

# WHITE PAPER ON CRIME

Discussion Document No. 1

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## Crime Prevention and Community Safety



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM  
AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT, COMHIONANNAIS AGUS ATHCHÓIRITHE DLÍ

## **ABOUT THE WHITE PAPER PROCESS - ROLE OF DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS**

A White Paper provides a high level statement of Government policy, its rationale and the strategies to give effect to that policy. Development of the White Paper on Crime will involve an end-to-end examination of the prevention, intervention and enforcement strategies to combat crime.

A series of discussion documents on key issues will provide structure for consultation during this process. Each document will include a general, non-specialist overview of the issue in question, together with a number of questions to assist in shaping discussion and feedback. This is the first of these documents.

Comments need not be limited to these specific questions and can be submitted by post or email to:

White Paper on Crime Unit,  
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform,  
94 St. Stephen's Green,  
Dublin 2.

whitepaperoncrime@justice.ie

Submissions on this document should be made **before the end of November, 2009.**

*If making a submission, please state if the views expressed are personal or are being made on behalf of an organisation. If views of an organisation are being submitted, it should be made clear which organisation is being represented.*

*Submissions may be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts and may be published. Please indicate if you would prefer your submission to remain confidential.*

## Crime in Ireland

In order to provide some background to the issues raised in this discussion document, Appendix 1 includes data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on recorded crime in Ireland between 2003 and 2008. The CSO is responsible for compiling and publishing Irish crime statistics based on data recorded in the Garda PULSE system. From 2003 a new Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS) has been applied to Garda statistics.

Some, but not all, of the different types of crime have increased during this period but within these overall trends there are further variations from year to year. Changes in recorded crime can be influenced by several factors, including criminal behaviour, police activity and legislative changes.

While statistics generated from Garda records provide valuable information about crime levels and trends, public crime surveys are used in many countries to complement police statistics. In Ireland, the CSO has included questions on crime and victimisation in the Quarterly National Household Survey on three occasions (1998, 2003 and 2006). These surveys show that the number of victims of selected crimes increased from 2.4% in 1998 to 5.2% in 2003 but fell back to 4.6% in 2006.

The discussion which follows is not based on a particular view of the precise level of crime in Ireland or on the direction of crime trends. It simply takes as its starting point the existence of crime as a cause of harm in our society which directly affects many tens of thousands people annually. While the level of crime in Ireland may be lower than in some other countries, the effects on individual victims can be significant and long-lasting.

# Introduction

The old saying that ‘prevention is better than cure’ is often applied to the harms caused by crime. In order to examine how we should face up to crime, prevention is a logical place to start.

This document considers the strategies in place in Ireland to prevent crime and their effectiveness and asks:

- **How well are existing crime prevention measures working?**
- **What scope is there for further development?**

The emphasis in this document is largely on what are sometimes called ‘high volume’ or ‘street’ crimes of burglary, theft, physical assault and public order offences. While some of the less visible, but no less serious crimes in Irish society are not addressed to the same extent, they will be examined as part of the overall White Paper process.

Crime prevention in Ireland has undergone comment and analysis for some time. The most significant recent examination was carried out by the National Crime Council in a 2002 Consultation Paper *Tackling the Underlying Causes of Crime*. This discussion document draws heavily on that work, as well as on the valuable input of the experts, voluntary groups and others who contributed to that earlier consultation process.

An Garda Síochána is also in the process of developing a Garda National Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy which will set out a framework for proactive Garda measures to prevent and reduce certain categories of high volume crime.

## ***What is Crime Prevention?***

Crime prevention has been defined as “intervention in the causes of criminal events, to reduce the risk of their occurrence and their potential seriousness” (Ekblom 2001).

A number of broad categories of crime prevention measures can be distinguished and reflect in each case differing perspectives on what gives rise to crime.

Crime prevention methods can be classified in a variety of ways. This document is informed by the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (2002) and breaks the different methods down as follows:

- (i) **Reducing opportunities for crime** – making it harder for crimes to be committed in the first place;

- (ii) Using **locally based partnerships** to change the conditions in neighbourhoods so as to reduce crime;
- (iii) Working to **prevent first-time criminality** among those most at risk of becoming involved in crime;
- (iv) Acting to **reduce the likelihood of re-offending** among those found guilty of offences.

Most countries, including Ireland, rely on a mix of these approaches to prevent crime.

### ***The Value of Crime Prevention***

Crime places a significant social and economic burden on individuals and society as a whole. Beyond the pain and trauma felt by victims, there are medical, property and insurance costs as well as the costs of the criminal justice system itself. Crime prevention measures can reduce this burden (International Centre for the Prevention of Crime 2008).

