

niacro

Issue 39  
SPRING 2017

## Adapting to changing times

Expanding  
influence  
and impact

# niacro news



### Positive Outcomes

Addressing the unique, varied and demanding social and personal needs of short-term prisoners.



### Approaches to Hate Crime

Exploring approaches to hate crime – the challenge for all of us.



### Moving Forward

Feeling good 'in our skins' in changing times.

Share your views - email [pact@niacro.co.uk](mailto:pact@niacro.co.uk)

# Welcome to the latest edition of NIACRO News!

39

NIACRO believes in supporting people who have offended or who are at risk of offending, to make positive choices which contribute to reducing offending and anti-social behaviour.

We aim to contribute to a reduction in offending and re-offending through appropriate and effective support for both adults in the community and those leaving prison.

In this issue we place the focus on POST (Positive Outcomes for Short Term Prisoners), a project ensuring that short term prisoners will be offered the opportunity to engage with NIACRO on a one-to-one basis to build an understanding of their needs and circumstances and motivate them to engage in the types of interventions that will have the potential to make an impact.

We also hear 'Stefan's Story', illustrating a striking transformation from difficult and complex beginnings to making a worthwhile

contribution to society through his role as a Peer Mentor with NIACRO. Also in this edition, our guest column features Cheryl Lamont, Chief Executive of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland who talks to us about the value of the third sector in reducing reoffending.

This issue also provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the many changes that have taken place at NIACRO. It has been important to reflect on why as an organisation we feel good 'in our skins' in what could still be framed as uncertain times. It is also an opportunity for us to thank our staff, Executive, supporters, funders and colleagues both within and outside of our sector, who have helped us through a difficult period.

We will keep campaigning and contributing to policy development, providing vital services for adults, families and children, and young people, and we will continue to work tirelessly to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities.



Thanks for reading,

*The Editor*

NIACRO



## Feedback

If you have any feedback on any aspect of NIACRO News or would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact our Public Affairs and Communication Team by emailing:

 [pact@niacro.co.uk](mailto:pact@niacro.co.uk)



# Positive Outcomes

Supporting the needs of short-term prisoners.



**A**s our POST (Positive Outcomes for Short Term Prisoners) project marks the completion of its first year, we want to reflect on some of the vital work undertaken by the project over the previous 12 months.

The short-term prison population have unique, varied and demanding social and personal needs, resulting in a high proportion being at risk of re-offending as a result of these challenges, making this particular group one of the most challenging populations to work with in the prison system. POST was designed to address the issues that these individuals face by ensuring that a personal and individualised approach is taken in each case.

Each POST worker is assigned a caseload of individuals from the committal stage, where work begins with the individual to identify areas of need. Once the needs are identified, an individualised work plan is created and onward referrals are made to ensure that a comprehensive package of support is offered to every inmate. Working cooperatively with the Prisoner Development Unit and the Housing Rights Service, a joined-up approach between service providers is put in place ensuring that each person's needs are best addressed both effectively and efficiently.

In addition to providing support to people whilst they are in custody and preparing them for the challenges of release, POST seeks to develop programmes within the prison which meet the educational and social needs of those in prison.

Some of these have included:

- the creation of a fast-track accredited Employability Programme through the Learning and Skills department
- a resuscitation course facilitated and delivered by the Physical Education Instructors in the prison gym
- a Stress Management course facilitated through Action Mental Health
- Employment Referral Sessions facilitated by People First and Criminal Conviction Disclosure Advice
- CV Development sessions facilitated through a peer mentor service created and supervised by POST.

The overall support of the Prisoner Development Unit, the prison staff, and the Learning and Skills department in the development and delivery of services has ensured the success of POST to date in addressing the un-met needs of the short-term sentenced prisoner population. Through a progressive joint working strategy there is the potential to advance further programmes designed to meet the needs of short-term prisoners.

To bring the POST story right down to the day-by-day realities, we have asked one of our POST Project Workers, Lauren, to describe a typical working day.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF....LAUREN

## A POST Project Worker

**07.45**

Arrive for work. Clear security and make my way to the office.

**08.00**

Start the day checking emails. The Prison Service sends a vast amount of information on a daily basis which can pertain to any number of people that I am currently working with, so it is important to stay up to date.

I also run a daily list of the current caseload that are allocated to me in my role as Support Officer with NIACRO POST and plan which appointments will take place that day based on the prison diary system and the availability of the NIPS PDP Co-ordinators.

