



niacro

# NEWS

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In this edition of NIACRO News, our Chief Executive, Olwen Lyner, outlines the key points in the recent CJI Report on the review of the contribution made by the voluntary and community sector to the criminal justice system, and our reaction to it.

See page 2 for more.



# Criminal Justice - The Voluntary Sector Contribution

Criminal Justice Inspection NI (CJI) recently published its report 'A review of the voluntary and community sector's involvement in the Northern Ireland criminal justice system'. NIACRO was involved in the review, and CEO Olwen Lyner has summarised the report and our reaction to it for NIACRO News.

The CJI review recognised the many factors which have affected the environment since a previous review in 2006: devolution of criminal justice and the establishment of the new Department of Justice; the economic recession; the pending work of the Charity Commission; and the many changes to delivery of criminal justice services in England and Wales. Its conclusion

is that voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations play an important part in the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement established the Criminal Justice Review. The 2000 CJR report recognised meaningful engagement with the VCS was an essential ingredient in developing the confidence in criminal justice that was required. Devolution and local accountability brought with them the opportunity of building that confidence. The newly established Policing and Community Safety Partnerships are the most recent signal of the contribution that local people from the local community make to providing solutions to local problems.

## Complex relations

The sector is part of a complex set of relationships, which support and enhance the DOJ's business "theme" of safer, shared and more confident communities. The CJI report refers to the strategies based in other parts of Government that impact on the lives of many - the Health and Social Care Board's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and DSD's Supporting People programme are two examples.

They demonstrate the real opportunity that the sector has to draw resources from other parts of the public sector to the project of reducing offending.

The report acknowledges the effort that the sector makes to increase the value of the funding it receives, around £8 million annually. With contributions from other sources, this rises to a spend in the region of £20 million. It will be important to be able to attract that added value from other Departments, agencies and charitable trusts.

One of the inspectors' recommendations is that "criminal justice funders should standardise their approach to funding, applying a commissioning philosophy rather than simple procurement...". There are signs of a lack of understanding and a degree of suspicion between the commissioning bodies and potential service providers.

So, there is a need for partnership in commissioning - planning together to answer real needs - if the services provided by the VCS are to be cost-effective and a genuine contribution to the resettlement process. We also need good communication and genuine partnership if the VCS is to keep the flexibility and innovation which have always been such important characteristics of its work.

The report does not discuss the current debate between on the one hand a concentrated effort on particular issues (such as criminal justice) and on the other, a focus on locally-based services. However, we in NIACRO have always promoted

the synergy that comes from voluntary organisations with a specific remit working alongside local organisations. In this way people seeking reintegration to the community can be supported for a time by an organisation with strong links to and an understanding of the criminal justice system, but this support can later be given by a local and less potentially stigmatising group.

## Justice re-investment

The focus on outcomes for funders links to the goal that we all want to achieve - a reduction in offending. The absence of current reconviction data (last completed in 2007) is a very real problem for everyone concerned. The report rightly flags up concerns about the value of many evaluations; however, these would be more valuable if they were supported by relevant and timely reconviction data.

The report is positive about "justice re-investment", directing savings (which come from, for example people not being prosecuted, or a reduction in the numbers of people in custody) towards preventing offending.

NIACRO has recently benefitted from this approach. The Minister of Justice allocated £800,000 from the criminal confiscation scheme in 2012 to local communities to help tackle crime and the fear of crime. An allocation from this fund means that a member of the Family Links team has been seconded

to Maghaberry prison to work with prisoners and their families, as well as with prison and probation staff. She will take part in the induction process for newly-admitted prisoners, to emphasise the importance of keeping in touch with family, and to encourage them to put their family members in touch with NIACRO staff.

This will increase Family Links' visibility in the prison and in turn increase the number of people in prison and families who can benefit from the practical and emotional support the programme offers.

## Advocacy and volunteering

VCS organisations see advocacy as an important part of their role. They form a vital link with politicians and policy-makers, representing the views and interests of their service users and local communities. This is more important than ever in a devolved criminal justice system and it demands the same good communication and partnership as the funding issue.

CJI acknowledges the importance of active, individual, volunteering. The report highlighted among other issues the value of prisoners becoming volunteers and the need for "good volunteer management practice and procedures".

NIACRO made an in-depth contribution to the CJI review and we are pleased at how comprehensive and thoughtful it is.

## Voluntary Sector response to the Prison Review

In a related move, a group of VCS organisations came together last autumn for a “Once in a Generation” workshop facilitated by the VSB Foundation – the title deriving from the Minister of Justice’s own definition of the Prison Review. It was striking how much emphasis the Prison Review Team laid on the role of the VCS, and the sector is keen to expand and deepen this role in partnership with the statutory criminal justice system.

The workshop came up with 10 actions to take forward the sector’s response to the review. Participants confirmed that “the primary purpose of prison” is rehabilitation and preparation for reintegration, and that this would underpin the VCS’s work. They undertook to pool resources and co-ordinate their work in order to make the greatest impact, and to develop a handbook for the voluntary services and NIPS, and a DVD for prisoners, on the services the VCS is providing.

