



NEWS

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Outside the new office
l to r, NIACRO Chair Sid McDowell, Service Manager Tony Martin,
CEO Olwen Lyner, Service Manager Donnie Sweeney,
Mayor of Derry Kevin Campbell, Minister of Justice David Ford.

NIACRO Celebrates Opening of New Offices in the North West

The Minister of Justice, David Ford MLA, the Mayor of Derry, Councillor Kevin Campbell and other guests gathered in Derry on 24 July to celebrate the opening of our new North West offices at 9 Queen Street, and the launch of the 2012/2015 Corporate Plan.



the Family Links team to support people who have a loved one in custody, NIACRO has established strong links across the North West and I am happy to reiterate the Department of Justice's commitment to supporting their work.

There will be many challenges to face as we deliver reform of the Prison Service, and work through the current economic downturn, but I'm confident that the sharing of resources, experiences and values will deliver the best outcomes for people across Northern Ireland."

Support from the City Council

Mayor of Derry Councillor Kevin Campbell offered his support to all staff at the new premises. He said, "As a representative for Derry City Council and a past member of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership, I have direct experience of the valuable work of NIACRO in prioritising the root cause of crime, working to reduce the impact on individuals and communities, and further influencing policy to recognise and address the issues.

I am delighted that the new facilities in Queen Street will enable workers and volunteers alike to continue to offer their services, in line

CEO's Welcome

Olwen Lyner welcomed local employers and community groups, and representatives from the Department of Justice, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Northern Ireland Prison Service. She said: "We're delighted to be here in the North West to celebrate the opening of our new offices and launch of our Corporate Plan with our partners and friends.

NIACRO has a long history of working across Northern Ireland to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities, and we have established strong relationships with people and communities in the North West in delivering our services and supporting

others in the delivery of theirs. Our corporate plan sets out our vision for the next three years, which includes developing closer links with local communities to enable them to deal more effectively with crime and anti-social behaviour."

Minister's commitment to NIACRO's work

Minister of Justice, David Ford MLA, reiterated this sentiment: "Today, here at NIACRO's offices, I have met a wide range of people from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, who working together are achieving real change in peoples' lives. From the employers who work with the Jobtrack programme to assist people in resettling into the community, to the volunteers who work with

with their newly launched Corporate Plan, to those most marginalised in society, and in doing so provide the steady improvements in community engagement they are committed to for the greater good of this city and beyond.”

From then to now

As Olwen said, NIACRO has had a presence in the North West for a long time – the Magilligan Visitors’ Centre opened in May 1975, and we opened a centre for prisoners’ families in Pump Street in 1982. We carried out a research project into what would now be called anti-social behaviour in the area in 1979, and the 1983/4 annual report describes young people on an after-school project in the Creggan raising the money for a trip to London. We moved into our previous offices at 19c Queen Street in 2003.

At present, as well as continuing work inside Magilligan prison, staff from the Jobtrack, Family Links, Caps and APAC projects work out of the office, delivering services across the north coast region to Coleraine, and south to Tyrone and Fermanagh.

Corporate Plan 2012-2015



The Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders

Corporate Plan
2012 - 2015

Working to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities

The new Corporate Plan 2012-15 sets out our vision and mission for the future. As in previous plans, it outlines the ways in which staff, volunteers and members will work with individuals, families and communities to help them to make positive changes in their lives. To maximise our impact, we work in partnership with a range of statutory departments and agencies; voluntary and community sector organisations; local councils; and private businesses.

Working collaboratively and co-operatively, we aim to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities. We work with children and young people, adults in the community and people in prison and their families, as well as working to influence others and using all of our resources to maximum effect.

You can find the corporate plan at www.niacro.co.uk or write or email to the addresses at the end of NIACRO News for a hard copy.

Celebrating Adult Learners' Week



For the first time, NIACRO, through the Jobtrack programme, participated officially in this UK-wide, week-long celebration of adult learning in May. We invited a range of training and educational providers to Amelia House to discuss available courses and opportunities with our service users. Eight came along including Pitman Training, CCTS, Leisure Industry Academy, and the Women's Tec. Other agencies such as the Open University were unable to attend but sent information leaflets. This part of the day was very well attended and generated a great deal of interest and enthusiasm among service users.

Celebration of Achievement

Following this, we held a Celebration of Achievement event where 20 Jobtrack participants received recognition for their achievements in learning. This

included special recognition for people whom staff nominated as having been outstanding in their achievements, under seven categories:

- under 25;
- over 25;
- commitment to learning;
- recognising learning in improving employment prospects (ie showing that they can set their learning in the context of employability);
- achievement against the odds;
- sharing learning; and
- female learner.

