

Probation *works*

Newsletter of the Probation Service (Ireland)

May 2013

In this edition: Launch of joint Irish Prison Service-Probation Service Strategy 2013-2015, 2012 Annual Report published, Community Project Profile: Tallaght Probation Project, A Day in the life of a Community Probation Officer, The Science behind Risk Assessment

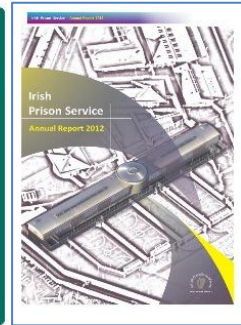
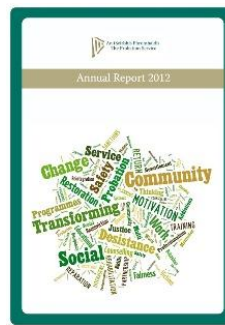
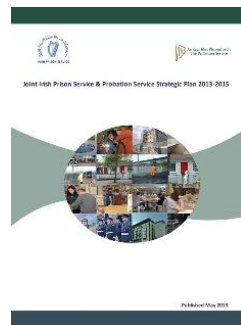
Message from Director

In this edition of Probation Works newsletter, we celebrate the visit by our Minister, Alan Shatter TD, to our Haymarket, Dublin Headquarters, on Wednesday 8th May 2013. Minister Shatter was in Haymarket to launch the Probation and Prison Services new joint strategy document, and also to formally receive the IPS and PS annual reports in respect of 2012 - more details below.



We also introduce a new feature, a 'day-in-the-life' type profile of a Probation Service staff member. This time out, we are featuring Linda Power, a Probation Officer working out of our Blanchardstown office. Staff and others often comment on how difficult it can be to get across to others 'what we do' in simple terms, particularly in ways and words that accurately describe our daily work. I hope that we will address this issue in the current and future editions of Probation Works, by highlighting what individual staff members do on a day-to-day basis in their different roles. We will also continue to feature the work of the various community based organisations that we work closely with across the country. This month we feature Tallaght Probation Project.

Vivian Geiran, Director



Launch of Interagency Strategy for Work with Prisoners

The Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service's Joint Strategic Plan 2013-2015 was launched on Wednesday 8th May, in our Haymarket, Dublin headquarters, by Mr. Alan Shatter TD, Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence. The strategy sets out seven actions where Probation and Prisons will work closely and co-operatively to improve our work with those in custody and following release, in order to better contribute to creating safer communities together. [Speaking at the launch](#) Minister Shatter welcomed this joined-up approach to working, and praised the managements and staff of the two services for the initiative and all it represents. The joint strategy document can be accessed by clicking on the report icon above.

Annual Report 2012

The Probation Service Annual Report for 2012 was also launched, simultaneously with the IPS Annual Report, and in conjunction with the PS-IPS Joint Strategy, at the event in Haymarket on 8th May 2013. The report sets out the work of the Service last year, as measured against our key objectives. While numbers of offenders referred to the Service in certain categories was down (e.g. Community Service Orders reduced by 6% from the 2011 figure), others - including the overall number of offenders with whom we worked in the community, as well as the number on the new Community Return (supervised early release from prison) scheme, and sex offenders under supervision in the community, increased last year.

The Probation Service Annual Report 2012 is available by clicking [here](#) or on the relevant icon above. A copy of the Irish Prison Service 2012 Annual Report is available [here](#) or by clicking the icon above.

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www.probation.ie

Meet Linda Power, Probation Officer, based in Blanchardstown, Dublin.

Introduction: Linda, from County Cork, undertook a primary degree in Social Work in UCC because of her interest in people. While studying she worked part time as a social care worker in the residential disability field. On completion of her primary degree she decided to undertake a Masters Degree in Social Work, in Glasgow, consciously seeking a challenging environment where she could develop her skills. She is with the Probation Service 5 years and is based in a community team having previously worked on an assessment team. We interrupted her busy day to ask her a few questions.