You can access the report on: [www.vsb.org.uk/news-and-events](http://www.vsb.org.uk/news-and-events)

# Young People in NIACRO

## Barclays Money Skills Champions project at the JJC

NIACRO facilitated five young people aged 16-17 to complete the first Barclays Money Skills Champions project. The six - week group in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre in March 2013 was led by Barclays, MOVE project worker Fiona Patterson and MOVE volunteers Sean Nugent and Robert Hadden.

The Barclays Money Skills project was devised by Barclays and six of the UK’s leading charities (National Youth Agency, Citizens Advice, Rathbone UK, UK Youth, YouthNet and Youth Access). Its aim is to build the money management skills of 100,000 young people (aged 16 to 25), particularly those who are “NEET”.

Barclays aim to support young people to build their financial skills and confidence, as well as training them to become Barclays Money Skills ‘champions’, helping to increase their peers’ financial awareness.

Volunteers from the CAB and Barclays Bank delivered sessions on Advice at Hand and Learning the Lingo (an introduction to banking terms). For the young people to complete their “interactions” and share their knowledge with others, they created word searches and posters which were then distributed to people within the JJC and Lakewood secure care centre, which went down a treat!

Overall feedback from the young people and JJC staff was very positive and we plan to deliver further group work within the JJC.

On completion of the group, NIACRO supported three of the five young people to open their first bank account. Barclays and the JJC hope to continue working in partnership in the future to reduce the barriers young people with convictions face when opening bank accounts.

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## NI Chair of Big Lottery Fund visits Amelia Street

As year one of the MOVE project drew to a close, the young people, volunteers and NIACRO Staff met with Frank Hewitt, NI Chair for Big Lottery Fund

and Amanda Doherty, Head of Communications, to share their experience of the year.

The young people were encouraged to share their views on how their MOVE mentor had supported them to reach their goals and their experience of the Voice Box forum. Frank and



parties every night, early morning dancing on the beach, a diet of just chocolate, Beyoncé for island leader and Tom Daly and Simon Cowell were banned for life!

The young people then considered the MOVE and IV projects as desert islands. They and their volunteers were asked to evaluate the “boundaries” that existed on MOVE Island/ IV Island, how they could be led differently, and to make suggestions for boundaries they think would improve how MOVE and IV are run.

Their feedback included:

“Really enjoy the activity days, would like to see more of them”.  
 “Spending allowance is difficult to stick to; a little extra money each visit would be good”.

“Joint visits with other young people and volunteers every so often”.

“More contact with leaders”.

“I would change nothing about (volunteer), she’s amazing, we always have fun”.

After a hearty lunch together the groups swapped activities and were reunited at the end of the day for their final activity together - a fast paced Hill Rally Stage. The day was a great success with attendance figures doubled from our first Forum event!

# Voice Box Forum at Todd’s Leap

Despite the early start, damp weather and cross country trek, 12 young people, nine volunteers and three NIACRO staff arrived at Todd’s Leap Activity Centre ready and raring to throw themselves into an action-packed day!

The group split in two for the day. As one group set off for their adrenaline-filled morning of blindfolded off-road jeep driving and a whizz down the 150ft zip line suspended above the forest, the second group threw themselves into the consultation activities in the Brain Box room.

The aim of the Forum was to gain young people’s views on how their project is led and delivered, and what changes they would like to see over the next year.

To ease them into thinking about boundaries, rules and leadership styles we asked the young people to imagine that they had landed on a desert island. In their groups they created island rules, decided who they would like as their island leaders and what items would be banned from their island.

The creativity was certainly flowing as suggestions included:

Amanda were clearly impressed by the courage and confidence shown by the young people who shared their experience of the adversities they have faced including being bullied, living under threat, being socially isolated and experiencing significant difficulties at home and school. The young people described how the support of

the MOVE Project has helped them overcome barriers in accessing education and opportunities within their community and the positive effect this has had on their confidence.

MOVE volunteers also shared their experience of the support they’ve received throughout

their time with the project and the positive changes they have observed in the young person they’re matched with.



# Forum for Families of People in Prison

NIACRO has always tried to involve service users - people in the criminal justice system or at risk of being so, and their families - in commenting on and contributing to the development of the policies and practices that affect them.

**A new Forum is looking at ways in which families and friends can engage with the process and ultimately be routinely consulted by policy-makers. One of its members describes their thinking:**

“When a loved one is sent to prison the impact on them and their family and friends is enormous. Everyone recognises this but knowing it has led to very little positive action to maintain the family support network for prisoners. The people who understand this best are the prisoners and their families and they need a clear voice to change the present inadequate situation.

For this reason NIACRO is facilitating a multi-agency group called the Forum for Families of People in Prison, with prisoner family members in attendance along with other interested partner groups. The Forum is chaired by a family member.

## Looking for improvements

Many NIACRO News readers may be aware of other family groups, which provide therapeutic and emotional support.