However, crime prevention initiatives should not be viewed in isolation from other strategies to tackle crime, particularly the presence of effective policing and law enforcement. These all serve to prevent and respond to crime and will be considered in detail during the White Paper process. There is, however, widespread agreement that there are fundamental limitations to the capacity of the criminal justice system to address crime on its own. Effective crime prevention needs a proactive, whole of society approach, capable of ensuring that interventions address local concerns and that resources are allocated efficiently (UK Audit Commission 2006).

# Reducing Opportunities for Crime

This category of crime prevention focuses on criminal opportunities rather than the circumstances of the offender. It aims to make possible criminal targets less vulnerable and to provide assistance and information to potential and actual victims.

In Ireland these measures include the work of the Garda National Crime Prevention Office, Neighbourhood Watch, Community Alert, and the development of public CCTV systems. Private individuals and companies also invest in crime prevention and security in this context. Information and advice is provided by Garda Divisional Crime Prevention Officers and is available on [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie). In addition, a range of specialised awareness campaigns have been used to highlight potential crime risks as well as preventive steps which can be taken.

Measures which seek to prevent crime can be practical and applied at relatively low cost. Many are steps that individuals and organisations take as daily common-sense precautions. As social and technological changes produce new crime opportunities, preventive measures need to keep apace. Examples of crime prevention initiatives in Ireland are included in the box opposite.

## Crime prevention measures

### *An Garda Síochána*

- Crime Prevention Advice & Information
- “Garda Confidential line”
- Public CCTV systems
- National Age Card

### *Awareness campaigns*

- Garda knife crime awareness campaign
- Cosc campaign on domestic and sexual violence
- HSE campaign on parenting, “Parents who listen, Protect”
- Community Fire Safety Primary Schools Programme which addresses the issues of arson and attacks on fire services crews
- Human Trafficking Awareness
- Local/Regional Task Force campaigns raising awareness about the consequences of problem drug use
- Confidential campaigns “Dial to Stop Drug Dealing”

### *Business Security Measures*

- Door security
- Entry/exit screening
- Electronic merchandise tags
- CCTV
- Forensic audits
- Firewalls, anti-virus software & encryption of confidential data

Many of these measures can be described as ‘situational’ prevention techniques and there are extensive case studies demonstrating that such measures can reduce crime (Pease 2002) (Goldblatt & Lewis 1998).

This does not mean that all such measures work. Crime reduction measures can, for example, move crime to another location or divert crime from one target to another. However, this so called “displacement effect” is not inevitable and rarely complete, according to research (UK Home Office 1998) but it needs to be taken account of. So too does the adaptability of criminals and the difficulty of sustaining any initiative requiring a high level of focus and structure for its implementation. Another concern is that those measures which require expensive equipment or technology might not be easy to avail of for those on lower incomes.

Finally, to the extent that crime prevention and avoidance becomes a predominant concern, it runs the risk of itself contributing to exaggerated fear of crime or of reducing trust and social solidarity in everyday life.

*Crime Prevention – Steps that individuals can take*

*Home Security Measures*

- Secure locking systems on windows, doors and gates
- Intruder alarm system fitted and maintained and serviced regularly
- Good external lighting
- High value items secured, photographed and their serial numbers recorded
- Electronic access to garages
- Use of Internet security software and password protection

*Personal Security Measures*

- Cash on person kept to a minimum
- Care in passing on personal information when using the internet or in responding to unsolicited "special offers"
- Programming of mobile phones for one user
- MP3 or personal CD player carried in inside pocket

*Vehicle Security Measures*

- Use of alarm system
- Parking in busy places and, at night, in well-lit areas
- Anti-theft devices such as security keys/fobs
- Valuables stored in car boot, not under a seat
- Car keys stored securely

### ***Preventing Repeat Victimization***

As research has shown that a small number of people experience a disproportionately large volume of crime (Sarma 2003), measures to prevent repeat victimisation are an important component of overall crime prevention strategies. Some individuals, households, or businesses may be more susceptible to crime than others due to factors such as failure to secure property, the value of goods held or on display, proximity to crime “hot spots” or perhaps due to high risk behaviour or isolation. Advice to such victims by An Garda Síochána on relevant prevention measures such as those described above, and their adoption by the victim can result in lower levels of crime and facilitate a more targeted use of resources. These have obvious relevance for crimes such as burglary and car theft but also apply to more complex situations involving high-risk sexual and domestic violence cases.

### ***Reducing Opportunities for Alcohol Related Crime and Disorder***

Over recent decades the level of alcohol consumption in Ireland has increased significantly and its abuse is seen as a factor in crime and public disorder, particularly in relation to violent crime, antisocial behaviour and the night-time economy (National Crime Council & UCD 2003). Crime Prevention strategies include measures designed to reduce alcohol abuse, especially ‘binge-drinking’ in circumstances which can lead to crime and disorder. Such responses include legislation (providing for example for hours of trading, closure orders, and confiscation of alcohol), as well as targeted policing, drink-driving campaigns and The Responsible Serving of Alcohol Programme. The question of long-term substance abuse and its links to crime is also of course very relevant and is dealt with later in this document.

