



Annual Report

2022-23



**Working to reduce crime and its impact
on people and communities.**

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Our partners and funders

We would like to thank all our partners and funders for their continued support.



Introduction

Between 2018-2023 we delivered our 5-year Corporate Plan and are immensely proud of the continued progress over this final year of the plan. This period has placed unprecedented challenges to the voluntary sector with reduced funding opportunities, a pandemic, cost of living crisis and real term reductions in wider public sector funding and support.

Nonetheless, this report details the strong results achieved across the 2022/23 year, with our services reaching 5,581 people, and delivered with a clear focus on partnership and progress.

In May 2022 we held our first in person staff day following the pandemic, which saw staff, the Senior Leadership team and members of the Executive Committee come together to take time out to focus on wellbeing, reflect on progress and award success. In July 2022 our Investors in People accreditation was reviewed, and as a result of the careful focus on staff and a value driven culture over previous years, we attained a Gold award for the very first time.

In November our frontline service staff were recognised for the part they played during the pandemic and beyond, as we were included as recipients of the Freedom of the City by Belfast City Council.

Funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) was coming to an end for the Working Well employability programme during the year, and against a backdrop of uncertainty of “re-placement” funding we collaborated with other ESF providers across the third sector, raising awareness of the vital support to people and communities that would be at risk if future funding was not available. Despite the difficulties this matter presented to the sector and the impact we experienced internally, we delivered outstanding results in partnership with colleagues in Prisons and Probation. We went on to be successful in a new bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to establish and deliver our new SkillSET employability programme.

During 2022/23 substantial work was undertaken with Include Youth, the Children’s Law Centre, VOYPIC and Queen’s University Belfast to deliver an event highlighting a NIACRO key policy ask to raise the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR), and creating workshops to help attendees navigate the public consultation that had been launched.

We continued our All-Island Fund partnership with the Irish Penal Reform Trust and delivered two knowledge exchange seminars together. The first, in Belfast, focussed on the experiences of women in prison whose

children are in care; the second, in Dublin, highlighted the barriers experienced by people who are living with a criminal conviction. Both of the seminars concentrated on exploring the lived experiences of people who use our services, as well as hearing from political representatives, academics, other experts and support organisations.

During the year we took time to reflect on the progress achieved from the previous Corporate Plan (2018-23) and to identify our key priorities and ambitions for 2023-28. Staff, volunteers, the Executive Committee and people who use our services all contributed to the development of our new plan with refreshed strategic priorities as well as a revised set of values – building on the strong guiding principles that have shaped NIACRO over its 52-year history.

This report only provides a snapshot of the extent and quality of the services we deliver. It is impossible to capture the true essence and culture of what makes what we do at NIACRO so impactful. Much of it is down to the experience, skills and ability of our staff and volunteers; their personal connection and commitment to our values is the key ingredient that brings about meaningful change.

Alongside committed staff is the willingness of our service users to work with us, to improve their lives, realise their hopes and fulfil their potential. The people who use our services choose to do so and this voluntary relationship serves to build trust and the important relationships necessary to transform lives. We will never take it for granted that the individuals who use our services choose to do so, and we value each connection. One mum from our Early Intervention Support Service recently thanked us for the support her family was receiving and reminded us all that “action speaks louder than words”. This report reflects that feedback.



Fiona Greene
Chief Executive



Les Allamby
Chairperson

Our vision and mission

Our vision

Our vision is of a society in which the needs and rights of all people are equally respected and protected.

Our mission statement

Working to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities.

Our values



Justice

We treat everyone fairly, believing everyone has rights and responsibilities.



Dignity

We respect and value everyone in society.



Compassion

We listen and act without judgement.



Integrity

We are honest and accountable for all aspects of our work.



Inclusion

We accept all people believing everyone has a right to belong.



Courage

We are brave and challenge when we need to.