**09.00 - 11.30**

I head onto the landings in the prison to see those who are scheduled for their initial POST Assessment or a follow-up appointment to check on their progress. I am often accompanied by one of the NIPS PDP Co-ordinators who conducts an interview with the individual alongside me. Most often these meetings take place in the designated interview rooms but they can also happen in recreational rooms.

On average the assessment takes about fifteen minutes to complete and during that time I try to identify what support services are required and what courses they may be interested in undertaking whilst they are in custody.

**11.30 - 12.30**

Return to the office to enter the information from the assessments into the prison computer system.

**12.30**

Off to the prison gym for a run!! I am very fortunate to have the use of a state of the art gymnasium during my lunch break as I am training for an ultra marathon.

**13.15**

Back to the office to make referrals for the those that have been seen. This involves liaising with the Learning and Skills department, the Physical Education Instructors, Adept, Housing Rights and NIACRO services such as Benefits Advice, FAMM, Base 2 and Family Links.

**14.00**

Landings re-open for visits with prisoners. Courses and information sessions that POST facilitates often take place in the afternoon so time is usually spent in the Prisoner Development Unit overseeing these activities or else I return to the landings to meet with participants and conduct interviews.



**15.30**

Return to the office to update the afternoon appointments into the prison computer system and to meet with the NIPS PDP Co-ordinators to discuss any relevant information for assigned cases, including those pending bail, further charges, deportation, transfer or release.

**16.00**

Finish work and head home for dinner, homework and a night run before starting all over again!!

*Lauren*



# Public Affairs and Policy Update



## Meet Katherine

In November 2016, we welcomed Katherine McCloskey to the NIACRO Team to undertake the role of Public Affairs and Policy Co-Ordinator.

Katherine is tasked with co-ordinating the public affairs, policy and communications work of NIACRO, including supporting the NIACRO staff team, managing internal and external communications, and overseeing public consultations and policy formulation, in particular focusing on demonstrating the value of NIACRO's service delivery functions.

Katherine previously worked for Citizens Advice and the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and has a strong background in policy, communications and public affairs in the third sector in Northern Ireland.

Her policy interests include criminal justice, mental health and women's rights which is reflected in her roles as a trustee of both AWARE and Training for Women Network.

# Assembly UPDATE

**A**t NIACRO, we have a strong relationship with local elected representatives and decision makers.

Like our colleagues in the community and voluntary sectors, we believe that a stable government at Stormont is the best framework for us to deliver the vital services that we provide in order to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities.

Whilst the context and political environment in which we exist is important to the work that we do, the current challenges will not discourage us from consistently advocating and lobbying on behalf of the people that we support on a day-to-day basis.

We will continue to proactively research and develop policy proposals and will engage with key influencers on those areas that are meaningful to our service users.

We appreciate that there is a lot at stake after the recent Assembly Election - and there will be challenges ahead for Northern Ireland, and for the lives and livelihoods of those who live here, particularly those who require the services that we have provided over many years.

We look forward to building upon the essential public affairs and policy engagement work that has already taken place on a wide range of issues including - women who have offended, mental health concerns, hate crime, children first; offenders second and responses to those who have committed sexual offences amongst others.

## Programme for Government

Following from the draft framework Programme for Government (PfG) consultation in Summer 2016, NIACRO had the opportunity to respond to the final PfG consultation in December 2016.

We keep a close eye on what goes on at the Northern Ireland Assembly. Here are some recent developments most relevant to our work:



In our detailed response we welcomed the Outcomes Based Accountability Model. We further commented on the relevant outcomes related specifically to the work of NIACRO which include:

- Reducing crime and the harm and vulnerability caused by crime (1);
- Increasing the effectiveness of the justice system (38); and
- Reducing re-offending (39).

The full response can be found on the Consultation area of the NIACRO website, [www.niacro.co.uk](http://www.niacro.co.uk)

## Consultations

Between October 2016 and March 2017, NIACRO responded to the following consultations:

- NI Executive - Programme for Government
- Children and Young People's Strategy 2017- 2027
- DWP and HMT Public financial guidance review - consultation on a single body
- Money Advice Service's 2017/18 Business Plan
- NIHE Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022
- Private Rented Sector in Northern Ireland - Proposals for Change
- Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill

All policy and consultation responses can be accessed on the Consultation area of the NIACRO website, [www.niacro.co.uk](http://www.niacro.co.uk)



Meet Stefan, a Peer Mentor on the MOVE project. At 25 years old, Stefan from North Belfast had a difficult start to life. Coming from a complex family setting, from the age of 10 he was living in residential children's homes across Northern Ireland and was considered by some to be one of the most challenging and complex juvenile offenders within the Youth Justice Agency.

