Welcome to the first edition of the Probation News Magazine. We are proud to introduce the first external magazine of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. In the 2014-17 Corporate Plan one of the priorities we outlined was ‘engaging with communities’. This magazine will provide 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.

‘Changing lives for safer communities’ Justice Minister David Ford pictured with PBNI Chairman Vilma Patterson (LEFT) and (Acting) Director of Probation Cheryl Lamont at the launch of the 2014-17 Corporate plan earlier this year.

IN THIS EDITION
Public Protection Arrangements
Page 3
Policing and Community Safety Partnerships
Page 5
Key Facts
Page 8
Introduction from the (Acting) Director

I am pleased to introduce this first edition of the Probation News Magazine. The critical role probation plays often runs under the radar or little is understood in comparison to larger criminal justice organisations. In these pages you will find examples of how probation works to prevent offending and change lives for safer communities.

Probation is a key part of the criminal justice system working with police, prisons, courts, communities and victims of crime.

Our budget is £17.5 million and we have 358 full time equivalent staff. Currently we supervise 4,328 offenders and provide 932 reports per month to the Courts and Parole Commissioners. We provide behavioural change programmes. We also offer a victim information scheme. Every year through Community Service, we deliver around 175,000 hours of unpaid work to communities enabling offenders to make some reparation for their crimes.

Our unique role within criminal justice is to risk assess and manage offenders and address their negative behaviours. Every probation officer is social work trained which enables us to effectively tackle the causes of crime and prevent others becoming victims.

We are a key partner in the Reducing Offending in Partnership project which brings together agencies to tackle prolific offenders who cause the most harm in communities.

We also play a leading role in the Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland which manages certain violent and sexual offenders in a multi-agency setting ensuring information is shared to effectively protect the public.

Our programmes within probation tackle violent crime including domestic violence; sexual violence; and internet sex offending. We also have an expertise in working with female offenders through the Inspire project.

Welcome from the Chairman

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland has a key role in shaping the justice system to ensure it is accessible, effective and fair. As a Board, our priority is to ensure that the organisation delivers a quality service to all citizens throughout Northern Ireland. Recent inspections by the Criminal Justice Inspection coupled with research on reconviction rates show that PBNI is an effective organisation that significantly reduces reoffending. In other words – probation in Northern Ireland works.

The structure of the Board which is comprised of community based public representatives, and which provides independent leadership on strategic planning and oversight, assists staff to work effectively and collaboratively in and with all communities.

Over the last two years the Probation Board has sought to engage and consult with a range of stakeholders about how probation’s priorities should be developed. It is very clear to me that communities appreciate and understand the important role and unique contribution played by probation in the rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders. However they also want us to engage more and tell the public about the range and breadth of work carried out. This magazine will help us do that.

Throughout these pages you will see examples of very successful collaborative working to make communities safer. We play an important role within prisons helping prepare offenders for release into the community. We also work closely with colleagues in the police service and youth justice agency. The Criminal Justice Inspector has said the probation board is an effective organisation with committed and hard-working staff who deliver to high standards in all areas of their work.

Indeed staff throughout probation are some of the most dedicated, professional and innovative people I have ever met. I want to acknowledge their commitment and, as Board Chairman, reiterate that PBNI staff will continue to do their utmost to continue to change lives for safer communities.

Vilma Patterson MBE
Chairman
Lord Mayor visits Probation to see how it changes lives for safer communities

Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nichola Mallon, took time out of her busy schedule to drop in and visit the PBNI office on the Antrim Road. She met with probation staff and heard more about what PBNI does to change lives for safer communities.

The focus of the work undertaken by the Probation Board is to reduce offending, and the Lord Mayor paid tribute to the work carried out by PBNI staff: “I wanted to take the time to see the work North Belfast Probation Office carry out supervising court orders, facilitating rehabilitation programmes, supervising Community Service and working towards a safer community. This is a vital service for the people of Belfast as Probation staff work to reduce offending whilst giving people an opportunity to turn their lives around.

“I was also very interested in hearing about the work carried out through the INSPIRE women’s project as it recognises the circumstances of women’s offending which often involves poverty, homelessness, mental illness, abuse, domestic violence and addictions. That Probation directly contributes to reducing women’s offending through its women-specific services by supporting and challenging female offenders shows how valuable this project is.”