Our special guest was Gary McAusland, CEO and founder of the Richland Group, a property development and investment company based in London. He also invests in start-up companies, is a TV presenter, and sits on the Foundation Board of the University of Ulster. Gary was very impressed with the event and the individuals' achievements - many took the opportunity to ask him about self employment. He has offered to run workshops for Jobtrack participants on topics relating to employment and business.

Man Matters Project

More NIACRO service users were talking about their experiences at the launch of Adult Learners' Week at Stormont. One of the speakers at the launch was Sammy McIntyre who undertook the two "Man Matters" courses we run in Amelia House - Total Football and Social History. The WEA's Man Matters programme offers a supportive, safe and welcoming space with courses designed to be of interest in particular to men and to help them back into education.

NIACRO is delighted to be able to host these courses through the Jobtrack programme. It's a great example of our constant drive to work together with other organisations to get the best outcome for our service users - and to open other organisations up to the idea of working with (ex) offenders.

This is what Sammy said at the launch:

"I was first introduced to "Man Matters" when I saw a notice for their Total Football course in NIACRO. Curiosity got the better of me so I signed up for it. During that course we learned firstly the history of the game and then went on to learn about and discuss social issues such as racism, homophobia, sectarianism and hooliganism. By doing this we were forced to examine our own views on these subjects as well as debating the opinions of others.

We didn't always agree on every aspect of the course but this was good because as I have said, we were forced to look at ourselves, and thanks to the encouragement of Mervyn [facilitator Mervyn Allen from WEA] we were able to look at facts as well as opinions. I soon felt more confident about learning in

general - I hadn't been near any kind of a classroom since childhood and to be honest I never thought I would want to again either.

After completing just this one short course I have started studying with the Open University and hope to gain a degree in English. I have also just finished my second course with Man Matters on social history. I have started writing short fiction stories and have entered my stories in a couple of competitions. I also enjoy reading on the various subjects we looked at during both courses, and look forward to doing more in the future.

More than I thought I could do

So thanks to the great work by the folks at NIACRO and these two courses, I have been encouraged to study at a higher level than I

thought I was capable of. I can't emphasise enough the importance of the work these people do in making education available to people like myself who would not otherwise have bothered to get involved."

The social history students went on an open-top bus tour of Belfast, cameras at the ready, to search out the city's architectural past. We had an exhibition of their photographic and art work in the Amelia House foyer, one photo has been used in our new Corporate Plan, and others illustrate this article.

We are delighted that both events went so well and were an inspiration to so many. We plan to be even more involved in Adult Learners' Week next year with events in other NIACRO locations and involving service users from other projects.



Young People Celebrate

Billy Clarke is Senior Practitioner of the Choose2Change programme, which replaced Youth Employability and which works with young people involved in the criminal justice system.

He recently shared in the achievements of some of the young people and wrote about it for NIACRO News.

Celebrating success

"In June I had the pleasure of attending Workforce Training's Celebration of Success for the young people who had achieved qualifications at Workforce. Mark Sidebottom from BBC Sport was the MC and the guest speaker was Michael O'Neill, the current N.I. football manager. Around 400 young people and parents attended the event, along with employers, DEL and community representatives.

"Before the awards distribution, Mark interviewed Michael about his time playing football in England, mainly focusing on when he first signed for Newcastle when he was seventeen. Michael's advice to the young people starting out on their career path was the same as his coaches at Newcastle had given him. They should "work hard; listen and learn; and have a good attitude towards your coaches and teammates". I suppose you could change coaches and teammates to employers and workmates. Michael then took part in a question and answer session with young people in the audience.

"The Celebration of Success began with the presentation of the Learners of the Year awards for each vocational skill, Essential Skills, schools programme and the overall Learner of the Year.

"Following this, young people who achieved success in vocational skills, Essentials Skills, the Vocational Enhancement Programme, hairdressing and multimedia received their certificates.

"It was great to see 12 of the young people we had referred to Workforce from Youth Employability and Choose2Change receiving certificates in Essential Skills numeracy and literacy at Entry Level 2 and 3, painting and decorating, catering, carpentry and joinery.

"Workforce Training Services have been a long time provider of training provision for young people in West Belfast. They continue to be particularly sympathetic to our goal of finding training places for young people involved in the youth justice system and we thank them for their support in this."



Howard Jenkinson with Independent Visitor volunteer Orla McLoughlin

Volunteer Forum

We held a Volunteer Forum in May for volunteers and staff from a range of projects. The forum included an introductory session on coaching skills - looking at unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. This was facilitated by Howard Jenkinson from Innovative Action.

The forum also provided an opportunity for staff and volunteers to meet and share information, and to welcome some of our new MOVE mentor/befriender volunteers. We would like to thank all of our volunteers for their time, energy, dedication and commitment to volunteering and the valuable contribution they make to our work.

