

Probation *works*

Newsletter of the Probation Service (Ireland)

January 2015

In this edition of Probation works: Abigail Women's Centre, Framework Decision 947 - Transfer of Probation Supervision, Probation Service Staff Conference, A Practice Student's Perspective, Probation Service Standards Project & Inspection, Garda Inspectorate Report published, Penal Policy Review Implementation Group, Probation Service Choir, Updated Drug Problems Best Practice website, EuroPris Newsletter, Federal Probation Journal.

Message from Director

Women offenders are one of the groups of Probation Service clients that we have been prioritising, both in our current strategic plan and in terms of practical service development and delivery. In continuing to prioritise the development of gender-specific approaches and responses to women who offend, we have – for example - identified designated probation officers around the country, to specialise in working with women clients. Later this month, specialised and gender-sensitive and focused training will be given to these dedicated Probation Officers, to enhance their skills base in this area of our work. In addition, gender-specific guidelines have been put in place for Probation Officers undertaking assessment reports with women; existing group programmes for women are being expanded, and our links with similar services in Northern Ireland have been strengthened, in order to learn from each other and share good practice, for mutual benefit.



One very specific and welcome development recently has been the opening of the Abigail Centre for women, in Finglas, Dublin, last month (see separate item below). This facility, providing fifty-five residential places for vulnerable, homeless women, many of whom have been in contact with the Criminal Justice System (including on probation and in prison) is run by DePaul Ireland and Novas Initiatives. The running costs of the DePaul element of the Finglas project, which provides fifteen beds in Finglas to women on probation supervision, including those on release from prison, is funded by the Department of Justice, through the Probation Service. DePaul have been one of our valued partners in this area of work, for many years, delivering much-needed services with us to homeless women offenders. The development of the entire Abigail Centre project is another great example of strong, positive and purposeful interagency co-operation, involving a range of Government Departments (Justice, Environment, Health, and Education) and agencies (Probation, Prisons, Dublin City Council, Health Service Executive, Dublin Region Homeless Executive, City of Dublin ETB and the Office of Public Works). More about the Abigail Centre – and more about other interagency initiatives in the pipeline - in upcoming editions of *Probation works*.

The next edition of *Probation works* will be published in March 2015.

Vivian Geiran, Director



European Drug Addiction Best Practice Portal

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has launched a new version of its **Best Practice** portal. Targeted at practitioners and professionals working in the drugs field, the portal is designed as a practical and reliable source of what works, and what doesn't, in the areas of drug-related prevention, treatment, harm reduction and social reintegration.

Summarising evidence in plain language, demystifying terminology and answering real questions from the field, the re-designed **portal** provides an accessible tool to support the development of evidence-based interventions. A vast array of data and research is presented in top-level 'answer sheets', complemented by underlying levels demonstrating the current evidence base.

The portal concentrates on illicit drugs and polydrug use and has a clear European focus. Intended as a 'living product', it will be regularly updated as information and research on interventions emerge.

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www.probation.ie

Abigail Women's Centre opens

The Abigail Women's Centre is an exciting new development in Kildonan Road, Finglas (formerly the site of St Laurence's Detention School). The Abigail Centre provides supported accommodation and a wide variety of services for vulnerable women. These onsite supports include life skills, education, training for the workplace, family mediation, addiction, physical and mental health, budgeting and housing.



Above: Community Service Participants working on the Abigail Women's Centre, Finglas and images of the Centre on completion.

The initiative involves a range of agencies including the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, Dublin City Council, the Probation Service, the Irish Prison Service, HSE, and DCETB with the centre being run by two key agencies, DePaul Ireland and Novas Ireland.

Tus Nua (De Paul), a Probation funded project working with women leaving prison or on Probation supervision, have now re-located from the North Circular Road, Dublin 7 to the Abigail's Women's Centre. Tus Nua has increased their capacity to accommodate 15 women and Novas Ireland will operate their unit for 40 women whose places are allocated through Dublin City Council's central placement unit. Both units are co-located on the same site in adjoining buildings with opportunities to share resources while maintaining their own identity.

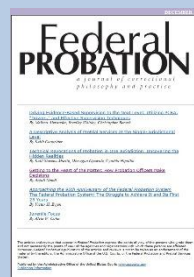
There is evidence that 32% of all adults accessing emergency accommodation from January to September 2014 were women with 11% on the rough sleeper count. The centre will play a significant role in meeting the needs of this group and also continue to support the Probation Service in our work with female offenders. This is a particularly important development in the context of the joint Probation & Irish Prison Service strategy, "An Effective response to working with women who offend" and will contribute to improved lives and outcomes for women.

EuroPris newsletter published

The January 2015 edition of the EuroPris newsletter has been published. This edition includes a feature article on new research findings on the needs of children with imprisoned mothers and fathers and an interview with Michael Donnellan, Director General of the Irish Prison Service. The newsletter can be accessed by clicking on the icon above.



