

# PROBATION NEWS

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**WELCOME** to the thirteenth 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 CHIEF EXECUTIVE TAKES UP POST

**Amanda Stewart, Probation's new Chief Executive, officially took up her role on Monday 4th October. Speaking on her first day, Amanda said: "I am delighted to take up this post with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. Probation is a really innovative and creative organisation carrying out a really valuable role, changing lives for safer communities."**

Board Chair, Dale Ashford QFSM added: "Amanda brings a wealth of experience to Probation having worked within the Criminal Justice system for over 20 years. The value she places on partnership working and engagement across the Justice sector will greatly assist Probation to deliver on its strategic priorities. Our partnership work is central to everything we do and I look forward to Amanda leading on further developing partnerships across Justice and with the Voluntary and Community sectors to help us rehabilitate and resettle people who have offended."

Justice Minister Naomi Long MLA also welcomed Amanda's appointment saying: "Probation is an organisation that is involved at all stages of the Criminal Justice process. It delivers a number of Justice priorities including tackling domestic abuse, tackling sexual and violent offences and implementing Problem Solving Justice initiatives. Amanda's experience and leadership will enable the organisation to continue its critical role of changing lives for safer communities."



Amanda Stewart, Chief Executive, meeting with Naomi Long MLA, Minister for Justice, and Dale Ashford QFSM, Board Chair.





# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIARY

Welcome to this edition of Probation News. I am now almost two months in post and throughout these first weeks my focus has been on meeting as many staff as possible and listening to their experiences. I have to say I am incredibly impressed by the passion, enthusiasm and professionalism of Probation staff. I feel very lucky and privileged to be working with and leading an organisation with such dedicated staff at all levels.

In October the Board held a 'Development Day' where senior managers and Board members came together to look at our priorities for the future. Going forward one of my main priorities will be developing our relationships and partnerships within and beyond probation.

My immediate focus will be on developing relationships with our statutory partners particularly prisons, police and youth justice and with the Department of Justice. We are fortunate to have well established links with the voluntary and community sectors which I look forward to continuing. Indeed it is these partnerships, particularly in local communities which enable us to support and assist people who have offended to become rehabilitated and resettled.

Our cross border partnerships are also critical and I am delighted to be attending the CEP (Confederation of European Probation) conference for Directors General of Probation Services in Europe later this month. As joint Chair of the PPAG (Public Protection Advisory Group) alongside Director of Probation in Ireland Mark Wilson, I am also pleased to be hosting the 12th PPAG seminar in Parliament Buildings on the 26 November. It is important that we learn from the experience of other jurisdictions and share best practice.

It is equally important that we send out a clear message to those who would seek to exploit our borders that we have systems in place to protect the public and keep communities across these islands safer.

Within PBNI all Probation Officers are social workers. It is therefore important for us to have continued links with professional social work bodies including the NI Social Care Council and the NI branch of the British Association of Social Work. There are issues with the workforce supply of trained social workers which is not unique to Probation and we are keen to work collaboratively to look at solutions and ensure we can attract, nurture and retain talent within the organisation.

A challenge for all public services in the future is around budgetary constraints and resources. For Probation the challenge is in terms of how we invest and transform the organisation but also, in terms of how we invest in services earlier to prevent problems and making sure they are allocated where they can be most effective.

Over the coming months I look forward to meeting with partners and continuing to build the important links in all areas of Northern Ireland that enable us to change lives for safer communities.

**Amanda Stewart**  
Chief Executive





## WELCOME BY CHAIR

**I am delighted that our new Chief Executive Amanda Stewart has now taken up post. Since October she has been working closely with the Board to develop our organisational priorities and plans for the future.**

We held a Board Development Day in October to look at the opportunities and challenges for the future. It was a pleasure to have Dr Julie Harrison from the Department of Justice in attendance to give us an overview of the Department's Corporate priorities. In 2022 the Board will commence the consultation process for our new Corporate Plan and we will be engaging fully with partners in that consultation process.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on Probation as it has all public services. I was delighted to welcome the Justice Minister, Naomi Long MLA, to Probation's Headquarters recently to talk to staff who had been at the front line of service delivery during the pandemic.

The Minister paid tribute to staff who have worked throughout the last 20 months helping some of the most vulnerable people in society.

As we move forward PBNI is well positioned to continue its role working in courts, in the community, in custody and with victims of crime. There are challenges ahead but I have no doubt that Probation staff ably led by our new Chief Executive will meet those challenges and continue to deliver safer communities for all.

**Dale Ashford QFSM**  
Board Chair

# PBNI Values our foundation of our work

Probation has four organisational values that are the foundations of our everyday actions within Probation.

