

IN THIS EDITION OF PROBATION WORKS:

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Newsletter of the Probation Service (Ireland)

May 2019



Message from Director

Last month, the Council of Europe's Committee on Crime Problems (the CDPC) approved guidelines on the recruitment, selection, education and training of probation and prison staff.

This document is a guideline, and therefore not strictly binding.

Nevertheless, given its broad support and acceptance, over the entire process of its preparation, it is a very significant instrument

in setting standards for the quality of staff formation and development, for implementation across the forty-seven Council of Europe Member States. Our dedicated staff are primary agents of change. They deliver our unique added value to the criminal justice system, to service users, their families and communities, every day; and thereby help to create safer and more integrated communities. In the past year, the Probation Service has made it a requirement for probation officers joining the Service to be registered social workers. This reflects our own particular commitment and contribution to maintaining and developing the professional standards of our staff, in order to be as effective as we can be. In addition, the ongoing development of our own unique integrated offender supervision practice project, the first phase of which will be completed this summer, will further help us increase quality and consistency in our service delivery.



Earlier this month, our Probation and Prison Service colleagues from across Europe learned that next year's Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services (CDPPS) will be held in Ireland. The conference will be co-hosted by the Irish Probation and Prison Services. We look forward to working with our colleagues in planning this major international event in the annual European penological calendar, and to taking the opportunity to showcase all that is good about what we do in probation and prison work

in Ireland, and especially reflecting our interagency cooperation in the criminal justice sphere. The conference will also provide up to date learning from our international colleagues, and we ourselves will contribute to that shared learning.

The next edition of *Probation works* will be published in July 2019.

Vivian Geiran

Director

Twitter: @VGeiran



Probation in Numbers



This month (May 2019) there are:

8,933 Persons under Probation Service

Supervision in the community;

1,569 Prisoners receiving probation assistance
in custody;

2,280 People on Community Service

1,286 Persons on various types of post-release
probation supervision

1,359 Women on probation Supervision in the
community, and

Kickstart Awards



Pictured: Minister Flanagan speaking at the KickStart Awards

The Kickstart Social Enterprise Grant Awards were held in Probation Service Headquarters on May 2nd. At the awards Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan TD, announced the allocation of €300,000 funding to social enterprises that tackle re-offending rates by providing employment opportunities for people with a criminal past.

222 Persons under eighteen years of age under probation supervision in the community

The monthly Probation Service 'snapshot' statistical table for May 2019 is available at:

[Click Here](#)

Probation Service: Monthly Offender Population Report

Caseload	Community Regions (Point in Time May 1 2019)				In Custody	Total (Persons)
	Eastern	Midlands and South East	South West	West and North West		
Total	3,869	1,894	1,522	1,648	1,569	10,502
Of Whom:						
Female	534	299	290	236	71	1,430
Male	3,335	1,595	1,232	1,412	1,498	9,072
Under 18	113	42	30	37	0	222
18 and over	3,756	1,852	1,492	1,611	1,569	10,280
Totals:	Total Caseload, in community:					8,933
	Total Caseload, in custody:					1,569
	Grand Total, national Probation Service caseload:					10,502
The following are the major community supervision categories.						
	Probation Type Supervision***:					3,355
	Community Service:					2,280
	Supervision in the Community Post Release from Custody****:					1,286
	Community Return****:					51
	Life sentence prisoners on supervision in the community****:					91
	Sex offenders on supervision post release from custody****:					177

*Regions

Eastern: Dublin, Meath, Louth, Wicklow

Midlands and South East: Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford

South West: Cork, Clare, Limerick, Kerry

West and North West: Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Westmeath

**Probation Type Supervision includes Probation Orders, Fully Suspended Sentence Supervision Orders, and Supervision During Deferment of Penalty.

*** Supervision in the community post release from custody includes Part Suspended Sentences, Temporary Release Supervision, Community Return, Life Sentence Prisoners on supervision in the community and Sex offenders on supervision in the community post release from custody.

**** Already included in the total of supervision in community post release from custody.

The funding is being provided by the Department of Justice and Equality's Social Impact Programme under its 'KickStart' Seed Fund. The fund will provide matching grants up to €30,000 to 14 organisations providing employment to former offenders and persons leaving prison.

Announcing the allocations Minister Flanagan said: "This funding will help social enterprises to increase employment opportunities for people who have found it difficult to access the labour market as a result of their past. Those who have paid their debts to society will be given an opportunity to make sustainable changes in their lives, get back on their feet and access employment."