Public Protection Arrangements

The Probation Board is part of the public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland. Working alongside organisations like police, prisons, social services and the housing executive the arrangements focus on assessing and managing certain sexual and violent offenders.

The aim of all the organisations involved is to protect the public and to minimise the risk of reoffending.

The arrangements have been examined and a positive inspection by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland in 2011 found that there was excellent partnership working in evidence.

Staff working in public protection are constantly seeking to ensure they are up to date with best practice. In October a special interest seminar was held in Crumlin Road Gaol to highlight good practice and share learning amongst those working in the field with a particular focus on the impact of domestic violence on children.

For more information visit the PPANI website www.publicprotectionni.com

Pictured L-R at the PPANI seminar held on 24 October in Crumlin Road Gaol: Annie Campbell – Director of Women’s Aid Federation NI, Dr John Devaney – Senior Lecturer at QUB School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, David Ford MLA – Minister of Justice, Julie Smyth – PPANI Co-ordinator, Geraldine O’Hare – PBNI Head of Programmes and Interventions and Hugh Hamill – Chair of PPANI Strategic Management Board and PBNI (Acting) Deputy Director.
Community Service Success

It has been a productive year for PBNI Community Service. Each year offenders deliver an average of 175,000 hours of unpaid work to the community in Northern Ireland through a community service sentence. 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 offenders to pay back to the community for the harm they have caused. The work is either under the guidance of our supervisors or staff in the host organisation.

On 12 August Cookstown District Council invited PBNI to a meeting in Gortalowry House, Cookstown about community service in the area. Eddie Loughran and his squad had recently finished repainting Slatequarry Community Hall and the local group and the Council wanted to show their appreciation and discuss future opportunities to work together.

Séan McElhatton, Good Relations Officer, Cookstown District paying tribute to community service in the area, commented:

“I am just back from Slatequarry Hall looking at the tremendous hard work Eddie & his team dedicated to this project. The hall has been totally transformed as a result of the teams efforts. This could not have happened without your cooperation & efforts and the community group are really excited about it too. Thanks again it was a great project!”

Another example of an effective community service partnership project is the environmental clean up on Stranmillis Embankment, Belfast. At the suggestion of Community representatives on the South Belfast DPCSP PBNI community service teamed up with Belfast City Council, the Department of Regional Development and the University of Ulster to clean up an area between Agincourt Avenue and the Lagan in the New Year.

If you have an idea for a project that offenders could work on for the benefit of your community, you can nominate a project for offenders to undertake at www.pbni.org.uk or email us at communityservice@pbni.gsi.gov.uk
Working in local communities through the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

Justice Minister David Ford has said that partnership working is the key to building safer communities.

The Minister was speaking at a Networking Event in Comber on 1 September hosted by Ards PCSP and Comber Partners and Community Together (PACT). At the event he heard first-hand about local initiatives to reduce crime and addiction delivered by the Probation Board, Youth Justice Agency, Families Against Substance Abuse and the PSNI.

Attending the event at Comber Leisure Centre, David Ford said: “Real credit is due to a range of local community, voluntary and justice agencies for the way they have worked together in Ards to identify and deliver local solutions to local problems. Partnership working is the key to building safer, shared and confident communities.”

“It is really important that all of us, as individuals and together, recognise that we have a role to play in making our communities better places to live, work and play.”

Restorative Practice and Victims

Earlier this year Christine Hunter, PBNI Area Manager was successful in securing a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust travelling Fellowship to research Restorative practices for adults.

In September 2014 Christine travelled to the USA to find out more about innovations in relation to Restorative Practice. Christine’s application was to research ‘Restorative Interventions with adult offenders in a Probation setting’. The award of a Fellowship is based on experience and knowledge of your chosen area; benefit to the criminal justice system and to society, and a clearly defined and worthwhile project.

Christine’s objectives in pursuing the Fellowship were clear: to inform PBNIs Restorative Practice and Strategy and to bring practices back which would inform and influence work in NI.

Christine says: “I was keen to inform the implementation of the Restorative Practice Strategy developed by myself and Probation Assistant Director Roisin Muldoon which was approved in March 2014. Since the setting up of PBNIs Victim Information Scheme in 2005 we have facilitated and supported staff to deliver restorative practices. Victim/offender meetings have been facilitated where appropriate, particularly in serious crimes where only the offender is in a position to answer questions that the victim has.”

