Magazine of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland • Issue 19 • March 2025



WELCOME to the nineteenth edition of the Probation News Magazine. This magazine provides a biannual opportunity to engage through sharing of news, best practice and information to stakeholders, staff and the public. We hope you enjoy reading this edition.

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NEW APPOINTMENTS TO PROBATION BOARD

On 1st March 2025, a newly constituted Probation Board started its three-year term.

The new Board is chaired by Glenn Houston. Glenn is a skilled senior executive with over 40 years' experience working in the integrated health and social care system in Northern Ireland. He has more than 20 years' experience working at Board level having worked as a Director and as Chief Executive in several Health and Social Care Trusts.

He is joined on the Board by: Maureen Brunt, Brian Ingram OBE, Jackie Johnston CBE, Bria Mongan OBE and Eileen Patterson, who have been reappointed for a second term. Also joining them will be new Board members: Kerry Anthony MBE, David Bowden, Ken Cameron, Denise Hunt BEM, Claire Keatinge, Maynard Mawhinney and Gemma McKeown.

Announcing the appointments, Justice Minister Naomi Long said: "I would like to welcome the new appointees to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and I have no doubt that they will make an important contribution supporting the PBNI in its crucial role in helping make communities safer.

"The Probation Board for Northern Ireland is involved at all stages of the criminal justice process working in courts, the community, in prisons and directly with victims of crime. Its contribution to reducing crime and reoffending along with the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals into the community cannot be underestimated.

"The PBNI helps to deliver a number of key justice priorities such as tackling domestic abuse and sexual and violent offending and implementing a trauma informed approach among others".

Read more about the new board on page 4

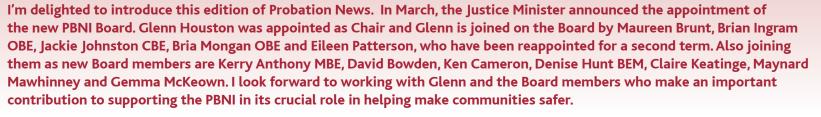


Probation Board Chair Glenn Houston along with Probation Chief Executive Amanda Stewart as he begins his term.





CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIARY



In this publication you will read about some of our work supervising community sentences. The new Programme for Government commits to strengthening the use of community sentencing and that is very welcome. Evidence shows that community sentencing can have much better outcomes than short prison sentences. The main reason why community sentences are more effective than short custodial sentences at reducing reoffending is that they allow people to retain contact with the support networks and services which help to address the factors contributing to offending such as family ties, jobs, housing, and childcare responsibilities, all factors which reduce the risk of reoffending. Community sentences are also demanding on the individual with many different requirements that must be fulfilled. As well as reducing offending community sentences can ease pressure on prison numbers and provide cost effective solutions to offending. However, in order to increase and strengthen the use of community sentencing we need to ensure greater sentencer and wider public confidence in their effectiveness and that is an area of work that we will continue to take forward.

In this edition of Probation News, you will find information about how Probation is contributing to tackling violence against women and girls.

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I sit on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Oversight Board which brings together all those with a role to play in helping effectively tackle violence against women. A key element in tackling violence against women and girls is challenging distorted, harmful and misogynistic thinking which we know can lead to violence. To help address this, PBNI provide a number of accredited offending behaviour programmes to help to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change and reduce risk. One of the programmes developed is the Promoting Positive Relationships Programme (PPRP). The aim of PPRP is to provide men who have demonstrated the potential to be abusive towards their partners with the opportunity to engage in an intervention programme aimed at developing knowledge and skills in which to develop healthy, non-abusive relationships. These men have not yet come before the courts and been convicted of a crime, so this is an example of an earlier intervention to keep people safe. Anne Weir, a PBNI Area Manager recently addressed a public meeting about the impact of our programmes in the Guildhall hosted by Mayor Councillor Lilian Seenoi-Barr.

Probation is committed to becoming trauma informed, and you can read about the work of our trauma implementation group.