Federal Probation Journal Published



The December 2014 edition of the Federal Probation Journal has been published. The Journal contains a number of interesting articles covering probation practice in the United States of America. The journal can be accessed at the following by clicking on the icon above.

Probation Service choir lift their voices in aid of Brother Kevin's Penny Dinners

On 18th December 2014 voices were raised and spirits lifted at Probation Service headquarters as the Probation Service choir made their premiere performance under the direction of David O'Shea.



The choir, who had only been together a few short months, treated the audience to a variety of traditional Christmas carols and uplifting choral music, including an animated reading of the eponymous Charles Dickens classic – 'A Christmas Carol'. Over 800 Euro was raised for Brother Kevin's Penny Dinners which was presented to Brother Kevin, on Monday, 22nd December 2014.

Framework Decision 947

Possible DG Justice Project Application



Following on from the successful EU financed Justice pilot project on Framework Decision 2008/947/JHA (FD 947), involving Ireland, Romania, Italy and other projects, the Probation Service, in conjunction with its European partners, are now exploring the possibility of a new European project to support and promote the broader implementation and use of FD 947.

EU Council Framework Decision 2008/947/JHA aims to facilitate the social rehabilitation of convicted foreign national offenders by facilitating their return from the EU State in which they are sentenced to their home country within the EU and to serve a probation measure or alternative sanction there.

The Framework Decision is now in legislation in most European jurisdictions. In Ireland the Criminal Justice (Mutual Recognition of Probation Judgments and Decisions) Bill is in preparation and is expected before the Houses of the Oireachtas this year.

While the finalisation of legislation is being completed, Ireland and the Probation Service has continued voluntary arrangements to deal with requests for supervision with other jurisdictions.

The Probation Service established an International Desk, (internationaldesk@probation.ie), in February 2010 as part of its preparation for the implementation of the Framework Decision. The International Desk provides a single point of contact for managing and co-ordinating all international requests and voluntary arrangements. It also provides information and gathers data in relation to transfers and requests for transfers.

The Probation Service is interested in exploring, with partners and CEP (Confederation of European Probation), options for an application under the DG Justice JUST/2014/JCOO/AG. The call is for a new European project to support and promote the implementation and use of FD 947. The deadline for proposals is 11th March 2015.

We welcome expressions of interest from potential leaders and partners who would consider participating in a new project to support and promote the implementation and use of FD 947 to facilitate the transfer of community sanctions.

Interested parties should contact Gerry McNally as soon as possible at gpmcnally@probation.ie to explore possibilities or clarify issues.

Restorative Justice: Le Chéile Mentoring Project Radio Interview



Le Chéile, a Youth Mentoring Project funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service through the Probation Service, recently participated in an interview on Newstalk 106 to discuss Restorative Justice.

The interview, broadcast on Saturday 24th January 2015 on *Dil Wickremasinghe's Global Village* show, featured Mary Henihan, Regional Manager with Le Chéile, and covered the general work of the organisation and the upcoming publication of a new Restorative Justice evaluation report. The launch of the report, which will be attended by the Director of the Probation Service, Vivian Geiran, will take place on Wednesday, 28th January 2015. The Newstalk106 interview is available at the following link and the interview begins 37minutes into the show: [Global Village Interview with Mary Henihan, Regional Manager, Le Chéile](#)

Exploring Probation: A Social Work Student's Practice Placement experience in the Probation Service

For a number of years, the Probation Service, in collaboration with a number of third level institutions, have facilitated practice placements for students of Social Work. The placements form an integral part of the development of the student's social work skills giving them the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have acquired in the classroom in a practical real world setting.

Washington Marovatsanga recently completed a student placement with the Intensive Probation Supervision team and offered us his views on his time spent with the Probation Service.



Above: Social Work practice student Washington Marovatsanga on his placement with the Probation Service

What interested you in a social work placement in Probation?

I had recently completed a first practice placement with another organisation which was of a quite generic nature and I felt I would benefit from a structured placement where I could develop my assessment and report writing skills. A placement in the Probation Service was suggested as a good structured environment in which to develop this area of my work. I had previously done an agency visit to the Bridge Project which had given me a broad idea about the work of the Probation Service and I felt it was a good fit for me.

Did it line up to your expectations?

The placement exceeded my expectations and more than met my identified learning objectives. I learned a lot on the placement and got a "snap shot" of what it is like to be a Probation Officer. The experience of and guidance from my practice teacher throughout the placement was excellent. While it took me a while to take it all in and get up to speed, the induction process for students was very helpful in getting me settled. Also all the staff were very helpful and very welcoming. The time went very fast – I was just getting warmed up and it was over.

What did you enjoy most about the placement?

