

Community Return: A Unique Opportunity

July 2015

Gerry McNally
The Probation Service, Ireland

Ireland

- Population 4.6 million people
- Member of European Union 1973
- GDP \$48,000 equiv.
- Imprisonment rate 88/100,000 (Incl. remand) (Aug 2014)
- Cost of imprisonment per prisoner €65,542 in 2013
- 89.5% of sentenced committals in 2013 for 12 months or less.

Ireland

- The Probation Service
- An agency within the Department of Justice and Equality
- The lead agency in the assessment and supervision of offenders in the community
- Member of CEP (Confederation of European Probation)
- Probation Service in Courts and Prison
- Community Sanctions
- Post-custody supervision

Ireland

- The Irish Prison Service
- An agency within the Department of Justice and Equality
- 14 Prisons
- 30th November 2011 3697 prisoners in custody under sentence
- Probation Officers in every prison
- Probation Service Post-custody supervision

Ireland

- 2008 economic downturn
- Reduced income and expenditure
- Expansion plans change
- Opportunity for change and innovation
- ‘Never waste a (good?) crisis’

Community Return

- **Programme for Government**

“to review the proposal to build a new prison at Thornton Hall and to consider alternatives, if any, to avoid the costs yet to be incurred by the State”

- **Thornton Hall Review Group Recommendations**

- Early Release Scheme for carefully selected prisoners with requirement to perform community service

Community Return Background

- Community Service/Community Return – ‘front door’ and ‘back door’ reparation
- Community Return – unique and innovative
- Pilot Scheme 2011-12
- Project Oversight Group and Co-located Team
- Joint Service Strategic Action Plan
- Expansion of Community Return

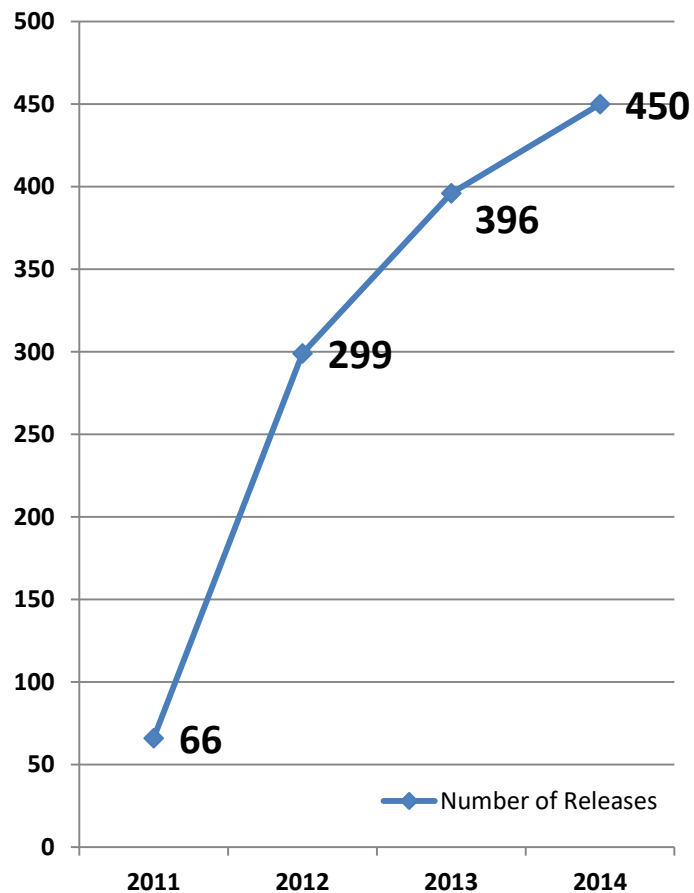
Eligibility

- 1 to 8 years
- Half sentence served
- Positive Engagement
- Series of Assessments