Minister Flanagan referred to the importance of social enterprise for those excluded from the mainstream labour market due to their criminal past saying "in order to break the cycle of re-offending, it is important that former prisoners who want to make a positive contribution to society have an opportunity to work. Supported employment in a social enterprise provides a much needed buffer, allowing people in this situation to gain confidence in their own abilities while also earning a wage.

"It's as simple as this: people who are given access to training and are in work are less likely to re-offend," he said. "This is important for the individuals, their families and the wider community."

Describing the positive impact the programme can have, an employee from Waterford based social enterprise RENEW said "For me, having a full-time job in a social enterprise means I'm earning an honest living and able to buy a few extra bits for the kids. I'm now in the system and earning a stamp every week. I'm getting trained up as a trainer and I've also enrolled in college."

At the announcement, successful social enterprises took the opportunity to showcase their businesses and their contribution towards employing people with previous convictions, helping to highlight the important role securing meaningful employment can have on an individual, their

TEDx Mountjoy

TEDx
MountjoyPrison
 x = independently organized TED event

On 2nd April 2019, I had the pleasure of participating in a TEDx event which was held in Mountjoy Prison. In a first for the Irish Prison Service, TEDx Mountjoy was a collaboration between the Probation Service, the Irish Prison Service and SOLAS. The theme for the evening 'Beyond Walls: from

Custody to Community,' focused on the barriers that offenders face leaving prison and the supports required as they try to re-integrate successfully into society.

I was one of eight speakers, alongside Eddie Mullins (Governor, Mountjoy Prison), Dr Deirdre Healy (UCD), Brendan O'Connell (Senior Psychologist, IPS), Wayne Hart (The Bridge Project), Caroline Gardiner (We Make Good), Philly McMahon (Dublin GAA Footballer), and Dr Anne Costello (IPS Education Service), all of whom offered differing perspectives from their own experiences or work within the criminal justice system. I hoped to provide insight into the important work undertaken by the Probation Service with offenders and the need for optimism and the holding of hope, in sometimes challenging circumstances.

After weeks of rewrites and practice runs, and support from fantastic coaches, we all took our turn on the famous red dot, hoping to challenge prevailing attitudes and spark conversations about how we can support offenders beyond the prison walls. We spoke to an audience of politicians, employers, activists, education-providers, senior policymakers, prisoners, and criminal justice stakeholders. Participating in this event was inspiring and highlighted the importance of a multi-agency approach in order to support real and tangible change for offenders.

Lisa Anderson, Senior Probation Officer



Lisa Anderson speaking at the Mountjoy TEDx Event

families and the wider community.

The Director of the Probation Service Vivian Geiran indicated that interest in the fund had been better than expected, which reflected positively for the potential Social Enterprise sector and for those organisations involved with providing employment for persons with a criminal justice history. The funding for Feasibility study and development grants will enable the 14 organisations to make decisions as to next stage of their business. It will also inform the Department of Justice and Equality's policy in the area, including any potential for further funding programmes.



Pictured: Kickstart Funding Recipients at the Event

Council of Europe Conference on Prison Overcrowding



Last month (April 2019), Director Vivian Geiran made a

A Day on the Community Service Bus

It is 9 am and the Community Service Bus is open for business outside of Haymarket. Two buses depart with Community Return and Community Service Clients. Tom Burnett has been a Supervisor for six years. A bricklayer by trade, he has worked on a number of sites. The Bus is the one he has most enjoyed and the one the clients prefer.

The Bus leaves and clients on board eagerly ask Tom where they are heading. It's off to South Finglas. The mood on the bus is good humoured and there is plenty of banter. Tom parks up the bus and the clients stream out to begin the clean-up of a housing estate. This is their second day here and the clients are rightly proud of the difference they are making. Locals approach Tom and thank him for his and the teams work. "Fair play to you and ye are doing a great job". The job is done and it's time to get back on the bus.

Aboard the bus there are pleas for a break. This is met with much ribbing and the lads agree it's too early at 11 am to have lunch. There are two Community Return clients on this site. John has five weeks left and Jim has 20 weeks ahead of him. They are hard workers glad of the opportunity to complete Community Return. The calm, steady influence they bring to site is clear to see.