The 'work-life balance' - I had opportunities to learn a lot and visit other organisations which allowed me to broaden my experience even further. I also enjoyed the social aspect and as a student I didn't feel alone or isolated. I always had someone to talk to and was pleasantly surprised at how very helpful and inclusive people were.

What were the challenges?

Sometimes I felt under pressure regarding Court deadlines but this is part and parcel of the work of the Service. I had to work with this and learn how to manage it. I also found the experience of working with involuntary clients a challenge. These challenges however, I believe brought out the best in me.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Now that we live in a multi-cultural society, the cultural guides available to staff to support them in their work with people from different cultures were very useful.

Overall the placement was a very positive experience – I enjoyed myself as well as getting great training and learning opportunities. I learned a lot and would recommend a probation placement to other students.

It also opened my eyes to probation as career – before my placement I would never have thought of becoming a Probation Officer – I have changed my mind.

Working Together For Lasting Change

Probation Service Staff Conference, December 2014

In December 2014, the Probation Service held a successful staff conference in the Irish Prison Service Training College, Portlaoise. The conference was attended by a representative group of over 150 staff, nominated from teams and regions nationwide, covering the broad spectrum of roles throughout the Service.

The theme of the conference, Working Together For Lasting Change, provided an opportunity for staff to take time out from their busy day-to-day work environment and to 'step back' to reflect, consider and contribute on critical professional practice issues.



Above: Probation Service Director, Vivian Geiran, opening the Staff Conference

In opening the conference Vivian Geiran, Director of the Probation Service, emphasised the essential role all staff have to play in shaping and delivering the Service's vision for the future: A vision based on accountability, excellence, opportunity and a core belief in people's capacity for change.



Above: Probation Service Staff attending the Conference

Staff also had the opportunity to hear from two guest speakers from Scotland – Mr. Allan Weaver, Criminal Justice Social Work Team Leader and Dr Beth Weaver, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Social Policy at Strathclyde University. Allan and Beth's inputs re-enforced the Service's drive to deliver the best professional services possible, founded on evidence-led practice, a robust organisational framework, sound leadership and professional staff supervision and, underpinned by strong social work values.

The central theme of the conference was desistance, the process leading to a cessation and abstinence from offending, and on how the Service can best engage with offenders to support them

through this process of change. Allan Weaver, an ex-offender turned probation officer, posed a simple question: What can we learn from those former prisoners who have successfully "desisted" from criminal behaviour or "gone straight?" and how can we incorporate this learning into criminal justice responses to crime?

Also explored at the conference were the range of positive influences and opportunities required to facilitate this change process and the potential the Service has to effect and support this adjustment with service users.

Staff attending the conference actively participated and shared their feedback and opinions at the themed workshops that formed an integral part of the conference. In addition to staff integrating some of the conference materials into their day-to-day practice, the Service have also incorporated the outputs from the conference into the Service Strategy 2015-2017 and its subsequent work-plans.

Feedback from the conference was overwhelmingly positive and helped to re-enforce the Service's commitment to pro-active engagement and support of our staff in their daily work. The conference provided a positive ending to a busy year for the Probation Service, with a clear focus on the future - a future that is challenging yet full of opportunity.

Probation Service Quality Assurance

In keeping with the importance of external review and oversight, the Probation Service, in summer 2014, established a Quality Assurance project to bring Service practice and service delivery to new levels of consistency, and transparency in professionalism. The project is developing Service Standards and an Inspection process which will assure quality service delivery and prepare the Service for future external and independent inspection.

The Probation Service has developed good operating procedures and guidance over the years, which have served the Service, our clients and the community well. The current Quality Assurance project builds on these, with a focus on accountability, quality assurance and transparency.

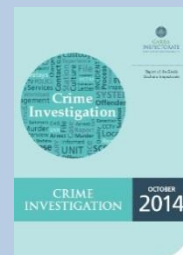
Over the course of the project a series of standard will be established, with linked practice guidance and measures. As each series of standards are established, the next step will be to monitor, review and measure how we are doing in achieving consistency in the implementation of the standards.

The findings of the Quality Assurance reviews and, in due course, inspections will help identify strengths and weaknesses, plan for development and ensure implementation of best practice.

For further information on the Probation Service Quality Assurance project contact Gerry McNally at gpmcnally@probation.ie

Garda Inspectorate Report on Crime Investigation Published

Frances Fitzgerald TD, Minister for Justice and Equality, published the report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation in November 2014. The Crime Investigation Report is available on the Garda Inspectorate's website or by clicking on the icon above.



Many of the key issues and themes reported in the Garda Inspectorate Report are shared by the other criminal justice agencies, including the Probation Service. In particular, these include the need for increased joint working and collaboration, better shared data and information, more co-operation and co-location, more effective management practices, greater efficiencies in work practice, clearer accountability and reporting and better practice in dealing with minorities and risk groups.

The Probation Service in numbers...



In 2014, there were over **6,000** visitors per month to our website www.probation.ie