These include groups which meet monthly at venues in Belfast and Ballymena and we are developing others. These meetings will continue as usual. The new Forum’s particular

focus is to seek improvements in the support provided to prisoners and families. For example, we have concerns about: the lack of rehabilitation; reoffending rates; prisoner health; the costs of telephone calls from prison landings; the overly bureaucratic and conflicting rules on prisoner property; the quality and time allowed for family visits; and many other issues. NIACRO News readers may have other concerns and we are keen to learn of them. We also note the great variation in rules and practice across the three prisons in Northern Ireland.

Some readers may be surprised to know that the prison service does not consult with prisoner families on issues that affect them generally. For example, recently the Prison Service reduced the number of visiting days at Hydebank without consulting either families or NIACRO.

Our Forum is designed to create a means for families to be consulted so that we can have a proactive voice within the criminal justice system and

work in partnership to improve prisoner and family support. It is widely accepted that a strong family connection plays a crucial part in reducing re-offending but sadly our system does very little to cultivate this support. This needs to change.

There has been a raft of critical reports on the Prison Service from a number of Government agencies, and changes are coming in the service; so this is a key time for families to have a voice and describe the necessary improvements in services.”



# MLA Visits North West Office

Foyle MLA Pat Ramsey visited NIACRO's North West Office in April. This visit was inspired by an earlier one to Amelia Street when he visited as a member of the DEL Committee.

The visit gave him an opportunity to meet with managers and staff and to hear at first hand of the projects and services provided by the organisation in the North West area. Mr Ramsey expressed his support for the organisation's work throughout Northern Ireland and is eager to keep in touch with us.



# Lord Mayor visits Hydebank Wood

Following his visit to Amelia Street in April, NIACRO was delighted to welcome the (then) Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alderman Gavin Robinson, to Hydebank Wood Prison in May. He met representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations who provide services in prison and in the community.

Alderman Robinson said: "It was great to meet such a range of organisations who work with some of the most vulnerable people in the community at Hydebank Wood today. In Belfast City Council and beyond, we are committed to improving community safety for people across Northern Ireland. Those I met with today demonstrated how, by providing services for people in prison and

their families, they are contributing to that aim."

Welcoming Alderman Robinson's comments, Chief Executive Olwen Lyner said: "We have worked closely with Belfast City Council over many years, and we're grateful for the opportunity to demonstrate those connections. Today shows how we are working in partnership with a wide range of other voluntary and community organisations to deliver services for people in prison and their families. Whether through improving skills and training, accessing accommodation, providing family support or through early intervention projects, we welcome the Council's commitment to continued

partnership working in the future. We know that by pooling our resources and focussing on the people in greatest need, we will be able to enhance community safety, and make Northern Ireland a safer place."



From left to right: Paul Norbury, Governor of Hydebank Wood; Alderman Gavin Robinson; Olwen Lyner, NIACRO Chief Executive; and Ronan McGinley, Service Manager at Opportunity Youth.

# Careers Advice DEL Committee Inquiry

The Employment and Learning Committee of the NI Assembly is conducting an Inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance in Northern Ireland. Service Manager Heather Reid, Jobtrack senior practitioner Gareth Eanetta and Choose2Change senior practitioner Billy Clarke gave evidence to the Committee in March.

Heather briefly described NIACRO's work in the context of training and employment, based as it is on "the unequivocal link between employment and successful resettlement".

She characterised the key barriers facing our service users as being poor educational experiences and discrimination, and described the process of alienation from early struggles in the formal education system leading to a lack of confidence in or commitment to education at all, and so a lack of qualifications and further separation from education, training and employment - the "NEET" cohort.

Later, there will be the reluctance of employers, training providers and the further education sector, to open their doors to people with a conviction. (continues overleaf)



## Careers Service

The NIACRO witnesses paid tribute to the positive working relationships we have built up with the Careers Service, not least the fact that staff from the service undertake our training on the relevant legislation.

It is the more unfortunate, therefore, that financial cuts have prevented the careers advisers continuing to do so, and Heather called on the Department to prioritise this training so that careers staff and personal advisers can give the correct information and guidance to people with convictions who are trying to get back into the labour market. We also pressed for DEL to take a lead in working with the Department of Justice to ensure that the Careers Service be integrated into the criminal justice system where it could do so much to support resettlement.

One question from the Committee was about the level of engagement in training by prisoners, and people in prison not wanting to engage in training programmes being offered. Heather and Billy made the point that an off-the-shelf training programme, which didn't take into account the alienation Heather had described earlier, was inappropriate. Our experience shows that people respond to

training that "fits" with their goals and aspirations and which gives them time to progress – this approach increases their own motivation to undertake training based in their local communities. Billy paid tribute to the Careers Service's efforts to encourage training providers to be flexible; perhaps in agreeing to a reduced timetable so young people can gradually get used to the discipline of regular attendance.

The Committee wanted to know about our work with employers, and asked about possible incentives to employers to take on young people who have offended – sadly, there are none! And indeed the costs of insurance for, say, work experience or job sampling, is a real barrier for employers. So we continue to work through our training programme, advice line and meet-the-employer events.

## Barriers to success

There was discussion on some of the reasons why education and training in the prisons is not as successful as it might be – for example, security issues routinely cause disruption which training providers and the colleges will not accept.

There are also problems of providing relevant courses – which, as Gareth pointed out, are not necessarily the traditional trades – and in managing the expectations of people in prison.

