

Profile of Community-based Criminal Justice Services in the Republic of Ireland

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Quality Matters
supporting improvement in social services

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1 Foreword

This profile of community-based, criminal justice services in Ireland was commissioned by St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) and produced by research charity, Quality Matters, in collaboration with a range of community, voluntary and statutory organisations. The main focus of the project was to create an online directory of community-based organisations supporting prisoners, individuals engaged with the Probation Service, or those with criminal convictions, and their families, to better meet the information needs of those groups, as well as to support people working in the sector. The Compass directory (www.thecompass.ie) will be launched in Autumn 2021.

The initiative was initially proposed by St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) and is now being developed by the Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities (IASIO), with project assistance from Quality Matters and Enclude. The online directory was designed with assistance from Pathways Centre, Care After Prison and the Irish Penal Reform Trust. The initiative is funded by the Probation Service, the Irish Prison Service and SSGT, and the three organisations were also involved in the development of the online directory and the production of the profile and gap analysis of community-based, criminal justice services.

While the focus of this work was to produce an informative and accessible online directory, we took this data gathering opportunity to develop an initial profile of community-based, criminal justice services and their service provision, geographical location and other relevant details about their activities. Further data was gathered from respondents to understand current gaps, barriers and perceptions of the criminal justice sector. While we are pleased with the findings, we are conscious the analysis is limited by some key factors, including the number of responses, disruption caused by Covid-19 and the start-up nature of this initiative. This report serves as a baseline for information about the criminal justice sector and our hope is it will serve as a useful starting point towards better understanding the needs of service providers and improving practices in the coming years.

SSGT, the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service are committed to working with our colleagues in the community, voluntary and statutory sectors to improve the lives and outcomes of prisoners, individuals engaged with the Probation Service, or those with criminal convictions, and their families.

St Stephen's Green Trust

The Probation Service

Irish Prison Service

2 Introduction & Methodology

2.1 Overview

This report presents a profile of respondents working in community-based, criminal justice services in Ireland, as well as a summary of gaps and barriers reported by these respondents. This report was commissioned by St. Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT). Findings are drawn from a new online directory of community-based services in Ireland supporting prisoners, individuals engaged with the Probation Service, or those with criminal convictions, and their families as well as for those who are interested in finding support for criminal justice-related issues. This directory is the result of a collaborative project between SSGT, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities (IASIO) and other key stakeholders. The project goal is to provide a central source of information on criminal justice-related services for and other support services available for prisoners, individuals engaged with the Probation Service, or those with criminal convictions, and their families in Ireland. The hope is this directory will increase access to services and improve referral pathways.

This report summarises key data obtained from respondents who supplied information for the directory as well as findings from a small number of open text questions that respondents were asked when completing an online survey to build the directory. The key objectives of this report are:

- To give a broad overview of the Irish criminal justice sector and its various service providers;
- To describe the challenges faced by respondents as well as the gaps or barriers experienced by their service users, including prisoners, individuals engaged in the Probation Service, or those with criminal convictions, and/or their families.

This report was developed by Quality Matters, an independent research charity, with assistance provided by IASIO, who are managing the data collection and data entry required to develop the criminal justice directory. The report itself was commissioned by SSGT to use the directory to provide greater insight into the current situation of service provision for these service user groups.

The directory contains information from 250 respondents across 95 organisations¹. An important consideration, at this early stage in the project's development, is that this initial directory should not be considered complete, in-depth, nor a comprehensive record of all community-based services in the Irish criminal justice sector. The directory is a first step towards developing a more detailed online resource of community-based services that comprise the sector in Ireland.

¹ All reference to respondents within this report refers to the number of individual offices or projects, not the number of organisations, as some larger organisations may contain or be comprised of multiple community-based services. For instance, four organisations within the dataset were comprised of 9 or more regional services, which were located across Ireland.

Based on this analysis of the initial directory, this report contains a profile of respondents working in the criminal justice sector and summarises key findings drawn from their responses, including the type and variations in service provision, geographic location of service providers, type of service users, referral pathways, sources of funding, gaps and barriers reported by its respondents . When reading this report, a key consideration is that this research may be limited by several factors, such as the fact the research was undertaken during a global pandemic, which might have impacted some findings (e.g., perceptions of gaps, waiting lists, service availability, etc.). A summary of the report limitations is detailed in the next section.