## Stefan's Story

By age 11, he had his first experience of the Juvenile Justice Centre. Stefan was identified by many professionals as 'problematic' and it was fully expected by some that he would spend most of his adult life in custody, as he had in his childhood and teenage years. However, when he was 17, he decided to change his life by getting help from the Juvenile Justice Centre.



For him this was a critical step, as he began to explore the positive choices that were available to him. Upon his release, he started to engage in personal development programmes and made the life changing decisions to stay free from custody and work towards an agreed care plan.

In that time, he embraced multiple experiences and challenges, all bringing him to where he is today, to – a situation where he now gives back to others.

Stefan is now working with the NIACRO team to reach young people who are experiencing similar circumstances, providing hope, inspiration and support to help others, particularly hard to reach young people on the margins of society. In his role as a MOVE Peer Mentor, he assists in the matching of volunteers to a young person, helping them to develop individual action plans.

His role encourages the participation of young people in the NIACRO Youth Forum and MOVE advisory group, ensuring that young people's voices are amplified and not ignored. Stefan provides a crucial role in organising social or recreational activities for young people, enabling them to become involved with and re-integrate into their own community.

Stefan has not only made a striking transformation but is making a worthwhile contribution to society – motivating and offering hope to young people in a similar situation as he was.

Stefan's story is not an isolated one and NIACRO believes children and young people can be diverted from the criminal justice system through support designed to meet their needs and the needs of their families. His story provides us with the impetus to continue to provide vital services, support and advocacy for children, young people and their families.

## What is MOVE?

The MOVE project, funded by the BIG Lottery, is a one-to-one mentoring scheme which provides enhanced opportunities for young people who are at risk of offending or who are experiencing significant difficulties at home, school or in their community.

With the help of volunteer mentors, MOVE aims to support young people to become better integrated within their community and improve their well-being and confidence.

We aim to work in partnership with existing services and impact positively upon the whole family unit.





# EXPLORING APPROACHES TO HATE CRIME

## THE CHALLENGE FOR ALL OF US

**As part of our work to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities, NIACRO has over recent years, sought to contribute in practice and in policy, to tackling hate crime.**

Our Peace III funded Challenge Hate Crime project balanced practice, working with people in prison whose offences had a hate motivation, with research which culminated in the production of research papers which made a series of recommendations regarding the criminal justice response to hate crime in Northern Ireland over concerns such as addressing the under-reporting of hate crime.

Through our STEM (Supporting Tenancies of Ethnic Minorities) Project, NIACRO supports people who have been (or are at risk of being) victims of a hate crime that may require them to relocate to a new area. Through STEM, we maintain close relationships with a variety of organisations and agencies, supporting Belfast's black and minority ethnic communities.

Paul Iganski, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Lancaster University, who contributed to the Challenge Hate Crime project, was our guest speaker at two special NIACRO events on 17th and 18th October, concerned with raising the profile of, and exploring approaches to hate crime.

The first event was a practical workshop attended by 20 representatives of community, voluntary and statutory organisations supporting victims of hate crimes and working with people whose crimes were motivated by prejudice or hate.

The Organisation for Security & Co-operation in Europe defines hate crimes as: *"...criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people. To be considered a hate crime, the offence must meet two criteria: First, the act must constitute an offence under criminal law; second, the act must have been motivated by bias."*

Recent research findings would indicate that **'bias' motivation for hate crime can often be a peripheral motivator.** Much of Professor Iganski's presentation and the subsequent group discussions focused on the implications of this insight for practitioners; where 'bias motivation' is, at times, wrongfully placed at the heart of hate crime instances, this can misrepresent what is going on and can lead to unhelpful practical responses. Professor Iganski drew on examples of instances where conflict had already been triggered between two parties, and the prejudice that lay beneath was triggered by that conflict, and was then expressed in angry or violent ways.

An 'over-focus' on the racist or prejudicial element of the crime with the 'offender' can, in these instances, be counter-productive. Professor Iganski pointed to the need, in many cases, to work with people to help them to deal constructively with the 'baggage' in their lives in the first instance (as is NIACRO's practice with many of our service users). It is often the case that under-developed cognitive and emotional capabilities necessary to deal appropriately with 'difference' lie at the heart of many of the thoughts and actions that arise in the 'heat of the moment' responses.

