Female Offenders, Drug Treatment, Technology in Supervision and Professional Practice. The Mental Health workshop will feature a presentation by Laura Cotter, Probation Officer, discussing her research in Ireland on the Needs of Adult Offenders with Mental Health Difficulties in Prison and Probation. The Technology in Supervision workshop will include a presentation by Gail McGreevy (PBNI) on the PBNI development of a smartphone app to support engagement and supervision of persons on probation.

More information on the CEP Conference and registration can be accessed at <http://cep-probation.org/wp-content/uploads/Conference-programme-Alternatives-to-Detention-6-and-7-October.pdf> Do visit the CEP website at [www.cep-probation.org](http://www.cep-probation.org) for regular updates and news on the work of the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) and on developments in probation across Europe.

### Implications of the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016

Under the [Criminal Justice \(Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures\) Act 2016](#), which came into effect in Ireland on 29 April 2016, a range of minor offences become spent after 7 years. This means that an adult convicted of an offence covered by the Act does not have to disclose the conviction after 7 years, except in certain circumstances.

The [Criminal Justice \(Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures\) Act 2016](#) brings Ireland into line with the majority of EU Member States in providing a regime under which certain convictions can be disregarded after a number of years have elapsed since they were imposed

It also means that such convictions will not be cited by Probation Officers in Pre-sentence Reports or other reports and will impact, in criminal justice, on practice in Courts, Prisons and An Garda Síochána.

#### Offences

The convictions which may be regarded as spent after 7 years are set out in [Section 5 of the Act](#).

- All convictions in the District Court for motoring offences except for convictions for dangerous driving which are limited to a single conviction
- All convictions in the District Court for minor public order offences
- A single conviction (other than a motoring or public order offence) in the District or Circuit Court which resulted in a term of imprisonment of 12 months or less (or a fine).

The Act does not apply to any conviction for a sexual offence or an offence which was tried in the Central Criminal Court. The 7 years is from the date the custodial or non-custodial sentence became operative and the person must have complied with the sentence or order imposed.



### ACJRD 19th Annual Conference

The 19th Annual Conference of The Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD) will take place on Friday, 7th October, 2016 at the Spencer Hotel, Excise Walk, IFSC, Dublin 1.

The theme of this year's Conference is Cybercrime. Speakers will include:

- Robert Hayes, Senior Director, Strategy and Partnership Enterprise Cybersecurity Group, Microsoft Corporation
- Professor Anne-Marie McAlinden, School of Law Reader, Queen's University Belfast
- Pauline Walley, SC
- Det. Sgt. Michael Moran, Assistant Director, Vulnerable Communities, INTERPOL
- Professor Clare McGlynn, Durham University
- Dr. Geoffrey Shannon, Special Rapporteur on Child Protection

Workshop presenters include:

- Dr. Orla Lynch, University College Cork
- Margaret Martin, Director, Women's Aid
- Andy Harbison, Computer Forensic Investigator, Grant Thornton
- Professor. Maura Conway, Dublin City University
- Rebecca Dennehy, SPHeRE PhD Scholar, University College Cork
- Dr. James O'Higgins Norman, PC, Director, ABC - National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre
- Det. Superintendent Michael Gubbins, Computer Crime Investigation Unit, Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation
- Dr. TJ McIntyre, Chair, Digital Rights Ireland

For more information and Conference registration details please visit <http://www.acjrd.ie/contents/319>

The [Criminal Justice \(Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures\) Act 2016](#) is an important new piece of legislation which will assist people in Ireland who have moved on from past offending behaviour in addressing barriers to employment, education, training, housing and insurance.

### Probation Service and Probation Board for Northern Ireland meeting

The Probation Service and Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) senior management teams met for their annual conference on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July in Belfast at the PBNI Headquarters, 90 North Street. The meeting discussed developments since their previous meeting and plans for cross-border co-operation and joint working on shared projects.

Arrangements for the Public Protection Advisory Group (PPAG) Seminar in Dublin in November were discussed. The Public Protection Advisory Group is chaired by the heads of the Probation Service and Probation Service for Northern Ireland. The quality and value of the Irish Probation Journal as a joint publication by the two services was acknowledged. The 13<sup>th</sup> Irish Probation Journal will be published at the PPAG Seminar. The Probation Service and PBNI are represented in the new North-South Social Innovation Network hosted by the Centre for Cross-Border Studies. Opportunities for social enterprise and innovation developments were explored.

The meetings of the Probation Service and Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) senior managements are important in developing shared interests and co-operation on an all-island basis. They are also opportunities for sharing of experience and knowledge on common interests and challenges.