Heather, Gareth and Billy felt not only that MLAs were interested, but that they were prepared to listen and take on board issues that they had not thought about before. It was especially gratifying to have the briefing paper described by one MLA as "one of the most well put together I have seen in a very long time".

You can read the transcript of the meeting at:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2012-2013/March-2013/Inquiry-into-Careers-Education-Information-Advice-and-Guidance-in-Northern-Ireland-NIACRO-Briefing/>

## Craigavon Employers Event

Jobtrack took part in a DEL-sponsored breakfast information morning in Craigavon in April. There was a large turnout of employers to hear from representatives of DEL on the services they offer in the Craigavon area.

Jobtrack staff took the opportunity to introduce themselves to agencies and employers who may be interested in our work and supporting it in the future.

# NIACRO in China

Dave Weir, Director of Services for Children and Families, has had a long association with the British Council and was recently invited by the Council to participate in a visit to Beijing.

The British Council aims to connect people worldwide with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK. On this occasion eight UK delegates with backgrounds in youth work, education, sport, business, design and politics met with their counterparts from youth organisations across China with a view to identifying potential partnership and exchange activities.

This was very much an exploratory exercise with each participant setting out the opportunities they were looking for, and hoping to identify a partner with whom to develop ideas. While some delegates were seeking cultural exchange opportunities for young people, Dave was looking particularly for exchange opportunities for young leaders. His ambition is to develop a partnership with an organisation providing services for young people with the aim of offering placements for staff as an opportunity for development.

戴夫·维尔

Mr. Dave Weir



## New contacts

The idea was picked up by two Chinese delegates from the Tianjin Municipal Youth Federation and the Guangdong Provincial Youth Federation.

Tianjin is the third largest city in China and is situated in the north near Beijing. Guangdong is in the south of China near Hong Kong and Macao. Though neither delegate was in a position to commit to the idea at this stage, we are looking forward to further dialogue.

From a particularly criminal justice perspective some of the Chinese delegates expressed an interest in finding out more about social investment/social impact bonds. Under these, public

bodies contract with voluntary/ community organisations on a payment-by-results basis to deliver agreed results in services such as preventing offending or re-offending.

This approach – which is also referred to in the CJI report on the voluntary and community sector described elsewhere in NIACRO News - is another conversation we hope to continue.



Diane Kelly, Immigrant Council of Ireland, addressing the seminar

# Human Trafficking - The Tip of the Iceberg

The topical issue of human trafficking proved to be a provocative one for our latest Justice Series seminar in June, with engaging presentations and heated discussions on the implications of possible legislation.

While the event was sponsored by Lord Morrow MLA and discussions chaired by NIACRO's Olwen Lyner, the main presentations came from Les Allamby of the Law Centre NI and Diane Kelly from the Immigrant Council of Ireland.

Sponsoring the second seminar of the 2013-14 Justice Series,

Lord Morrow MLA started proceedings by outlining the motivation for his Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill, which was introduced to the Assembly soon after the event. Describing human trafficking as "modern day slavery", Lord Morrow explained how one of the 18 clauses in his proposed law will mean that rather than

criminalising prostitution, "those who pay for the services of a prostitute will find themselves in court". Pointing out that, to date, there have only been two convictions for human trafficking in Northern Ireland, Lord Morrow called on legislators to do something to address "injustice".

## Tip of the iceberg

The Law Centre's Les Allamby defined human trafficking as the acquisition of people by improper means with the intention of exploiting them. He also sought to clarify the nature of trafficking, explaining that while it is usually associated with sexual exploitation, many victims are subject to forced labour in other areas such as agriculture, fishing, catering and domestic servitude. Les went on to explain how traffickers exploit language differences between victims, involving almost 20 nationalities – with the largest group of victims being Chinese. Worryingly, he said the number of trafficking cases reported is undoubtedly “the tip of the iceberg” of a much more endemic problem.

In wrapping up his presentation, Les highlighted the need to treat victims as victims, pointing to the number of people – particularly from the Chinese community – who are imprisoned for working in cannabis factories under trafficked conditions, when they are in fact deserving of genuine consideration and concern given that they too are victims.

Diane Kelly spoke next, emphasising that human trafficking was not to be confused with smuggling or immigration, but rather that it is a crime against the person. She referred to the growing problem of the Irish indoor sex industry, which, according to research, is paid for primarily by middle-aged married male professionals. Diane presented other key findings from research into human trafficking in the Republic, including:

- 75% of human trafficking cases in the Republic of Ireland relate to sexual exploitation.
- 1 in 4 cases involve a child.
- Approximately 1,000 women are for sale in the Irish indoor sex industry every day.
- 800 of these are advertised online.
- 97% of these 1,000 are immigrant women.
- 1 in 4 buyers have encountered trafficked, controlled or underage girls.

However, Diane reinforced Les Allamby's belief that these statistics represent the tip of the iceberg. She backed the Nordic model of criminalising the men who purchase sex, rather than the women who she said usually have had fewer opportunities in life.

