



**PBNI** Probation Board  
for Northern Ireland  
Changing Lives for Safer Communities



**PROBLEM SOLVING JUSTICE PROJECTS:  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT IN PROBATION FOR  
SERVICE USERS AND STAFF**

**CEP Workshop  
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## Overview

- **Probation Board for Northern Ireland and Psychological Services**
- **Problem Solving Justice Pilot Initiatives**
- **Benefits of Early Interventions / Outcomes for the Criminal Justice System, Service Users and Staff**



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## Probation Board for Northern Ireland

- Non-Departmental Public Body of the Department of Justice
- Work at every stage of Criminal Justice - Court, Community and Custody
- Psychological Services/Interventions and staff support
- Problem Solving Justice Initiatives: Psychological Interventions and Well-being for Service Users and Staff Impact



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## Psychological Services within PBNI

- Psychology Service developed over 25 years
- 20 Psychologists (Forensic/Clinical Psychologists)
- Provide Psychological Support, Assessment and Interventions across Northern Ireland for Service Users and Advice to Probation Staff
- Designed to add value to Probation Officers;
  - Pre-Sentence Reports
  - High Risk Cases
  - Mental Health / Risk Assessments / Consultations
  - Life Licensees
  - Offending Behaviour Programmes / Consultations
  - Specialist Psychological Therapies
  - Training
  - Research
  - Policy Development
  - Problem Solving Justice



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## What is Problem Solving Justice?

- PSJ tackles the root causes of offending behaviour and reduces harm and vulnerabilities within families and the community.
- The ultimate aim of PSJ is to prevent re-offending and reduce further victims, through early intervention
- Problem Solving Courts refer to a judicial process or criminal justice approach which addresses underlying root problems that contribute to criminal behaviour
- Based on concept of therapeutic justice:
  - offender engagement
  - specialist court

Origins in USA late 1980s

**4000+** Problem Solving Courts



## Why Invest in Problem Solving Justice?





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## **Problem Solving Justice Early Intervention Initiatives and Psychological Support**

- Substance Misuse Court (SMC)
- Enhanced Combination Orders (ECOs)
- Un-adjudicated Domestic Abuse Programmes
- Mental Health



## Substance Misuse Court Service User Profile

- **Gender:** 84% Male, 16% Female
- **Age:** 19 – 58 year olds
- **Substances:** 70% Drugs, 16% Alcohol, 14% Drugs and Alcohol

- **Offending Type:**

- Theft
  - Drug Offences
  - Offences Against the Person
  - Motoring Offences
  - Offences against the state
  - Criminal Damage
  - Other

**Treatment Length:**

- Average of 31 Weeks
- 27 Counselling Sessions
- 42 Supervision Sessions
- 11 Drug Tests
- 18 Court Hearings

**Completion Categories:**

Completed and Abstinent  
Completed and Significant Harm Reduction

**Reasons for Drop-Out/Removal**

**OUTCOMES/ EVALUATIONS  
TO DATE**



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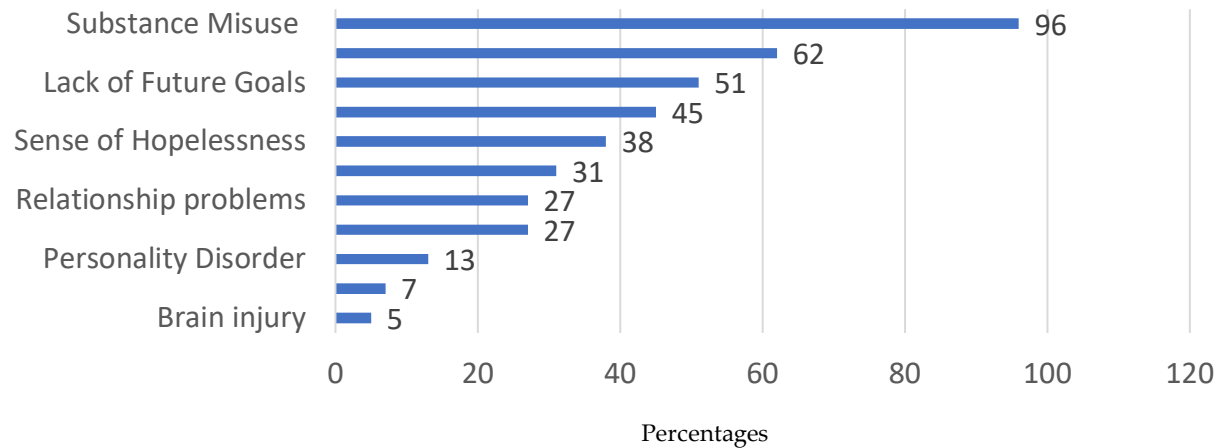
## Enhanced Combination Orders (ECOs)

- **Background to ECO**
- **Aim:**
  - provide community based alternative to short custodial sentences
  - interrupt cycle of offending
  - rehabilitation
- **Operating Principles:**
  - victim focused
  - individualised approach with service users
  - sentencer engagement
  - enforcement
  - collaborative partnerships

**“Short prison sentences are long enough to damage you, and not long enough to heal you”**

**(Rory Stewart, Prisons Minister E&W, 2019)**

## ECO Psychological Presentations





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## **ECO Outcomes /Re-Offending Rates/ Staff Well-Being**

- NISRA Report (2019)
- **reduction in re-offending**
- **decrease by 20.7% of custodial sentences in ECO areas**
- **90% reported ECO helped them to desist**
- **87% reported ECO helped address other problems/behaviours**
- **2018/19 Reoffending Cohort; 45.6% custody re-offending rate**
- **31% ECO re-offending ( down 10% from 41%)**
- **800 + ECO's to date**
- **Improving Societal Outcomes – mental health and well-being, training and employment opportunities, family stability, stable accommodation. Cost effective**
- **Staff Well-Being and Psychological Support: Very positive responses. Hope and resilience. Investment in the journey/change for the service user.**



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## **Promoting Positive Relationships Programme (PPRP) and Respectful Relationships Programme (RRI)**

- Domestic Abuse Interventions for men on the cusp of the Criminal Justice System.
- PBNI deliver PPRP across all Health Trusts in Northern Ireland.
- **Aim:**
  - to promote healthy relationships and reduce risk of abuse against partners/children
  - upstream Interventions / tackling root causes
  - reduce number of Domestic Abuse victims
  - diversion from the Criminal Justice System

### **Outcomes:**

- Evaluations to date
- Benefits



## Mental Health and the Criminal Justice System

Prevalence of MH & co-occurring disorders in the offender population

Rates of suicide & self harm

Other Mental Health Needs, ie  
Personality Disorder  
Learning Disability  
Substance Misuse  
Communication Difficulties  
Brain Injury  
Trauma

Access to Mental Health Services in the Community

Sentencing Options



## Why a Mental Health Problem Solving Justice Initiative?





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# **PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF STAFF IN THE PROBLEM SOLVING JUSTICE PROJECTS**



## **Staff Support and Psychological Well-Being**

**Service User/Staff Relationship/Dynamics**

**Enhanced psychological well-being and mental health**

**Investment in change/rehabilitation/ retention**

**Long term staff commitment**

**Increased Staff Confidence and knowledge**

**Continued Professional Development**



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**THANK YOU**