These values are:

- **RESPECT**  
We will treat everyone with respect and dignity at all times and value diversity and differing viewpoints.
- **INTEGRITY**  
We will act in a way that engenders trust with all. We will be honest in what we say and do.
- **OPENNESS**  
We will encourage people to speak up and make suggestions about practice and we will be open about our decision making.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY**  
We will be accountable for our decisions and actions.

These values outline how members of the public, service users and staff can expect to be treated when engaging with PBNI and are central to helping us build a culture within Probation that is inclusive, respectful, where everyone can speak up and make suggestions and where we all seek to continually learn and improve.



## Our Values

### Respect

We will treat everyone with respect and dignity at all times and value diversity and differing viewpoints.

### Integrity

We will act in a way that engenders trust with all. We will be honest in what we say and do.

### Openness

We will encourage people to speak up and make suggestions about practice and we will be open about our decision making.

### Accountability

We will be accountable for our decisions and actions.



## Justice Minister visits Probation

Probation was delighted to host a visit by Naomi Long MLA, Justice Minister, to our Headquarters in Belfast to celebrate Hidden Heroes Day in September and recognise the work of Probation staff throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dale Ashford QFSM, Board Chair welcomed the Minister to Probation Headquarters. The Minister took time to speak to frontline staff including, Emer Loughran, Brendan Campbell, Lisa Wilson, Karen Andrews and Dr Twylla Cunningham about the delivery of probation services and how we adapted our approach to continue to deliver services during the pandemic. Along with staff, the Minister also met Probation's Chief Executive Amanda Stewart, Director of Operations Gillian Montgomery, and Director of Rehabilitation Dr Geraldine O'Hare.



# Lisburn and Castlereagh Mayor meets with Probation

Alderman Stephen Martin, Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council along with the Council Chief Executive, David Burns, recently met Gillian Montgomery, Director of Operations; Aideen McLaughlin, Assistant Director; Lorraine McKenna, Area Manager; and Andrina Landa, Community Service Supervisor, to talk about the Community Service projects that have been going on in partnership with the Council and local community groups.

The Mayor also had the chance to meet with Service Users who had been making birdboxes for the Council and the RSPB to distribute to local residents. The Mayor commented on Twitter: "Brilliant meeting you all today especially the Service Users trying their hand at new skills while giving back to their local community. Wherever possible there should always be a path forward for everyone prepared to work at it."



## Probation visits the Lord Mayor's Parlour

Probation was recently invited by the Lord Mayor, Cllr Kate Nicholl, to meet with her in the Lord Mayor's Parlour along with some of our Service Users to listen to the work they have undertaken upon release from custody. Cllr Nicholl is particularly interested in using her term as Lord Mayor to raise awareness of important issues relating to people in the city who have complex needs.

Along with three Service Users, Gillian Montgomery, Director of Operations; Aideen McLaughlin, Assistant Director; and Aidan Malone, Probation Service Officer had the pleasure to meet the Lord Mayor in her Parlour and talk about the programmes and interventions provided to address addiction and poor mental health. Service users also talked about the challenges of securing accommodation and the importance of structure and daily routines in their lives.



# Feedback and Thanks



Dear Johnny,

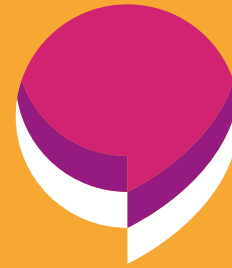
*I am glad of the opportunity to thank the probation service for the amazing work your groups have been doing here at Omagh Riding for the Disabled. They came into a building showing 40 years of hard work and deterioration and have transformed it into a bright, clean and safe place. They have painted rooms and arenas, power washed and cleaned everywhere, repaired fences and woodwork, strimmed the grass and weeds everywhere all summer leaving the external areas, smart and well cared for.*

*Arthur and his workers have saved us a lot of expense in helping us with the taking down and rebuilding of the old stables, which are now incorporated into the new stable block. They have hung new gates in the stable/arena area. This block was built with grants from Peace IV and the local council, which unfortunately did not cover the whole cost. With the building being closed for a long time due to covid restrictions we have had very little money coming in. Thanks to your team we are now reopened with our premises looking better than it has for many years.*

*We can't thank the service enough for allowing us to be part of your programme. We will be putting out some publicity through the local papers and RDA magazine to celebrate the new building. We will with your permission thank the Probation board and the workers for a great job, well done.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Gwen Garret, Group Trustee, RDA Omagh*



## Victim Information Schemes

# Helping Victims get the Information they need

**Victims of crime have told us that timely and accurate information and communication are key to meeting their needs. There are three information schemes that can provide information to registered victims.**

Probation's Victim Information Scheme (VIS) provides information to registered victims about what it means when someone is sentenced to a Court Order which requires supervision by Probation.