**Pictured Left: Members of the Probation Service and Probation Board for Northern Ireland meeting in Belfast at their annual conference.**

## Probation Officer Profile Interview



Pictured above: Tommy Groome, Probation Officer - Dublin South Central Team.

### Q: How did you decide on a career in Social Work & Probation?

Well, while the influence of social developments, family, religion, personality & even astrology might have played a part in becoming a social worker & probation officer, there were some circumstances that stand out as significant factors.

In my late teens, I was very involved in 'volunteering' with groups that offered practical support to elderly citizens & homeless persons. I also worked with a group of volunteers who 'befriended' & offered support to young persons coming out of State institutions such as Letterfrack, Co. Galway.

A friend of mine at the time was in UCD studying towards becoming a social worker. I was at the time working as a post office clerk in the GPO, Dublin. She introduced me to the concept of the 'professional social worker'.



### RESEARCH CONNECT - Irish Association of Social Workers

Research Connect is an online service linking social work researchers with mentors. The service is provided through the Irish Association of Social Workers, one of the ways in which the Association supports practitioner research. The idea for Research Connect grew from listening to the needs of members of the IASW practitioner research special interest group (<https://iasw.ie/group.aspx?contentid=2931>) who identified the need for mentors to offer support, advice and information about social work practitioner research. Research Connect provides a place to make connections between practice and academia and so contributes to building the base of evidence informed practice, positioning social work more strongly in the research community and embedding a research ethos and culture in practice.

We need to disseminate social work research – to invite conversation, reflection and critique about social work, the issues that impact on our work and on those we work with. Practitioner research can inform the delivery of services, bringing solutions to decision-makers about how best to deliver safe and effective services to patients and service users.

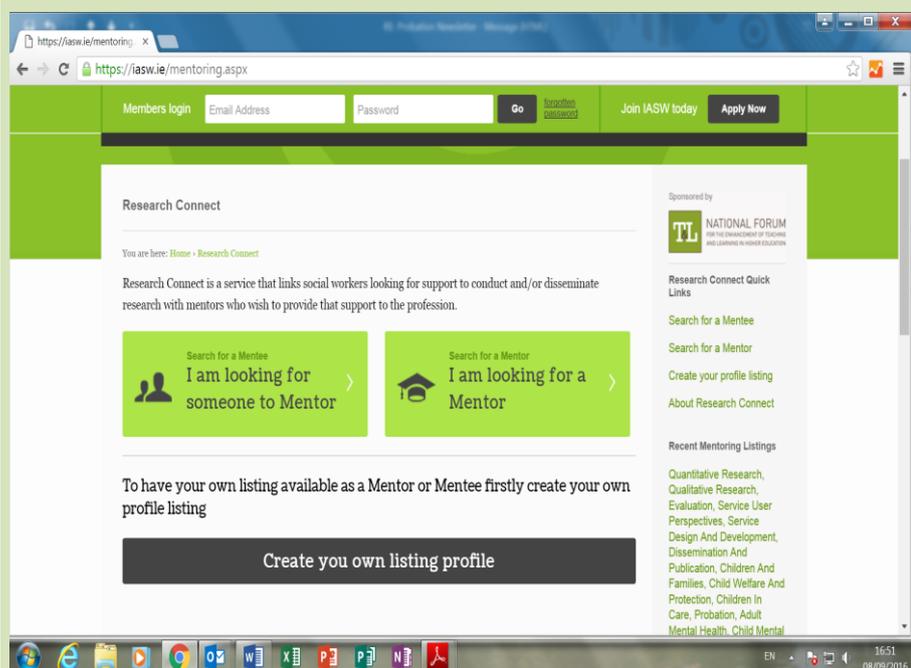
The service is based on a very simple idea whereby those interested upload their profile, search for mentors/mentees with similar interests and make matches accordingly. When a person creates their profile listing, it goes to the IASW office for approval before being uploaded to Research Connect. Once a listing is approved, the mentor/mentee is then sent a link which allows them to edit their profile.

If interested in getting in touch with a mentor or mentee on Research Connect, simply click on the contact button to send the person a message. There really is very little obligation after that – it's entirely up to the individuals involved to decide how much time and input they want to put into any mentoring relationship they make.