3 Methodology and Report Limitations

3.1 Limitations to this Research

Within this research, it is important to highlight several limitations. This report is based on initial data collected for the purposes of developing of an online directory of community-based, criminal justice services supporting prisoners, individuals engaged in the Probation Service, or those with criminal convictions, and/or their families, which will be the first of its kind in Ireland. However, it should not be considered a comprehensive nor complete picture of all organisations or services, in Ireland, working with these service user groups. In this light, the report should be viewed as a first step towards developing an online directory of community-based services working with these populations.

Another limitation is that respondents working with the general population, but who might provide services to some criminal justice service users and/or their families, were not included in this initial dataset. This meant, service providers that provide support to some criminal justice service users, but whose work is primarily focussed on helping the general population fell outside of the scope of this project.

Due to the lack of existing service directories for community-based services working in the criminal justice sector, representatives for all service providers in the criminal justice sector may have been included in this online directory and/or audit of criminal justice services in Ireland. It is hoped that once published and shown to be a useful resources, other services will request they be included in the directory in the future.

Also, the thematic analysis of gaps and barriers being reported by respondents was based on a limited number of responses to the criminal justice directory. Therefore, it should not be considered as representative of all views and/or respondents within the criminal justice sector and, in most cases, respondents reported on their own field of expertise, rather than commenting across all possible themes.

Finally, the research was undertaken during the global pandemic in Ireland, which may have impacted the number of responses or affected a respondent's perceptions of needs, gaps and/or barriers. It is possible that some respondents for community-based services did not provide up-to-date information for the criminal

justice directory due to a lack of staff resources during the global pandemic, which may also have impacted the findings contained in this report.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology for developing the criminal justice directory and producing this report involved four steps, including the development of an online survey instrument, data collection, data analysis and the development of the report.

Step 1: Development of an online survey instrument

A survey instrument was designed to gather service information and gaps in service provision/delivery from 250 respondents across 95 organisations working in Ireland. The instrument was co-developed by Quality Matters with input from an interagency advisory group². Once developed, an online survey was created by Enclude to easily gather information and safely store data in a custom-designed Salesforce client relationship management (CRM) system used for the criminal justice directory.

Before the online survey was administered, the instrument was tested in two stages: first, three online focus groups were undertaken with service users, family members and representatives from community-based services to review the instrument, and second, the online survey was piloted by four community-based services in Ireland. The main purpose of the dataset is to develop an online directory of community-based, criminal justice services in Ireland. Other information was gathered from respondents to develop a profile of community-based, criminal justice services to establish a baseline and better understand the sector.

It is envisaged this online directory will be a valuable resource for people who are looking for a single source of information on services and supports available and it represents the first such resource for criminal justice services within Ireland.

Step 2: Data collection

Data collection was primarily undertaken by IASIO with assistance provided by Quality Matters. The data collection was undertaken in three stages. First, an audit of criminal justice services in Ireland was undertaken by IASIO to identify the widest possible range of services working with criminal justice service users and/or their families. A total of 250 respondents across 95 organisations in Ireland was identified and included in this dataset. Second, a desktop review and internet search was used to gather publicly-available information on criminal justice services and the type of service provided by these community-based services. This information was obtained through a combination of existing directories or service documentation developed by IASIO and by using publicly-available details on an organisation's website.

The third and final step involved validating this information with respondents between January and March 2021. An online survey with partially completed detail about a community-based service and its service provision was sent to all 250

² This project advisory group was comprised of St. Stephen's Green Trust, Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, IASIO, Irish Penal Reform Trust, Care After Prison, and Prisoner Support Network.

respondents identified in the audit of criminal justice services undertaken by IASIO, however only 55% of respondents (N=137) completed to the online survey. This means further detail on the type of service provision and gaps/challenges was provided by only 55% of respondents at the time of writing this report. The limitations of this response rate is elaborated further in the next section.