Then it is off to another housing estate, this time to weed and edge pavements. This takes up the next hour. Tom offers encouragement and shows the clients what to do. The next stop is back in Finglas Village.

Along the main Finglas road the grass has grown out onto the pavement by three foot. The grass is cut back and the litter is picked up. One hour's hard work, makes a world of difference. One of the clients, Ross, comments that they carried out similar work on a pavement further down. A

presentation at a high-level conference, to address prison overcrowding across the Council of Europe (CoE) Member States. The conference, jointly organised and hosted by the European Union (EU) and the CoE, addressed an invited audience of senior officials, including Judges and Prosecutors from across Europe, exploring ways in which national systems can manage and reduce, where appropriate, the numbers in prison.

Prison overcrowding has been a persistent challenge across various parts of Europe, as well as more widely. The aim of the Conference was to consider the problem of prison overcrowding from different angles, by prosecutors, judges, justice system administrators and other CDPC delegates and to discuss possible practical steps that could be taken by these professionals at the different stages of the criminal justice process which could result in managing prison numbers better and in overcoming the problem of overcrowding. A further stated aim was to identify what support the Council of Europe can offer in this respect, including the possibility of holding a meeting at political level (Ministers of Justice) in order to present the outcome of the Conference and to assist Member States in dealing with prison overcrowding effectively.

The Council of Europe White Paper on Prison Overcrowding is available at the following link:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/-/white-paper-on-prison-overcrowding-approved-by-the-committee-of-ministers>

More information on the conference is available at the following webpage:

member of the public had thanked them as he couldn't access the path for a number years in his wheelchair. The extra three foot allowed him to access the pavement.

Commenting on his Community Service Order Ross says I'm glad the Judge was in good humour the day I got Community Service". It's clear that the members of the public benefiting from the work done are thankful too.

Aine Morris, Probation Officer



Youth Justice Open Forum

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cdpc/-/high-level-conference-on-prison-overcrowd-1>

Council of Europe – Standards for Probation and Prison Staff



The Council of Europe's Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) held a plenary meeting on 25–26th April 2019, which Vivian Geiran attended and contributed to, as Ireland's representative. The CDPC meeting considered, and approved, a draft document guidelines on the recruitment, selection, education and training of probation and prison staff. These guidelines were drafted by Dr Nicola Carr (of the University of Nottingham) and Mr. Torben Adams (Head of Division, Regional Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Bremen, Germany), working with the Council for Penological Cooperation (PC-CP) of the Council of Europe.

A copy of the guidelines document, as approved by the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) is available [here](#)



Pictured: Minister of State David Stanton speaking at the Youth Justice Open Forum

The YPP division of the Probation Service were well represented at the open forum on the new youth justice strategy hosted by the Department of Justice on the 8th of May. In attendance were Brian Dack, Assistant Principal Probation Officer, as well as the four Senior Probation Officers of the dedicated YPP teams – Rosemary Fox, Irene Gilmore, Ciara O'Connor and Síle Loughrey.

The purpose of this half day intensive session was to highlight the most important things that State agencies and other stakeholders can do to support children and young people who come in contact with the justice system, to help identify obstacles to progress and brainstorm ideas to overcome those.

The forum was attended by all of the main agencies working in the youth justice system including the Courts Service, the DPP's office, Oberstown Children Detention Campus, and An Garda Síochána. Additionally there were representatives in attendance from Tusla, the mental health services and various community organisations that work directly with young people.

The day was opened by Deaglán Ó Briain, Principal Officer in the Irish Youth Justice Service. A presentation followed from Niamh Kelly, Solicitor from Michael J. Staines & Co. who

Legal Aid Board Conference on Domestic Violence



A Legal Aid Board Conference on the topic of Coercive Control and the Domestic Violence Act 2018 took place in Wood Quay on 19th March. Speakers from an array of backgrounds, including Carmel Donnelly Assistant Principal Probation Officer, delivered well received and informative talks from the perspective of their respective organisations.

Patrice Cooney, solicitor from the Legal Aid Board addressed the main elements of the Domestic Violence Act. Sergeant Laura Sweeney, outlined how an Garda Síochána manage Domestic Violence complaints and prosecutions in such cases. Ross Wynne spoke on behalf of COSC and detailed the work of the National Office of Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence and the contents of the National Strategy on same. Raymond Briscoe spoke on the role of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Domestic Violence cases .