The Prisoner Information Scheme (PRVIS) is available to any person who has been the victim of a crime which has resulted in an offender being sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

The Mentally Disordered Victim Scheme offers victims of mentally disordered offenders the opportunity to let their voice be heard when considering applications for leave of absence or for the discharge of mentally disordered offenders.

## WORKING TO KEEP THE PUBLIC SAFE



By Liz Arthur, Assistant Director

**Sharing of information and close inter-agency working is absolutely vital in the area of public protection. Probation's Assistant Director for Risk Liz Arthur outlines some of the work undertaken during the pandemic and explains why good communication and sharing of information is more important than ever.**

Probation has continued to work throughout the pandemic with our partners in police, prisons and health trusts to assess and manage those people who have been convicted of violent and sexual offences. Indeed there has been increased liaison with partner organisations - for example with the police, hostel staff and social services to verify the circumstances of high-risk service users and share information more regularly. Throughout the last 20 months our priority has been preventing people becoming victims of crime.

The use of technology has been really important in our work.

It enabled us to keep in touch with partners in the early days of Government restrictions and ensure that multi-agency meetings could continue using video technology.

We know that there has been an increase in reported incidents of domestic abuse during the pandemic and PBNI updated its operational guidance to reflect this. Partner organisations recently held a public protection seminar to look at learning in relation to domestic abuse cases.

As we move forward we will continue to prioritise public protection.

## PROBATION HAS LAUNCHED ITS NEW 'RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICE FRAMEWORK'



By Aideen McLaughlin, Assistant Director

**Our new 'Restorative Justice Practice Framework' sets out our ambition to be the leading organisation for the delivery of restorative practices for adults at all stages of the criminal justice system.**

Through the framework, we aim to ensure that all staff keep the victim at the heart of its practice. Ultimately the objective is to have all operational staff throughout the organisation delivering restorative practices where it is appropriate to do so. That will ensure that restorative practice is at the heart of our work.

PBNI is also developing new systems to record the number of restorative interventions being delivered and the outcomes for both victims and those who have offended. It is critical that we are able to measure and evidence the impact and difference that restorative practice makes to people's lives. Existing working relationships and partnerships with community organisations such as NI Alternatives and Community Restorative Justice Ireland will continue to be developed to expand delivery of restorative practices within communities.

Community service is one of the areas of PBNI's work where restorative practice is most visible, enabling those who have caused harm to put something back into their community and make reparation for their actions. There are also plans to develop victim panels, where the direct victim of crime does not wish to be involved, the perpetrator of the crime will have an opportunity to meet with a nominated individual who will represent the views of the victim.

Probation is committed to progressing restorative practice and put victims at the heart of the criminal justice process to ensure their views are heard. The Restorative Justice Practice Framework will help achieve that. The Probation Victim Information Scheme is available to any person (or agreed representative) who has been the direct victim of a criminal offence for which the offender received a Probation Supervised Sentence.



**Kerri O'Neill, Intensive Supervision Unit Area Manager, and her team have continued delivering essential public protection services throughout the pandemic.**



# PROBATION FUNDED PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

By Stephen Hamilton, Assistant Director

**Partner organisations funded by Probation have successfully continued delivery of their services throughout the pandemic. Our main funded partners delivering services to service users are:**

- NIACRO (Aspire Project; Working Well and Transitions)
- ASCERT (Addiction/mental health urgent interventions)
- CRJI, NI Alternatives and Barnardo's (under the ECO project).
- Start 360 (Services to women; and Protect Life)

During the pandemic, Community and Voluntary sector services have been delivered remotely, albeit with provision for partners to attend offices when needed under certain circumstances.

This has worked well, and we recognize that it is vital that relationships with both sets of staff continue to develop and grow.

For this reason, Probation has been encouraging partners from the Community and Voluntary sector to deliver services face to face in Probation premises where facilities, space and public health precautions allow. This has all had a positive impact on Service Users.

A Service User reflecting on their time with Ascert during the pandemic said: "knowing I have someone to turn to, when it seems like everyone has gone away, helps me through". Their Ascertain worker added: "This particular Service User had felt disassociated with services due to Covid, the waiting times and a lack of accessibility. They valued the regular support and consistency that Rapid Response Referral Addiction Service (RRRAS) sessions provided during a lonely time when risk of relapse was at a high level."

The worker also highlighted their positive experiences of partnership working with Probation: "Thankfully the majority of my experiences with Probation Officers have resulted

in brilliant collaboration between us both which has really benefited the client. An example of this would be sharing knowledge in relation to signposting. Mutual respect for one another has helped the working relationship especially when we felt isolated, knowing that you could simply lift the phone and access a Probation Officer was fantastic throughout the pandemic".