Following the presentations, Olwen Lyner chaired a Q&A session from the audience of more than 30 delegates – of whom more than half were MLAs or political party representatives, with Anna Lo MLA and Jim Wells MLA particularly vocal on the subject.

**If you'd like to know more about future Justice Series events, contact Mairaid McMahon at [mairaid@niacro.co.uk](mailto:mairaid@niacro.co.uk).**





## A Solid Foundation

**NIACRO has recently joined up with six NGOs from other EU Member States to work on a project with the slightly unwieldy title of “A solid basis for the future of young male offenders”.**

It stems from contact made under the ExOCOP employability project of 2009 to 2012 with “180 Foundation”, a Netherlands-based NGO which works with vulnerable and at-risk young people. NIACRO was involved with ExOCOP at many levels and with many partners in the statutory and voluntary/community sectors in Northern Ireland and across the EU. Most relevant to the current project is our work on promoting the employability of young offenders and people returning to the community from custody. So we were delighted to accept an invitation to join the project.

“180” is leading the project, which is 80% funded under the EU’s Daphne III programme. This aims to reduce violence against children, young people and women. The goal of the project is to increase the self-respect of young male offenders in the same age group, helping them to reframe the way they think about themselves and others. This will give them a “solid basis” for the future.

NIACRO’s role will be to:

- Gather information on existing programmes for building self-respect.
- Share knowledge of and experience with such programmes.
- Input to and feedback on the lead organisation’s draft programme.
- Carry out a pilot of the draft programme in Northern Ireland.
- Give feedback on this first pilot and report on the progress of the programme.

We will also be drawing on our experience of our own Jobtrack and C2C (Choose 2 Change) projects, and working closely with the Juvenile Justice Centre.

## City of Culture

**Jobtrack staff in the North West have been working to take advantage of the UK City of Culture activities in Derry/Londonderry.**

We held an information event for service users in March, attended by Martin Melarky (City of Culture Company), Jim Collins (Portrait of a City project) and Fiona McGonagle (Bluebell Arts project). The event was informal and allowed plenty of interaction between the speakers and the excellent number of service users who came along.

The main aim of the event was to increase awareness of the range of opportunities that City of Culture provides to help people gain experience or develop new skills by participating in some of the many and diverse volunteering projects. These include activities such as making a piece of art out of car parts or building a garden area in the city in 72 hours. While we were keen for Jobtrack service users to take up these opportunities in order to enhance their CVs, it was also about having a bit of fun and taking part with family members so that everyone could enjoy the craic.

A number of people who attended completed volunteering forms and hope to get involved in stewarding at events. Service users also showed a great deal of interest in other activities particularly the “Portrait of a City” project. In this, participants take photographs which hold significance for them around the city - building up a portfolio of pictures which is like a mini biopic of their life. We hope that those who have participated as a volunteer or taken part in one of the many projects available will have an opportunity to showcase their experience later in the year.



# Managing Money

NIACRO recently completed a year-long programme training “hard to reach” groups connected to the criminal justice system in how to manage their money.



For some years, we have been developing our capacity to help people raise their levels of financial capability. Staff have prepared information handbooks for people dealing with financial issues in prison, as a resource for prison staff and to help people in prison prepare for their release. Funding from the Money Advice Trust enabled us to deliver the programme in community settings to groups of people affected by the criminal justice system - adult men, young people, women, family members - who find it difficult to access or engage with mainstream services.

The programme aimed to empower individuals to take ownership of and responsibility for their finances and debt, to learn skills to improve their ability to plan, budget and manage their finances, and ideally to help them break the cycle of debt, dependency and poverty.

## Achievement

Funded through the Money Advice Trust innovation grants programme, staff delivered 12 money management programmes between April 2012 and March 2013. A total of 13 programmes were delivered to 63 people from across Northern Ireland at centres in Armagh, Belfast, Coleraine and Derry/Londonderry, including hostels. Of these, 43 submitted written portfolios and attained Open College Network accreditation Level 1 with 3 Credits. For most of them, this was the first positive recognition they had ever received, of completing a course that had educational value.

Feedback gathered from programme participants was very encouraging for the facilitators as it showed that the material is accessible and participants found the programme very practical and useful. Examples of the value of the programme to people include:

- Very interactive with lots of different learning styles/ methods incorporated.
- Really informative.
- The facilitator is very practical and engages well. The information is extremely useful.
- Excellent course. Gained useful information.
- Good presentation – plenty of opportunity to ask appropriate questions.
- Very friendly staff. I now know how to keep track of my income.
- The small friendly group made it easy to question when necessary.
- Everything very well explained.
- The course allowed everyone to gain information on a topic they specifically required.

The programme is obviously very relevant to our core work and it has become recognised as a very useful learning tool for participants. So even in the absence of secure funding for 2013/4 we plan to continue with the training, albeit on a smaller scale, while pursuing available funding for the future.

# Hate Crime Publications Launched

CHALLENGE  
HATE CRIME

DEAL WITH IT

The Challenge Hate Crime project has been one of the largest, most innovative and most demanding NIACRO has undertaken.

It involved research, both academic and action-based; partnerships both local, especially with the NI Prison Service, and international; and the development and piloting of very new ways of working with people who offend.

