

## Reducing Offending in Partnership

### How Reducing Offending in Partnership works

- Reducing Offending in Partnership (ROP) is a partnership project between the Department of Justice, Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Youth Justice Agency which aims to tackle people who regularly commit crime and who impact most upon the community. It involves justice partners working together to reduce reoffending, support desistance and to ensure that fewer people become victims of crime.
- Despite having no legislative framework, the vision of Police, Probation, Youth Justice, Prisons, the Department of Justice and a range of other partners has led to one of the most successful partnership programmes being delivered across Northern Ireland.
- The ROP initiative arose out of a local police-led pilot programme in Ballymena in 2010. Its aim was to address reoffending of prolific offenders in the Ballymena area, particularly those with alcohol and drug problems.
- The strength of ROP is a commitment from all organisations both at a strategic level and from key individuals on the ground who have delivered success.
- When we first developed ROP the chief feature of this local initiative was the regular sharing of information in respect of cases between the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and PBNI.
- Over a period of time this led to discussions between PSNI, PBNI and the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) with regard to formalising this initiative and linking it to the IOM initiatives in England and Wales.
- The objective was to manage offenders who are at high risk of offending/reoffending, and who were causing significant levels of harm within their community and are often not cooperating with criminal justice agencies or related services
- It was about developing coherent and efficient local structural arrangements into which existing interventions fit to provide a proportionate and effective response to the challenges presented by local offender population.
- ROP is the strategic umbrella or overarching framework that brings together criminal justice agencies and specialist services to prioritise interventions with identified priority or prolific offenders.

- Due to the success of this local initiative the ROP Steering Group and Working Group developed a model for roll out throughout Northern Ireland
- All partners made a commitment to this process and Police established Reducing Offending Unit's in each District to specifically help manage and select those who were causing most harm within our communities. The Probation Board chair local ROP meetings.

### **Identification of offenders**

- In the first instance, police use a matrix to identify priority offenders in a particular area.
- This provides a basis for discussion with partner agencies and the community, based on the risk assessments carried out on those offenders by the respective agencies
- Those persons identified are informed they have been selected and informed they will be given support should they wish to move away from a life of crime
- At the core of ROP is the delivery of a managed set of interventions, sequenced and tailored to respond to the risks and needs of the individual.
- For those who do not wish to comply these interventions have the key aim of disrupting the Offender's criminal activity, supporting compliance and thereby reducing their reoffending.
- Presently we jointly manage approximately 350 Priority Offenders, the majority of which live very chaotic lifestyles and have been caught in the revolving door of the Prison and criminal justice system.
- This will expand to approximately 600 people when we fully develop prevent and deter and Probation Risk of Serious Harm Cases
- In managing such numbers it is crucial we engage with all key partners and the community

### **Three strand approach to ROP**

- ROP is based on a three-strand approach
  1. *Prevent and Deter* - To reduce crime and antisocial behaviour involving young people through early identification and effective intervention strategies

Prevent and Deter focuses on early intervention and the Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership has a key role in this strand. Other key stakeholders including Education and Health will also be key in order to

prevent those young people from progressing into the Criminal Justice system. We have made some real progress in establishing strong local partnership arrangements with areas identifying young people at risk of offending and providing immediate intervention and support

2. *Catch and Control* - A proactive approach by Police and partner agencies targeted at individual offenders who persist in their offending behaviour.

PSNI Catch and Control officers have been at the forefront of this strand. Ownership and focus on individuals who persist in their offending has led to a consistent and effective approach, reduction in delay and increased confidence in the criminal justice system.

3. *Rehabilitate and Resettle*: A joint approach by all agencies to provide a gateway out of crime for priority offenders. Probation and Youth Justice Agency, have been instrumental in providing rehabilitation services for many individuals involved in ROP.

## **Benefits of ROP**

- There are many benefits to ROP which have been realised by all partners.
- Many who led very chaotic lifestyles when selected for ROP have moved away from crime and addressed many of the issues that caused their offending.
- Agencies also share information about developments in each case and discuss progress in terms of rehabilitation, compliance and reoffending
- We have many success stories and as result fewer victims of crime and a safer communities.
- We have seen better and increased communication between all agencies involved in ROP.
- Probation Officers and Youth Justice Agency have highlighted improved communication with PSNI officers. They welcomed the fact that one police officer was responsible for managing the offender they were supervising, and therefore had knowledge of all their offences and could check information more easily.
- Police have been the recipient of timely information which has helped manage risk and prevent reoffending.
- We have seen Increased community confidence and PCSP involvement, with PCSP's funding a number of local initiatives.

- We have seen evidence of substantial reductions in acquisitive crime linked to the cohort and up to 60% of adults and young people spending less time in Custody and in turn reduced their levels of offending.
- What is really encouraging is the increased number of individuals entering the Rehabilitation and Resettlement strand and some real tangible evidence that those engaged in ROP have changed their lives by, tackling addiction and getting support for mental health issues.
- In order to measure real benefits ROP Steering Group has commissioned an economic evaluation of ROP which will give us very useful data around costs and savings to the criminal justice system.

### **Looking to the future and developing ROP**

- We have had the College of Policing Peer Review of ROP which reported in 2014. Experienced personnel from Police, Probation and Public Authority looked at ROP structures and provided an overview of good practice and areas for development.
- They have provided us with a framework for taking ROP on the next part of its journey.
- There are a number of key areas for us to focus on in taking ROP forward.
- We need to recognise other collaborative work being developed and ensure we fully consult with PCSP's, councils and communities, in order to focus on the issues that affect our communities.
- Integrating ROP with other initiatives is key to this process
- We need to embrace advances in IT. Making it easier for agencies to send and receive information and exploring opportunities to develop a shared IT platform
- In developing ROP with Prison Service we need to acknowledge that Prison walls are our new neighbourhoods.
- Further development of arrangements with Prison Service and linking ROP to a number of Prison Review Team recommendations will ensure we manage those from Prison into the community more effectively
- Under ROP, PBNI and PSNI are looking at good practice in other areas which would ensure compliance of those on licence within our community