The aim is to achieve compassionate, nurturing, relationship-based practice, and build strong, resilient, healthy, and productive people. Effective probation services are built on sustained and meaningful relationships and our work on trauma provides an opportunity to establish a stable and consistent workforce for the future and improve the services that we provide to the people we work with and create safer communities. We are continuing to work with our partners in the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland to drive forward our trauma informed work. Finally, you will read in this edition about our engagement with local universities as a key recruitment pathway for social work and other staff working with service users. This is an area we want to focus on in the coming year. We are working with universities to showcase the range of jobs available in Probation and the impact we can make on individuals, their families and the wider community.

We hope you enjoy Probation News and if you want to find out more please contact our **Communications Team**.

Amanda Stewart OBE
Chief Executive

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CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to have been entrusted by Naomi Long MLA, Minister of Justice, with the responsibility of chairing the Probation Board for the next three years. I want to thank Amanda Stewart and the Senior Management Team for the very warm welcome extended to me since taking up this role in March. Max Murray did an excellent job as the previous Chair and I hope to maintain and build on his legacy.

The new Board members met for the first time on 21 March. We had the opportunity to view an impressive video 'Changing Lives' in which service users talked about the impact of Probation in helping them make a new start, a powerful story board.

There are now 12 Board members plus the Chair. Our profiles are accessible on the PBNI website. We have a combined rich and diverse skill set, coupled with a mix of relevant experience. I am pleased that the new Board consists of some former and some new members. This brings much needed continuity and helps to retain corporate memory. I am confident that the Board will be highly engaged in providing strategic leadership, supporting and encouraging the workforce and in bringing the challenge function when needed.

As well as the full Board, we discharge our governance responsibilities via a Committee Structure, including an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Policy and Practice Committee and Corporate Resources Committee. Our first formal Board meeting is scheduled for 10 April.

I have always known that Probation provides a crucial role in supporting service users.

Not surprisingly, I have been hearing about the excellent work that takes place in the community, in courts and prisons and with victims of crime. Over the coming weeks I look forward to meeting staff who are directly involved in service delivery.

During March, I held a series of conversations with the Chief Executive and with other members of the Senior Management Team.

These conversations have provided important background information about the issues impacting on the probation service. These conversations will continue during April and May.

As part of the corporate induction, Board members will be invited to participate in visits to front line services over the course of the year.

My first impressions are of a public authority with a clear mission and purpose, with a robust governance and leadership framework, making a real difference to the people with whom we have contact.

I am a qualified social worker and have had a long career in health and social care in Northern Ireland. Previous roles include Chief Executive of the legacy Craigavon and Banbridge Community Trust and as CEO of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA). My professional background and my more recent experiences on Boards will be relevant to this new role. I have held public appointments in Northern Ireland and in the wider UK context. Two appointments have a direct connection to Justice, namely the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland (PPSNI). For the past seven years I have also led the Board of the Jersey Care Commission (JCC). Going forward I intend to concentrate my time and efforts on the Probation Board.

I have already been apprised of the importance of Trauma Informed Practice in underpinning the work of Probation. I have heard too about other pioneering initiatives supporting individuals who have been referred to Probation. I am looking forward over the coming months to getting out and about to increase my knowledge and understanding of the work, and I also look forward to meeting in person with service users, staff and other key partners that we work with to support safer communities.

Glenn Houston

Board Chair



NEW PROBATION BOARD CONSTITUTED

On 14th March, Justice Minister Naomi Long announced the newly appointed members to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

The Probation Board is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Department of Justice (DoJ). It is responsible for securing the maintenance of the probation service and determining the policies and strategic direction required for its delivery. Within this governance framework it also monitors and provides assurances of the service's performance against the Corporate Plan and the supporting annual Business Plan objectives.

THE BOARD

Glenn Houston was appointed as Chair to the Board.

BOARD MEMBERS

Kerry Anthony MBE

David Bowden

Maureen Brunt

Ken Cameron

Denise Hunt BEM

Brian Ingram OBE

Jackie Johnston CBE

Claire Keatinge

Maynard Mawhinney

Gemma McKeown

Bria Mongan OBE

Eileen Patterson



The newly constituted Probation Board has held its first meeting. Chaired by Glenn Houston, the meeting also had Chief Executive Amanda Stewart and Senior Management in attendance.