Carmel Donnelly presented on the work of the Probation Service in the area of Domestic violence. Dr Jane Monckton-

highlighted concerns in relation to children's understanding of the legal processes and the importance of taking their views into account.

A young person from the south east of the country then spoke. He was 20 years old and was supported in his presentation by the Le Chéile Mentoring Service. He had been involved in the criminal justice system for some years and spoke expressively of his feeling of confusion about where he stood within the system. He articulated his efforts to do what he was asked by Gardaí, Solicitor and the Courts and his bafflement when, despite doing as asked, he still seemed to fall short. More positively however, he outlined that he was supported by his Probation Officer, who referred him to Le Chéile. He finished by outlining his ambitions to move on from his involvement in the criminal justice system and to attend college.

Síle Loughrey, SPO in YPP Dublin North then presented on the changing trends in youth justice as reflected by Probation Service referrals from the Courts. She outlined that although the numbers of referrals have fallen over the last 10 years or so, the profile of the young people we are working with has changed. She noted that young people are now coming before the courts who are more entrenched in their offending behaviour and more difficult to reach. She presented a statistical analysis of Probation clients, which formed the basis for part of the later round table discussions.

Each table, of around 15 people, then commenced a discussion, which was facilitated and recorded by the Irish Youth Justice Service, on the following themes:

- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Diversion
- Procedural Rights (investigation, prosecution and court proceedings)
- Sanctions (including Detention)
- Post-release (Re-integration)

The half day concluded with a brief address from Minister of State, David Stanton followed by a networking lunch.

Smith, criminologist, Gloucestershire university presented a paper on Understanding Coercive Control /Homicide Reviews in the UK. Aoibhneas Women's Refuge were represented by Karen Nally who spoke to the victim experience.

First Social Enterprise Meet & Greet event takes place in Probation HQ



Pictured: Meet & Greet at Probation HQ

Social enterprises, open to recruiting people with criminal records, provide a much needed first step on the employment ladder for individuals who have been excluded from the labour market as a result of their record.

Employment in a social enterprise provides an Employer-to-Employer work reference which is very helpful in moving on to the mainstream labour market and freeing up a vacancy for the next person.

The Martin Tansey room in the Probation Service HQ was a hive of activity, chit chat and networking on May 23rd when the first Social Enterprise Meet & Greet event took place. 13

COSC Launch Major Awareness Campaign

On May 9th Minister for Justice and Equality launched a major national awareness campaign on sexual harassment and sexual violence. '*No Excuses*' is a high impact media campaign to reach a national audience featuring TV, cinema, radio, outdoor, social and digital advertising. The campaign is being run by Cosc – the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, which is part of the Department of Justice and Equality.

The ads began broadcasting on May 10th and the campaign will run for three years up to 2021. The initial ads feature both male and female perpetrators and victims. They cover a number of scenarios ranging from sexual harassment in the workplace, unwanted physical attention at a bar, and an attempt to expose someone in a locker room, to an attempt to coerce a partner into unwanted sexual activity and finally an attempt to prey on someone not in a position to give consent.

At the launch Minister Flanagan said "Research has shown that Ireland suffers from disturbingly high levels of sexual harassment and sexual violence. These ads highlight and help people recognise these behaviours and the many precursors to them. They call on us to reflect on our own reactions and to stop excusing sexual harassment and sexual violence. I hope that they will help all of us to hold such behaviours and their precursors totally unacceptable with the ultimate goal of reducing and preventing the incidences of sexual harassment and sexual violence, which affect the lives of too many people in our society both directly and indirectly."

On March 8th, International Women's Day, WIN International

social enterprises, operating right across Dublin, hosted information stalls about the type of goods and services their businesses provide. Probation Officers, IASIO staff members as well as those working in Local Employment Services all attended to learn more employment opportunities for their clients.

With the current Department of Justice and Equality strategy on social enterprise, 'A new way forward', is in its third and final year, the need to embed social enterprise into the practices of the Probation Service has never been more pressing. With an estimated additional 15,000 people expected to be employed in social enterprises within the next three years we need to ensure that no one is left behind as a result of their criminal record.