PBNi’s Victim Information Scheme also works with other Criminal Justice agencies and Victim organisations to provide an integrated service to victims. In October 2012 the Prisoner Release Victim Information Scheme, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland Victim Information Scheme and the Mentally Disordered Victim Information Scheme (operated by the DOJ) became co-located.

This followed a recommendation by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland in 2011. PBNi manages the unit which combines the skills and experience of staff from all three organisations. The Department of Justice intends to bring forward legislation in the future to facilitate closer working between the schemes and the Victim and Witness Care Units.

Contact the Victim Information Scheme: Victim Information Unit Unit 4, Wallace Studios, 27 Wallace Avenue, Lisburn BT27 4AE
T: 0300 123 3269
victiminfo@pbni.gsi.gov.uk
Cooperation between both probation services on the island of Ireland continues to go from strength to strength.

Those who commit crimes may move between jurisdictions therefore it is essential that there is cooperation and safeguards in place to protect communities throughout the island.

PBNI works closely with its counterparts in the Probation Service in the Republic of Ireland. Information sharing and joint training are critical elements of our work which has developed over the past number of years. Regular annual meetings take place, chaired by both Directors and attended by senior management in both organisations. These meetings discuss operational issues and provide an opportunity to update on changes to practice and new developments which impact upon probation.

November saw the annual Public Protection Advisory Group Seminar take place in Dublin. The event was attended by both Ministers for Justice and staff working in public protection in policing, probation and prisons. It highlighted some of the good practice and new initiatives taking place including work on restorative justice, and work with local communities through Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. There were also presentations on ‘Community Return’ whereby prisoners can be selected for temporary release with a requirement to do community service work for a set number of weeks, and ‘Reducing Offending in Partnership which helps deal with the most prolific offenders in NI’.

PBNI and the Probation Service also jointly produce and distribute the Irish Probation Journal which provides a forum for sharing theory and practice and increasing co-operation and learning between the two jurisdictions and developing debate about work with offenders. The 11th edition of the Journal has now been launched and is available online. Please see PBNI website to download a copy.

As always if anyone has an interest in submitting an article for the journal they should contact Gail McGreevy in PBNI gail.mcgreevy@pbni.gsi.gov.uk or Gerry McNally at the Probation Service GPMcNally@probation.ie

PBNI (Acting) Director Cheryl Lamont and Vivian Geiran, Probation Service Director signing the Joint information sharing protocol in respect of the management of sex offenders and offenders assessed as Risk of Serious Harm.

PBNI work has been recognised through a number of awards recently, including the prestigious Butler Trust and Justice in the Community Awards.

**Butler Trust**

Both Simone Simpson, Probation Area Manager and Michael Winnington, Probation Officer have been successful in the annual Butler Trust awards.

The Butler Trust Awards recognise and celebrate outstanding practice by people working in prisons, youth justice and probation settings – helping to give credit where it is due and spread good practice more widely. Simone has been awarded a Butler Trust certificate for her work in Prisons and Michael has been shortlisted for an award for his work in PBNI’s Assessment Unit preparing pre sentence reports for courts.

**Justice in the Community Awards**

Two of Coleraine’s Riding for the Disabled volunteers, Albert Clyde and Michelle Scott, have been named Justice Champions’ for services to their community at an awards ceremony in Parliament Buildings. The charity was nominated by Probation Area Manager Janet McClinton and they have been recognised for their significant role in working with offenders to inspire them to change.

Pearl Priddy, Shop Manager for Cancer Research in Enniskillen, was also nominated by local PBNI Manager Patricia McKeever and will receive a certificate of commendation.

Justice Minister, David Ford, said:

“These awards are an opportunity to showcase the exceptional work that is going on within the heart of our community, often by volunteers, working quietly and diligently in the background making Northern Ireland a safer place for everyone.”
On average there are 74 domestic abuse incidents in Northern Ireland every day. It affects people in all relationships and both men and women. In 2012-2013 Northern Ireland Women’s Aid helpline managed 47,597 calls, 674 of these calls were from male victims.

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland works with a range of agencies to reduce domestic abuse and protect victims and children.

We deliver a number of domestic abuse interventions both through group work and also on a one to one basis. These interventions are delivered throughout the province and work closely in partnership with Women’s Aid, PSNI and Social Services.