COMMUNITY SERVICE HELPING GIVE BACK TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Everything Probation does is about reducing reoffending. Reoffending can be reduced through rigorous sentences served in the community. With the right investment, community sentences can succeed where short prison sentences fail. Reoffending information shows that the rate of reoffending for adult offenders sentenced to a community order was nearly half that of adult offenders subject to a custodial sentence of less than 12 months.

Whilst we can't directly compare, the latest figures (those sentenced/released in 2021-22) show 53% of adults released from custody (having served less than 12 months) reoffended whereas this was much less for adults on a community sentence.

A key reason why community sentences are more effective than short custodial sentences at reducing reoffending is that they allow people to retain contact with the support networks and services which can help to address the factors contributing to their offending.

This includes maintenance of family ties, jobs, housing, and childcare responsibilities, all factors which reduce the risk of reoffending.

They are also demanding on the offender, with many different requirements that must be fulfilled. Community sentences involve both positive requirements that provide support to individuals and prohibitive requirements for example living in approved accommodation or being subject to electronic monitoring. All of which reduces the risk of reoffending.

ENHANCED COMBINATION ORDER AN AITERNATIVE TO SHORT PRISON SENTENCES

This year, in a welcome development, we have received funding from the **Department of Justice** to enable us to renew and expand the delivery of **Enhanced** Combination Orders (ECOs), which are a community alternative to short prison sentences.

ECO's have been evaluated and shown to be **effective** in reducing reoffending and reducing the number of prison sentences. This year's funding means we can renew our delivery of this successful community sentence within Courts in Downpatrick, Ards, Newry, Armagh and the North-West.

Importantly, the extra funding will also allow for expansion of ECO's into the North Antrim area, that is, Courts sitting in Antrim, Ballymena and Coleraine.

The first ECO in this area will be available to the judiciary from 1 June, and prior to that there will be planning and engagement with all relevant stakeholders, along with recruitment, to enable this to take place.

We know that with the right investment, intensive community sentences can succeed where short prison sentences fail.

As well as reducing offending, they can ease pressure on prison places and are value for money. ECOs are an important and effective community sentence which can help reduce offending and keep communities safer. They provide positive outcomes for individuals, their families and wider society.



Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr Micky Murray, met Annadale Allotments committee members along with Probation's Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery, Assistant Director Emer Loughran, Community Service Supervisor Paul Best and South Belfast Area Manager Liz Walker to see the results of Community Service. The Lord Mayor said: "When we partnered up with Probation to help bring Annadale Allotments back to its former glory I don't think anyone could have imagined the transformation."



COMMUNITY SERVICE HELPING GIVE BACK TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Community Service is one of the most successful court sentences in terms of preventing reoffending. Three out of four people who complete community service do not reoffend within one year.

Some examples of community service work are environmental and conservation projects, painting and decorating, contributing to community clean-ups, working in animal shelters or assisting disabled people. The Community Service sentence enables pay back to the community for the harm that has been caused. The work is either under the guidance of our supervisor or staff in the host organisation.

This sentence requires a person under supervision to do unpaid work in the community that lasts between 40 hours and 240 hours.

Read the Community Service Order leaflet to find out more.

Anyone sentenced to a Community Service Order, a Combination Order or an Enhanced Combination Order will do a certain number of hours of unpaid work. Anyone can also suggest a possible Community Service project to be carried out. Read more about Community Service projects and placements and how to suggest a project.



Justice Minister Naomi Long visited Mullaghmore and Castleview Community Resource Centre (MACCA) in Omagh.

MACCA is a longstanding Probation partner and the facility includes a community garden and safe play area. There are also allotments for Men's Shed, conservation volunteers and local college groups.

The Minister said: "Community service is a practical and visible way for people who have offended to give back, learn new skills and become rehabilitated within the local community."