How did I join the Probation Service: While in Glasgow completing my Masters in Social Work I was influenced by the work of Fergus McNeill who lectures on Criminal Justice Social Work. As part of my placements I worked in an approved hostel with ex-offenders, loved the work, and chose as my dissertation topic to research “whether supported accommodation assists in offenders desisting from crime”. I was hooked on the area but on finishing college starting working in Child Protection in Glasgow. When I saw that the Probation Service was recruiting I wanted to get back to Ireland, applied and luckily was successful!

What I do and how I do it: My role is to supervise offenders that are subject to orders of the Courts. This involves meeting offenders, primarily in our local office but also in their homes and community based services such as drug rehabilitation services. My first few meetings with the offender is focused on assessment of their risk and also needs. This involves exploring with them their offending behaviour, both current and past and the factors that may be contributing to them being at risk of further offending. By and large, this involves examining areas such as drug and alcohol use, who they are hanging around with, housing issues, awareness of the damage they have done to their victims and challenging any ongoing criminal attitudes.

Also I look with them at what might be protective for them in staying out of trouble or what may motivate or assist the offender to move away from crime. Following assessment, I then draw up a plan with the offender regarding the areas/goals for supervision. I encourage them to take responsibility for their offending and rehabilitation, and try to expose them to alternatives to offending. I often refer offenders to community based services, such as addiction and employment services.

Additionally, I carry out one-to-one work with offenders, using programmes on anger management, drug awareness and victim awareness, for example. Sometimes I meet offenders in prison to prepare for their release back into the community and I also have to write pre-sanction reports or progress reports to the Court. At times, offenders may not respond to supervision or be non-compliant, for example through non-attendance, further offending or escalation in their risk levels. With these cases, I may have to return an offender to Court, if I cannot successfully motivate them to get back on track.

Biggest Challenge: The nature of the client group that I work with, that is offenders whose lives are often in chaos, can be a challenge. Supervision of offenders is frequently marked by relapses back into old behaviours. Coupled with this, change is a very slow process and this, I guess, can be frustrating at times, particularly when you are aware of the impact of crime on victims and communities.

Other challenges obviously come from cuts to community based services which you often rely on to complement supervision plans. Also, where there are gaps and/or sometimes poor communication between the various agencies it can be frustrating.

Best thing: I love my job. Relationship making is crucial. Working with offenders and witnessing them make positive changes to their lives is the most rewarding aspect of this job. No day is the same and you are continually challenged. Additionally, the Service has introduced a number of positive changes in recent years, it is exciting to be part of that process.

Last word: The work of a Probation Officer is a challenging yet rewarding job. In my opinion, probation supervision can, and does, have a positive impact in terms of challenging and influencing offenders and reducing the risk of further offending. I would like to see Probation being used more frequently by the Courts and that more

Community Project Profile

Tallaght Probation Project, Westpark, Tallaght, Dublin 24

Tallaght Probation Project (TPP) provides programmes for adults and young people who have come into conflict with the law. It supports and challenges them to overcome obstacles, adopt an offending free lifestyle, and enhance their future prospects. The majority of participants are referred by the Probation Service. In addition to on-site activities, participants can benefit from a network of locally based services.



Since 1995, when it was established to work with isolated young men in West Tallaght, its remit has widened greatly. It now supports the Probation Service in delivering a number of community based orders and accepts participants from a much broader geographical area. In 2006, the Project moved into purpose built premises in Tallaght Village from where it runs a broad range of services.

The Project runs an on site Community Service programme. Participants complete projects for the benefit of local charities. Recent beneficiaries have included a Women's Refuge and a Community Crèche. At present a mosaic, art works and flower planters are being created to brighten up the local Focus Ireland Homeless service in Tallaght village. A number of people are also attending under the Community Return programme.

A broad range of educational activities are available in the centre including Literacy, Computers, General Education, Lifeskills, Horticulture, and the Arts. People can take part on a sessional basis or as part of a full-time FAS supported Local Training Initiative. In response to areas identified with probation teams a number of brief intervention programmes have been developed: For example Alcohol & Offending, Anger Awareness and Dual Diagnosis. The latest addition to this is the Anger Control Training programme which is run over a 12 week period.

'The Link' programme works with young people, typically from 15 to 18 years of age. It offers education, offending behaviour programmes as well as Community Service activities. It is a designated Day Centre under the Children Act.