A staff member from NIACRO said "At the start of lockdown I had concerns about how Working Well would be able to achieve targets and goals and provide a quality service/experience for our Service Users. It was only achievable by the continued referrals, support and understanding of Probation. Good relationships and communication with Area Managers and Probation Officers contributed to our ongoing success. Staff in the team were able to build relationships with Probation Service Officers and Community Service Officers too and provide our employability service to those on Community Service Orders which is now embedded into Working Well"

Another NIACRO staff member said "Working through the pandemic has been a challenge for us

adapting to new ways of delivering Working Well. However, a great support for me was knowing that I always had Probation Officers and Community Service Officers at the end of an email or phone call to check in with them in relation to Service User progress. The strong relationships we have built allow us to work together for the best interests of the individuals we support whilst helping them to develop their employability"

The importance of the partnership approach between Probation and Voluntary/Community organisations was underlined by a Service User, who said "My Employment Officer went to great extremes for me to get to where I am today and has been a major part of my transformation and I can't thank them enough for the inspiration they have brought to me during this pandemic. I will never forget this journey. It is priceless and no doubt life changing."

To conclude, I would like to thank our partners for their ongoing support and collaboration, which is so important to support our work. It will be great to see them in person, as circumstances permit, in the coming months.





# HOW ENHANCED COMBINATION ORDERS WORK TO CHANGE LIVES

By Jill Grant, Assistant Director

Short term prison sentences can have an adverse impact on family relationships, employment and housing. They are also unable to facilitate the time needed to address mental health issues and addictions. In response, Probation developed a demanding community sentence as an alternative to short prison sentences (12 months or less). Based on existing legislation and known as the Enhanced Combination Order (ECO), ECOs offer Courts a community based sentencing option in a more intensive format. It is currently available in three Court areas.



ECOs focus on targeted interventions, restorative practice, desistance and victims' work, with service users also required to complete unpaid work within their local communities (Community Service). Crucially, every person subject to an ECO is assessed by PBNI psychologists, with those who need it receiving a bespoke mental health intervention. Where appropriate parenting/ family support work and accredited programmes are also part of the order.

ECOs use a multiagency approach and PBNI have developed partnerships with a range of organisations including Barnardos, Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) and NI Alternatives. As well as Probation Officers (POs), ECOs involve Probation Service Officers (PSOs), Community Service Officers and PBNI Psychologists.

# IRISH PROBATION JOURNAL TURNS 18

By Gail McGreevy, Head of Communications

This year sees the publication of the 18th edition of the Irish Probation Journal (IPJ), a joint initiative of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Irish Probation Service.

First published in 2003, the journal has a readership across the world and regularly contains articles from international contributors both in practice and in academia. It is also 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.

Articles in this year's Journal cover themes such as mental health, UK sentencing policy, electronic monitoring, the contribution of the Community and Voluntary sector, trauma informed practice, substance misuse, social enterprise's contribution to employability, violent offenders, reintegration, restorative practice, 'money mules', prolific offenders, along with 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.

# REHABILITATION THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE



By Niall McEvoy, Assistant Director

Community Service is one of the most successful court sentences in terms of preventing re-offending. Three out of four people who complete community service do not re-offend within one year. Niall McEvoy, Assistant Director, explains:

The work Service Users on a Community Service sentence do and the supervision we provide helps challenge their behaviours while they pay back for the harm they have caused the community in a direct, visible, and meaningful way. For some it gives them a structure they have not had before, for others it allows them to learn a new skill, but for all it provides an opportunity for them to accept what they have done while doing good in the community.



Service User on Community Service

*"Before starting community service I was very nervous about being around a lot of people I didn't know and doing things I hadn't really been interested in before. This all changed after a short time as I was made to feel welcomed, I learned new skills about gardening, using equipment and gained knowledge about various plants, weeds and shrubs. It helped me form a new routine and has given me motivation to help landscape my girlfriend's garden. Once my community service has ended I will continue to seek employment work on developing a better routine and habits."*



Service User on Community Service

*"On being sentenced to 80 hours community service, I wasn't sure what to expect. To be honest I imagined that it would be a pointless exercise and waste of time. On making contact with my officer, I realised that it was a lot more organised than I thought. She asked me many questions regarding my abilities and interest. I was placed at a church where the grounds needed tending. The jobs were, grass cutting, strimming, gardening and also some inside work when it was raining. The supervision was extremely friendly, kind and had a good sense of humour. The people at the church were friendly and appreciated the work we were doing. There was a lot of things that required strength, like heavy lifting and jobs that took a long time like grass cutting. It was obvious that they really needed help. So I found my experience rewarding. It wasn't pointless and we even had a lunch on my last day. I was proud of the work we did and I was pleased with the experience."*



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for Northern Ireland



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