### ***Crime Prevention and the Physical Environment***

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an approach to crime prevention which involves ‘designing out’ features of the physical or built environment to reduce opportunities for crime and increase the general feeling of security<sup>1</sup>. Typical measures are cited on the next page.

Another perspective on how our living environment impacts on crime and crime prevention comes from the “broken windows” theory (Wilson & Kelling 1982). This theory draws a connection between physical deterioration in a neighbourhood and crime. Some analysts argue that if a broken window in a building is left untended, other signs of disorder will increase. It is suggested that a broken window is a signal that no one cares about the area and that no one will intervene to prevent anti-social behaviour or criminal activity. Fixing small problems could prevent this chain reaction from becoming established.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2008) Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Area Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide. See also Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2007a.) Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities.



*Planning, design and management measures which can be applied to the built environment include:*

*Planning*

- Reduction of derelict land/property
- Promoting pedestrian use
- Supporting urban renewal

*Design*

- Orientation of buildings to maximise natural and formal surveillance and to prevent the creation of congregation points which can be a focus for criminal and anti-social behaviour.
- Pedestrian friendly environments – e.g. wide, well-lit footpaths, clear of hiding places.
- Installing gates to restrict access to alleys/lanes running between terraced houses
- Good levels of well-positioned lighting.
- Play areas located to provide adequate natural surveillance and supervision.

*Management*

- Enforcement of bye-laws
- Crime and anti-social behaviour patterns recorded and appropriate actions taken
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Regular routines for cleaning up litter, graffiti, illegal flyers and posters and abandoned cars
- Maintenance of landscaping to ensure that the effectiveness of CCTVs is not affected by trees, shrubs or landscape features.

### ***Local Authorities and Estate Management***

In addition to their general responsibilities for managing many aspects of the physical environment, local authorities have a significant role in addressing anti-social behaviour and promoting community well-being as a result of being the biggest landlords in the State, with a housing stock of some 120,000 dwellings. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997 includes provisions relating to anti-social behaviour in local authority rented dwellings and estates. It recognises the role of local authorities in actively promoting the interests of tenants and other occupiers in their housing estates and also in working towards the avoidance, prevention and reduction of anti-social behaviour.<sup>2</sup> One of the main provisions of the 1997 Act

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<sup>2</sup> The Centre for Housing Research, which is funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and local authorities has produced good practice guidelines on preventing and combating anti-social behaviour.

enables a local authority tenant, or the local authority itself in certain circumstances, to apply to the District Court for an excluding order against an individual member of the household who is believed to be engaging in anti-social behaviour.

The provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 strengthen this regime, by updating the definition of anti-social behaviour to include damage to property and graffiti and significant impairment of the use or enjoyment of a person's home. In addition, it provides for changes to the terms and conditions of a tenancy agreement to specifically reference anti-social behaviour. At a more strategic level, the Act requires housing authorities to adopt anti-social behaviour strategies which will assist them by providing a framework for action; co-operation between bodies; complaints procedures; and initiatives for the prevention and reduction of anti-social behaviour.

The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 contains provisions to address anti-social behaviour in private rented accommodation and also extends the local authority power to obtain excluding orders in respect of the occupants (other than the owner) of tenant purchased houses. It also extends to the Shared Ownership Scheme, the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme and affordable houses under the Planning and Development Act 2000, the existing local authority power to refuse to sell a house under the Tenant Purchase Scheme to a person it has reason to believe may engage in anti-social behaviour.

# Local Partnerships to Co-ordinate Crime Prevention

The preceding sections show that crime prevention measures involve a range of people and organisations beyond those in law enforcement alone. The Garda Síochána National Model of Community Policing (2009) makes it clear that the prevention of crime is everybody's business and community support and involvement is essential to the success of these measures.

The Community Alert Programme, a community-based initiative in rural communities has been run for over 20 years by Muintir na Tíre in association with An Garda Síochána. The Programme is intended to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people in rural communities, especially the elderly. Another important partnership in which the Gardaí are involved is the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, established in 1985 by An Garda Síochána as a crime prevention measure in urban areas. Within the business community, Business Watch Schemes can make a significant contribution to the prevention and reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Because co-ordinating a wide range of organisations and individuals is complex, several jurisdictions have introduced governance structures to co-ordinate this type of activity, with an emphasis on community and local involvement. Examples include Crime Reduction Partnerships in the UK, local security and crime prevention contracts in France, as well as comparable models in the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Canada. On a broader international level, the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime emphasise partnership working and local insight in addressing '*the conditions in neighbourhoods that influence offending, victimisation and the insecurity that results from crime by building on the initiatives, expertise and commitment of community members*' (UN ECOSOC, 2002).

