Alternatives to Custody
Women’s Centres and the view from Northern Ireland

Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, London 10.06.15

@NicolaCarr

#prisonalternatives

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Overview

☆ Context of Probation and Community Sanctions in Northern Ireland
☆ Development of provision for women
☆ Current issues and challenges
Probation Board for Northern Ireland (NDPB)


Different legislative framework

Probation Officers – social work trained
Community Sanctions

- Growth in prison population (2009-2013 - +28%)
  - Short custodial sentences rise
  - Crown court cases rise
  - Custody/Probation sentences
  - Recalls

- Rise in numbers subject to community supervision
Paradox of Probation?

Supervision in the community an alternative and reduces the prison population

or

Expanding community supervision widens net and (potentially) increases prison population

Paradox of Probation (Phelps, 2013)

‘Rather, probation serves both capacities, acting as an alternative and as a net-widener, to varying degrees across time and place.’ (Phelps, 2013:51)
Net-widener or penal reduction?

Two central outcomes that determine the probation-prison link:

1. Whether probation diverts people away from prison or draws cases under greater supervision;
2. Probation as an opportunity for rehabilitation that reduces future incarceration or as a pathway to prison.

1. Sentencing practices and processes;
2. Effectiveness and quality of probation supervision and services
3. Policies and procedures regarding violations and breaches

Phelps (2013)

COST ACTION IS1106 Offender Supervision in Europe
Table 1: Number of People on the caseload at Point in Time by sentence type*: 31st March 2010 – 31st March 2015

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Community Sentences</td>
<td>2,495</td>
<td>2,690</td>
<td>2,821</td>
<td>2,616</td>
<td>2,525</td>
<td>2,248</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-release</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>1,119</td>
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<tr>
<td>All post-release supervision</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1,048</td>
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<tr>
<td>All pre and post-release supervision</td>
<td>1,363</td>
<td>1,392</td>
<td>1,581</td>
<td>1,836</td>
<td>2,141</td>
<td>2,156</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non Statutory supervision</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>All P8NI supervision</td>
<td>3,983</td>
<td>4,211</td>
<td>4,441</td>
<td>4,468</td>
<td>4,652</td>
<td>4,395</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% change 31 Mar 2015 on 31 Mar 2014</th>
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<tr>
<td>-11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>-9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>+13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>+1%</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-6%</td>
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Key Figures:
Women 10% of caseload
Highest proportionate representation of women in 40-49 age group
Policy and practice context

**Corston Report (2007)**
- Experiences of violence and victimisation
- Histories of abuse
- Higher prevalence of mental health need, drug use etc.
- More likely to be primary carers

**NI Strategy for Women Offenders (2010)**
- Acquisitive crime – fines
- **But** fine default result in prison
- Higher rates of self-harm in prison
Women in Prison in Northern Ireland

Belfast's Hydebank Wood prisons 'not good enough'

Performance at two of Northern Ireland's prisons is not good enough, inspectors have said.

They have made more than 150 recommendations for improvements at the women's prison and young offenders centre at Hydebank Wood in Belfast.

The inspectors said they had "significant concerns" that both prisons were in a "downward spiral".

About 180 young men are held at Hydebank, NI's main young offenders centre.

About 70 women are in a separate facility on the same site.

Inspections visited in February this year and assessed performance in the areas of safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement.

"It is the fourth time we have inspected Hydebank Wood. In 2009, at the first inspection, I was raising the same issues," Brendan McGiugan of Criminal Justice Inspection said.

The greatest cause for concern surrounds the safety of prisoners, Mr McGiugan said.

"We already know many people in the system have mental health issues and they are very vulnerable. They need to be given a regime that supports their rehabilitation," he said.

"It is the fourth time we have inspected Hydebank Wood in 2005. At the first inspection, I was raising the same issues."

Culture change

Mr McGiugan said that changing the culture of the prisons was a significant challenge.

"There has been significant under-investment in the development of people to take over the Northern Ireland prison service. We need people who know what success looks like."

He said change was vital. "The current regime is not making them (prisoners) better. It is not good enough. That is not what we want as a society."

Brendan McGiugan said there is a lack of "purposeful activity at Hydebank Wood"

Nine years on, Hydebank Wood is deemed a failure for women

14 November 2013

By Neil McCartney

The CJI have "significant concerns" about the level of care provided to Northern Ireland's most vulnerable prisoner population - women - as they are moved yet again to a suitable secure facility.

A new report by the Criminal Justice Inspectors (CJI) has questioned the ability of Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre (HYOCC) and Ash House, Northern Ireland's women's prison, to deliver positive outcomes for inmates within their care.

And, nine years after women were moved from Maghaberry Prison because of its unsuitability, the inspectors have concluded that the replacement jail in Hydebank Wood (HYOCC) has failed to come up to scratch - and is having a "significant and immediate" effect on the outcomes for women inmates.

A lack of "purposeful activity" at HYOCC was highlighted, which failed to keep 60 of 100 women inspectors had seen in their report, in which they "hoped" to continue the "correlation" of the women's prison with the HYOCC.

By 2009, all inmates in the women's prison were now living in the young offenders centre, with the inspectors warning that the environment was "not consistent" with the needs of women. They said there had been "inconsistent" care for inmates, with staff "not prepared for release as survivors".

The sample of 100 inmates living in the women's prison at HYOCC included women of all ages, from all parts of the country, and with a range of "behaviours", the inspectors said.
Women’s Offending Behaviour in Northern Ireland: A Strategy To Manage Women Offenders and Those Vulnerable to Offending Behaviour 2010-2013

* **Strategic Strand 1** : Providing Alternatives to Prosecution and Custody

* **Strategic Strand 2** : Reduce Re-Offending

* **Strategic Strand 3** : INSPIRE Women’s Project: Gender-Specific Community Supervision and Interventions

* **Strategic Strand 4** : Developing a Gender Specific Approach to the Management of Women in Custody.
INSPIRE Project

- Established in 2008
- Women centred approach
- Assessments for court
- Statutory orders
INSPIRE Model

* Registered as a day-care provider
* Links with Sure Start
INSPIRE Model

Source: Jean O’Neill – Manager INSPIRE
Inspire Women’s Project

- Mental Health
- Housing Executive
- Prison Arts
- NICAS
- NIACRO
- DUKE OF EDINBURGH
- Quakers
- Lifeline
- FASA
- Women 'aid
- WSN
- ALTERNATIVES/CRJNI

Source: Jean O’Neill – Manager INSPIRE
Evaluation of Project

Quality of supervision – rated positively by women

Safe space

Practical supports

Non-judgemental

Good compliance

Inspire was viewed by key stakeholders as a unique and much needed service that has been highly effective in the short time it has been running. The staff team are highly regarded by both women offenders and stakeholders alike. Central to the Project’s success has been its women-centred approach which involves women in identifying their own needs and objectives and the wide and varied links with community based organisations, particularly the Northern Ireland Women’s Centres. Such links with support in the community have meant that Inspire can provide a ‘joined up’, rapid and cost effective response to a wide range of women offender’s

Easton & Matthews (2011)
Evaluation recommendations

- Establishing stronger links with agencies (police, housing, mental health)
- Developing robust monitoring and evaluation outcomes
- Widening scope – courts, geographic

Easton & Matthews (2011)
Resources and risk orthodoxy

Women fall off the agenda?

Jean O’Neill: Griffins Society Fellowship exploring women’s transition from custody to the community.
References


References