Turning to those who are victims of hate crime, Professor Iganski emphasised the importance of understanding the very significant implications of being a victim of a hate crime - the crime strikes at the very core of a person's identity and sends a message that they are somehow inferior or do not 'belong'. It therefore causes people to live with insecurity and a heightened awareness of risk; mentally pushing people out to the margins of society.

Participants found Professor Iganski's reflections on the approach of Smile, an organisation in the North West of England, helpful when considering the implications of these insights for supporting victims of hate crime and offering challenge and support to those who have offended in this way. Smile's intensive work with the offender is centred on three core themes of: addressing the complex difficulties the individual may have experienced through life; supporting anger management; and raising empathy for the victims to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. This preparatory work culminates in the offender and two proxy victims talking through the impact of the crime together.

The second event was a NIACRO Justice Series event, held over lunchtime at Stormont Buildings, where Professor Iganski addressed MLAs, policy makers and voluntary and statutory representatives. His address focussed on two key messages:

- **The need to recognise hate crime as a public health concern**, in recognition of the mental health consequences of the crimes and the limitations of a purely criminal justice response which invariably comes after the event and cannot alone adequately address the varying and complex needs of both the 'victim' and the 'offender'.
- The potential **power of bystanders** to make a significant contribution to a victim in the aftermath of an incident. Many hate crime instances occur in busy public places, and bystanders have the potential to offer a helpful 'first response' through simple acts or kind words. Paul spoke of the positive impact of 'emotional first aid'. A simple kind word "Are you OK?", an offer of help "Can I help you to make a phone call?" or a distancing from the offence "I am so sorry that you experienced that in this area; his/her attitude do not reflect my beliefs". All potentially powerful ways to reassure an individual who is likely to be in shock and feeling vulnerable and insecure.



This 'civil courage' is a recognised valuable contribution in Germany where there is widespread acknowledgement that civil society organisations are well-placed to build civil courage; tapping into the resource of the silent majority who find it abhorrent but who may not speak out if not actively encouraged to do so.

There are numerous testimonies from people, including NIACRO's STEM Project clients, who have been victims of hate crime and who report that nobody coming forward with this 'civil courage' in the aftermath of an incident can just as hurtful as the incident itself. Professor Iganski recognised that this 'civic courage' may not come naturally to everyone but he is of the strong belief that it can be learned and we all have a responsibility to help each other to overcome the fear of feeling tongue-tied or embarrassed about saying the 'wrong thing'. We are not asking people to intervene with the offender, Paul reminded us, but rather in the aftermath, when any immediate danger has passed. Surely there is a challenge in here for all of us.

# Valuing Our Volunteers

NIACRO volunteers support us in a wide variety of projects with people who have offended, their families, young people at risk of offending, and the wider community.



Volunteers are an integral part of our organisation. They bring experience, skills and diversity which complement the work of our paid staff in delivering essential services to the community. We value the unique and distinct contribution volunteers make and have demonstrated this through our achievement of the Investing in Volunteers standard.

Volunteers involved in NIACRO's Youth Volunteering services listen, encourage and support young people, as well as helping them to have fun and experience new opportunities. This has been a busy year for the Youth Volunteering team, activities have included:

- Fishing trip
- Panto at the Mac
- Christmas craft workshop
- DJ workshop
- Beauty pamper and tuition evenings
- Bingo
- Days out at We are Vertigo and Citi-Golf
- Fitness training sessions



**Danielle is a volunteer mentor on the Independent Visitor (IV) Scheme:**

*"I take out a young person once a fortnight, we have a chat and do something that the young person chooses.*

*My young person and I spend a lot of our time in the winter months going to the cinema and in the summer months we spend time outdoors walking in the local park.*

*We chat about anything going on in both our lives; I find it's just as important to share what is happening in my life to enjoy a good friendship."*

*"The best advice I can give to anyone considering volunteering is to just go for it. Yes, it can be a challenge at the beginning but the benefits the young person and for the volunteer are more than worth it."*

# Volunteer Training

Volunteering opportunities are now available in the Belfast, South Eastern and Southern Trust areas. We also have limited opportunities in the North West. NIACRO provides relevant training including a certified 'safeguarding course', guidance and out-of-pocket expenses to prepare and support our volunteers. NIACRO volunteers will receive regular support and supervision, as well as other training opportunities identified as relevant to the role.