Our Community Service squads have begun the clean up at the Blue Bridge in Lisburn. With ongoing safety concerns and the bridge looking worse for wear, it is hoped the cleanup will begin to rejuvenate the area and help increase safety for local people. We were delighted to have Robbie Butler MLA drop by to see the cleanup begin.

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

"I would just like to pass on my sincere thanks to you and the guys for sorting everything out at the club. Please pass on my thanks to the guys involved"

From a representative at Dundela Football Club

"Many thanks to you and the team for all your hard work. Much Appreciated."

From a tenant at Annadale Allotments after Community Service helped tidy up her plot after Storm Eowyn





STABLE ACCOMMODATION HELPS REDUCE REOFFENDING

Accommodation and housing is an issue that impacts the work of PBNI, with accommodation for service users a critical factor in reducing reoffending and overall desistance. Housing has also been outlined in the Programme for Government as one of its nine priority areas.



Having a place to stay is something many of us take for granted. However, many service users have difficulty accessing appropriate and sustainable accommodation. Many lead complex and chaotic lives with mental health issues along with addiction issues and find it difficult to begin to find routine in their lives. Their journey to rehabilitation can be even more difficult if they do not have a place to stay.

A range of research has shown that there is a link between stable and sustainable accommodation for people who have offended and preventing reoffending. Housing has been identified as one of the key factors that can reduce reoffending, by as much as 20%.

Evidence shows there is a much lower rate of reconviction of people while they are living in approved premises (3.1%) than for those who accessed mainstream accommodation services (36.6%).

Probation's Assistant Director Liz Arthur recently attended a meeting of Derry City and Strabane District Council alongside our partners in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to talk about the importance of approved accommodation. Approved accommodation plays a fundamental part in public protection and child protection as it enables us to more rigorously supervise people in the community. All residents in approved accommodation are supervised by PBNI, managed in accordance with our Practice Standards, and are staffed 24 hours a day.

At the Council Meeting, Cllr Christopher Jackson said "We recognise the link between people that are not able to achieve stable accommodation and those people that offend. I do recognise the fantastic work that does happen in Bond's Hill"

Our accommodation working group meeting at Clifton House to discuss how to tackle the issue of homelessness amongst **Probation Service Users.** It is well researched that having access to appropriate and sustainable housing is a key factor in preventing reoffending and our working group is looking at innovative ways to support service users.



PROBATION HELPING TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



Tackling violence against women and girls is a key priority for Probation. We are committed to tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence and do so through a range of partnerships including the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland which is a partnership involving Police, Probation, Health Trusts, Prison Service, NSPCC and others.

Our staff also carry out work to challenge and tackle misogynistic and distorted thinking. For example, through our Promoting Positive Relationships Programme (PPRP) we work with men who have demonstrated the potential to be abusive towards their partners. These men have not yet come before the courts and been convicted of a crime, so this is an example of early intervention in the truest sense. Men are referred into the programme from Social Services because concerns have been raised within a healthcare setting about their behaviour.

This programme focuses on providing the participants with a range of cognitive and behavioural skills and tools that supports and promotes the use of positive behaviours in their intimate relationships. For example, the attendees get a thorough understanding of what constitutes abusive behaviour, its impacts on victims, families and children. The attendees are educated on how to develop non-abusive, healthy relationships and the impact of domestic abuse on children.

An essential component of this programme is the role of the Partner Support Worker (PSW) who supports the partner and/or ex-partners of the man attending the intervention. They ensure the safety of the victim, whether women or children, and aim to help them put in place ways to prevent further abusive behaviour.

Many of our staff have also been trained in Professor Jane Monckton-Smith's homicide timeline training which is based on her ground-breaking research on coercive relationships and detectable signs that lead to domestic abuse and homicide.

Our partnerships with organisations including Women's Aid are critical as we continue our work in this area and ensure our staff are trained and have the right skills to tackle this heinous crime.

Chief Executive Amanda Stewart sits on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Oversight Board and our Director of Operations attends EVAWG Programme Board. Over the coming months there will be a continued focus on this important area of our work.