## *Co-ordination Measures in Ireland*

In Ireland, the National Crime Council 2003 report recommended a National Crime Prevention Model which would operate at local, county/city and national levels and involve the development of 34 individual Crime Prevention Strategies. Emphasis was placed on engaging local level representatives at all stages of the development of those strategies. The National Crime Council advocated that An Garda Síochána work more closely with communities as part of the recommended Model. It also concluded that crime prevention programmes in Ireland were not co-ordinated in a coherent or integrated manner, in that different agencies were responsible for different aspects of the crime prevention agenda.

More recently, the Garda Síochána Act 2005 introduced Joint Policing Committees. Their purpose is to provide a forum where An Garda Síochána and the local authorities, as two organisations with significant involvement in preventing and tackling crime, can come together along with members of the Oireachtas and community and voluntary interests on matters affecting an area. In particular, it is the

function of the Committees to keep under review the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in their area and the underlying and contributory factors.

Local policing fora to deal specifically with drugs issues have been set up in Local Drugs Task Force areas in the context of the National Drugs Strategy.

Community safety fora exist under the RAPID<sup>3</sup> programmes in many urban areas and provincial towns and involve Gardaí, local authority and community representatives in working to improve local people's sense of ease and security in their living environments. Practical examples of the RAPID in operation are the publicly funded installation of community based CCTV systems in RAPID areas and the Community Graffiti Reduction Programme.

Finally, multi-agency County and City Development Boards (CDBs), which are led by local government and which include Garda representation, also exist in each county and city area. Their core role is to generate more co-ordinated delivery of public and development services at local level in meeting the needs of their communities.

### *Supporting the Development of Sustainable Communities*

In addition to delivering social housing units, overall housing policy also supports the development of sustainable communities where people are happy to live, work, and play. Enhancing the quality of life in these communities should help to make them more resistant to the risk of crime.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government supports a number of regeneration projects around the country to create sustainable communities through a combination of social, educational and economic initiatives, as well as by rejuvenating the built environment (Dept of the Environment 2007b.). In this context local authorities are required to consider all aspects of life in particular estates and to take a strategic approach to address disadvantage. This involves multiple local and national agencies in a programme designed to create sustainable communities and address the primary causes of deprivation in the area (Cunneen 2008).

In the past two years, the Department has spent some €220 million supporting regeneration projects. Each project is supported by a masterplan to address not only physical improvements to the estate and the dwellings but also to facilitate social inclusion and address educational and other disadvantages. Masterplans often include initiatives to deal with anti-social behaviour, and in extreme cases, criminality. A prime example of this is the Regeneration of Limerick City which aims to improve the lives of households living in Moyross, Southill, St. Mary's Park and Ballinacurra Weston. As part of this process the Regeneration Agencies have developed a strong relationship with, among others, local authorities, the HSE, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Education and Science and An Garda Síochána in developing plans for and delivering on regeneration in the city.

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<sup>3</sup> Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development

## Questions for Consideration

- What do you think has worked best to prevent or to reduce (i) crime generally, (ii) crimes against the person, (iii) crimes against property, and (iv) neighbourhood crime? What other methods should be used and how can we ensure that they are effective?
- In the area where you live and/or in your workplace, are there any gaps in the delivery of crime prevention measures? If so, what are they?
- In your experience, how is information about local crime prevention/reduction measures and successes communicated?
- How can community spirit be developed to promote crime prevention at local level? Would you be willing to become involved in promoting crime prevention measures locally?
- How can links between An Garda Síochána and local communities be strengthened?
- What role should communities play in considering aspects of their local living environment and their impact on law and order?
- How should the Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert schemes be promoted? What can be done to ensure that the activity levels of such schemes are maintained and the schemes remain effective?
- Should regulations be introduced to ensure that certain minimum crime prevention standards are met in the design of new buildings and the security fittings installed? What, if any, advantages would there be to putting good CPTED practice on a statutory basis?
- At present crime prevention is addressed at a number of geographical levels through a multi-agency approach (e.g. RAPID, CDBs, Joint Policing Committees). Is the degree of co-ordination adequate? What structures do you think would make best use of resources to deliver effective crime prevention policies and practices?

# Preventing Involvement in Crime

Another category of crime prevention measures focuses on people who are at a higher risk of becoming involved in crime than others. These measures attempt to offset those risks and therefore the likelihood of a person getting sucked into criminal activity.