If you're interested in finding out more, visit the NIACRO website [www.niacro.co.uk](http://www.niacro.co.uk), call us on 028 9032 0157 or, email [volunteering@niacro.co.uk](mailto:volunteering@niacro.co.uk).



## Disclosure Advice

We know that the criminal records regime can be complex and confusing, whether you are a person with a criminal record or you are an employer or other organisation who is dealing with applicants disclosing conviction or offending information.

### Did you know...

The NIACRO Disclosure Advice team can provide direction and advice concerning how to disclose your criminal record.

We can also provide guidance on how to recruit fairly and on what the law says in relation to this.

- » The Disclosure Advice team can be contacted on 028 9032 0157.
- » Our Advice Line is available Monday to Friday from 10.30am - 3.30pm.
- » Alternatively, please email our Disclosure Hub at [DisclosureHub1@niacro.co.uk](mailto:DisclosureHub1@niacro.co.uk)





## THE VALUE OF THIRD SECTOR IN REDUCING REOFFENDING - CHERYL LAMONT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**The probation service performs an important role in the justice system. In 2015-16 it provided 8255 reports to assist decision making in the criminal justice process.**

In the prisons in Northern Ireland, probation delivers pre-release resettlement interventions to prisoners and also provides risk assessment reports to the Parole Commissioners to inform their decision making about prisoner releases. In the community, probation supervises offenders under a range of Orders and Licences to ensure sentence compliance. Services are also provided to victims of crime through our Victims Information Scheme. The successful delivery of the probation service is central to the promotion of public confidence in both community sentencing and the wider justice system because of its role in delivering compliance, rehabilitation and resettlement.

However the delivery of probation services is not carried out by probation staff in isolation. Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) has worked in the heart of local communities across Northern Ireland since it was established in 1982. During this time, we have built strong relationships with the voluntary and community sector. Those relationships are critical in helping us to successfully deliver our services. Indeed one of the unique elements of society in NI has been the strength and influence of the third sector over the last 40 years, and like many public sector bodies, probation has benefited from close collaboration with a number of third sector organisations.

As we move forward into a new Corporate Planning period I believe those relationships will not only be consolidated but strengthened as we seek to rehabilitate and resettle those who have offended.

As a result of budget reductions over the past few years, Probation has had to reduce its funding to the third sector.

Despite this, probation has sought out opportunities and accessed funding that has enabled collaborative work to continue. Indeed In the last number of years community and voluntary sector collaboration has been at the heart of a number of important new initiatives aimed at enhancing rehabilitation and resettlement.

For example, 'Reset' the Intensive Resettlement and Rehabilitation Project was introduced by probation in 2015. It is a bespoke desistance based adult Mentoring Scheme, which aims to rehabilitate and positively support former prisoners through the period of transition back into the community by enabling them to meet the challenges within the first few weeks of release. Following a competitive tendering process probation partnered with NIACRO who provided the mentors for the project. An independent evaluation was conducted at the end of pilot and it demonstrated the effectiveness of the project and the important role played by NIACRO in supporting probation's work. It found "the intensive support provided by Reset positively complemented the Probation Officer role, particularly during the first week post-release when basics such as accommodation, health care and finances were being put in place, and was highly beneficial to mentees".

Similarly projects such as the Enhanced Combination Order and the Restorative Practice Pilots have all been successful because of third sector involvement. The expertise and training provided by community partners such as Alternatives, Community Restorative Justice Ireland and Barnardos have been important to the success of both projects.

Probation's Inspire Project, which is a bespoke initiative for women, also benefitted greatly from the collaboration with the community and voluntary sector. This project is a prime example of the reach and credibility an organisation like NIACRO has, as it worked with the extensive network of women's centres in NI to build support for female offenders within their own communities.

The third sector has also provided brave leadership in assisting probation to rehabilitate those who have offended.

The provision of approved premises, employment and training opportunities have been extremely important in assisting rehabilitation.

However the provision of such services is not always understood by the wider community. NIACRO along with others such as the Simon Community, Extern and Presbyterian Social Witness Council have been steadfast in their provision of such services even when faced with public criticism.

So why does third sector partnership work in reducing reoffending? Interestingly, the CJINI have completed reviews of the Voluntary and Community Sector's contribution to CJS in NI in 2006 and 2013. Both reviews, albeit with structural changes given devolution in 2010, noted very positive features within the sector and also identified other challenges and development requirements. For me, as Chief Executive of Probation, there are a number of reasons why third sector partnerships adds value.

