

PROBATION NEWS

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INNOVATION IN CROSS BORDER PUBLIC PROTECTION WORK

"Protecting the community is the fundamental purpose of the justice system. Effective collaboration between agencies in both jurisdictions can add greatly to the levels of protection and I welcome the opportunities for sharing best practice," the words of Northern Ireland Justice Minister, David Ford MLA opened the sixth annual Cross-Border Public Protection Seminar held in Belfast City Hall last week.

The Seminar themed "Innovation for Safer Communities" provides an opportunity for staff working in public protection across the justice system – probation, police, prison – to enhance collaboration and share learning between partners.

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Justice Minister
David Ford,
PBNI (Acting) Director
Cheryl Lamont,
PBNI Chairman
Vilma Patterson and
Probation Service
Director Vivian Geiran.

WELCOME to the third edition of the Probation News Magazine. This magazine provides a twice yearly opportunity to engage through sharing of news, best practice and information to stakeholders, staff and the public. We hope you enjoy reading this edition.



PBNI
Probation Board
for Northern Ireland



Introduction from the (Acting) Director

Welcome to the third edition of the Probation News Magazine. I hope you enjoy reading this latest update on probations' work.

I would like to draw attention to some significant events for PBNi which are detailed for you in the magazine. The recent Public Protection Advisory Group (PPAG) seminar in Belfast City Hall was a great opportunity to showcase best practise in cross border cooperation. Minister for Justice, David Ford MLA attended the seminar with justice colleagues from across Ireland, north and south. In recent months the Minister has also visited probation teams in the North West and supported the annual Public Protection agencies Special Interest Seminar on online offending in October.

There is an article on Reset – an intensive mentoring project, which I hope you will find interesting. The work of one of our probation officers, Lesley Bell is featured in an excerpt from a feature article in the Guardian newspaper.

I hope you find this edition of the magazine informative. I hope it helps explain some of what we do. Please feel free to contact us or receive further information through our website.

Cheryl Lamont
(Acting) Director of Probation



Welcome from the Chairman

One of the strengths of PBNi is its willingness to use its expertise both through its community based board members and professional and committed staff to explore and develop new opportunities to contribute to public and community safety. You will see examples of our community safety focus and the innovation of our staff through the articles in this magazine.

I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Board members who will shortly be stepping down. Their advice, wisdom, encouragement and challenge have been very valuable. I am delighted that those Board members who have served 3 years have been reappointed. The commitment both the outgoing members and those reappointed have shown to the organisation and to Probation's work is a true example of good citizenship and altruistic attitudes. I also welcome the appointment of the new Board members and look forward to working with them in the future.

I am pleased that as part of the modernisation of delivery of probation in Northern Ireland the Board commissioned the Organisation Development Review two years ago. Taking the appropriate time to look intensively at our systems, processes, practice; at the senior management structure, and then at workforce modernisation has put us in a strong position for managing change in financially challenging times and ensuring continuation of front line delivery with fewer resources.

Vilma Patterson MBE
Chairman

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Justice Minister David Ford announced the new members who have been appointed to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland following an open competition regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland. The new Board members will take up office on 1 December 2015. They are:

Judith Gillespie, Ian Jeffers, Angela Matthews, Gearoid OhEara, Barbara Stuart, Dave Wall

The Minister also announced the reappointment of the Chair, Vilma Patterson and six serving members – David Brown, Julie Erskine, Edgar Jardine, Robin Mullan, Thomas O'Hanlon, Pauline Shepherd – for a second term.

David Ford said: ***"I welcome the appointment of the new members to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland plays a key role in reducing crime and preventing re-offending through the effective supervision of offenders."***

PPAG Innovation

The annual PPAG seminar brings together representatives from police, prison, probation and government departments in Ireland North and South to consider new and innovative practice and explore ways to further develop and increase partnership working.

(Acting) Director of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, Cheryl Lamont commented: *"Collaboration has always been central to the work of*

[Click here](#) for the 12th edition of the Irish Probation Journal launched at the PPAG Seminar.

both probation services on this island. There has been significant recent co-operation on a range of operational areas of work including; the supervision of sex offenders, the assessment and management of female offenders and providing pre-sentence reports. This seminar looks at ways to enhance that collaboration."



The Public Protection Advisory Group [PPAG] which is jointly chaired by the Director of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Director of the Probation Service organise the Seminar annually. This PPAG was established in 2006 to specifically address how increased cross-border co-operation could be taken forward and to implement the probation elements of the agreed work programme coming from Ministers.

Public Protection Agencies focus on online offending



The PPANI agencies held the annual special interest seminar on 16 October at Crumlin Road Gaol. The seminar agenda had a focus on sexual offences committed through use of the internet, raising awareness of the impact of this type of abuse upon children and families and providing an overview of the ongoing work carried out by the agencies involved.

Hugh Hamill, Chair of the PPANI Strategic Management Board and Deputy Director PBNI, said of the event; *"A significant amount of work has been achieved in relation to online offending. The public protection agencies in Northern Ireland have adapted supervision methods and programme delivery to successfully monitor and address this type of offending. This is a really important development in preventing abuse and keeping families safe."*

Representatives of the Public Protection agencies pictured at the Special Interest Seminar at Crumlin Road Gaol l-r; Julie Smyth, PPANI Coordinator, Hugh Hamill, Deputy Director PBNI and Chair of the Strategic Management Board, David Ford MLA and Minister for Justice, Geraldine O'Hare, Head of Programmes and Interventions PBNI and Steven Wilson, Detective Chief Inspector, PSNI.

North West focus

PBNI works in communities across Northern Ireland and, with 2 offices in Derry, there is an established focus on providing a service to the people of the city and surrounding areas.