When Dad Was Away



Liz Weir with the new storybook

As part of Belfast Book Week, which this year coincided with European Children of Prisoners Week in June, NIACRO sponsored a session with storyteller Liz Weir.

Liz introduced her recently-published book "When Dad was away" to a group of children at the Crescent Arts Centre. The book tells the story of Milly, whose father has been sent to prison, leaving her angry and confused.

Issues of bullying at school, the experience of visiting prison and preparation for dad's return home are all sensitively handled, and the book is beautifully and vividly illustrated.

Liz explains the motivation behind the book, going back to her career as Children's Librarian in Belfast where she first came into contact with the children of prisoners at the visitor centre in the Crumlin Road prison. [Which was of course run by NIACRO and Save the Children at that time.]

"In the years that followed", she recalls, "I have told stories in prisons from Crumlin Road to the Maze, from Mountjoy to Portlaoise. I've taught storytelling skills to men in Magilligan, helping them record stories for their children as part of the Big Book Share initiative." Even outside prison, many of the children Liz meets as a storyteller know someone who is in prison while others have parents who work in prisons "so all in all, a lot of children are affected".

Children need the truth

It was important to Liz that "When Dad was away" was a proper, full colour storybook which children could show to other members of the family and people like teachers and support workers. "Children need to be told the truth", she says, "And often a book can provide a discussion point. I hope this one will prompt conversations within families, schools and support organisations."

Liz paid tribute to the "sterling work" NIACRO has done over the years to support the families of prisoners, and the book includes contact details for NIACRO and other support organisations.

"When Dad was away" is illustrated by Karin Littlewood and published by Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

APAC - helping in the community

Our APAC (Assisting People and Communities) programme has been running for more than five years, helping people deal with relationship problems in their communities. Over that time, it has continuously developed new and innovative branches as we have seen different needs arising - APAC Mental Health, the award-winning APAC Women, and linking up with our Base 2 and RIO (Reintegration of Offenders) projects.

One service user talked to NIACRO News in June about her experiences.

Targeted

Margaret, a single parent with two young sons, moved into a district of Belfast which was pretty "closed". She thinks this was the main reason she was targeted for a two-year ordeal of anti-social behaviour on at least a weekly basis. People took money from the boys, her windows were broken, she was shouted at in the street, got faeces through the door, and a car was even driven into the front garden and set alight. It naturally took a toll on her mental and physical health. She was on anti-depressants and admits there were times she felt suicidal; even to the extent

she might have taken her sons with her.

Going to the police was hardly an option given where she lived (though she did take that risk once or twice). Locally-based community groups apparently couldn't help either. The housing authorities wanted to know the names of her attackers - and were not prepared to mend broken windows and the front door. Neither were they able to give her a transfer, and trying to get one she describes as "a nightmare". At her lowest, she would have settled for going back to a homelessness hostel, where she had spent time at a previous bad period of family breakdown. (So that she had at first been thrilled to move into her own home, which makes the misery she then went through all the worse.)

Astonishingly, Margaret had held down a job through most of this period, but she did eventually have to take some sick leave.

Making contact with NIACRO

An acquaintance she shared some of the story with, suggested she come to NIACRO - they were aware of

our Base 2 programme, which supports people who feel at risk in their communities. She didn't have much hope after all the time she had suffered: "Here I go again, this won't help either". But she did come to Amelia Street in late summer two years ago, and was rapidly referred to APAC. Her NIACRO support worker Clare Morrison describes a woman at the end of her tether, in tears most of the time, overweight and eating erratically. One early move was to take Margaret and the boys to Corrymeela for a weekend in the autumn, a real boost for the whole family. As she says, the boys loved the freedom of it, away from the stress and "realising that people are OK really." The following summer, she joined Family Links at Corrymeela and again enjoyed seeing her sons relaxed and free. Indeed, she found the experience of talking to Family Links members quite an eye-opener too.

To get back to the struggle for re-housing; she describes NIACRO's Clare as "my spokesperson" continually badgering the housing authorities, making phone calls on her behalf and generally being there for her. Her employers were also supportive, and wrote to the



housing authorities on her behalf. Eventually, she was offered her present house, where she is settled, content, off all medication, has lost four stone in weight and is back to work. And she raised nearly £1,000 this year walking the marathon route on behalf of a suicide awareness charity. The day we talked to her she was preparing to go on holiday with her sons. She says they still, after a year in their present home, will sometimes say, "Isn't it great we're here now, not where we were before."

We asked about the people who had been so vicious in their behaviour to the family. Young men, 19 or 20 years old; she feels there's a difference between younger boys behaving anti-socially and this age group. She also feels that an occasional incident is one thing, "but this went on and on and on." So she does feel that a custodial sentence would be appropriate, though unlikely to happen.

NIACRO she describes as "lifesavers - I think I'd still be there if Clare hadn't helped me." Thanks to Margaret for sharing her story with us, and we wish her well in the future.