Step 3: Analysis of dataset

Once data was gathered, the criminal justice directory was analysed by Quality Matters to develop a profile of organisations that responded to the online survey in two ways:

1. An analysis of respondents compared across counties in the Republic of Ireland by location and the catchment areas where they currently operate;
2. An analysis of respondents based on the categorizing the type of service provision and their key target groups respectively:

Additionally, qualitative data from the criminal justice directory was analysed to identify themes and patterns in the gaps reported by respondents as well as any reported barriers reported by respondents for either service users and/or their families. A brief summary of these findings are provided in this report.

Step 4: Development of this report

Following this analysis of the criminal justice directory, Quality Matters was responsible for developing a report for SSGT, Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service. It contains an in-depth analysis of the criminal justice directory and a thematic analysis of the qualitative feedback on gaps and barriers shared by respondents. This version highlights key findings and offers a broad overview of respondents working in the criminal justice as well as the key gap and barriers reported being reported by these respondents.

Profile of Criminal Justice Directory

250

The total number of respondents working with criminal justice service users and/or their families

203 across 95 organisations

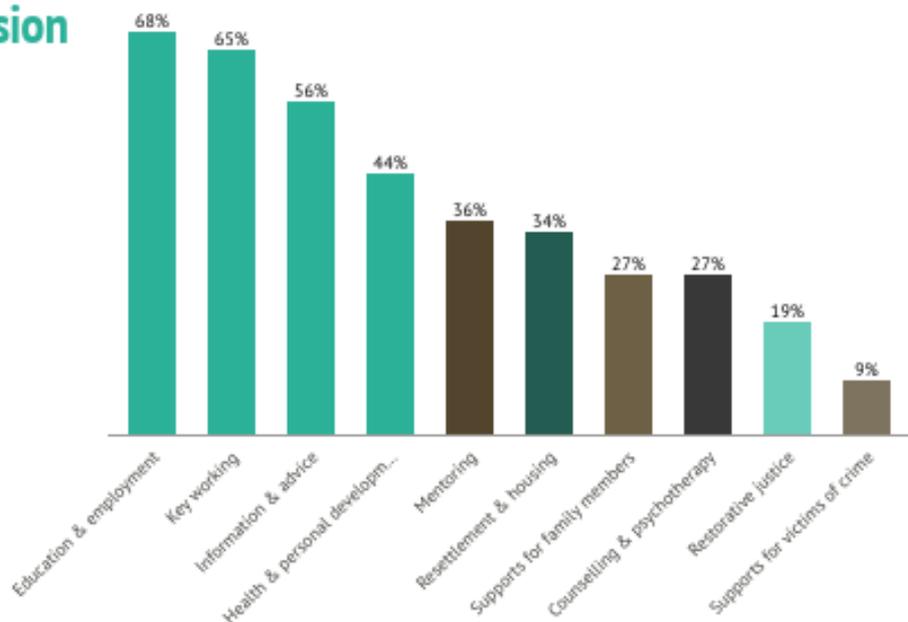
Number of respondents with a parent organisation

47 respondents

Number of respondents with no parent organisation

Types of Service Provision

Out of 250 respondents, the highest reported area of service provision reported was education and employment supports for prisoners and ex-offenders. The least reported area of service provision was supports for victims of crime



Breakdown of Catchment Areas

Out of 250 respondents, the three counties with the highest proportion were:



48%

Co. Dublin (n=122)

22%

Co. Cork (n=56)

20%

Co. Limerick (n=51)

7/10

70% of respondents had a catchment area of **one county** (n=174)

1/10

11% of respondents provided services in **two to four counties** (n=27)

2/10

19% of respondents provided services in **five or more counties** (n=47)

Services Delivery & Target Groups

Types of Service User Groups

Among respondents, the highest-reported target groups who receive support were:



7/10 offering support to males

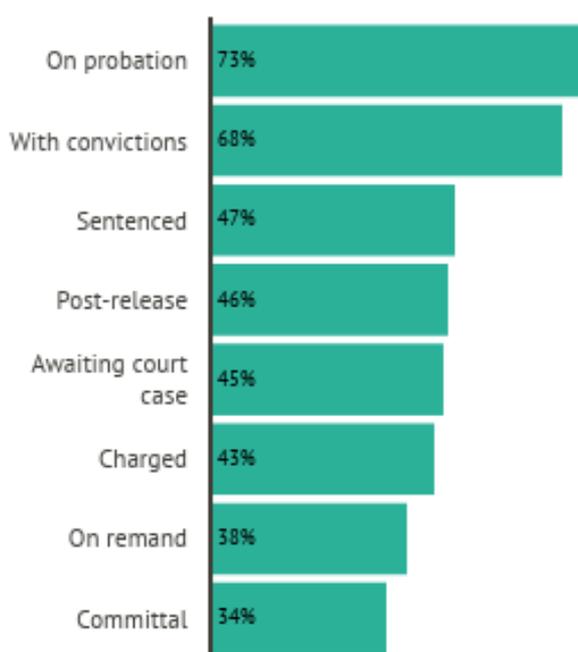


6/10 offering support to females



4/10 offering support to young adults (aged 18 to 24)

Stages of Criminal Justice System



Out of 226 respondents, nearly half or more work with service users who are on probation, have current convictions, or have been recently sentenced.

Delivery of Prison In-reach

Respondents identified any prison campuses or detention centres where they provide prison in-reach supports. The top three prisons were:

62% Dóchas Centre

55% Wheatfield Prison

54% Mountjoy Prison



Providing Community Outreach

Of 180 respondents* to the online survey:

44% of respondents provide community-based outreach (n=80)



Of the 80 respondents that provide community-based outreach, over 50% were located in Co. Dublin

* Responses to the online survey vary because respondents were not obliged to answer all questions in the survey.

Referral Details and Structure

Structure of Organisation

Out of 90 respondents to the online survey, the legal structure of their organisation was:

88% were either a **charitable, community and/or voluntary organisation** (n=79)

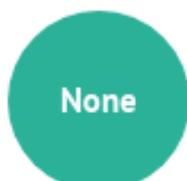


9% were a **social enterprise** (n=8)



Waiting List Times

59% of respondents had **no current waiting list time** (n=47)



22% had a wait time of **one month or less** (n=17)



15% had a wait time between **one to three months** (n=12)



3% had a wait time between **three to six months** (n=2)

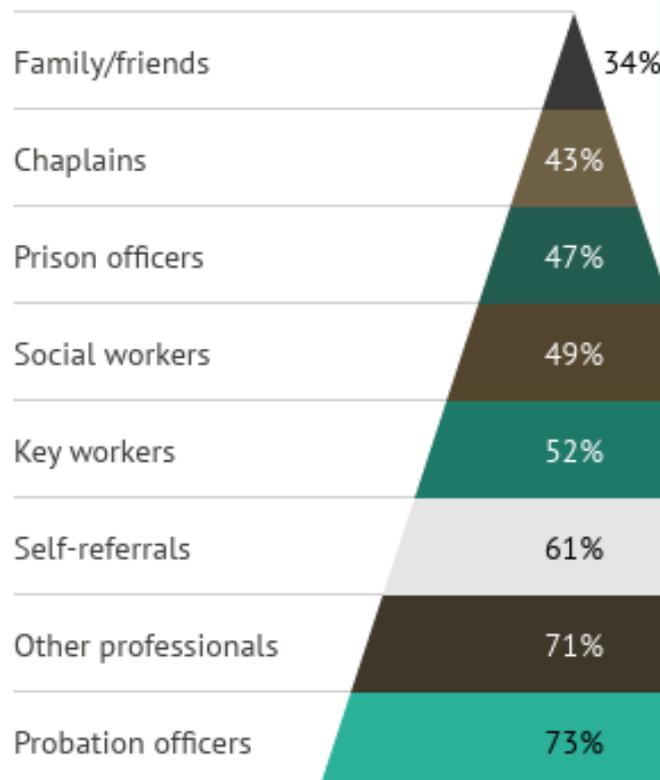


1% had a wait time of **six months or more** (n=1)