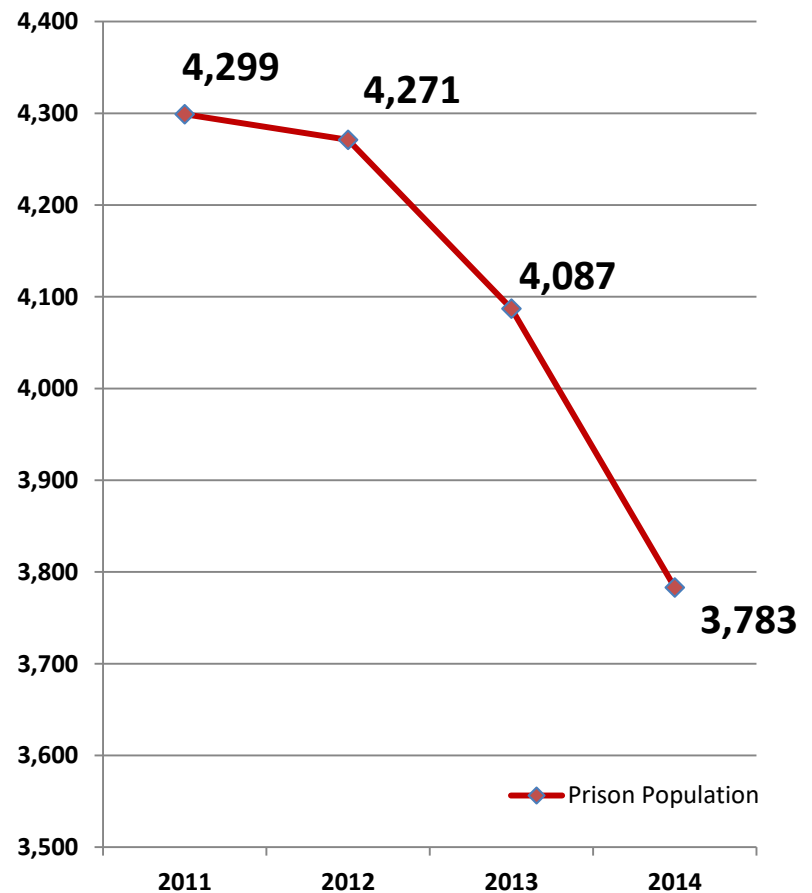
Conditions

- 2/3 work days each week
- Weeks required calculated and clear
- Two absences
- Conditional Release