Our impact in numbers



3093

Adults



1847

Families



641

Children

We delivered 27 services, supporting

5581 people



77,035

Contacts



28,289

Interventions



6,329

Positive outcomes

People reporting positive outcomes achieved:

1,493

Supporting relationships



1,066

Health and well-being



1,080

Employment, education & training



1,195

Stabilising accommodation



734

Stabilising finances



761

Living with a conviction



Children & young people

Our belief

Early interventions can support children and young people to make positive life choices and avoid risk-taking behaviours. We therefore work alongside families, schools, and communities to offer such support.

Our impact

Independent Visitor

What we did	Volunteers befriend and support young people who are in residential or foster care
What we achieved	34 young people were matched with a volunteer, who met over 402 activities and 1281 hours

Independent Representation

What we did	Advocacy and support for young people in Lakewood Secure Care Centre
What we achieved	51 visits to Lakewood providing support for 65 issues reported by young people

EISS (Early Intervention Support Service)

What we did	Support for families when difficulties arise, before they need involvement with statutory services
What we achieved	108 families supported in the Southern HSC Trust area and 101 families supported in the Belfast HSC Trust area

CAPS (Child And Parent Support)

What we did	Intensive support services to families whose children aged 8 – 13 are experiencing significant difficulties
What we achieved	43 families supported in the Southern HSC Trust area

Family Support Hub

What we did	NIACRO chairs a group of voluntary, community & statutory bodies providing family support in Southern HSC Trust area
What we achieved	347 families connected to support services at 12 monthly meetings

SCOPE

What we did	One to one support for children and young people who have a family member in prison
What we achieved	15 children were given intensive support over six months

EISS Case study

Carolyn, an 8-year-old girl, was referred to EISS by the Family Support Hub. Her mum advised that she had had sensory issues for years, 'obsessive' over hair and clothes, and struggled to leave her mum, which made going to school challenging. Her parents' recent break up had also been difficult for her, and so we worked with both to support her.

We agreed a support plan based on meeting emotional needs, boundaries, behaviour and the family routine. Throughout the 12 weekly sessions, Carolyn learned to express and understand her feelings, as well as ways to manage and face them. Her parents also adopted these strategies and were proactive to support her to use them.

Carolyn's mum was also given one-to-one sessions on different ideas to help manage and deal with Carolyn's behaviours at home, alongside support and encouragement to assist her in the single-parent role. She admitted she hadn't put boundaries in place and was now remedying this; she was feeling more confident in her parenting skills and her ability to create a more settled, happy home.

Overall Carolyn's general anxiety levels and behaviour improved.

"I found the service really worthwhile. It had a bigger impact than I imagined."



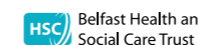
"Thank you so much for all your help and advice for Niall. It is hugely appreciated. Niall has improved dramatically and has achieved more resilience and his separation anxiety is no longer the case."

EISS Participant

"I feel more confident, and I have made friends. I can speak to other boys in my class now because I am confident. I loved my time with you, and I feel better because of it. Time goes quickly, we did lots of different things each week which was fun."

CAPS Participant

Our Funders



Families affected by imprisonment

Our belief

People in prison and their families have the right to maintain (or not) relationships in prison and in the community; helping families to access services strengthens their ability to cope, to achieve effective resettlement and to desist from crime. We therefore work to reduce (re)offending, and its impact, by supporting families affected by imprisonment.

Our impact

Family Links

What we did	Emotional and practical support for families affected by imprisonment
What we achieved	1324 families received support, including 150 children

Visitor Centre Services

What we did	Hospitality, child-care, and welcome service to prison visitors at the three prisons in NI
What we achieved	Tailored services provided across all 3 sites in visit halls and Welcome Centres, including child-centred visits, monthly activities and tailored events

FAMM (Family And Money Matters)

What we did	Debt and money management advice to people impacted by imprisonment or serving community sentences and their families
What we achieved	492 people received advice, and 70 bank accounts have been opened through Clonard Credit Union for people who would not otherwise have been able to gain access to a bank account from high street banks because of their conviction or lack of ID

Family Links Case study

When Erin was charged and taken into custody, her partner Luke and children had their home's windows smashed and car vandalised, and were forced to move into their grandparents' two-bedroom apartment. They had nowhere else to go. Social Services referred the family to Family Links, and we provided emotional and practical support. Luke was struggling with the breakdown of his relationship, the offence itself, media attention, intimidation in the community, being homeless and trying to support the children.