Firstly I think it is useful to have partners involved in providing support and assistance who have a level of independence from the criminal justice system. A key role of probation is ensuring those who have offended comply with court orders and holding people to account. That is absolutely necessary in order to protect the public and contribute to community safety. However the involvement of those from outside criminal justice can bring a different perspective, as they can focus solely on addressing offenders needs. This can of course lead to them being viewed as more approachable by people who have offended. However what is crucial is that all those involved in a partnership arrangement understand their distinct roles and responsibilities. The third sector's independence also enables it to play a key role in influencing and lobbying public policy. Within NI our highly respected third sector colleagues play an invaluable role in shaping the public policy framework in which we operate.

Secondly the third sector can be responsive and flexible as the need arises. Probation like most public sector bodies has a very clear statutory remit within which it operates. We have a clear governance and accountability structure to

ensure that our organisation operates within relevant legislation.

However the third sector tends to have some more scope to adapt its work to address developing need. This of course makes the third sector ideal partners in driving forward innovation,

Thirdly the third sector's extensive experience of accessing funding, particularly European funding, is extremely valuable. Funding has been secured in recent years to research hate crime, provide training and employment opportunities address the challenges of coping with a criminal record. Ongoing research by our third sector partners and local universities will help shape policy and practice throughout criminal justice.

Fourthly the community and voluntary sector particularly in NI have a strong values base. They are passionate about helping people change their lives. Those values entirely compliment probation's values. However, the CVS organisations can take more risks and directly influence public policy in a way that statutory bodies cannot.

The draft Programme for Government outlined that problem solving justice was a strategic priority for the NI Executive. Despite the present political uncertainty it is likely that problem solving justice will be a key area of work going forward. Probation is perfectly placed through its work in tackling the causes of crime to contribute to a problem solving approach to justice. However there is also a role for our community and voluntary partners. There are opportunities to do things differently. There are opportunities to be innovative and creative. It

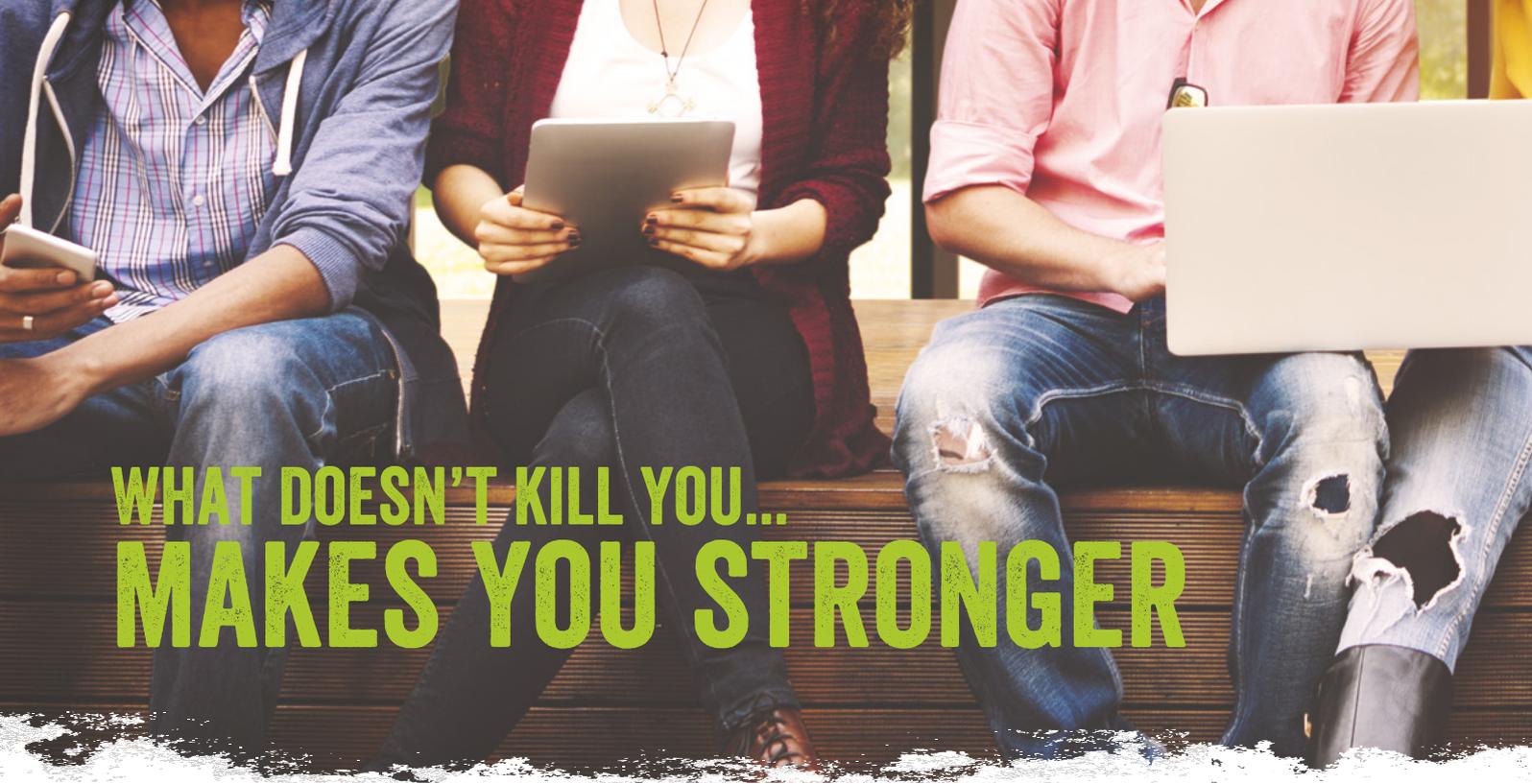
is in these circumstances that partnerships with the third sector can really flourish and develop. I look forward to strengthening our partnerships to reduce the number of victims of crime and keep communities safer.