In the last number of months there have been a number of training events delivered by PBNI to develop better awareness of domestic abuse, and to develop a risk assessment framework for staff working in the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI).

Through the Tackling Violence at Home Strategy, PBNI are also playing a lead role in the health trusts, in the development and implementation of a group work programme to address domestic abuse on behalf of the five Trust areas in Northern Ireland. This is a unique opportunity for health and criminal justice to work closely together in the area of domestic abuse and child protection, which PBNI is very happy to be contributing to.

Traditionally there can be an increase in incidents of abuse during and after the Christmas break, and we would appeal to anyone who is suffering abuse to report it and seek help. The 24 hour domestic and sexual violence helpline is 0800 802 1414. In an emergency always call the PSNI on 999.

Programmes to tackle Domestic Abuse

PBNI working in Prison

Probation staff work directly with prisoners in custody as well as supervising them in the community following their release. PBNI staff work in all prison establishments in Northern Ireland; Maghaberry, Magilligan, Hydebank Wood Prison & Young Offenders Centre, and we also have a presence in the Working Out Unit in Belfast. The work in each establishment is underpinned by a Service Level Agreement which sets out the expectations on PBNI staff and the funding provided by NIPS.

In 2011 the Prison Review team lead by Dame Anne Owers published a Review of the NI Prison Service which made 40 recommendations on the conditions, management and oversight of all prisons. One recommendation 31 (PRT 31), stated: The Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland should undertake joint work to plan and deliver integrated services, explore staff exchange and consider shared services.

Senior staff in both organisations began working more closely to develop a better shared understanding of the work of respective organisations and a joint delivery group was established to address the significant change programme which arose from implementation of PRT 31 and wider reform work. This has involved widespread engagement with staff in both organisations and has led to the development of a tangible model for future delivery of offender management and other joint work.

PRT Recommendation 32 called for the appointment of a Director of Rehabilitation and this led to the secondment of PBNI Director Brian McCaughey in September 2013 to NIPS.

In September 2014 the DCJ established the Reducing Offending Directorate and in October the Minister attended a seminar in the Prison Service College where he heard inputs from Parole Commissioners, DOJ officials and PBNI Deputy Director Paul Doran on the issue of recalls to prison in Northern Ireland. The seminar brought together the leading organisations to discuss how recalls impact upon the criminal justice system. The event was chaired by Sue McAllister, Director of Reducing Offending Directorate, and an action plan has been developed to improve practice in this area.

In 2011 the Prison Review team lead by Dame Anne Owers published a Review of the NI Prison Service which made 40 recommendations on the conditions, management and oversight of all prisons. One recommendation 31 (PRT 31), stated: The Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland should undertake joint work to plan and deliver integrated services, explore staff exchange and consider shared services.

Senior staff in both organisations began working more closely to develop a better shared understanding of the work of respective organisations and a joint delivery group was established to address the significant change programme which arose from implementation of PRT 31 and wider reform work. This has involved widespread engagement with staff in both organisations and has led to the development of a tangible model for future delivery of offender management and other joint work.

PRT Recommendation 32 called for the appointment of a Director of Rehabilitation and this led to the secondment of PBNI Director Brian McCaughey in September 2013 to NIPS.

In September 2014 the DCJ established the Reducing Offending Directorate and in October the Minister attended a seminar in the Prison Service College where he heard inputs from Parole Commissioners, DOJ officials and PBNI Deputy Director Paul Doran on the issue of recalls to prison in Northern Ireland. The seminar brought together the leading organisations to discuss how recalls impact upon the criminal justice system. The event was chaired by Sue McAllister, Director of Reducing Offending Directorate, and an action plan has been developed to improve practice in this area.
Key facts
What the numbers say:

1. Probation Service which covers all of Northern Ireland.

1237 total number of victims provided a service by the PBNi Victim Information Scheme since October 2005.

70% of those supervised by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland in the community through a community order who did not go on to reoffend within one year.

4,328 number of offenders currently under supervision.

175,000 hours of Community Service delivered across Northern Ireland in 2013/14 equating to a reparative value of over £1 million to the community.

90% of those currently supervised by PBNi are male.

34% of all offenders starting probation supervision in 2013/14 who declared that they had a mental health condition.

932 reports delivered last month to the Courts and Parole Commissioners.