Toe By Toe



We all know that far too many prisoners and offenders have big problems with what we used to call literacy and numeracy; use of IT has been added to these and they are now termed Essential Skills. NIACRO staff both inside and outside the prisons are very aware that not having these skills can make job-hunting almost impossible. At a more basic level, it can corrode your self-esteem which in itself is characteristic of people who offend. Staff on the Jobtrack programme ultimately want to support service users into employment, but they are very well aware that we have to work flexibly and start from where our client is.

A reading programme called Toe by Toe, used in the prisons in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, is tailor-made for this purpose. It was developed by Keda Cowling and draws on her experience in working with children with dyslexia. It's based on a reading manual which uses a very specific, detailed and intensive system of helping people decode the words on the page. She gave the programme its odd name to get across the message that improvements would come in tiny steps, but that the students can see and celebrate those improvements to boost their confidence and make them want to carry on. A separate organisation, the Shannon Trust, runs the plan in

prisons (one of the trustees of Shannon Trust is Eric Allison, the journalist and ex-offender who so inspired staff, service users and members/friends at our AGM a few years ago).

Mentors

NIACRO was aware that the Prison Service had used Toe by Toe in all three prison establishments. Prison staff had originally been the "mentors" on the programme, but with a view to encouraging prisoners to act as peer mentors, which is the way it's meant to work, and this has happened. We were impressed by the results, and keen to bring this particular form of support into the community. So recently, a trainer from Toe by Toe held a workshop to introduce the programme in more detail to staff and service users. Everyone found it very engaging - not easy, but well worth the effort.

All the mentors who will deliver Toe by Toe will be ex-prisoners and we are now recruiting them. One, who had been a mentor in prison, is already working with three Jobtrack clients, and we plan to pilot the project over the next six to twelve months.

You can learn more about Toe by Toe from:

www.shannontrust.org.uk
and www.toe-by-toe.co.uk

For Whom the DEL Tolls?



One of NIACRO's constant appeals is for all government departments to recognise and then act upon their responsibilities in the business of resettlement – the process which aims to ensure that ex-prisoners and other offenders will not offend again. Given that employment and training are key to successful resettlement, it's not surprising that one of the departments we most try to influence is the Department for Employment and Learning.

Well, on 11 January this year, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister announced, in the context of the arrangements for electing a Justice Minister, and a proposal to reduce the number of Departments from 11 to 10, that "the functions of the present DEL will be divided principally between DE and DETI in an agreed manner".

Since then, there has been less focus on this topic, and we're not certain how it will all pan out.

Committee Consultation

However, the DEL Assembly Committee did carry out a consultation on the issue. To quote the Committee Chair, Basil McCrea MLA, in an Assembly debate on 18 May, "As soon as the announcement was made, the Committee felt that the views of the key stakeholder organisations should be considered... Accordingly, the Committee wrote to 75 organisations and offered them an opportunity to put forward their views. Members were impressed with the number of stakeholders who not only chose to provide a written response to the consultation but were prepared to come up to Parliament Buildings to explain their views to the Committee. I put on record our thanks to those stakeholders."

We replied in writing to that letter from the Committee, which later organised a "discussion event" to hear the views of key respondees to the consultation on the future of the Department. Director of Services Pat Conway and Jobtrack's Gareth Eannetta met the Committee in April.

The key points that Pat made were that:

- NIACRO has worked with DEL for over 10 years, and we have more

recently welcomed a good understanding and close relationship with the Department.

- DEL has shown increasing recognition of the barriers our service users face in accessing DEL services, and - more importantly - has made considerable progress in trying to reduce these barriers. In our experience, DEL is the only Department outside the Department of Justice which understands the link between employability and the resettlement of offenders, and the role it can play.
- This connectivity or cultural synergy between Employment and Justice is an example of cross-departmental activity that, in our view, has evolved positively. (This point was later quoted in an Assembly debate in May.)
- The various departments within DEL are working better together: DEL's European Unit has been particularly effective in recognising the need to reach out to marginalised people including people with criminal records.

What the future holds?

NIACRO's basic concern is for the service offered to our client group, rather than which branch of government delivers the service. Yet there is an argument for retaining DEL, not least because it is such a large department with such a broad range of responsibilities. So Pat also outlined NIACRO's concerns for the future if DEL's functions were to be relocated in other departments:

- The loss of intra-and inter-departmental working.
- Loss of momentum; the recent positive developments are likely to be lost in the short to medium term.
- The need for and difficulties of cultural realignment in any other government department/s; not all are orientated towards people who are socially excluded or have real understanding of or engagement with NIACRO's client group.