The purpose of these Meet & Greet events is to:

- Answer any generic queries on what social enterprises are and the role they play in increasing employment opportunities for people with convictions
- Provide an opportunity for Probation Officers, IASIO Training & Employment Officers, as well as staff from other support services, to meet with social enterprises from their region who are open to recruiting people with convictions
- Make direct connections with senior/HR staff in these social enterprises
- Gain a greater understanding of the type of social enterprises in their area including the nature of their business (construction, manufacturing, hospitality etc) location and potential jobs available in the social enterprises
- Hear about current and future vacancies in each of

published statistics as part of the 2018 WIN World Survey ranking 40 countries on gender equality, sexual harassment and violence. The Irish research was carried out by Red C research. The survey reported that Ireland has the highest level of claimed sexual harassment in Europe with 32% of Irish women between the ages of 18 and 34 saying they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the last 12 months. That was the highest level in Europe, and the second highest out of all 40 countries surveyed. Only Mexico fared worse.

Reported sexual offences are also increasing. Last year, 3,182 sex crimes were recorded by Gardaí, a 26% increase on 2017. While some of this may be attributable to an increased willingness to report crimes, which should be welcomed, the reported figure still only shows a fraction of the total prevalence of these crimes as it is generally accepted that sex crimes are chronically under-reported.

The Minister added: "The aim of this campaign is to make the public question our responses to a range of sexual harassment and potential sexual violence scenarios which are endemic in society, to consider the extent to which we excuse or 'explain away' incidents when we see them, and to ask us to stop excusing them if we do. We want the campaign to provoke us all to ask: 'Just what is our attitude to sexual harassment and sexual violence? Are we tolerating it? Are we excusing it?' And if we are, even if we are doing so only at the lower stages, are we facilitating a culture in which it is really hard for victims to be heard, to be helped, to be supported."



the social enterprise as well as their HR policies

- Network with staff from other support services

More Meet & Greet events will be planned around the country over the coming months. If you are a social enterprise and would like to have a stall, please email siobhan@bridge.ie



We are delighted to announce that the We Make Good webshop is LIVE!

Come over to wemakegood.ie, read our story and find out more about our wonderful network of makers and designers. And get to know our range of beautiful, ethical and Irish-made products. We'll be adding to our collection all the time, so keep checking in!

**Conference of Directors of Prison and
Probation Services 2019**

One of the 'No Excuses' campaigns advertisements currently being broadcast to a national audience.

Irish Criminal Justice Agencies Conference 2019

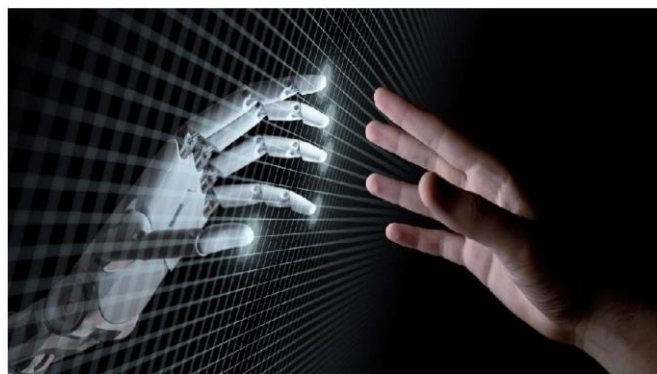


The 6th Annual Irish Criminal Justice Agencies Conference will take place on **Tuesday, 4th June, 2019**, in the Conference Centre, Upper Yard, Dublin Castle. The theme for this year's conference is "*Sexual Offences: The Challenge of Balancing Rights in the Criminal Justice System*".

The Conference is a collaboration of the Department of Justice and Equality, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Irish Prison Service, the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS), An Garda Síochána, The Probation Service and the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD). The lead partner for 2019 is the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

This conference will be of particular interest and relevance to policy makers, those working in government agencies, professionals, practitioners, academics and those involved in community and civil society groups from a wide range of disciplines within the Criminal Justice System.

The Conference programme can be accessed at https://www.acjrd.ie/files/2019_ICJA_Conference_-_Programme_04.06_.19_.pdf



24th Council of Europe Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services (CDPPS)



Vivian Geiran, Director, and Irish Prison Service Director General, Caron McCaffrey, attended the 24th Council of Europe Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services (CDPPS), which was held in Cyprus on 21st – 22nd May 2019. The overall theme of this year's conference was: *Offender Management: Tradition and Technology*. Delegates from the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (Cheryl Lamont, CEO and Dr. Geraldine O'Hare) and Northern Ireland Prison Service (Director of Rehabilitation, Paul Doran) were also in attendance. Geraldine and Paul made a joint workshop presentation on the evolution and outcomes of probation-prisons interagency cooperation in Northern Ireland.

