

Editorial

This year marks the twenty-first anniversary of the publication of the *Irish Probation Journal*. As well as a time for celebration, twenty-first birthdays are a marker of maturity and independence. In this vein, this year's issue of the *Irish Probation Journal* provides a unique look back at the archives of the Journal through the perspectives of probation practitioners North and South. The articles included in this issue have all been specially chosen by practitioners because of their significance to their thinking and practice. Each article is accompanied by a brief explanation providing the rationale for selection.

The first article included in this collection is chosen by Margaret Griffin, Regional Manager in the Probation Service. The article, by Fergus McNeill, is based on the paper he delivered for the Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture in 2009. 'Probation, Rehabilitation and Reparation' explores the changing rationalities shaping rehabilitation over time. McNeill (2009) notes some critiques of rehabilitation and the different legitimisation strategies of this shape-shifting concept. He concludes the article by calling for probation practitioners, managers and academics to be involved in helping to shape and redefine what rehabilitation means, both as an idea and as a practice. This call – to bring together voices from practice, management, and academia – resonates with what the *Irish Probation Journal* has done over the course of its history.

The second article included in this collection is an article written by the then Directors of the probation services North and South, Michael Donnellan and Brian McCaughey, and published in 2010. In this piece, the authors highlight the legacy of the historic Good Friday Agreement, which paved the way for a review of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and included recommendations advocating for closer co-operation across the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. This eventually led to the establishment of the Public Protection Advisory Group (PPAG), which this article specifically addresses. The PPAG identified a number of areas of common priorities between the Probation Board of Northern Ireland and the Probation Service, including best practice in the management of people convicted of sexual offences, information sharing and co-operation, and working with diversity.

The desire for greater co-operation is underscored by the changing political context, but also by an increased emphasis on co-operation between services at a broader European level, including in relation to sharing best practice and facilitating the transfer of supervision arrangements across borders. The pertinence of this is highlighted in the explanation by Gillian Montgomery (now Director of Operations in PBNI, but previously an Area Manager in mid-Ulster) of why she chose this piece, where she describes working in a border area where she saw these issues up close in practice.

The next series of articles chosen by practitioners for this special issue covers different aspects of research, policy and practice. Martynowicz and Quigley's research on the reintegration of prisoners in Ireland, published in the Journal in 2010, is selected by Tim Coughlan, a Probation Officer working in prisons. Tim explains that the findings of the article, which detail some of the challenges facing people leaving custody, in relation to the supports available, still resonate today, particularly in light of a rising prison population. Kate Walshe, a practitioner working in the Probation Service, has selected Phil Bowen's article, published in 2021, which provides a critical review of recent sentencing practice in England and Wales. While neither the Republic of Ireland nor Northern Ireland has seen the same level of punitiveness in penal policy in recent years as our neighbours, it is always instructive to look at nearby trends in criminal justice policy and sentencing. Bowen (2021) charts the ratcheting up of sentencing tariffs amongst successive Westminster governments, which has seen people being sent to prison more frequently and for longer periods. He also highlights some of the continued tensions in forthcoming legislation – between policies that will not do anything to ameliorate a burgeoning prison population and plans to reverse the calamitous privatisation of probation services in England and Wales. Meanwhile, Olivia Keaveney, Director of Operations with the Probation Service, highlights how Anna Connolly's summary of the research on effective practice in probation supervision, published in 2006, shaped her thinking about practice, particularly in relation to thinking about the meaning of quality in probation supervision.

Some of the challenges of practice, particularly meeting the wider needs of people under probation supervision, are highlighted in Paul Thompson's article about housing, published in 2014. In this article, Thompson (2014) highlights some of the challenges of addressing this fundamental area, and discusses how these challenges can be exacerbated when there is resistance to 'offenders' living within communities. Probation's role as a bridge between people under supervision comes through in this piece, which Liz Arthur, Area Manager with

PBNI, has chosen for inclusion, explaining that these issues and probation's role remain as live today.

The next article selected for the issue addresses a key concept that has been influential in practice in recent years. Maruna's (2017) and others' work on desistance has revitalised aspects of criminal justice policy and practice. At its simplest, desistance encourages a shift in our preoccupations regarding why people offend towards an emphasis on why and how people stop offending, and how they can be supported to do so. In this article, chosen by Peter Beck, a Probation Officer in PBNI, Maruna (2017) expands the lens of this work to focus towards 'Desistance as a Social Movement'. Taking inspiration from other movements – civil rights and recovery movements – he envisions the next step as one where desistance migrates from the realms of academic discussion into the communities where it occurs. This is a journey that had already begun at the time when this article was published and has since gained increased momentum.

The next two articles selected by practitioners for the special issue focus on topics that have been particularly relevant to practice in recent years. Collette Lattimore, an Area Manager with PBNI, has chosen Annie McAnallen and Emma McGinnis's article, 'Trauma-Informed Practice and the Criminal Justice System', published in the Journal in 2021. Meanwhile, Stephen Hamilton, Director of Operations, has selected Shane McCarthy's article on restorative justice, published in 2011. Both are topics that have gained increased resonance in practice in recent years.

Finally, probation is often decried for its relative lack of visibility, at least to outside audiences, for whom the image of the prison more readily comes to mind when sentencing and punishment are covered in the media and in wider public discourse. Many will be familiar with news headlines reporting that a person has 'escaped a custodial sentence', while the accompanying news story mentions in small print that the same person has received a community sentence. There is therefore a great deal to be done in raising the visibility of probation and community sanctions and measures, both within and beyond the criminal justice system. Books such as Vivian Geiran and Shane McCarthy's *Probation and Parole in Ireland: Law and Practice* go some way towards achieving this. Tara Kane, a Senior Probation Officer in the Probation Service, chose her review of Geiran and McCarthy's (2022) book for inclusion in this issue, noting that this book, the first of its kind on the topic in Ireland, provides an accessible and comprehensive guide to the subject.

All of the articles in this special edited collection speak to the inter-relationship between research and practice. The contributions to the Journal over the past twenty-one years show that this is not a one-directional journey. Practice has been influenced by the findings of research, but practice has also shaped research. Indeed, a number of the pieces in this collection have been written by practitioners and policymakers. Moreover, practitioners and people who are and have been subject to probation supervision have important insights to share about the nature of what it means to work with and be under the supervision of probation. Probation services and wider society need to listen to and learn more from these voices. It is fitting therefore that the final article included in this issue of the Journal is a new piece by Ian Marder and colleagues, describing the newly formed Criminal Justice Open Research Dialogue (CORD) Partnership, which aims to embed a culture of interdisciplinary open research in the field of criminal justice. It is worth underscoring that the *Irish Probation Journal* has been at the forefront of this endeavour for the past twenty-one years – a clearly prescient and necessary voice.

Professor Nicola Carr
School of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Nottingham