Appropriate services

Pat listed the key elements of an appropriate service based on DEL's responsibilities and NIACRO's experience of working with the Department:

- essential skills;
- vocational qualifications;



DEL Committee Chair, Basil McCrea MLA, at a recent NIACRO Justice Seminar

- innovative and flexible access to training and employment;
- equality of access to training and employment;
- access beyond the mainstream and the need for specialist intervention;
- strengthening relationships with employers;
- maintaining and developing the link between wages and welfare levels;
- greater use of and access to, for example, the Social Investment Fund and support for social enterprises;
- promotion and expansion of apprenticeships; and
- building on the gains made to date.

In the short discussion following Pat's presentation, MLAs picked up on or raised the issues of NEETs, the relevance of the Department of Social Development to many of DEL's clients, the

cultural shift that would be necessary if other Departments took over relevant elements of the work of DEL, and lifelong learning.

The Chairman, Basil McCrea MLA, asked why NIACRO had not suggested aligning our work with the Department of Justice. This gave Pat the opportunity to emphasise the long-established view of NIACRO, that "if it all goes back to Justice, it is seen as a Justice problem, and it is not a Justice problem...we cannot revert to the silo situation".

Finally, Mr McCrea, in thanking Pat and Gareth for their contribution, paid tribute to the work of NIACRO. He said, "As you know, I have had a long association with NIACRO over many years. For everybody's sake, it is important that the people whom you look after are dealt with in the most appropriate manner. You have my full support, and I commend you for your work."

Working sans frontières

To quote the European Social Fund: "Collaboration and sharing experiences across borders...is an effective way to access new ideas, innovative approaches and new skills. It helps participants understand what works and what does not, and why." The European Commission put much greater emphasis on transnational co-operation in the regulations for the current, 2007- 2013, ESF than in earlier programmes. Although NIACRO was involved in cross-border activities from at least the mid 1980s, relationships and exchanges with colleagues in other EU Member States have developed year on year. The EQUAL programme in the mid-2000s was especially important in part funding our ReachOut project along with the Prison and Probation services, and it in turn helped us to develop the current Jobtrack programme.

NIACRO greatly values its transnational working, which we believe has been of mutual benefit to us and to our partners. It is not always easy to work with interpretation

– both literally, from another language into English and vice versa, and also culturally, with colleagues who may have a very different view of the world from ourselves. But it's stimulating, if sometimes also frustrating.

It's important to take the opportunity to affirm what we are doing - to test out our own practices against those of peers in other countries. Often that confirms that our work is effective and good practice, and partners are keen to learn from us. It has been gratifying to have been invited to join transnational networks - people are recognising what we have to offer. Often it's sobering to see just what tough struggles other NGOs face especially in the newer EU Member States.

The following articles are examples of recent and current transnational working.



Eurochips is the European Network for Children of Imprisoned Parents, a network of European organisations from 13 countries, working in the areas of children's rights, child welfare, and criminal justice. Each year an estimated 800,000 children in the EU are separated from a parent in prison, and Eurochips tries "to increase awareness and achieve new ways of thinking, acting and interacting on issues concerning prisoners' children". Its goals are based on the need for a child to maintain a link with both parents if separated from one or both, as enshrined in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

So – goals and activities with which NIACRO is very much in tune. We have been an associate member of Eurochips for a couple of



Dave Weir with Larry de Cléir from the Bedford Row project, Limerick and Maja Gabelica Suplijika from the Children's Ombudsman's office in Croatia at the Eurochips conference.

years and have just been formally invited to join as a full member, which we're very happy to do. The Network takes a rights-based approach to children of prisoners, and we have been encouraging fellow-members to see the benefits of combining this with a resettlement agenda.

Indeed, Eurochips took part in the final conference of ExOCO, the resettlement network in which NIACRO has been taking such an active part over the last three years (you can read more about this above). We've also had links with the organisation through a research project on prisoners' children in which Family Links service users took part (NIACRO News 28).

Reflecting on prison

Director of Services Dave Weir attended a Eurochips "day of reflection" in Switzerland in May, focussing on how and

what to tell a child – "Where's Daddy?" Participants reflected on such topics as:

- The need for truth – but how difficult it may be for a shocked parent, whether prisoner or partner, to be truthful. And how much of "the truth" can the child understand and cope with?
- The arrest process and how distress to the child can be minimised.
- Finding the balance between the child's right to a "normal" family life and the contact with the prisoner which we know will help the latter's resettlement.
- A speaker from the "Coping" project drew up a "wish list" for visits:
 - make visiting easier;
 - nicer visiting areas (all prison visits in Sweden take place in single rooms);
 - a kinder approach from the prison staff;

- more support – from NGOs, from schools etc;
- more information and discussion – eg, whether or not the child wants to visit;
- longer visiting times;
- making it easier to telephone;
- overnight stays; and
- don't search small children.

NIACRO is looking forward to planning Eurochips' 2014 conference jointly with "Families Outside", a Scottish organisation working to support prisoners' families.