More information, and documentation, on the 2019 CDPPS conference is available at the following webpage:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/prison/agia-napa-cyprus>

Booking details are described at <https://www.acjrd.ie/contents/391>

Ireland to host next year's Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services



The Probation Service and Irish Prison Service will jointly host the 25th Annual Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services (CDPPS), in Ireland on 24th and 25th June next year (2020). This follows a combined proposal made to the Council of Europe by Vivian Geiran, Probation Service Director, and Irish Prison Service Director General, Caron McCaffrey, and subsequent discussions with the Council for Penological Cooperation of the Council of Europe. The announcement that Ireland is to host CDPPS 2020 was made during the closing session of this year's CDPPS, which was chaired by Caron McCaffrey, in Cyprus. Planning is now already underway for next year's conference and we will keep you posted on developments through this newsletter and other media, as those plans unfold.



Pictured: Vivian Geiran and Director of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland Cheryl Lamont at the Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services

Latest European Probation Statistical Report Launched

Promoting more humane and socially effective penal sanctions

www.coe.int/prison

Search tool

Key information

- Calendar
- Country factsheets
- Useful links

Council of Europe publishes Annual Statistics on Probation

2019

The Council of Europe have launched the annual statistical

Research on Women, Drug Use and Crime



Pictured: The official BRIO launch in SAOL in October 2016.

Summary of Key Messages from Research on Women, Drug Use and Crime

The following is an extract taken from the BRIO May 2019 Newsletter.

The BRIO Evaluation 2016–2018 reviewed literature and research focusing on women, drug use, crime, imprisonment, recidivism, desistance and peer work. Extrapolated from research spanning more than four decades, the findings offer key points of departure to the evaluative study, the aim of which is to explore the development and achievements of an innovative Peer Worker education and training programme (BRIO) for women who have histories of drug use and offending. In summary, then the key messages from the literature are:

- It's different for women. Studies demonstrate that women's patterns and experiences of drug use, treatment uptake, recovery, relapse, offending,

report on probation in Europe. The report, known as SPACE II (SPACE I is the report on prisoner numbers in Europe) is based on statistics gathered from the Council of Europe Member States, and collated and analysed by Prof. Marcelo Aebi and his team at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, measures the stock and flow of probationers in individual Member State jurisdictions each year. The latest report, based on statistics for 2018, was launched by the Council of Europe on Wednesday 22nd May. Prof. Aebi made a presentation on a summary of main findings of the report, in a workshop, the same day, at the Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services in Cyprus.

More information on the release of the SPACE II report, its main findings, and a link to the full report itself, is available [here](#).

A Day in the Life



Sometimes in conversation socially I'm asked what I work at. Much of the time I'll reply that I work in the Public Service and that tends to shut down the conversation. On occasion however I will say that I work in the Probation

criminal justice involvement, imprisonment, re-entry, desistance, recidivism differ significantly from men's patterns and experiences that have until recently been regarded as the 'norm'.

- An understanding of lived experience is crucial. Many studies offer information about patterns of drug use and offending among women, initiation, drug treatment, relapse, criminal justice involvement, desistance and recidivism.
- Making connections is vital. There is a significant body of research that highlights the connections between women's drug use, offending, victimisation and trauma. Mental Health Issues are seen to be central and histories of traumatisation & re-traumatisation.
- Poverty, inequality, marginalisation and disadvantage are central to the experience of women involved with the drug treatment and criminal justice systems. In almost all of the literature the issues of poverty, inequality and adversity are noted and more recently the phrase 'low income women' is used.
- Stigma and discrimination impacts on those with offending or drug use histories, following imprisonment or treatment in a life after drug use or crime. Such stigma is believed to have a greater impact on women,
- Recidivism and Relapse, common experiences among those who use drugs and /or offend, are major challenges for women. Multi-layered, multiple and complex issues affect women who use drugs and offend. Substance use affects recidivism, but also may affect and significantly impact and compromise women's employment opportunities and prospects, their relationships with children and their access to social and familial supports.
- Relationships are central in women's lives. Women are viewed as relational – their relationships with children, partners, families, many of which are threatened by involvement in drug use and crime, are often the motivating factors for survival, perseverance and change. They are also often a

Service. I started working in the Probation Service in 2002. Since then I have worked in a number of roles, both in a prison and community setting. For the past 9 years I have been assigned to the Kildare Probation Service team. I work with all categories of offenders; men, women and children. A snapshot of my work over the past 6 months will include pieces of work with persons who have engaged in pretty much every type of offence. This has included the completion of a Parole Board report on an in-reach basis and various pieces of work with a Restorative Justice focus. Since commencing work in Kildare the variety in my role has been both exciting and challenging. It has required training in all risk assessments such as LSI-R, YLS/CMI, SARA, RM2000, PSROSH, and Stable and Acute.