Area Manager Anne Weir was invited to talk about Probations' role in ending violence against women and girls organised through the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Councillor Lilian Seenoi-Barr.

This event was in response to an increase in attacks on women and girls in the North West and Probation was honoured to take part to present how Probation is working for safer communities and to keep women and girls safe.



Probation North West Area Manager Anne Weir with other statutory colleagues and Derry City and Strabane District Council, Cllr Lilian Seenoi-Barr

PROBATION ATTENDS LORD MAYOR'S INSTALLATION DINNER



Probation Board for Northern Ireland Chief Executive Amanda Stewart and staff were delighted to attend the installation dinner for Belfast Lord Mayor Councillor Micky Murray.

Over the past year the Lord Mayor has supported a range of community initiatives that Probation is involved in a community service project in the Braille Unit in the city centre and Annadale allotments.

The Lord Mayor paid tribute to the role Probation plays in making Belfast a safer place to live and work.

SOCIAL WORK AT THE CORE OF PROBATION

March marked World Social Work Day and provided an opportunity for Probation to highlight its role as a social work organisation. At the end of the month it was great to see social workers in Northern Ireland recognised through the annual Regional Social Work Awards 2025, hosted this year by Western Health and Social Care Trust. Our Chief Executive Amanda Stewart was one of the judges for this year's awards.



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BECOMING A TRAUMA INFORMED ORGANISATION WILL HELP BUILD STRONG, RESILIENT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Probation is on the journey of becoming a Trauma Informed organisation and has been working with Trauma Informed Oregon to guide the organisation. Taking a Trauma Informed approach is important for both staff and the people Probation comes into contact with. This approach has become increasingly cited in policy and adopted in practice as a means for reducing the negative impact of trauma experiences and supporting mental and physical health outcomes.

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as harmful or life threatening. While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

The aim is to achieve a compassionate, nurturing, relationship-based practice, and to build strong, resilient, healthy, and productive communities.

PROBATION RECOGNISED FOR TAKING A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH

The <u>Safeguarding Board NI</u> held an event "Systems to Support our People – Embedding a Trauma Informed Approach" in the Stormont Hotel. Principal Psychologist Michael McCracken was delighted to be asked to present to attendees on Probation's own Trauma Informed Approach.

In addition, Chief Executive Amanda Stewart and Principal Psychologist Michael McCracken picked up two prestigious awards at the Safeguarding Board NI Recognition and Celebration Event. Amanda was presented with the coveted 'Leadership Award' for her visionary, empathetic and passionate approach to embedding Trauma Informed principles in the organisation.

Amanda and Michael were also delighted to receive the award for 'Continuous Improvement' which was presented to the wider organisation. This award is in recognition of Probation's commitment to developing a shared language for and an understanding of a Trauma Informed Approach.



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Probation is working with universities to promote job opportunities within the organisation and explain the aim of our work, which is helping to change lives to create safer communities.

In February the Head of Communications alongside a representative from the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) held a focus group with newly recruited staff in the organisation. They all said it was important that Probation continue and enhance its partnership with our local universities to make people aware of the great career opportunities available.

We have linked with Ulster University and visited their Magee Campus to meet with students on the social work and criminology courses.

Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery and Emma Richmond took over Dr Campbell Killick's lecture at the School of Applied Social and Policy Science on 18 March, where they talked about the practice of risk assessment and its contribution to desistance. The social work students also had the opportunity to ask questions of Assessed Year in Employment Probation officers Jenna Chesters, Karen McConville and Rachel McCloskey at the lecture.

Emma Richmond was also invited on the same day by Dr Michelle Rouse, lecturer at Magee to deliver a guest lecture for the Criminology and Criminal Justice Programme – Sentencing and Punishment module.

Emma's lecture focussed on providing a link between the theory underpinning sentencing options and PBNI's involvement in considering the custodial and community based sentences available to the judiciary when sentencing. We also linked with Queen's University Belfast who promoted our social work roles on their social media channels.