We met with the school principal to make them aware and provided individual support sessions in school with each child, as they were suffering with such a great upheaval in their life. We worked through feelings, emotions, anger management, how to handle bullying based on media attention and how to be a steady support for each other through each stage of the court process.

We also held sessions with the grandparents, as their health had been impacted as they struggled to cope with the situation. Working in partnership with Social Services and the Housing Executive, the family was awarded additional housing points and moved into their own house. The whole family attended our Family

Day in the summer and the children attended our Summer Scheme. The children are now progressing well in school and engaging with supports to help them.

Luke and the grandparents have spoken about how they feel more in control of the situation and couldn't have made it through without the help of Family Links, particularly through the court process. They feel more prepared for the future with the support of Family Links.

“We would not have got this level of support anywhere else.”



“I appreciate everything you have done for us throughout this journey, my family and I are so thankful.”

Family Links Participant

“We really appreciate all NIACRO do for us families visiting on the daily and they also go to all this effort on International Women's Day giving out gifts – it's amazing, we feel so welcomed and seen here.”

Visitor to Visitor Centre

“When a family member goes into custody, and you have no previous experience of this it is completely confusing. I really appreciated help from the first person I spoke to who was very patient and explained a lot of the process to me, Melissa has been very consistent and thoughtful in her support despite the lack of engagement from my family member. When you have no experience of the criminal justice system it is overwhelming. I found NIACRO to be invaluable.”

Family Links Participant

“Staff are so attuned with the needs of the families and children. At times when there is particular challenges during a visit staff step in and take children into the play area so seamlessly which really assists with defusing challenges.”

Visitor to Visitor Centre

Our Funders



Adults in prison and in the community

Our belief

Supporting people who have offended or who are at risk of offending to make positive choices contributes to desistance from crime. We therefore work to contribute to a reduction in offending and re-offending by supporting adults leaving prison and in the community.

Our impact

APAC ASB

What we did	Support for people to retain tenancies and prevent homelessness because of anti-social behaviour
What we achieved	52 people referred, with 96% retaining their tenancy

APAC STEM

What we did	Support for people whose tenancy may be at risk due to harassment / intimidation because of their ethnicity
What we achieved	19 people referred, with 100% retaining their tenancy

Aspire Mentoring

What we did	Mentoring support for young men referred by PBNI
What we achieved	271 men supported

Aspire Community Engagement

What we did	Mentoring support for young men, not subject to statutory supervision
What we achieved	389 men supported

Transitions

What we did	Mentoring support for PBNI referrals (men and women not fitting Aspire criteria) on post custody supervision
What we achieved	127 people supported

Insync

What we did	Holistic support for victims of paramilitary violence
What we achieved	63 participants supported

Welfare Advice

What we did	Specialist welfare advice service to meet the needs of people in contact with the criminal justice system
What we achieved	376 individuals supported; 76% received more in depth support and a benefit check

Aspire Mentoring Case study

When Steven was referred to Aspire Mentoring, he was struggling with his mental health, the break down of a long-term relationship, and had recently been homeless. He had moved into his own accommodation but was having difficulties managing the cost of living, running a home and completing practical tasks.

We met with Steven and agreed an action plan with realistic goals, focusing on completing day-to-day practical tasks, which we supported him to achieve. We helped him register with the GP and apply for all the benefits to which he was entitled. We made sure he received food parcels and electricity vouchers. Steven was so grateful for this because he had no family support after the death of his parents. He has started to manage things like making his own appointments when needed and engaging with other support services without prompting. His confidence is growing, and he's showing interest in his own future. He's working hard to keep on a positive path and hasn't come to the attention of the police again.

When Steven's mental health is more settled, he knows that he has a referral to NIACRO's employability programme waiting. He's taking steps to engage with support services that will allow him to engage in training and employment opportunities. He has made so many positive steps in a short period of time and improves daily.

“Before I just felt like giving up. I wouldn't have been able to get anywhere without your support. Thank you.”

