

Editorial

Welcome to the eighteenth edition of *Irish Probation Journal (IPJ)*. First published in 2003, the Journal has significantly developed and gone from strength to strength over almost two decades in existence. With a readership that stretches far beyond this island, the journal regularly contains articles from international contributors both in practice and in academia. It is now an important reference point for colleagues within the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) and provides source material and examples of best practice for colleagues in other jurisdictions. Each year, the *IPJ* also contains an article based on the annual Martin Tansey Lecture organised by the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD), which seeks to promote reform and the development and effective operation of the criminal justice system. We are delighted to be able to support ACJRD in its endeavours through the publication of this article. Importantly, the journal also has a range of articles and practice notes both from practitioners working in services as well as those who are conducting research using data and information from probation.

Some of the themes covered in this year's publication include: mental health, UK sentencing policy, electronic monitoring, the contribution of the community and voluntary sector, trauma-informed practice, substance misuse, the contribution of social enterprise to employability, violent offenders, reintegration, restorative practice, money laundering, prolific offenders, and an international perspective from the Latvian Probation Service. This wide and varied range of articles provides a comprehensive, informative and thought-provoking edition of the 2021 *Irish Probation Journal*.

In January 2021, the editorial committee held a workshop for those interested in writing for the journal. Attended by over 40 practitioners, the event was extremely successful, and a number of those who were in attendance are writing in this publication, whilst others are interested in writing in future editions. The level of enthusiasm and commitment to shared learning, amongst practitioners in both services, is very encouraging.

It is important to acknowledge that throughout this past year we have continued to face both the personal and professional challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore all the more impressive that practitioners, policymakers and academics have made time and prioritised writing for the journal. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that we have all been working against the backdrop of a global pandemic for over 18 months. Those working within criminal justice providing frontline essential public services have had to review, revise and adapt their practice to ensure the continued delivery of these services, whilst at the same time keeping staff, service-users and the wider public safe. The editorial committee of *IPJ* wish to place on record our thanks to all of those who have continued to deliver services and keep our communities safer. We also acknowledge that those who are most marginalised in society have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and, of course, those who offend are one such group.

Many of the themes and articles this year, whilst not directly about COVID-19, will resonate with our collective recent experience working though the pandemic. We know, for example, that the mental health repercussions and trauma experienced as a result of COVID will be felt for many years to come. Likewise, employment, substance misuse and reintegration into communities have all been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

The opening article in this year's journal draws from a series of research studies, undertaken in the Irish Probation Service and internationally in relation to the mental health of those subject to probation supervision. It questions whether service-users with mental health problems in probation require 'equivalence', and argues that new thinking is required, which might include the establishment of a sub-group of specialist probation staff specifically trained in mental health.

There are several interesting contributions in relation to rehabilitation policy. An article marking 50 years of NIACRO sets out how this community organisation has adapted to meet the changing political and social landscape in Northern Ireland (NI) and its efforts to influence public policy in NI. A further article by the Director of a UK think-tank considers sentencing policy in the UK and the challenges and opportunities provided by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. A paper exploring the history and development of Electronic Monitoring (EM) of offenders in Ireland charts policy and legislative developments and considers the potential for, and likelihood of, its future use.

Accessing employment continues to be a challenging issue for those who have offended. Readers can peruse a paper which considers the journey of

the *Working to Change — Social Enterprise and Employment Strategy 2021–2023*. The paper outlines the co-design approach taken, as well as detailing the underpinning principles of the employment-focused strategy for people with criminal convictions.

There are two articles in relation to substance misuse; one is a practitioners' response to an article that appeared in *IPJ 2020* on the Substance Misuse Court piloted in Belfast Magistrates Court. The second is based on the findings of a recent online survey on patterns of drug and alcohol misuse amongst those under the supervision of the Probation Service.

Likewise, there are two papers in relation to trauma — one in relation to trauma-informed practice, which highlights key themes from a systematic narrative review of the international criminal justice research on trauma-informed practice in the criminal justice system; the second considers a cohort of females within PBNi who have offended, and explores the links between adversity, trauma and offending behaviour.

As always, the journal reflects new crime trends, and we have an article this year which looks at the concept of 'money mules' — the author shares the learning journey undertaken in order to gain a better understanding of the nature of this offending, distinct patterns and consequences and implications for Probation practice.

Partnership working is critical across the criminal justice system, as reflected in a number of contributions. One paper considers research carried out by 'Care After Prison' (CAP), which is a criminal justice charity supporting people affected by imprisonment, current and former offenders, and their families. One of the key aims of the research was to identify any gaps in the provision of care from prison through to the community, and to explore how these gaps could be filled, from the perspective of those with lived experience of imprisonment. Another considers the regional application of the 'Joint Agency Response to Crime' (J-ARC), a strategic management initiative working to address prolific offending through collaboration across An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service. A third article on restorative practice within Northern Ireland considers partnership work with community and voluntary organisations, as well as statutory bodies, in delivering effective restorative interventions.

Once again, the journal is further enriched by a contribution from our colleagues in the Latvian Probation Service. The paper describes the history and evolution of the service, tracking significant developments and challenges. Readers will be interested in learning about their work with

Electronic Monitoring and Restorative Justice, particularly as both are central themes in two other papers in this edition. There is plenty of scope to compare, to contrast and to inform thinking.

As we publish this edition of the *Irish Probation Journal*, we would like to put on record our thanks to all the members of the Editorial Committee for their tireless work and commitment. Thanks to the members of our advisory panel, who provide an important function in reviewing articles and providing guidance and feedback. As always, our appreciation to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Probation Service for the support provided.

To all those who have submitted articles and papers published this year, we are very grateful for your time and efforts. Finally, to our readers, we want to thank you all for your continuing support and for championing the Journal. As always, if anyone wishes to submit an abstract for consideration for next year's *IPJ*, please make contact with any member of the Editorial Committee.

Enjoy this eighteenth edition of the *Irish Probation Journal*.

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