It was also fantastic to see one of our Probation Officers Rory Mills, featured by NI Social Care Council during World Social Work Day, explaining how rewarding his career in PBNI has been. He talked about the skills and characteristics needed to be a good Probation officer including empathy and believing in people's capacity to change.

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CHANGING

LIVES

FOR SAFER

COMMUNITIES



A CAREER IN PROBATION

Probation attends numerous career fairs and employability fairs throughout the year, at Queen's University and Ulster University. Each time our staff find themselves very busy fielding questions from interested students, especially those studying Social Work.

Being a Probation Officer is a great career path for social work graduates. As all our Probation Officers must be Social Work Qualified and registered with Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

There are also many positions within Probation that do not need social work qualifications. Probation Service Officers and Community Service Supervisors contribute to changing lives for safer communities alongside Probation Officers. Probation also has positions on the corporate side that are vital in supporting operational staff in their duties.

Everybody works together to ensure service users are given the chance to make amends, that victims of crime are supported with empathy and the public are protected.

VACANCIES IN PROBATION!

An opportunity to change lives for safer communities

We have current vacancies open for Probation Officers and for Probation Officers (Assessed Year in Employment).

Probation Officers have responsibility for the management of individual service users in the community and in prison. Seeking to reintegrate service users into the community through effective assessment and supervision, thereby reducing reoffending and contributing to public protection.

Probation Officers who have already completed their assessed year in employment (AYE) begin on Band 8 between £37.035 to £43.693.

We are also seeking social work qualified graduates to join us as a Probation Officer for their Assessed Year in Employment. You begin on Band 6 which is £36,124.

We have offices throughout Northern Ireland, based in the communities we work with.

Joining Probation can give a wide variety of opportunities with different challenges every day to give you a rewarding and fulfilling career.





CONTACT PROBATION AT

PROBATION HEADQUARTERS

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 028 9052 2522

 Communications Unit
 028 9052 2522

VICTIM INFORMATION UNIT

80/90 North St, Belfast BT1 1LD 0300 123 3269

AREA TEAMS

West Belfast and Lisburn		North Antrim
Glenshane House, 202a Andersonstown Road, Belfast, BT11 9EA	028 9030 6630	3 Wellington Court, B
Unit 4, Wallace Studios, 27 Wallace Avenue, Lisburn, BT27 4AE	028 9262 3456	19/20 The Diamond, 0
North Belfast and South East Antrim		Rural South
171 – 179 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GE	028 9034 7474	1d Monaghan Street,
South and East Belfast		12 Church Street, Por
297 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1AG	028 9052 6655	
330 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 2GE	028 9054 1444	Rural West
Down and Ards		Sperrin Centre, 1 Mar
15 Castle Street, Newtownards, BT23 3PA	028 9185 8282	Cathcart Square, 14 D
Downshire Civic Centre, Ardglass Road, Downpatrick, BT30 6RA	028 4461 8281	Rural Mid Ulster
North West		9 Kirk Avenue, Maghe
25 Shipquay Street, Londonderry, BT48 6DL	028 7131 9670	25 College Street, Arn

North Antrim	
3 Wellington Court, Ballymena, BT43 6EQ	028 2566 2345
19/20 The Diamond, Coleraine, BT52 2DN	028 7034 6880
Rural South	
1d Monaghan Street, Newry, BT35 6BB	028 3025 3030
12 Church Street, Portadown, BT62 3LQ	028 3839 7575
Rural West	
Sperrin Centre, 1 Market Street, Omagh, BT78 1EE	028 8225 4872
Cathcart Square, 14 Dublin Road, Enniskillen, BT74 6HH	028 6634 3345
Rural Mid Ulster	
9 Kirk Avenue, Magherafelt, BT45 6BT	028 7930 2115
25 College Street, Armagh, BT61 9BT	028 3752 9876



PROBATION MATTERS PODCAST

Probation publish Podcasts to raise awareness and understanding of the work we do supervising community sentences to change lives for safer communities.

Each podcast examines different areas of our work in Courts, Communities, Custody and with Victims of Crime.