“The counselling sessions helped me when I was feeling at my worst. I became homeless and was attacked by people in the community because of my race. This has been one of the most difficult times of my life. The support I got has helped me get through this, I don't know where I would be if I hadn't have got this support.”

Insync Participant

“Thanks for everything. I can't believe my life has changed so much and don't feel like I could have done it without you keeping me right. You have seen me at my worst so understand how much I have changed, I forgot how good life can be. I am a good dad, son and brother which I had given up on ever thinking this was possible. I am really grateful and appreciate everything you have done.”

Aspire Participant



Adults in prison and in the community - continued

Base 2

What we did	Crisis intervention project which offers clarification, support and mediation services
What we achieved	1198 referrals received

Base 2X

What we did	Floating support service for individuals who have illegal drug debt, to remain safe from harm and maintain their tenancy
What we achieved	30 people supported

Belong 2

What we did	Supporting those from minority ethnic and/or migrant backgrounds who have been impacted by the Criminal Justice System including through advice sessions with professionals in the sector
What we achieved	21 people supported and 39 professionals advised

Connections

What we did	One-to-one support for women through and beyond the Criminal Justice System
What we achieved	15 women supported (5 months pilot period)

Women's Group

What we did	Weekly meetings for women in the community
What we achieved	39 women supported

Working Well Community

What we did	Employability support based in Probation and NIACRO offices across NI
What we achieved	654 people received support

Working Well Prison

What we did	Employability support based in NI's three prisons particularly connecting participants to services and programmes to enhance skills and support individuals towards release
What we achieved	419 people received support

Disclosure Advice

What we did	Advice regarding the disclosure of convictions including to employers, FE colleges, and other institutions regarding compliance with legislation and good practice
What we achieved	358 queries around the disclosure of convictions and 480 people trained over 44 sessions in best practice

Working Well Case study

When Jack was referred to Working Well by his Probation Officer, he had just finished a catering qualification and was struggling to find work in a restaurant kitchen. He had been living in temporary accommodation since his release from prison and was subject to a curfew, and the nature of his offence limited the places he could work or volunteer.

We identified a voluntary opportunity, helping in the kitchen of a local homeless drop-in centre. While Jack was volunteering there, he was approached by the owner of a local restaurant (who had previously hired a NIACRO client) about the possibility of a work placement. We went along with Jack to meet the head chef and restaurant manager and agreed an 8-week placement.

Jack excelled during the placement, receiving consistent positive feedback from the head chef, who said he could not ask for anything better, Jack was a "real team player." Upon completion of the 8 weeks, he was offered a job. He is continuing to volunteer at the drop-in centre once a week and has come a long way in terms of confidence in his own abilities. He is saving money to be able to afford a private let and move out of the hostel.

"You couldn't have done any more for me. Thanks for all your support."



"Thank you for recognising my skills and interests and enabling me to put them to good use, getting back to work has been the best thing to happen to me in a long time. The support made me feel like a human being again. Thanks so much, I am delighted to be back in employment again."

Working Well Participant

"Thank you for the advice on this and the sanity check I really needed. I do believe the systems and personal prejudice are failing offenders all over the place. I just want to get on with my life and provide a normal life for my wife and 5 children. Just so glad your organisation exists as I really wouldn't know what to do"

Disclosure Advice Client

Our Funders



External engagement

Our belief

The knowledge and experience we gain from our work gives us the obligation, and authority and the responsibility to seek to influence decision makers, service providers, community leaders and the wider public. We will continue to have an impact on policy and practice by communicating our policy asks and engaging relevant publics.

Our 5 key policy asks are:

1. Effective resourcing of early intervention programmes and services

Early intervention works on the principle of intervening at an early age and/or stage to help children/adults to develop the skills they need to live happy, healthy, and successful lives.

2. Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility

Northern Ireland's Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) is set at 10 years old and is one of the lowest in Europe. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that the minimum age of criminal responsibility should be 16 years.

3. Address delays in the Criminal Justice System

When criminal justice does not perform effectively it can have a significant adverse impact on the lives of those involved: victims, defendants, witnesses, and their families. It also wastes significant amounts of public monies and impacts upon the confidence of the public in the system's effectiveness.