Number of Releases

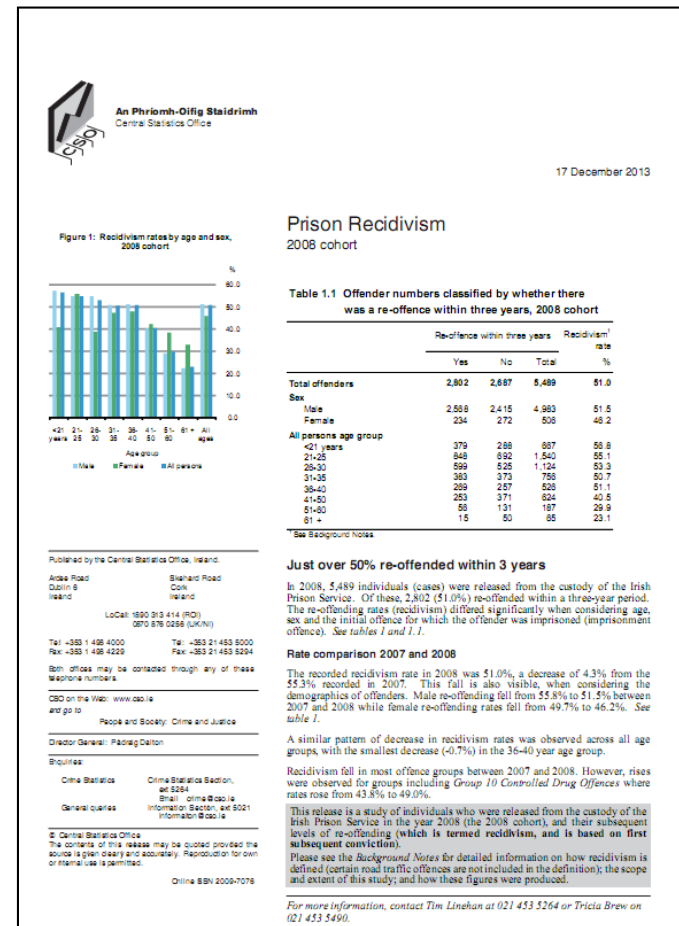


Prison Population



Recidivism

- Central Statistics Office/Irish Prison Service study
- Recidivism rate of 51% within 3 years
- 33% re-offended within 6 months
- 40.4% offended within 12 months



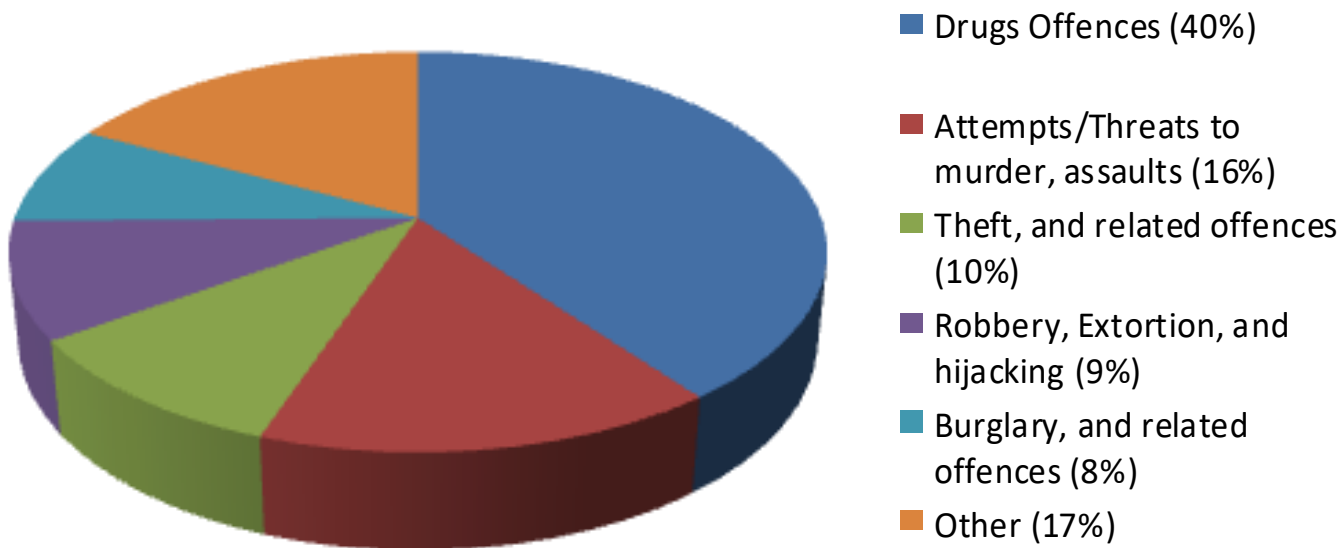
Evaluation of Community Return

- To assess operation and effectiveness of Programme
- Sample population of 761 persons

**Community Return: A Descriptive Evaluation
of the first 20 months 2011-13 (November
2014). Report available at www.probation.ie**



Offence Types



Offence types of Community Return participants

Statistics

Table 3: Community Return Population

Location	Number	Percent	
Dublin	329	43%	
Munster	245	32%	
Rest of Leinster	144	19%	
Connacht/Ulster	43	6%	
Total	761	100%	

Table 4: Sentenced Prison Population

Location	Number	Percent
Dublin	1252	40%
Munster	839	27%
Rest of Leinster	669	21%
Connacht/Ulster	363	12%
Total	3123	100%

