

Editorial

Welcome to the nineteenth edition of *Irish Probation Journal (IPJ)*. One of the real strengths of probation across Europe and beyond is its willingness to seek out and support academic and practitioner-based research, which informs effective practice to achieve our shared goals of safer communities and fewer victims. Over the past 19 years, the journal has become well established as a recognised forum for the sharing of criminal justice research, evaluation, analysis and discussion on probation and community sanctions. We are confident that the broad range of contributions in this year's edition will further contribute to this knowledge base.

Back in 2020, the editorial was reflecting on the challenges of the pandemic for probation practice. While it is hoped that we are out of the trenches, we are continuing to learn to live with COVID-19 and to adapt practice – particularly through the wider use of technology – to respond to the needs of all stakeholders. *IPJ* can play an important role in tracking and recording learning from this period and continues to welcome articles, from across the criminal justice community, that explore the legacy issues.

The editorial committee would like to thank all those who have contributed to this year's publication and acknowledge their commitment to sharing knowledge and promoting critical debate on current issues. In February 2022, the editorial committee held an online workshop for those interested in writing for the journal. Attended by over forty participants, the event was extremely successful. A number of those who were in attendance have completed papers for this publication, whilst others are interested in writing in the future. The level of enthusiasm from practitioners in both services is very encouraging, as is the willingness to collaborate on joint endeavours, which we anticipate will bear fruit in future editions.

Thematically, this year's publication has attracted articles that include: youth offending and transitions from custody, collaborative working, desistance, unadjudicated domestic abuse, and human trafficking. Marking the anniversary of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, there is an

exploration of its experiences of 40 years of practice. With a readership that stretches far beyond this island, the journal regularly contains articles from international contributors, both in practice and in academia. This year, we welcome a paper from the Slovenian Probation Service. In keeping with established tradition, our flagship article is based on text from the annual Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture, organised by the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD). We are delighted to be able to support ACJRD through the publication of this article. The journal also has a range of articles and practice notes from practitioners working in both services, as well as from those who are conducting research using Probation data.

Earlier, we referenced the increasing importance of technology as a legacy of the pandemic. The opening article explores 'the benefits and challenges of technological improvements and greater efficiencies for the criminal justice system'. While recognising the importance of 'efficiencies', the paper warns against the rush to adopt new practices that may fail to take due regard of human rights and could negatively impact on the rights of all individuals to a fair trial.

There is an interesting juxtaposition between two papers that are based on an 'oral history' approach. An article marking 40 years of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland considers the development and transformation of probation services in Northern Ireland. Based on a structured group interview and written submissions, the content reflects the perspective of staff who worked in probation in 1982. The second paper presents preliminary findings from the second phase of the ongoing 'Histories of Probation in Ireland' project. The lived experience of supervision in Ireland is explored through interviews with current and former clients from the 1980s to the present day.

The theme of youth justice is central to a number of articles. The needs of young adults as they transition from youth justice services and agencies to custodial and non-custodial settings in Ireland are explored and identified in an article that outlines the preparation phase of a three-year research project. At the other end of the continuum, a paper featuring interviews with young people involved in car crime describes the attractions of this lifestyle and explores what works in encouraging desistance from this adolescent-specific form of deviance. Youth justice in an entirely different sphere is part of a third contribution to focus on young people. The paper explores the developments that can provide real opportunities for mainstreaming restorative practices across schools in Northern Ireland. It argues that whilst restorative practices are recognised as a proven structured approach for conflict resolution and

the repair of harm involving children and young people, its use in school settings remains intermittent in Northern Ireland.

Mental health is a recurrent theme for the journal and has been explored in many articles over the years, an indication of the central space this issue occupies in the supervision of people involved with the justice system. It is fitting that this year's 'practitioner response' relates to last year's Martin Tansey Memorial lecture, 'Probation and mental health: Do we really need equivalence?' by Charlie Brooker. The paper explores how the findings from Brooker's research are reflected in research undertaken by the Probation Service, and reflects on the impetus and the initiatives to address this issue in probation practice.

Readers will be interested in the article from the Director General of Probation in Slovenia, which describes the steps to establishing a state service in 2018 and outlines the progress in relation to programme and procedural development and the role of collaboration on a national and international basis. The subject of collaboration is also echoed in an article from Northern Ireland, which looks at the challenges and opportunities for interagency engagement, most particularly in relation to Probation and police collaboration.

The link between probation and desistance may now seem like an obvious one. Looking at the subject through the lens of a systematic narrative review of the literature regarding probation supervision and desistance provides a focused and enlightening view. At the core of this article is the central tenet that if the goal of probation supervision is to reduce offending, then knowledge and understanding of how desistance happens in practice is an essential part of the probation toolkit.

As always, the *IPJ* aims to publish articles on topical issues in the criminal justice arena. A research analysis of the Promoting Positive Relationships Programme (PPRP) provides an overview of an early intervention/preventative programme, developed and implemented by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, that aims to address unadjudicated domestic abuse. We welcome another article this year on the subject of human trafficking. Based on the findings of a retrospective case-file analysis that aims to develop a profile of perpetrators within Northern Ireland, the article also explores the role of 'coercive control' and how a greater understanding of that role could inform assessment of risk and the development of appropriate offence-focused intervention(s).

Our appreciation to colleagues who have completed some interesting book reviews. Thanks to the members of our advisory panel who fulfil an

important function in reviewing articles and giving guidance and feedback. Our appreciation to the Probation Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland for the support provided each year. Finally, to our readers, we want to thank you all for continuing to support and champion the *Irish Probation Journal*. As always, if anyone wishes to submit an article proposal for consideration for next year's publication, please make contact with any member of the editorial committee.

Enjoy this edition!

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