## Cheryl Lamont

Chief Executive





## WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU... MAKES YOU STRONGER

**G**iven the period of relative turmoil that NIACRO faced almost two years ago, I believe it's important to reflect on why as an organisation we feel good 'in our skins' in what could still be framed as uncertain times.

It is important firstly, to reflect on how much support we have received from colleagues in other organisations; many of whom we have worked alongside for years, who approached to us individually or spoke to me personally.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance which was given to the organisation through the exceptional skills and qualities of our Executive Committee who asked challenging questions but, with a steady hand, helped the organisation through its most difficult moments.

Thirdly, I want to recognise the skills and resilience of the NIACRO staff team who remained up for every challenge posed to them. NIACRO had an opportunity to tender for the RESET program within two weeks of the loss of our European funding – a new piece of work that required new operating procedures and changed working relationships. The success of the RESET contract secured several further opportunities and we have learned from that

experience, including the necessary focus we need to place on business development to support both our service delivery and public engagement work.

Business development traditionally focuses on the opportunities available to ensure that we secure the resources needed to assist those individuals and families that we exist to support. While accepting the necessity to secure resources to deliver services, NIACRO has always worked to advocate on behalf of our service users and to ensure there is greater public engagement about the vital work that we do.

We have been working consistently at the heart of public policy, providing commentary and expertise in the areas in which we work. This has been manifested through our on-going Justice Series events which have been running prior to the devolution of Justice in 2010. Moreover, we continually engage MLA's and policy makers in a wide range of issues including - women who have offended, mental health concerns, hate crime, children first; offenders second and responses to those who have committed sexual offences to note but a few.

NIACRO has demonstrated further success in our 'Off the Record' campaign which resulted in a change to the legislation allowing for minor offences committed as a child to be filtered from the adult record.



The real success of the campaign was the feedback from commentators and the public which demonstrated support and an understanding of the need to allow individuals (in this case children) to move on from their 'offender label'

This support really matters to our work and makes an invaluable difference to the people we are working with. That is why we are currently working to develop our community engagement strategy and we are looking for your input.

- We want to **re-invigorate NIACRO's individual and corporate membership**, giving life to a group of supporters who want to engage in our policy work or who would like to be more publically associated with our causes and concerns.
- We want to **develop the volunteering options that NIACRO provides** for individuals prepared to offer their precious time to our work. We want to examine new volunteering opportunities to support our services users in a wide range of situations.
- We want to **engage with organisations in our society that offer jobs; training and social value experiences** to ensure that they are not automatically setting aside those who present to them with 'observations' evident their Access NI vetting form.

NIACRO mission to 'reduce crime and its impact on people and communities' in the broader social context will be sustained by gaining a community of supporters for its vision.