Aside from my core case work there are other important aspects to my role. Each week I represent the Probation Service in Court. This is much more than an administrative role of delivering reports and collecting referrals. Although much of our work in the Probation Service occurs behind closed doors away from the public eye, our work in Court is visible and one method of developing our public reputation as a professional and competent service. For this reason I place great value on the work I do each week in Court.

Our work in the Probation Service could not be as effective without the support of community groups and projects. For this reason it is important that support is given to such projects that assist our work with offenders. I have had the opportunity to assist many community projects, mainly in the youth sector, over the past 9 years through sharing of experience, advice and guidance. I feel that this has been a most valuable exercise as the existence of strong and effective community projects are key to achieving the goals of our work with offenders.

great source of trauma, victimisation, grief, bereavement and loss in their lives.

- Relationships are crucial also in the context of professional support services and treatment responses. Interactions that are rooted in equal and empowering relationships between service providers and service users are believed to have significant benefits. Relationships between parole officers/probation officers/workers and those on parole or probation are believed to have either positive or negative effects on desistance/recidivism outcomes.
- Gender-responsive, trauma-informed and integrative services for women with histories of drug use and offending are believed to offer more effective and empathetic responses to their needs and preferences.
- Reentry or release is a difficult moment for women and 'successful' reentry often hard to define. According to much of the literature, women leaving prison or 'coming' home often define success as achieving a "normal life", accessing accommodation, reuniting with their children and families, meeting challenges, being resilient, achieving independence from surveillance by the criminal justice system and engaging in caretaking and helping others.
- Reunification with families and children are crucial for women. A significant body of literature highlights the trauma of separation from children for women with histories of drug use and criminal justice involvement.
- Desistance and 'redemption' are complex processes. Gendered experiences of these processes must be taken into account.
- Working with women to promote recovery and desistance, prevent relapse and recidivism is about process and journeying – a 'coming home' to a space where women can take responsibility for making choices and decisions about the next stage of their journey – into the worlds of peer working, work and education.

Over the past 12 months or so I have taken a step into the world of staff training, specifically in relation to the Always Children First training. This has been an exciting venture and one which has brought new challenges, not least trying to fit training days into my schedule. It has been an enjoyable experience however. I now have an appreciation for the extent of the preparatory work required to deliver a training course! One of the more positive aspects of this has been the opportunity to meet with so many of our colleagues from around the country.

The offending behaviour which we encounter is often unpleasant. Despite this, it is our role to work with offenders in a professional manner in order to effect change. I believe that self-care is of utmost importance in order to preserve one's own mental well-being, but also in order to maintain high standards of work practice and motivation. For that reason I try to maintain a healthy work/life balance. I find that this has served me well and helped me maintain high standards across all aspects of my role. It's a tough job, we know it can be stressful. We must enjoy it though as otherwise we'd be working elsewhere. We do see success stories and every single day the work of the Probation Service is making communities safer. I am proud to be part of an organisation with so many dedicated and talented staff around the country. It is a privilege to work in the company of such exceptional people and that is what keeps me coming to work every day!

Dermot Lavin, Probation Officer

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- Peer support models may offer women a productive, generative healing role in connecting with others with similar life experience. The power of generativity, altruism, connection with others has been documented in recent research and has been connected with desistance, recovery and 'redemption'.

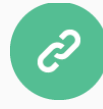
This knowledge base has already informed the proposal, initiation and development of the BRIO programme and its evaluation and will continue to impact the development of the programme into the future. These findings represent the starting point for BRIO along with the aspirations of the SAOL Strategic Plan, that focuses on the importance of being gender-responsive, participant/peer-led and trauma informed and the Gender Policy of the Probation Service and Irish Prison Service, that aspires to be gender-responsive, women-centred, build strategic alliances and work integratively.

More information on BRIO can be accessed at

<https://www.saolproject.ie/BRIOHome.php>



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