## *Risk Factors for Involvement in Crime*

Numerous studies have identified a range of risk and protective factors which have a bearing on whether an individual becomes involved in crime, and in particular so-called 'street' crime. Generally accepted risk factors include socio-economic deprivation, inadequate parenting and challenging family circumstances (including criminally active relatives), as well as individual intelligence and psychological factors, educational attainment and community environment (Farrington 2002). Some of these factors are fixed and not susceptible to change; others may vary over time.

Many of these factors have been found to occur simultaneously and to interact so as to heighten impact. Similar factors are found to affect the long-term welfare and health of the person, including their educational progress, employment prospects, mental health, and socialisation.

While research on risk factors in Ireland is relatively limited, research on prisoner backgrounds and the social backgrounds of persons charged with criminal offences bear out their relevance in an Irish context (O' Mahony 2002).

It is also clear from these studies that most types of crime are far more likely to be committed by men. While crime is certainly not an exclusively male preserve, this must prompt consideration of the relationship between masculinity and offending.

## *Intervention Measures*

### *Family*

- National Parenting skills programme
- HSE family support services
- Community Mothers programme

### *Education*

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) – An Action Plan for Education

Inclusion incorporating:

- Home School Community Liaison Scheme
- Giving Children an Even Break
- Breaking the Cycle
- Early Start Pre-School Scheme
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- National Educational Welfare Board
- Youth Encounter Projects
- Youthreach

### *Community*

- RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) and CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais (an investment programme in rural areas))
- Local and regional drugs task forces
- Garda Youth Diversion Projects
- Awareness programmes, e.g. 'Copping On'
- Young People's Facilities and Services Fund

## ***Intervention***

The risk factors discussed here do not ‘predict’ that a person will become involved in crime, nor do they absolve individuals from personal responsibility for their own actions. Nevertheless, the awareness of the combined influence of these factors has prompted many jurisdictions to design early interventions to reinforce the protective factors (i.e. positive influences that can improve the lives of individuals or the safety of a community) and offset the risks.

The motivation in many instances is primarily one of welfare and social equality, with child development the priority. Some programmes focus on the family: others have a focus on education or training, while others are tailored to meet the needs of a particular community. At least some such programmes have been found to have an important impact on crime, by changing the individual’s personal circumstances and opportunities in life. The positive outcomes, both for the individual and for society, have also been shown to produce significant financial savings and there are some who argue that early intervention is a more cost effective strategy than more conventional reactive measures to combat crime (Piquero et al. 2008).

### ***Ireland – Early Intervention***

In Ireland, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion recognises the significance of early intervention in breaking the cycle of disadvantage and a range of pre-school, education, family support, diversion and counselling programmes are in place. Examples of the range of early interventions are cited on the previous page. Some of the programmes have an explicit crime prevention agenda, notably the Garda Youth Diversion Projects, but in the main the primary motivation is on welfare, education and development needs.

One particular innovative programme underway is the *Prevention and Early Intervention Programme for Children* which is overseen by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. This aims to prevent children from succumbing to the risks associated with disadvantage. The initial focus in the programme is on a small number of projects in areas experiencing severe economic disadvantage. These projects will be evaluated and the hope is that they will provide insight into what interventions are effective, and why, so that this learning can be applied elsewhere.

Another programme is the Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF) which develops youth facilities (including sport and recreational facilities) and services in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. By attracting young people into these facilities and activities, it aims to divert them away from the dangers of substance misuse/crime. The Fund’s target group is 10 -21 year olds who are “at risk” due to factors such as family circumstances, educational disadvantage or involvement in crime/substance misuse.

### ***Intervention and Substance Abuse***

The relationship between substance abuse and crime is a complex one but there are many similarities between the risk factors for involvement in crime and chronic drug and alcohol abuse and the existence of a link between the two has been well established in Irish and international research (Connolly, J 2006). Successful interventions targeted at those risk factors should in principle have a positive impact on both. A key element of the National Drug Strategy has been work on prevention through the Local Drug Task Forces and the YPFSF which have focussed not only on drugs education and awareness but on addressing underlying risk and protective factors.

In addition, specific treatment measures can achieve positive outcomes for substance users and addicts and contribute to crime reduction and prevention. Under the National Drugs Strategy, a range of treatment facilities are provided in Ireland, either directly by the HSE or in partnership with voluntary agencies. Initial findings from research carried out under the Strategy observed extensive reductions in criminal activity among drugs users who have undergone treatment programmes (Cox et al 2006).

### ***'Designing Effective Local Responses to Youth Crime' - Irish Youth Justice Service baseline analysis of Garda Youth Diversion Projects***

Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) administered by An Garda Síochána and provided by a range of youth organisations occupy a pivotal position in the Youth Justice system and have a very broad geographic spread. Recently, the Irish Youth Justice Service undertook a baseline analysis of 96 of the 100 projects currently in place. This is the first part of an improvement programme for GYDPs, as envisaged by the National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010. It provides a qualitative profile of youth crime in each locality and sets out a strategy for GYDPs to effectively impact upon youth offending.