You can learn more about Eurochips on the website, www.eurochips.org or contact Dave Weir at NIACRO, dave@niacro.co.uk.

You can read elsewhere in NIACRO News about a book written for the children of prisoners (When Dad was away).

Hate Crime Experience Brought to Stockholm

The European Commission's "Radicalisation Awareness Network" was established in September 2011 by the EU Home Affairs Commissioner, Cecilia Malmstrom. It is strongly supported by the Commissioner who refers regularly to it in her blog. In the words of the official document setting it up, RAN is "designed to facilitate knowledge-sharing, raise awareness and identify new and creative solutions to counter violent extremism". NIACRO was invited to join the network, and we bring to the table our experience with hate crime especially when it is linked to sectarianism.

Administered by the Swedish consultancy Radar, RAN's Working Group held its first meeting in Stockholm in June. Director of Services Pat Conway attended what he describes as a stimulating and

energetic meeting with great sharing and openness on a very difficult area of work. The participants included police, policy makers and NGOs and came from ten EU Member States or regions, largely from Northern Europe – the network is keen to recruit from further afield.

This meeting was a first step in planning how RAN will operate. Members plan to share the experience of front-line work in places where hate crime and radicalisation flourish for whatever reason, especially among vulnerable young people. (Radicalisation is taken to mean the encouragement and promotion of radical attitudes and behaviour; the word "radical" in this context is normally assumed to be extreme and violent.)

What members learn from this experience can and should help design the higher-level policies which will hopefully chip away at the dangers of increasing radicalisation and violence in communities.



ExOCOP

At a recent meeting of the 15 ESF-supported Learning Networks across Europe held at the Titanic Centre in Belfast, Olwen Lyner, acting as the representative from Northern Ireland in the just-ended ExOCOP programme, outlined the key messages that had emerged from its work.

ExOCOP was the name of the criminal justice Learning Network. NIACRO has been active in its work; Olwen has been on the steering group, and several staff with colleagues from other organisations such as the Prison and Probation Services have made presentations and/or taken part in the discussions at the workshops and seminars which took place. These included Jobtrack in Italy and here at Amelia Street where we hosted a workshop on employment issues; the resettlement of women offenders in Berlin; family relationships in Slovenia.

Pat Conway (2nd left in the front row) at the RAN conference



This is Olwen's summary of what she said.

40 Organisations, 12 Countries

"Involving 40 agencies from 12 Member States, the network brought together government departments of justice and labour/employment and embraced European relationships. They examined, recorded, and made recommendations on the many areas of agreement; supported and prepared prisoners to enter or re-enter the labour market - so we were proactive on the social inclusion agenda; and focused on people who are long-term benefit dependant, low skilled and unemployed.

"Many of the network members had been active in previous ESF-funded programmes and knew the need to bring departments of justice and labour together with prison establishments.

Hope for the future

"A key hope for the new round of ESF funding will be that what we have learned will move Member States away from merely piloting such interventions to mainstreaming them within operational plans.

"We know that helping offenders increase their employability reduces crime and brings them closer to sustainable employment. This impacts on the incidence of crime and the cost of crime, and in a situation where public funding is under pressure this must be an appropriate goal. In order to address this issue, however, we need a connected European framework that that would provide for:

- A cross-governmental approach to managing the transition from custody to the community.
- Cooperation within and between communities and neighbourhoods.
- A public-private partnership, especially with stakeholders in the NGO sector.
- Systematic, structured inter-European knowledge transfer and communication.

"To support these hopes we have:

- Produced a report that identifies key points for intervention in the journey through prison to the community with supported recommendations.
- Carried out an exercise in comparing the evaluations

of the work across Member States.

- Set up a knowledge management process to provide a platform for future work.

Berlin final conference

"Finally, we attended ExOCO's concluding policy forum in Berlin in June. I was joined by Brian McCaughey from Probation, Brian Grzymek from DOJ and Brian Smart from DEL. The conference brought together justice and labour policy makers to promote the mainstream issues, and confirmed our recommendations. I'm glad to report that it was NIACRO who generated and delivered the final paper drawing all the findings together. NIACRO staff have been really committed to the ExOCO process all the way through, along with colleagues from the public service and employers, and we feel we made a real impact on the success of the programme."

Pat, Heather and Gareth (front from right) in Potsdam with other speakers at the conference



HSI

We first made contact with the German resettlement network HSI (Haftvermeidung durch Soziale Integration to its friends, translated as “Social integration for the prevention of imprisonment”) in 2008. They had heard about our work through the EU funding grapevine (transnationalism works!). It’s a group of 19 criminal justice organisations in the state of Brandenburg in former East Germany – it has been particularly interesting to hear them talk about the experience of being a society in transition. Since then we have exchanged many visits and shared many ideas, especially on the employability issues which are at the heart of our Jobtrack programme. They’ve met with some of the employers who support our resettlement work, and with Prison Service and Probation staff.