There are also numerous potential benefits for mentors which can include:

1. Access to the voice of service users;
2. Direct support of practitioners to contribute to the social work evidence base;
3. A mechanism for attracting PhD students;
4. A means to increase publication outputs by co-authoring papers on joint projects;
5. Joint projects with practitioners in the field may also enable academics to access data sets, populations and research settings where access may otherwise be difficult to negotiate;
6. Enables more inclusive research funding applications as many grants are now actively seeking the involvement of practitioners/service users in funding applications and in the research process;
7. It may also help attract practice teachers for each individual university by academics reaching out to directly support social work practitioners in the field.

To find out more about the Research Connect, visit [www.iasw.ie](http://www.iasw.ie) and click on Research Connect in the menu bar. You do not need to be a member of the IASW to use this free service – research minded practitioners and mentors are welcome to create their own listing, to engage with Research Connect and to be part of the development of the social work profession in Ireland.



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As a result I went to night school to complete my Leaving Certificate, resigned from my Civil Service post, obtained my Social Science Degree over the following years & found employment as a welfare officer in Dublin City Council. Enjoying my role as a welfare officer, I later moved to the HSE & worked in child protection & family support services & I obtained a Social Studies Certificate (CQSW) in Croydon college, London. I moved to Probation in 2001.

#### **Q: My experience in Social Work & Probation:**

The role of social worker in the HSE was both challenging & rewarding. It involved assessing risk of abuse of children & sometimes attendance at Court regarding Care & Supervision Orders. In addition, I enjoyed my involvement in 'preventative & support' services such as, supporting & recruiting foster carers, setting up community projects for children 'at risk of leaving school early' and organising 'parenting skills' courses.

The Probation Service was an ideal place to move to for a new challenge where I could use the skills that I had already developed and learn new areas of expertise. With input from an excellent Training Section I was afforded the opportunity to work in Mountjoy & The Training Unit Prisons, to report on & work offenders convicted of very serious offences in the Circuit Court and in recent years I have worked as a P.O. in the community.

Each of these placements has offered different experiences & challenges.



**Pictured above:** President Michael D. Higgins addressing the Cork Alliance Conference

**Cork Alliance Conference – “Narrowing the Disconnect: The Ethics of Supporting Desistance from Crime”.**

Vivian Geiran co-presented – with Irish Prison Service Director General, and Ian, a former service-user, at the Cork Alliance Conference on Thursday, 15th September. The conference, with the theme: “Narrowing the Disconnect: The Ethics of Supporting Desistance from Crime”, was addressed by President Michael D. Higgins, and Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, David Stanton TD, and attended by a large and enthusiastic crowd at the Firkin Crane venue, Cork. Current and former service-users addressed the conference, as did a range of high-profile academics. The latter included Prof. Shadd Maruna, Prof. Joanna Shapland and Dr. Deirdre Healy. The common thread running through the various presentations was how those involved in the Criminal Justice System can facilitate and bring about desistance from offending.

The conference was a great success, particularly evidenced through the moving testimonies of the former service users who spoke ‘with conviction’ about how they have turned their lives around and are now living productive, pro-social lives, all of them committed to helping others on the desistance journey. More information on the conference presentations will be available on the Cork Alliance website: <http://www.corkalliancecentre.com>

**Pictured below:** Michael Donnellan, Director General – Irish Prison Service, Ian (former service user) and Vivian Geiran, Director – Probation Service; presenting at the recent Cork Alliance conference.



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Overall I have enjoyed the daily challenge of engaging clients in facing their difficulties, improving their lives & desisting from offending. While frustrations have arisen, attempting effective liaison & communication with others in the Criminal Justice System & in the Community has also been an enjoyable task.

**Q: The Best Part of my Day at Work:**

Well, without in any way being flippant, going home is the best part. I say this as the work day is usually satisfying & it's good to feel that you having put in 'a decent effort', or even made some 'breakthrough' with a client, or found a creative way to tackle a 'problem', or just persisted when it's just been a 'bad' day. Having met & maybe enjoyed challenges, then one can look forward to rest, enjoying friends, tennis, the pub or just lazing at home.

**Q: I would like to see in Probation: ?**

Well, a huge reduction in the amount of forms & boxes to be ticked.

An emphasis in procedures & documents been based on social work values and that they are "Specific, Measured, Achievable, Realistic and Timed. A continued emphasis on acknowledging worker's difficulties & their positive performance.

**Q: Something You may not Know About Me: ?**

I might not have won Wimbledon, played for Arsenal, won a Grammy or the Nobel prize for Literature, however I am glad that I became a social worker & Probation Officer. Others can decide if I have been 'good at my job' in any way. Oh! I have recently handed in my retirement notice, so I'm on the lookout for a new career.