The study found risk factors along the lines discussed here to be present in many of the young people attending the programmes but also identified a number of differing profiles in the patterns of offending among different young people. The study also found that up to 50% of youth crime is committed in situations where alcohol has been consumed and significantly contributes to the offending behaviour. The analysis emphasises the necessity of putting in place a plan to reduce youth crime in each area, based on local circumstances and taking into account international evidence about what works well. The aim is to break the sequence of events leading to criminal acts or reduce risks associated with the young person's circumstances. More detailed work is now to take place in 5 trial locations to further develop good practice and training which can then be implemented throughout the scheme.



## Questions for Consideration

- How can the degree of early intervention and support to families at-risk be improved?
- How could existing crime prevention/intervention measures be better targeted to optimise results and to improve the use of limited resources?
- What role should these interventions play in an overall strategy on crime, given their primarily welfare focus?
- How can the existing services be effectively co-ordinated between the different agencies?
- In what way might parents be encouraged, assisted or held accountable when it comes to tackling anti-social behaviour by their children?
- Can you suggest any additional measures which might be introduced to divert young people from involvement in crime?

# Reducing Re-offending

Although the role of sanctions in the criminal justice system will be addressed in detail in a separate discussion document, some aspects are introduced here, in light of their implications for crime prevention. Simply put, many offences are committed by persons who have previously offended and been detected. Strategies to reduce re-offending can be implemented in either the community or in places of custody.

## *Intervention in the Community*

The Courts have a range of penalties and interventions at their disposal to address individual behaviour and to match the crime. They may, as an alternative to a custodial sentence, postpone sentencing subject to certain conditions (e.g. treatment for an addiction), apply a probation order, impose community service instead of imprisonment, impose a custodial sentence suspended in part or in full subject to conditions, or impose a fine.

The Probation Service plays a central role in managing the performance of non-custodial sentences in the community. It engages with offenders, their families and others to facilitate a positive change in offenders' lives and to reduce offending and make communities safer. In addition, the Probation Service funds and supports organisations and projects providing services to offenders and their communities as well as restorative justice initiatives.

*The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, through the Probation Service, funds voluntary bodies providing a range of services to offenders in local communities such as:*

- training and education
- offender management programmes
- residential accommodation
- drug and alcohol abuse treatment

Specific projects include PACE, Business in the Community/Linkage and the Bridge project.

### *Restorative Justice*

- Nenagh Community Reparation Project
- Restorative Justice Services Tallaght

### *Perpetrator Intervention Programmes*

Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence provides funding for domestic violence perpetrator intervention programmes.

There is some overlap in the types of risk factors which are addressed in these programmes with those referred to earlier – particularly in respect of education and work training, personal skills, addiction treatment, cognitive behavioural programmes etc. The work of the Probation Service is informed by research and experience as to what steps and programmes are most likely to have a positive impact on offenders (Connolly, A 2006) and also on why some offenders desist from further crime and the ways in which this process can be supported.

Some jurisdictions formally emphasise the problem solving role of the Courts through the use of ‘community courts’, ‘drug courts’ and certain restorative justice models. Pilot ‘drug court’ and restorative justice schemes have been in operation for a number of years in Ireland and a Commission established to determine how restorative justice could be brought into the mainstream criminal justice system is due to report shortly. The National Crime Council also studied the Community Court concept and recommended that they be piloted in Ireland (National Crime Council 2007).

### *Intervention in Custody*

Considerable debate exists on the proper balance between community-based and prison-based sanctions and these issues will be explored further during the White Paper process. Re-conviction rates are often studied to assess the impact of rehabilitation programmes in prison but this may understate actual crimes committed in many instances. Equally, however, it is difficult to separate other factors which might result in a person desisting from repeat offending.

Given the many barriers to the successful re-integration of ex-offenders into the community, it is necessary to have realistic expectations as to the impact of prison programmes. Nevertheless, there remains a strong demand for penalties to offer something more than incapacitation, and to include rehabilitative measures to reduce re-offending and to improve the lives of offenders, their families and the communities they live in. Research shows that some interventions in prison can succeed in altering the behaviour and attitudes of participants and in helping them to desist from crime (O’Connor et al. 2008).

Examples of programmes in place in the Irish Prison Service, in conjunction with the VEC, Probation Service and others are set out on the next page.