HSI has now completed its transnational project, and Pat Conway, Heather Reid and Gareth Eannetta were invited to speak at the closing conference in March. Over 100 people attended

the conference in Potsdam, including the Brandenburg State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice and the Director of ESF from the European Commission.

Heather provided a brief overview of NIACRO’s role as an NGO within a criminal justice system, and our experience of transnational working. All three NIACRO representatives were involved in the delivery of workshops focussing on the importance of “transition management” in successful reintegration and on the role of European projects in organisational development.

Following a busy but successful conference they had the opportunity to see some of the HSI projects in action, including a visit to the Juvenile prison in Wriezen where they experienced a lock down – German style! NIACRO’s contribution to the transnational partnership was acknowledged as extremely valuable and has laid the foundation for emerging relationships with our colleagues from the Netherlands on work with families of prisoners and with young people.

Uzbekistan

In May, we welcomed nine guests from Uzbekistan, part of a NICO (NI CO-operation Overseas) initiative hosted by the Department of Justice. They also met with the Justice Minister and the Prisoner Ombudsman in a process of developing their own criminal justice system. The NICO work stream under which the visitors came is the Justice and Home Affairs programme, designed to tackle such topics as “tribal conflict, dysfunctional law enforcement and terrorist activity”. We tried, with a certain amount of difficulty, to get across the role of the NGO sector and what it might contribute to criminal justice.



Facts and Figures



From time to time, we've included some official statistics in NIACRO News. They don't tell the whole story, but they do help to describe the criminal justice scene and they are sometimes surprising. Here is a round-up of some key figures. As they are taken from an assortment of publications, they do not all refer to the same time periods.

Crime levels

The PSNI recorded 104,040 crimes in 2010/11, a decrease of almost 4%. This is the lowest level since the current counting rules were first used in 1998/99.

There were decreases in: offences against the person; burglary; theft; fraud and forgery; criminal damage; offences against the state and other notifiable offences. There was a rise in sexual offences by 9.1% and robbery, up by 2.4%.

The detection rate was 27.3%, up from 25.8% in the previous year.

(Source: Chief Constable's Annual Report 2010/2011)

Experience of crime

12.6% of all households surveyed and their adult occupants were victims of at least one crime in the previous year. This is the lowest level since the current methodology was first used in 1998, and a statistically significant decrease on the previous year of 1.7%.

The risk of becoming a victim of crime is considerably lower in NI (12.6%) than in England and Wales (21.5%).

The younger you are, the more likely you are to be the victim of violent crime (assault, wounding, mugging). 6.9% of respondents aged 16-24 had experienced violence at least once, compared to 0.2% of the over-75s. Young men aged 16 to 24 remain the most likely victims of violent crime.

(Source: DOJ Research & Statistical Bulletin 3/2011: Experience of crime)

Perception of crime

The NI Crime Survey asks people about their experience of crime and their views about the level of crime. In some ways this is the most interesting data of all, showing a degree of irrationality in our views of crime.

In 2010/11, 15% of people thought they were likely to be a victim of burglary in the next 12 months, compared with an actual risk of 2%; 15% thought they would be victims of car crime, compared with the actual risk of 3%; and there was a similar discrepancy with regard to violent crime (10% against 2%).

Although crime is lower in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales, we worry more about it: 19% of us worry about violent crime compared to 13%, and 16% of us are anxious about burglary compared to 10% in E/W. At the same time, however, we are less likely than our counterparts across the water to expect to be victims of violent crime ourselves (10% against 13%) or car crime (15% compared to 13%). This doesn't hold for burglary, where we are less optimistic of avoiding being victims (15% in NI, 13% in E/W).

Although crime is in fact decreasing (see "Crime levels" above), 62% of people responding to the survey thought it had increased in the previous two years.

(Source: DOJ Research & Statistical Bulletin 1/2012, Perceptions of crime)

Prosecutions

38,404 people were proceeded against in the criminal courts in 2011/12. 5,438 cautions were issued, and 958 “informed warnings”. There were 432 Youth Conference orders, and 259 disposals to the NI Driver Improvement Scheme. Only two cases were referred to the community based restorative justice process.

(Source: data received from PPS 10 July 2012)

People in custody

On 31 March 2012, there were 1,793 people, adult and young offenders, in custody, the average for the “snapshot” figures for the four quarters being 1,732. Of the 1,793, 1,264 were sentenced leaving 529 (30%) unsentenced. The average time spent on remand was 5.59 months.