Much of the learning from the project has now been brought together in a unique publications pack which Justice Minister David Ford MLA launched at the Skainos Centre in East Belfast in April.

The research papers and accompanying DVDs outline the extent of the problems of hate crime in Northern Ireland and the need for a more effective response and joined up approach across the criminal justice system.

We hope that this research, undertaken over three years, will inform a model which will result in a reduction in the number of hate crime incidents and consequently the numbers of victims of hate crime. Each agency is already working on

practical changes to ensure hate crime offences are dealt with effectively.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Ford said: "We all understand the waves of hurt and harm that reverberate each and every time someone is a victim of an incident based on their perceived religion, race, sexuality, disability or nationality. It can have terrible consequences, particularly for the victim, but also for the perpetrator. And it can have a detrimental and lasting effect on entire communities.



## Action plan

“What this research has done is offer solutions by recommending a series of changes to policies and procedures, and a model of intervention to address the behaviours of those convicted of these heinous offences. In January this year I brought forward an action plan, setting out the further work that we in the Department of Justice, and the other criminal justice agencies, must progress if we are to rise to the significant challenges that hate crime presents us with.

This was agreed by the Justice Committee and work is now underway to deliver the actions in it. Those agencies within the remit of my Department will not be

found wanting when it comes to responding to these issues.”

Max Murray from the NI Prison Service was Chair of the CHC Project Steering Group. He commented: “As the lead agency for this project, we look forward to the development of a model that both reduces re-offending and begins to deal with the endemic issues resulting from hate crime, including sectarianism and racism. The Department has recently approved funding which will ensure that we get a vital flow of information to enable us to take proactive, collaborative action, with a firm focus on reducing offending and re-offending, and on building a shared future for all.”

## Working together

CEO Olwen Lyner said:

“We welcome the range of commitments that have been made to date in tackling hate crime. We now look forward to further discussions with all interested groups to ensure that we can, together, not only deliver better outcomes for people affected by hate crimes, but ultimately contribute to a reduction in such incidents in the future. Such a partnership approach, harnessing the strengths of a range of organisations, will provide a more effective means of making all of our communities safer.”

You can access the 12 publications and two DVDs on our website [www.niacro.co.uk/challenge-hate-crime](http://www.niacro.co.uk/challenge-hate-crime)

## Challenging Hate Crime in the EU

The European Commission established the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) in September 2011 as an umbrella network of organisations and individuals working to challenge hate crime and the radicalisation which encourages and promotes extreme and violent behaviour against certain groups in society.

NIACRO has been a member of RAN from the start – in fact, our work in this field pre-dates the EU process. Way back in 2006/7 (NIACRO News 14 and 19) we were part of an EU-funded project called AGIS working with partners in GB, Germany, Bulgaria and Malta. We then hosted a seminar with participants from Bradford and London to explore any parallels and learning there might be between the Northern Ireland conflict and the effects on Muslim communities in Great Britain of the “war on terror”.

More recently, of course, we have invested a great deal of time and energy along with our partners in the Prison Service in the Challenge Hate Crime project.

So it was not surprising that we were invited to join RAN and Director of Services Pat Conway has attended two important events this year; a plenary meeting in Brussels in January (described in NIACRO News 32), and an Ireland-orientated workshop in Dublin in April.



## Working groups

RAN is organised into working groups which aim to share experience, knowledge and good practice, and subsequently to advise the EU and individual Member States on how best to tackle violent crime motivated by hatred and prejudice.

NIACRO is a member of the working group on deradicalisation and exit interventions (RAN Derad) which met in Dublin in April. It looked in particular at the problem of “young people at risk of involvement in racist or sectarian hate crime, violent extremism, and organised criminality”.

Derad is led by Harald Weilnböck, whom some NIACRO News readers will have met at the hate crime conference which rounded off the Challenge Hate Crime project in Belfast last September.

Anyone who has met him will have been impressed by Harald’s knowledge and expertise, but especially his quiet but intense energy and commitment to the cause of helping people who commit hate crimes to reconsider and ultimately change their behaviour.

## The Ireland context

The April workshop was designed to give participants from both parts of Ireland an introduction to RAN, with participants from the two police services as well as NGOs and public authorities.

The workshop set out the Ireland context – youth vulnerability to involvement in racism and sectarianism, dissident

republicanism/loyalism, and violent criminal gangs. There were presentations on current approaches, practices and experiences of working with young people at risk of getting involved, and an audit of good practice, working methods, weaknesses/gaps and emerging issues across Ireland.

Radicalisation Awareness Network



## Sharing Experiences

There was also a session on lessons to be learned from other Member States, including a particularly interesting initiative in Denmark. Within the Security and Intelligence Service there is an innovative Centre for Prevention; its key way of working is a “broad co-operation with a number of public authorities and extensive dialogue with representatives of different ethnic and religious groups [including] individuals and groups that represent more controversial groups”. Schools, social services and the police work closely together, and perhaps the most important element of the work is that there is wide public acceptance and trust for the Centre.

In this session there was discussion on “practice and politics”. Pat felt that his description of the way in which Challenge Hate Crime had combined case work, group work and work in the community resonated with other participants. He also stressed the need to recognise that politicians can be unhelpful, not always consciously.