This year the Minister for Justice David Ford and Department of Justice officials have shown their continued support, engagement and assistance for this work. Anthony Harbinson, Director of Safer Communities, DOJ, and the Justice Minister recently visited Probation staff in Londonderry, meeting with Area Managers Nicola Barr and John O’Kane in the Crawford Square office and accompanied by (Acting) Director Cheryl Lamont to meet staff who work across the city. Anthony also had the opportunity to visit a community service work placement with Age Concern Derry.

The Justice Minister, David Ford also made a visit to the Crawford Square office and team earlier this year. He was pleased to meet staff informally and to see our work in the city of Derry.



David Ford is welcomed to the office by Area Manager John O’Kane and (Acting) Director, Cheryl Lamont.

Director of Safer Communities Anthony Harbinson met with Age Concern representatives during his recent visit.



Winston Churchill Fellowship

Winston Churchill Fellows Cheryl Lamont (1997) and Christine Hunter (2014) attended the annual Winston Churchill Fellowship dinner. Both Cheryl and Christine have been awarded fellowships for innovation in domestic violence and restorative justice work respectively.

“Reset has kept me out of prison”



Paul spent 9 months in custody and was released on licence in August 2015. He was one of the first offenders to be supervised through the new Reset mentoring project. He outlines the benefits of the project:

“When I came out of prison I knew it was going to be hard to get a flat, and I needed help with that. My Mentor did the forms for me and helped me with the application. My Mentor is very easy to talk to, he’s not judgemental about my drug addiction. He is encouraging me to go forward. He is helping me with all of my appointments, and if I didn’t go I would be in breach of my licence so it has been a relief to call my mentor to take me.”

“I think more people in prison need to find out about this programme, so the pressure and stress of coming out can be taken away. I am worried about when the 12 weeks is up, how I can keep up with my appointments. Reset has kept me out of prison, and helped me get the flat which stops me going out and committing crime.”

Reset (Intensive Rehabilitation and Resettlement project) is a new mentoring scheme for offenders which has been introduced by PBNI.

We know that a significant proportion of prisoners released are recalled to custody as a consequence of either failing to comply with the supervisory requirement of release or because of reoffending and we know this often happens within the first few weeks of release.

Reset is funded by the NI Executive Change Fund, the purpose of which is to deliver new initiatives which have a preventative focus, which in turn, will contribute to longer term savings to the public purse.

PBNI’s bid for funding was for a paid Mentoring Scheme, commissioned from the Community and Voluntary Sector (NIACRO), in order to address the high recall rate.

Reset supplements the work of Probation Officers in order to specifically assist offenders during the critical stage of transition from custody to the community.

Probation Officer, Lesley Bell was interviewed for The Guardian Day in the Life feature in September

social care network: adult social care hub
A day in the life of ...

As a probation officer, I have to believe that people can change

I was a social worker before going into probation, so I understand what it's like when people's lives haven't gone to plan

Sponsored by: Liverpool City Council

About this content

Lesley Bell

Friday 9 October 2015 08.30 BST

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Save for later

Lesley Bell, probation officer.

Role

I am one of 11 probation officers based in the Belfast intensive supervision unit, supervising people convicted of violent or sexual offences. Most are on licence following release from prison – they are still serving a sentence but can live in the community. I develop risk management plans for how each person can be managed in the community to prevent them from reoffending.

I work with people who have offended, as well as liaising with other professionals and the police, prisons and social services. Sharing information with others is critical. Protecting the public and making communities safer is our first priority.

How I got where I am

I knew from the age of 16 that I wanted to be a probation officer, when in the summer holidays I spent time volunteering and came into contact with a prisoner’s family. In the early 1980s in Northern Ireland, probation officers started as trainees and they worked for a year while also training in social work. I began a degree in psychology, but a year in the goal posts changed, and a social work qualification was required before becoming a probation officer.

I revised my plans and after graduating in psychology spent two further years studying social work. Once I qualified, the probation board for Northern Ireland didn’t recruit for another number of years. I worked as a residential social worker with young people until 10 years later, when I finally became a probation officer. Social work definitely prepared me for my current job, as I understand what it’s like when people’s lives haven’t gone according to plan.

FOR FULL STORY PLEASE CLICK HERE

Hate Crime Pilot in Belfast and North Antrim

PBNI has been delivering cultural competency training and is piloting a new programme called 'Accepting Differences' in an effort to tackle hate crime. The programme is being piloted in Belfast and North Antrim.

'Accepting Differences' is a first for probation and has been developed in response to an increase in offences motivated by hate or prejudice over the last number of years. It has taken on board international best practice and has been designed for the circumstances of Northern Ireland's strategic response to this issue.

Highly trained staff will challenge offenders' attitudes and prejudices, as well as showing them how and why their beliefs were formed and how to develop new attitudes to reduce their risk of reoffending. There is evidence that with appropriate training and the right staff in place, it is possible to undo the belief system that an offender may have and so ensure that offending stops. We are hopeful that this intervention will assist in changing lives for safer.



**Nobody deserves this.
And nobody deserves
to get away with it.**

Transphobic Hate Crime is unacceptable.
To stop it, report it.
0845 600 8000
In an emergency call 999
Confidential online reporting at
www.psnl.police.uk



KEY FACTS

4,390 people on PBNi caseload totalling **4,781** court orders.

77% are under supervision in the community and **23%** are in custody.

11% on the caseload were convicted of a Sexual offence.

Victims Unit had **230** people registered with the Victim Information Scheme.

66% of caseload is aged 20-39.

41% on the caseload were convicted of a violence against the person (VAP) offence.

17% on the caseload were convicted of a Theft offence.

9% were assessed as posing a risk of serious harm.

707 reports were completed, of which 391 were Pre Sentence Reports and Specific Pre Sentence Reports.