42 of the total were adult women and 11 young offender women; five were juvenile males, ie under 18. [One of the Youth Justice Review recommendations – and something NIACRO has long called for – was that people younger than 18 should not be detained in Hydebank, and the practice is to end in November 2012. In the news release announcing this, on 28 June 2012, Justice Minister David Ford said that the number at present was “low single figures”.]

Just under 200 people were serving life sentences, and around 10% serving sentences of less than six months. The average sentence length was 5.48 years.

(Source: Analysis of NIPS prison population from 01/04/2100 to 31/03/2012. www.dojni.gov.uk/niprisonservice/reports/populationstatistics)

Young people in the criminal justice system

The YJA received 1,746 statutory orders in 2010/11.

The average daily population in the JJC over the last few years was 26/27.

There were 411 new admissions into the JJC in 2010/11, a five year high. There was a significant increase in 17-year-olds being admitted, an outcome of the 2009 legislation which brought this age group into the definition of a young person; before this, they were often admitted to Hydebank Young Offenders Centre [see People in Custody above].

There were 2012 referrals to the Youth Conference Service, slightly more as diversionary youth conference plans (52%) than court ordered youth

conference orders (48%).

(Source: www.youthjusticeagency.ni.gov.uk/publications_library)

People on probation

On 31 March 2012, 4,441 people subject to 4,799 orders (that is, a range of directions from the courts that the person should come under probation supervision) were being supervised by the probation service. This was a 6% increase on the previous year.

37% of the orders were Probation Orders and 20% were Community Service Orders.

10,376 reports were prepared, the majority (6,096) being pre sentence reports.

(Source: PBNI caseload statistics 2011/12. www.pbni.org.uk/statistics and research)

Public Protection Arrangements

PPANI is a multi-disciplinary group of agencies responsible for managing people convicted of sexual and certain violent offences. They are categorised 1 – 3, 1 being the lowest and 3 being the highest risk of re-offending.

On 31 March 2012, 1,299 people were being supervised through PPANI; 1,087 sex offenders and 212 violent offenders.

The great majority (84%) were category 1; 1.3% (17 people) were category 3.

(Source: data received from PPANI 24 July 2012)



Housing Needs of ex-offenders

Director of Services Pat Conway spoke at a UU conference in May on the need for suitable housing for ex-offenders. NIACRO consistently – and continually – makes the point that criminal justice systems alone can't create successful resettlement, so it was good to see that the conference was the brainchild of staff working on housing issues within the School of the Built Environment at the university.

Speakers and participants came from housing agencies, criminal justice services, voluntary and community groups, and academia.

Pat described the work of NIACRO and the pathways which lead to resettlement – finance, education, training and employment, health,

behaviours, social networks and of course accommodation. He set our work in the context of the Housing Executive's homelessness strategy, 2012/2017, which was launched on 1 May.

So for example, the APAC programme can help prevent homelessness by intervening at an early stage, by putting people in touch with relevant services, arranging temporary accommodation, advising on benefits etc. Pat also pointed out the range of vulnerabilities which ex-offenders and ex-prisoners can experience – the young person without support, the person convicted of sexual or violent crime who is unwelcome in most communities, the migrant worker with no family or familiar community around them, people under threat

from their communities and many more.

Finally, Pat highlighted the value of getting the housing issue right. It's the value which NIACRO has been pointing out since our work started, and for which there is strong evidence. Providing the right housing service, identifying other relevant services and helping people access them, plays a big part in reducing offending and hence reducing the number of victims of crime. We welcome the recognition of this in the DOJ's draft Reducing Offending strategy, currently out for consultation, which states that; "The likelihood of reoffending can be reduced by 20% if stable accommodation is provided upon release."

Pat Conway, Lorraine Robinson (Extern) and Paula Quigley (SmartMove NI) at the conference



STAFF COMINGS AND GOINGS

We welcome to the staff team: Pamela Purdy and Darren Boyle to the Jobtrack programme in Armagh and Magilligan; Geraldine McKee to RIO; Fiona Patterson to our newest project MOVE; Olga Santorini to APAC in Derry; Ruth Stephens to Independent Visitor/Independent Representation; Lesley McMaster to Caps Belfast and Maggie Butler and Susan Hamilton to Accounts and Admin respectively.

Farewell and a big thank you to two stalwarts of the accounts department, Valerie McGreevy and Ian Power



Marathon Power

NIACRO's marathon relay team with Service Manager Heather Reid. They ran the Belfast Marathon in aid of Meningitis Research NI, a charity which NIACRO staff support, and raised £1,295. We would like to thank all the people who sponsored us, and also Annmarie McNamara who ran the full marathon and donated all her sponsor money to the charity.



Managing Sexual Offenders

The last Justice Series seminar in the previous session of the Assembly heard from Professor Hazel Kemshall of de Montfort University where she holds the Chair of Community and Criminal Justice. We are including her presentation as Occasional Paper 2, a supplement to this issue of NIACRO News.



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