*Courses and Programmes Provided in Custody*

- Education Services - basic education, (e.g. literacy, numeracy and teaching English as a second language and general subjects (e.g. English, History, Maths, Languages, Information Technology, Arts, Technology)
- Work Training – skills training, emphasis on enhancing employment prospects (construction, catering, horticulture, metalwork)
- Programmes that address particular problems or prisoners needs (e.g. Addiction Awareness, Childcare, Group Skills, Anger Management)
- ‘In-reach’ services providing advice, referral and support on housing, social welfare, training and employment post-release.

***Rehabilitation and Reintegration***

Even where the principal sanction is prison-based, the task of reintegration requires post-release community supports and involvement. Internationally, prison systems are now looking at how to better plan and tailor interventions in prison and how to link those efforts to continued support after release. This is sometimes referred to as ‘positive or integrated sentence management’, and was recommended by the National Economic and Social Forum in its report *Reintegration of Prisoners* (2002). The Irish Prison Service is developing an Integrated Sentence Management model which emphasises the importance of an integrated approach involving the prisoner, his or her family, the Prison and Probation Services and the wider community.

***Management of Sex Offenders***

Convicted sex offenders raise particular concerns around public safety and re-offending. *The Management of Offenders : A Discussion Document*, published earlier this year sets out proposals for the management of offenders from conviction for sexual offences through imprisonment and re-entry to the community with the purpose of protecting the public and reducing the risk of re-offending. A combination of rehabilitative measures and active supervision and monitoring of higher risk sex offenders is envisaged with electronic monitoring being used to support a supervisory regime.

***Young Offenders***

Special considerations arise in dealing with young offenders and are reflected in the principles embodied in the Children Act, 2001. In addition to taking into account the special needs and rights of children, there are compelling crime prevention arguments for effective early intervention in diverting children from future criminal activity. For

children who have committed offences, then, the Act emphasises a diversionary and restorative approach based on using detention as a last resort. The Irish Youth Justice Service has been established to provide co-ordinated strategic leadership in the field of youth justice in keeping with these principles.

This mandate is being advanced through the National Youth Justice Strategy (2008-2010) which includes the objective of reducing offending by diverting young people from criminal activity. Key measures delivering on this include the Garda Youth Diversion Projects and the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme. A new Young Persons Probation Division has been established within the Probation Service to facilitate the implementation of the community sanctions envisaged in the 2001 Act. For the small number of children who are detained, the Irish Youth Justice Service is overseeing programmes to assist their early re-integration, as well as meeting their health, education and welfare needs in a safe and secure environment.

## Questions for Consideration

- What should the priorities be in aiming to reduce re-offending?
- How effective do you think community-based sanctions are and could more community-based sanctions be developed in your area?
- How can young people best be diverted from crime?
- How can ex-prisoners successfully reintegrate into society? In a contracting labour market are there any particular measures which might help ex-offenders to get a job and stop the cycle of re-offending?
- What other steps should be taken to assist ex-offenders in desisting from further offending?
- What is the potential role of restorative justice in preventing offending?

# Conclusion

This document has aimed to outline in general terms the principal measures and approaches which can be put in place to prevent crime, based on international and Irish experience. It is by no means exhaustive but is intended to encourage suggestions on what else should be done to prevent crime.

Most countries, including Ireland, apply a mix of the different approaches. The precise mix may have evolved over time and not necessarily within an overall plan or design. Since many different agencies and organisations are involved, it is not surprising that initiatives will have been developed to respond to particular needs as they have emerged. Evaluation of specific initiatives is now standard good practice but evaluating crime prevention interventions is challenging. While we can draw on evaluations carried out in other countries, there is not yet a comprehensive data bank of 'what works' in an Irish context.

A key issue for consideration as part of the White Paper process and on which views are now sought, is how best to manage the mix of these strategies for the future.

## Questions for Consideration

- Should crime prevention policies be incorporated into the wider social planning process? If you think they should, how should that happen?
- What structures should be used to co-ordinate crime prevention activity and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives?
- How can the financial resources available be best used for projects with a long-term return?
- How should crime prevention funding be budgeted for, managed and evaluated?
- In the evaluation of the effects of Garda and community crime prevention initiatives what in your opinion are important factors (e.g. reduction in crime, sense of community, personal safety)?