4. Reduce the use of remand supported by enhanced alternatives

The number of people in prisons is rising, as is the percentage of those on remand.

5. Reform the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978

Helping people with convictions to contribute to and feel included in society is key to reducing re-offending, and we eagerly await agreed amendments to the current legislation.



Our impact

- We partnered with the Irish Penal Reform Trust to secure an All-Island Fund award to elevate issues of policy concern across the island of Ireland. The programme of events commenced formally with a Knowledge Sharing Event in Stormont in May 2022, highlighting the experiences of women in custody whose children are in care.
- In November 2022 we held a joint seminar in Dublin focussing on the barriers to employment following a conviction. We secured speakers including Senator Lynn Ruane, Sinead Gibney, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and Htaik Win, solicitor with the NI Human Rights Commission.
- We continued to work with the Children's Law Centre, VOYPIC and Include Youth in highlighting our joint research entitled 'Tracing the Review: Developments in Youth Justice in NI 2011-2021', with substantial work undertaken to deliver an event in collaboration with Queen's University Belfast and our Tracing the Review colleagues. We took this opportunity to not only focus on the reasons to raise the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) but on creating workshops to help attendees navigate the public consultation which was launched. The highly successful event was attended by a wide cross-section from public, private and CV sectors.
- NIACRO children and family services staff took part in two sessions with Professor Ray Jones in relation to his review of Social Care in Northern Ireland. Work undertaken in relation to MACR also presented us with an opportunity to highlight our key policy ask in relation to early intervention.

Consultations

Pivotal to the work of NIACRO is listening to our services users and consulting with our stakeholders across all areas of our work. Formal consultation responses included:

- DoJ Charlotte's Law Consultation
- NI Audit Office Review on Re-Offending
- DoJ Audio and Video Links for NI Courts
- DoJ review on Actions relating to Bail, Remand and Custodial arrangements for children
- DoJ Consultation on Increasing the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility in Northern Ireland
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland Consultation on Corporate Plan 2023-2026
- Money and Pensions Service (MAPS) 'Debt advice clients with deficit budgets' Call to Evidence
- DoJ Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy
- DoJ Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy
- Dept of Education Draft Corporate Plan



Applying resources effectively

Our belief

We must use our resources efficiently and effectively to bring maximum benefit to our service users. To realise our outcomes, we will support our staff and volunteers, and secure and manage the necessary resources.

Throughout the year the Central Services Support team which includes our Finance, HR and Administrative teams worked tirelessly to support project delivery and maintain a robust infrastructure.

Staff support and training

- The internal Wellbeing group continued to focus on a wide range of connecting and supportive activities.
- We delivered a comprehensive Training Programme including mandatory programmes and bespoke offerings based on staff learning and development needs.

Volunteers

- We had 30 active volunteers.
- As well as retaining our Investors in Volunteer Award, we held a special event during Volunteers week to celebrate their work with children and young people.

Securing resources

- Among a range of positive income generation activities during the year, we successfully bid for funding from the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund as well as a successful tender to the Public Health Agency for the Early Intervention Support Service in both the Belfast and Southern Trust Areas.
- NIACRO's Centre for Development, funded by the National Lottery, now has Approved Centre status with SFJ Awards to deliver accredited programmes and qualifications that enhance the knowledge and skills of those working with adults who have offended and young people, children and families who have been or may be vulnerable to being impacted by their or others' crimes. The Centre for Development is also a member of the CPD Certification Service and provides approved learning and development initiatives which support the continuous professional development of those working with people involved in the criminal justice system.
- In early 2023 we designed and secured SFJ Awards approval for our new training programme Supporting Women Through and Beyond the Criminal Justice System.

Quality standards and controls

- In August 2022 our Investors in People re-accreditation took place; we were awarded IIP Gold for the first time.
- Work was completed to secure the renewal of the Investing in Children award.
- Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation was completed.
- An Internal and External Financial Audit Programme took place with positive assessments.
- The Executive Committee and Finance and Audit Committee met regularly during the year in line with our Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- NIACRO is committed to keeping people safe and we operate strategic and operational safeguarding working groups to ensure compliance with our Keeping People Safe Policies and Procedures.