The issue which cropped up again and again at the CHC closing conference needs always to be made clear – politicians have to be very careful that their words do not give tacit permission to the perpetrators of hate crime.

The workshop ended with a discussion on the future development of RAN Derad in Northern Ireland and the Republic. It has to be said that the language of “(de) radicalisation” is not very familiar in our context (though recent events in Woolwich may have made it more recognisable). It “feels” more about the discourse of 9/11 and jihadism than the sectarianism, often linked with organised/violent crime, which presents a serious problem. We need to make the effort to interpret what we hear from other EU Member States and seek out the parallels and common ground where we can both learn and contribute.

One area of common ground is the identification of young people, often from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, with strong though often ill-informed opinions and an attraction to violence. Developing ways to work with these young people which will seem relevant to them and start from where they are at, is something all the participants could see to be of value.

NIACRO will continue to influence and inform the discussion within RAD with an emphasis on how best to apply the lessons in the local context. [www.ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs](http://www.ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs)

## Women and Awards

As part of the roll-out of the Inspire model across Mid-Ulster, the Pilgrim Trust granted funding to help meet the needs of women from the Dungannon/Armagh area. We ran a 10 week Taster Programme in First Steps Women's Centre, Dungannon. The women enjoyed a variety of “~Tasters” including Cook-It, Holistic Therapies, Creative Art, and IT & Creative Writing. They were awarded their certificates of attendance on 21st May - a great success!

We plan to replicate the taster sessions in the Cookstown/Magherafelt area in Positive Steps community centre, Cookstown.



## Prisoner Voting Ban

CEO Olwen Lyner was a signatory to the following letter which appeared in the Guardian on 19 June:

“The prisoners’ voting bill before Parliament presents an opportunity to lift the unjust and outdated ban on all sentenced prisoners taking part in our democratic process. While those who have committed crimes may be rightly deprived of their liberty, they never cease to be citizens.

The current system of blanket disenfranchisement is a violation of the UK’s obligations under the European Convention of Human Rights, sending a poor message to both people in prison and society as a whole.

The ban undermines efforts to help prisoners reform their lives and

take responsibility by suggesting that their opinions are unwanted and their voices do not count.

A large number of people sent to prison have already been marginalised as a result of poverty, poor education, abuse and neglect.

Removing their basic democratic voting rights only compounds this harmful exclusion.

Prison governors and officials, chief inspectors, electoral commissioners, legal and constitutional experts, civil society organisations, faith groups and most other European governments recognise that people in prison should not be automatically disenfranchised.

We hope that MPs and peers considering the issue will do

likewise and take this opportunity to overturn the blanket ban.”

Other signatories to the letter were: Most Rev Peter Smith, Archbishop of Southwark; Rt Rev James Jones, Lord Bishop of Liverpool (bishop for prisons); Lord Woolf, Chair, Prison Reform Trust; Lord Ramsbotham; Peter Bottomley MP; Juliet Lyon, Director, Prison Reform Trust; Shami Chakrabarti, Director, Liberty; Frances Crook, Chief Executive, Howard League for Penal Reform; Frank Kantor, General Secretary, Free Churches Group; John Scott, Chair, Howard League Scotland; Deborah Coles, Co-director, Inquest; Nuala More, Senior lawyer, Aire Centre; Clive Martin, Director, Links; Angela Clay, Chair, Assoc. of Members of Independent Monitoring Boards; Chris Stacey, Director (services) Unlock.

# Criminal Records

**“For too long now, overzealous [criminal records] checks have blighted the lives of too many hardworking people: stopping them from securing jobs they may very well be suited to.”**

We couldn't have put it better ourselves. The quote above comes from an article in “Liberty”, the newsletter of the National Council of Civil Liberties. The article is about an important ruling by the Court of Appeal in London in January 2013. This stated that the blanket requirement for job applicants to give information on all convictions, even trivial offences that were spent and went back many years, breached Article 8 of the Human Rights Act which enshrines the right to a private life.

Following the case, the Government has proposed changes to the system in the form of revised regulations, though these will apply in the first instance in England. The new regulations would filter out cautions and warnings after six years (after two years if received under the age of 18); and convictions that did not result in a prison or suspended prison sentence would not have to be disclosed after 11 years (after five and a half years if under 18).

## Making a difference

No-one wants the hassle and expense (to the applicant or to the taxpayer) of all this. But sometimes going to the law is the most effective, or even

the only, approach that will make a difference. NIACRO has increasingly found that the most practical help we can offer complainants is to help them seek legal assistance to challenge employers and training providers under either Article 8 as in the English Court of Appeal case, or under their failure to comply with the AccessNI Code of Practice. This has been successful. Most of the 15 cases we have progressed for legal assistance have had a positive outcome, either resulting in obtaining leave to take Judicial Review proceedings, or being settled out of court with a financial settlement or with the complainant having their conviction information amended or removed.

## The safeguarding saga

NIACRO has been living with these problems since the establishment of AccessNI and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups regulations in 2008 and 2009 respectively. We've written about it in five out of the last eight issues of NIACRO News, responded to around 10 consultation documents and met with Government departments, Assembly committees and official inquiries.