This year the Project is focusing on new ways to work with women in order to better meet their needs. The TPP hosts an interagency group to examine how best to support women coming out of prison or on probation in the community. This involves joint working between prison and community based Probation Teams, local projects, South Dublin County Council and other relevant agencies. Alongside existing work with women a group based programme is being designed.

For further details on the work of the centre contact the Project at (01) 4270600 or project@tpp.ie



EuroVista (Probation) Journal

Interested in European probation? Access a wide range of current academic articles by visiting www.euro-vista.org (click on the icon above) and log in using EuroVista as the username and EuroVista4U as the password. Remember to use uppercase for the letters marked in bold.

Management of Sex Offenders

The interagency Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management model, known as SORAM, was established to support enhanced levels of co-operation and co-ordination between key statutory organisations involved in managing convicted sex offenders. Led jointly by the Probation Service and An Garda Síochána, and with the active support of both the HSE Children and Family Services and the Irish Prison Service, the model is currently being extended on a pilot basis throughout the country.

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Anger Management Programme

The Probation Service is currently collaborating with Romania (project lead) and Italy in an EU-funded transnational probation project that is developing an anger management programme, which we will roll out later this year.

European Directors General of Probation conference

The Director, Vivian Geiran attended the conference of Directors General of Probation in Europe, in Oslo last month. The conference was organised by the CEP (European Organisation for Probation) and hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The theme for this biennial conference (held in Dublin in 2011) was - "Probation, Reintegration and Restoration," and provided delegates an opportunity to "share, discuss and set common priorities for the future." More detail on the conference is available at www.cep-probation.org. While in Oslo, Vivian Geiran also attended a bilateral meeting at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, to discuss issues of mutual interest, with Ms. Marianne Vollan, Director General, Norwegian Correctional Services.



Pictured above : Probation Service Deputy Director, Suzanne Vella, having an informal discussion with Iuliana Carbutaru, Director of Probation in Romania.

The science behind risk assessment

The Probation Service, in common with similar services worldwide, use a number of risk assessment instruments in our preparation of Court reports and in our ongoing management of Court orders. We are proud of the expertise we have developed in this area and have fully integrated risk assessment instruments, such as the 'Level of Service Inventory - Revised' (LSI-R), into our computerised case tracking system. Risk Assessment has its detractors, and as an agency staffed by Probation Officers with social work training, we have lively debates about the risk management imperative.



James Bonta, Head Psychologist with the Canadian Attorney General's Office who developed LSI-R, recently, and succinctly stated why the instrument is so useful in the hand of the trained Probation Officer.

"The LSI is a good predictor of risk (there are over 50 studies demonstrating this fact). However, one must be careful in using the LSI solely because of its predictability because one may argue that you end up punishing someone for what may happen and not what the person actually did. Rather, what is important with the LSI is the reliable and valid identification of criminogenic needs. By identifying criminogenic needs, a case plan can be developed for managing offender risk."

James Bonta

The Probation Service is committed to using established and proven risk assessment instruments, such as LSI-R, to inform professional probation assessment and management of offenders. A brief overview of the science behind risk assessment instruments can be found by clicking the icon above.

National Volunteering Week



This week (May 13th to 19th 2013) we celebrate the "opportunity to shine a light on the inspiring work of volunteers and highlight the value and impact of volunteering to Irish society"

www.volunteer.ie and acknowledge and appreciate all those volunteers who work with the Probation Service. In particular, we thank all those who give of their time in the wide range of community and voluntary organisations that partner us in our work in the community and in prisons, as well as those who serve on voluntary boards of management or voluntarily supervise work placements for community service orders under our management.

The Probation Service in Numbers

8,790

new referrals to the Probation Service

1,264

(14%) of the total were women

710

(8%) of the total were under 18 years of age.

3,384

(39%) were between 18 and 24 years

171

(2%) were 55 years of age or older

Cavan and Donegal

were the two counties with the highest number of Community Service Orders per 100,000 population in 2012

15

(Probation) Family Conferences on young persons requested by Courts in 2012

8,226

criminal record requests processed for the Probation Service by An Garda Síochána in 2012