Our people

NIACRO Executive Committee

Directors during the year ending 31 March 2023 were as follows:

Les Allamby - Chair

Majella McCloskey - Vice-Chair

Tony Glover - Treasurer

Paul Farrell

Christine Hunter (Until February 2023)

Helen Dunn

Gillian McNaull

Mark Walker

Conor Murray

John Patrick Clayton (Until November 2022)

Senior Leadership Team

Fiona Greene - Chief Executive

Rachel Long - Director of Operations

Ciara Corrigan - Programme Manager

Gareth Eannetta - Programme Manager

Patrick Anderson - Programme Manager

Maggie Butler - Central Services Support Manager

Ruth Walker - Business Development Manager

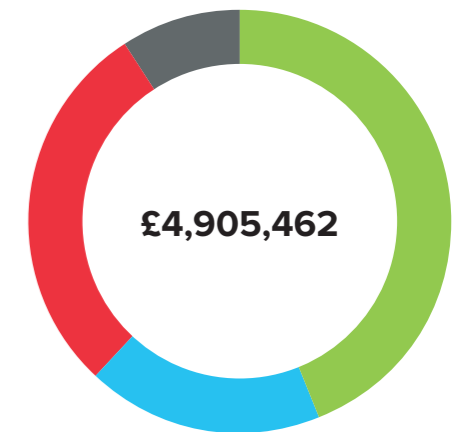


Financial overview

Our funders	Value
All-Island Fund / IPRT	£7,376
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	£77,592
Charles Hayward Foundation	£25,000
Children in Need	£17,515
Construction Industry Training Board NI	£37,210
Department for Communities, Advice NI	£72,257
Department of Health, Mental Health Fund	£35,637
Department of Justice	£371,836
DOH/HSCNI Strategic Planning and Performance Group	£229,173
European Social Fund	£892,609
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	£60,165
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	£417,022
Northern Ireland Prison Service	£796,265
Pilgrim Trust	£6,872
Probation Board for Northern Ireland	£985,123
Public Health Agency	£323,398
Red Cross	£6,482
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	£23,732
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	£126,886
MEDF, The Executive Office	£9,547
The National Lottery	£20,289
Ufi VocTech Trust	£53,050
UK Community Renewal Fund, UK Government	£150,819
Voluntary agencies	£7,240
Western Health & Social Care Trust	£11,331
Donations & membership fees	£1,828
Investment Income	£4,450
Services Income	£134,758
Totals	£4,905,462

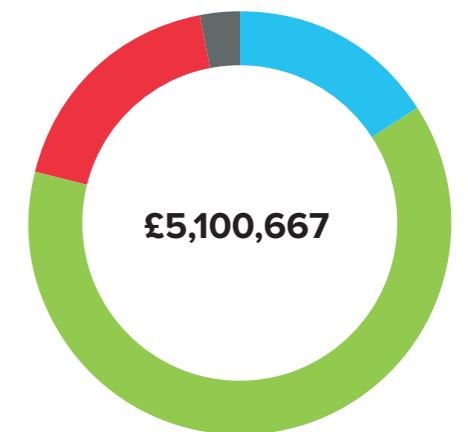
Breakdown of income sources

Classification	Value	Percentage
Criminal Justice	£2,153,224	44%
European funds	£892,609	18%
Local admin	£1,405,137	29%
Other	£454,492	9%
Totals	£4,905,462	100%



Breakdown of resources expended

Strategic area	Value	Percentage
Children and Young People	£803,841	16%
Adults in Prison and the Community	£3,210,673	63%
Families Affected by Imprisonment	£920,222	18%
Fundraising and Governance	£165,931	3%
Totals	£5,100,667	100%



Key Information

Company Registration Number: NI 018121

Charity Registration Number: NIC101599

Registered Office: Amelia House, 4 Amelia Street, Belfast BT2 7GS

Company Secretary: Fiona Greene

You can request a copy of the full Financial Statements by emailing us at:

niacro@niacro.co.uk



Belfast

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