There was a change in the regulations last September, which NIACRO welcomed as it seemed it might clarify the system to some extent, with new definitions of “regulated activity”. Instead, the confusion has if anything increased and we are getting more and more calls from employers looking to us for clarification.

We have reported before on difficulties in the further education sector, the very place where people wanting a second chance should be supported. On a more positive note, three large FE colleges have asked for NIACRO training and support with their policies, which we welcome. And we are working with Belfast Metropolitan College and the Probation Service on protocols for dealing with people who have a high risk of offending so that they can have an opportunity to undertake education and training.

The health and social care sector - a very large employer in Northern Ireland - is the source of increasing complaints regarding criminal records. Employers who cannot be bothered to look at the person or beyond the criminal record

check are refusing jobs to increasing numbers of suitably skilled and qualified applicants, even for posts they are finding it hard to fill. Sometimes it is evident that they either do not know the difference between a caution and a conviction or are ignoring it.

Ultimately they are denying themselves access to a very dedicated and productive labour pool as they misinterpret and hide behind the safeguarding regulations.

Disclosures are still including information which is questionable, for example non-conviction information or “soft intelligence”. This is defined by Access NI as “behaviour that might be indicative of criminal activity”.

There is something really quite alarming about this – how many of us could be absolutely sure we have never carried out “behaviour that might be indicative of criminal activity” in the eyes of a suspicious or hostile neighbour, colleague or passing police officer?

It's very easy to suggest an involvement in, for example, drugs, paramilitary activity, or anti-social behaviour, without the hard, provable evidence which is at the heart of our judicial system.

## Keeping it simple (not)

We have some sympathy with employers. Access NI placed the following on its website:

### “Recurring Error on Enhanced Applications

Since the introduction of the new Applications Forms we've noticed an increase in the number of Forms being returned to Countersignatories for correction of errors.

The most frequent problem appears to be on Field A1 where the box being ticked is Enhanced (£30). By ticking this box you are indicating that no check is required against the Barred Lists, however on Page 5 the 'Yes' box is being ticked for a Barred List check at Fields H7 and H8 - this is, in effect, contradictory and we have no option but to return the Form for clarification. When completing an Enhanced Application, if you require a check of the Barred Lists (ie, the position is Regulated Activity) please ensure you place an X in the box for 'Enhanced with Barred List Check' at Field A1, and also in the 'Yes' box at Fields H7 and H8.”

No wonder employers are getting on the phone to us.

## Maybe one day...

We do have some good news to report, however. After the Security Industry Authority was set up in 2009, NIACRO received many stories of its inflexibility and indeed irrationality in implementing the law.

Since then, we have met the SIA on several occasions and worked hard to explain the impact the new system was having on individuals. We welcome the fact that the Authority is now barring significantly fewer job applicants from working in the security industry, especially those who have been on probation or received cautions.

We can also live in hope that the changes brought about by the Court of Appeal case in England and the pending amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act will come our way soon.

We may also hope that the important recommendations of Sunita Mason's two reviews will be implemented by the Department of Justice.

In the mean time, we will continue to help individual applicants and employers, highlight the issues with politicians and policy-makers, and call for change in the future.

# Volunteers Dance on their Hats



NIACRO volunteers celebrated Volunteers' Week in high style at their Mexican Feast and training session in June.

Following the "feast" part of the evening, MOVE's Fiona Patterson, who is an accredited trainer for the "Thinkuknow" course, led a session for volunteers and staff on internet safety for young people.



Shadow Secretary of State, Vernon Coaker, 4th left, with members of CO3, the NGO chief officers' association. He met CO3 in May for a wide-ranging discussion about the role and contribution of the third sector and the impact of Westminster on its activities. NIACRO CEO Olwen Lyner is 2nd left.

## Staff Comings and Goings

We say goodbye and a big thank you to Sophy Bryson who has been a volunteer for 17 years: we featured Sophy's unique contribution in NIACRO News 30.

Goodbye and good wishes also to Jean Fleming from the North West office.

We welcome new staff to:

Caps (Claire Trolan Watts and Ann Montgomery)

Jobtrack (John Kerr, Tony Kearns, Kate Russell and Dominic McGranaghan)

Choose 2 Change (Jill Neill, Susan Bateman and Oonagh McAlister)

Independent Visitor (Aislinn Bryson)

Public Affairs and Communications Team (Julia Kenny and Robyn McCready)

Administration Team (Kala Hodgen)

APAC Mental Health (Helen Patterson)



If you want to learn more about NIACRO, you can contact us in the following ways:  
By post or in person:

Amelia House,  
4 Amelia Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7GS

City Factory  
9 Queen Street  
Derry/Londonderry  
BT48 7EF

26 Carleton Street  
Portadown  
Craigavon  
BT62 3EP

Company Registration No NI 018121  
Charity Registration No XN 48280

By phone: 028 9032 0157  
Online: [www.niacro.co.uk](http://www.niacro.co.uk)  
By email: [niacro@niacro.co.uk](mailto:niacro@niacro.co.uk)

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