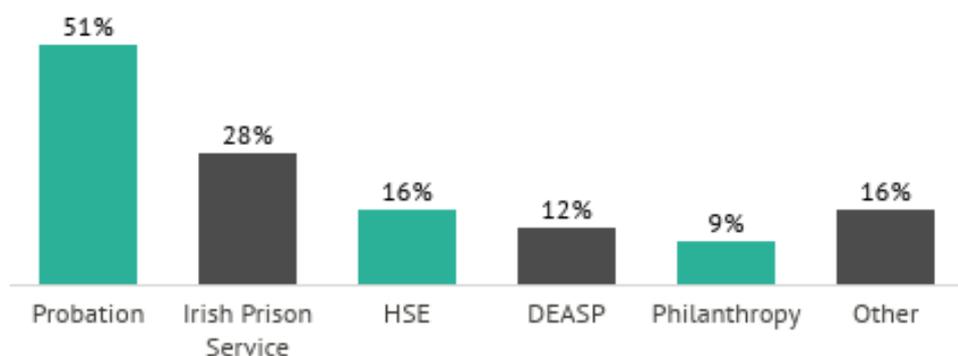
Sources of Referral

Respondents were asked how their service users were typically referred. Out of 225 respondents, the main sources were reported as:



Sources of Funding

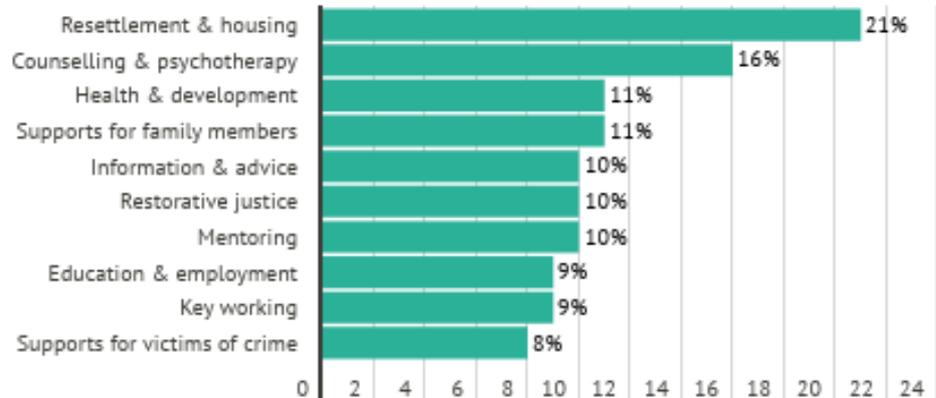
Out of 93 respondents, their main sources of funding were reported as:



Themes on Gaps and Barriers

Gaps in Local Service Provision

Among 78 respondents that reported gaps in service provision in their catchment area, findings show the gaps were:



Other Gaps in Service Provision

Respondents were asked to report any other types of gaps in service provision in their catchment area. Out of 38 respondents, these other gaps were:



9

Lack of mental health services



7

Need for emergency and supportive housing for individuals leaving prison



7

Need for parenting and child support programmes



5

Need for addiction treatment services

Barriers related to access to service users

Respondents identified barriers associated with either receiving referrals or difficulty experienced when accessing clients while in prison. The themes from this analysis found that:

35

of respondents stated that **prison staffing levels limit access** to criminal justice service users

26

of respondents **did not receive sufficient referrals** from Irish Prison Service or Probation*

16

of respondents reported how **in-reach services are not sufficiently accessible** for clients on protection

*It should be noted the Probation Service highlighted that client are referred to organisations and community-based services that meet the immediate requirements of clients.

8 Acknowledgements

The project team from SSGT, Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service would like to acknowledge the research assistance given by IASIO, who were responsible for gathering data for the criminal justice directory, Quality Matters for project design and management, as well as the six interviewees who shared their views and perspective on gaps in the criminal justice sector to supplement findings in this report.

9 Any Questions?

If you would like to be included in the criminal justice directory, which is due to be launched in 2021, please contact Emma Byrne with IASIO (ebyrne@iasio.ie) for more information. Also, if you should have any questions about this research or the findings contained within, you can contact St. Stephen's Green Trust (info@ssgt.ie) for more information.