# APPENDIX 1

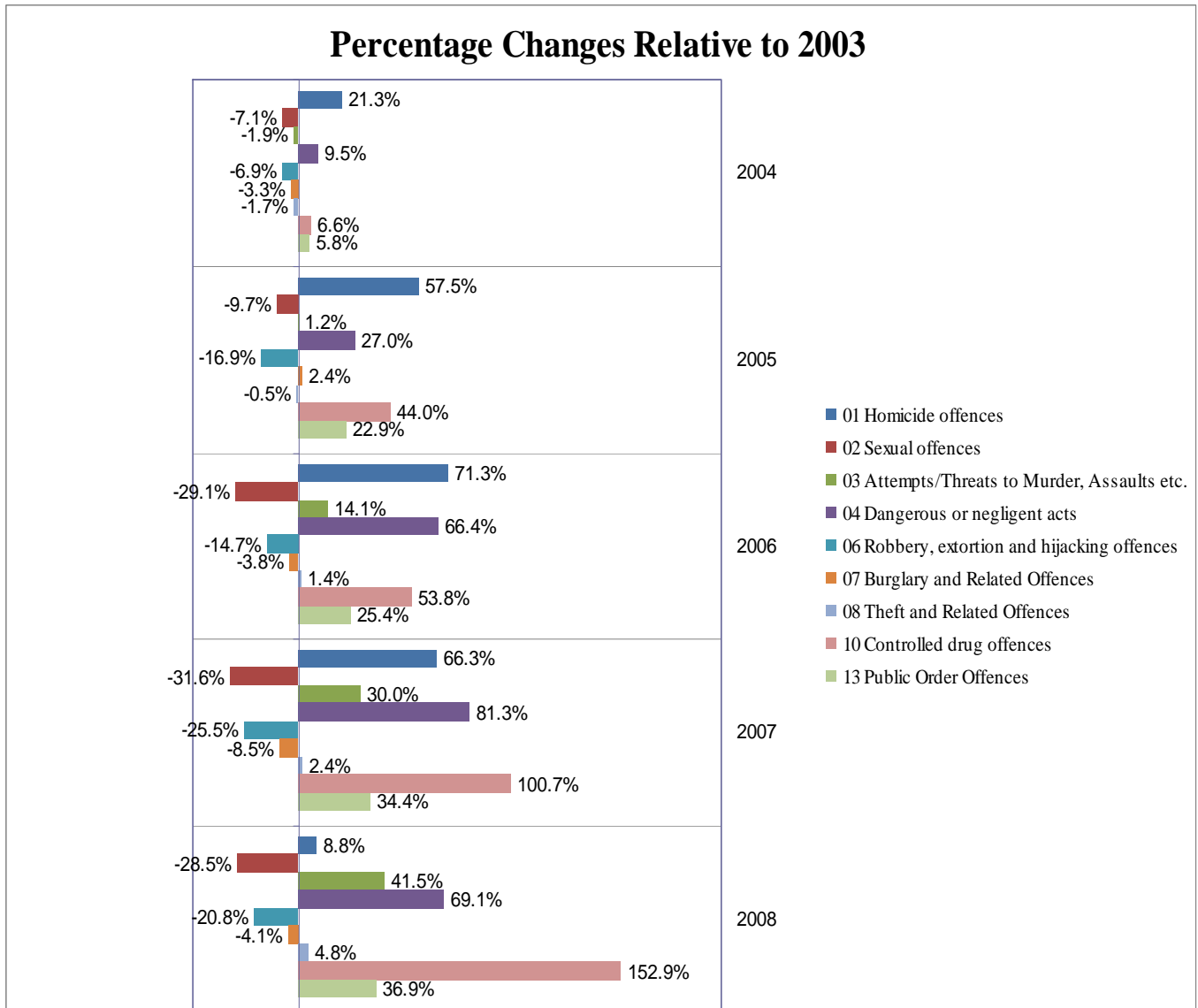
## Selected Recorded Crime Offences (Number) by Type of Offence and Year (2003-2008)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>01 Homicide Offences</b>	80	97	126	137	133	87
<b>02 Sexual Offences</b>	2,002	1,860	1,807	1,420	1,369	1,432
<b>03 Attempts/ Threats to Murder, Assaults etc.</b>	13,530	13,278	13,691	15,442	17,585	19,142
<b>04 Dangerous or negligent acts*</b>	11,588	12,686	14,722	19,281	21,009	19,596
<b>06 Robbery, extortion and hijacking offences</b>	2,916	2,716	2,424	2,487	2,173	2,309
<b>07 Burglary and Related Offences</b>	25,755	24,914	26,381	24,783	23,566	24,701
<b>08 Theft and Related Offences</b>	73,441	72,200	73,083	74,501	75,218	76,986
<b>10 Controlled drug offences</b>	9,257	9,866	13,326	14,236	18,583	23,407
<b>13 Public Order Offences</b>	45,163	47,793	55,486	56,626	60,714	61,829

Source : Central Statistics Office (CSO) , 2009

\*Note - Dangerous or negligent acts include: driving/in charge of a vehicle while over legal alcohol limit, driving/in charge of a vehicle under the influence of drugs, endangering traffic offences, and abandoning a child, child neglect and cruelty

### Selected Recorded Crime Offences (Number) by Type of Offence and Year (2003-2008) – Percentage Changes Relative to 2003



Source : Central Statistics Office (CSO) , 2009



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