It matters less the figure of our annual turnover and more about the influence and impact our work can have on public attitudes, so that those who we work tirelessly to support, can seek and obtain the relevant and necessary services and support they need from the fullest range of statutory agencies, employers, private sector services and third sector organisations

Olwen Lyner  
Chief Executive, NIACRO

#### INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING US? WHY NOT:

- Become a NIACRO member
- Volunteer for NIACRO
- Find out more about our bespoke training providing an understanding of the implications of the current criminal record regime
- Tell us how you would like to make a difference by emailing [pact@niacro.co.uk](mailto:pact@niacro.co.uk)



*Sonia Crozier (Director) & Ian Razell (deputy director) from the National Probation Service (England and Wales) Paul Doran and Stephen Hamilton from PBNI 27.01.2017*

## PROBATION VISIT

NIACRO had the pleasure of hosting Sonia Crozier and Ian Razell from the National Probation Service (England & Wales) and Paul Doran and Stephen Hamilton from PBNI on Friday 27th January.

The visit was primarily to showcase the Reset programme and our visitors had the opportunity to meet with two of our service users who had taken part in the project, as well as discussing the wide range of services that NIACRO offer.

## International Women's Day

To celebrate International Women's Day, the Maureen Sheehan Centre came to NIACRO to conduct Women's health checks for our Women's Group and staff. We would like to say a huge thanks to everyone who made our IWD 2017 event a huge success. In particular, we would like to thank, the Heart Project, Cancer Focus Northern Ireland, the Centre of Health and Wellbeing, and Lynsey and Nikki from NIACRO for their expertise and assistance. #BeBoldforChange

## BLACK SANTA SIT-OUT

NIACRO received a gift from this year's St Anne's Cathedral Black Santa sit-out campaign. £220,000 was distributed to over 200 local charities at a special service in the Cathedral on Sunday 5th February.

The gift will go towards meeting the practical needs of NIACRO's STEM clients.



*Ruth Walker and George Jones at Black Santa Sit in donations 05.02.2017*

## Northern Ireland Discussion Forum

The NI Discussion Forum came to Amelia House for its latest meeting during Financial Capability week on Friday 18th November. The agenda included contributions from Bob Winnington, Executive Officer of Money Advice Liaison Group (MALG), who gave an overview of the current landscape for MALG and the challenges for the organisation and its members beyond 2016.

Tommy O'Reilly (DfC) brought us up to date with the progress of Welfare Reform, covering mitigation measures and additional funding for the advice sector.

Julie Alexander from the Welfare Reform Team (NIHE) briefed us on the impact of welfare reform in the social housing sector, whilst Kathy McKenna (Citizens Advice) gave a presentation on their Money Coaching initiative. The occasion was a wonderful opportunity for NIACRO to reach out beyond the usual criminal justice sector walls and to promote our Family and Money matters service to partners within the sector.

## NIACRO AGM

We held our 2016 AGM on Thursday 17th November in Amelia House. The meeting was focused on a number of areas over the past year including:

- Points for reflection and learning
- Opportunities and achievements
- Investment and visioning
- What we value



After the usual proceedings, we heard from Nathan Dick, Head of Policy and Communications at CLINKS - an organisation that supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders in England and Wales.

Nathan gave us an interesting insight into the current criminal justice landscape within the third sector in England and Wales. We were delighted to have Nathan's input and we look forward to maintaining our continued good relations with CLINKS over the coming years.

Olwen and our Chair, Sid McDowell highlighted a positive year and thanked all staff and volunteers for going the extra mile to ensure a successful year for NIACRO.



### SCOPE - SUPPORTING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS

In February 2017 we welcomed a new 3 year project to NIACRO. Funded by Children in Need, SCOPE (Supporting Children of Prisoners) is a needs-led, child-centred project that provides support to children (aged 0-18) living in the Belfast area, who have a parent or sibling currently in custody.

SCOPE provides one-to-one emotional and practical support to young people to help them with specific difficulties such as; adjusting to the imprisonment, struggling to maintain contact with a family member in prison or

feeling socially isolated from the community. Family sessions may also be appropriate to help the family strengthen communication and relationships in the home.

In addition, onward referrals will be made to other support services and consultation sessions will be given to other professionals to increase awareness of the needs of children and siblings of those in prison and advice on how best to support group, often referred to as the 'invisible' population.



The logo consists of a red circle with the word "niacro" in white lowercase letters, centered within a white vertical pill-shaped background.

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If you have any feedback on NIACRO News, would like us to cover a specific issue or want to write a guest column, please contact our Public Affairs and Communications Team:

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