Compliance

- 89% compliance rate
- Main reason for breach is for 2nd absence
- Participant compliance attributed to a desire to avoid returning to prison and
- secondary motivational factors such as participant enjoyment of the work experience, appreciation of early release or, a sense of commitment to the Community Return contract.
- Improved resettlement process and outcomes. (Probation Supervisors)

Compliance

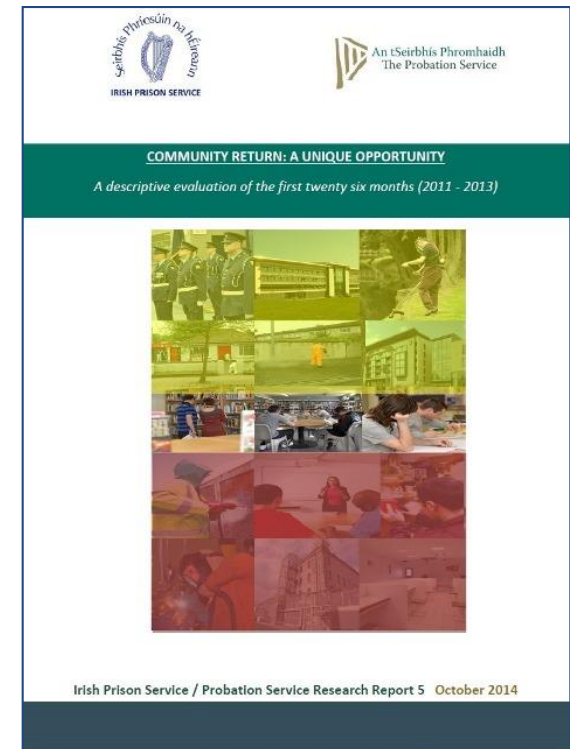
- Structure and routine aided re-integration, work ethic and self-esteem developed, their positive profile in working in the community and the learning of work skills transferable to employment.
- keeping occupied, providing positive supports and a starting point to build on, particularly in the early stages after release when particularly vulnerable to relapse to anti-social behaviour, companions and offending. (Participants)

Outputs and Outcomes

- 9,580 weeks of Community Return completed
- €1.8 million (euro) worth of unpaid work for the community
- Enhanced pre-release education and rehabilitation participation
- Reduction in prison population:
- 30th November 2011 3697 prisoners in custody under sentence
- 28th November 2014 3204 prisoners in custody under sentence

Re-imprisonment Rates Community Return Participants

- 232 completions released in first year of scheme tracked to end of 2013 in the evaluation study (2014)
- 20 persons returned to prison on new offence and sentence
- 6 of these were as a result of non-payment of court ordered fine
- 91% had not returned to custody



Recommendations

- Further Develop of Assessment Process
- Engage with Department of Social Protection required to ensure participants can access payments
- Improve work site numbers and proximity
- Better State, Community and Voluntary agencies partnership and co-ordination for improved results
- More pre-release preparation
- Increase participant numbers

July 2015

- 1409 Participants since inception
- 163 breach/return to custody (11.5%)
- Almost 89% compliance

SUPERVISORS FEEDBACK

Very co-operative, generally better workers than those referred from the Courts, they take direction, turn up on time, good example to others.



Views of Probation Officers

- Compliance strongly linked to desire not to go back to prison
- Other motivational factors include enjoyment of work experience, appreciation of early release and sense of commitment to the scheme

Views of Prison Service

- Scheme encourages prisoners to engage in therapeutic programmes while in prison
- Offers a significant incentive to behave and make positive steps while in custody



Participant Feedback

Benefits include

- Structure and Routine
- Work ethic and self esteem
- Work skills
- Helps them stay out of trouble

Challenges include

- Strictness of signing on conditions
- Access to social welfare payments
- Time and Cost

Words from a participant and a supervisor



Thornton Hall



Thornton Hall



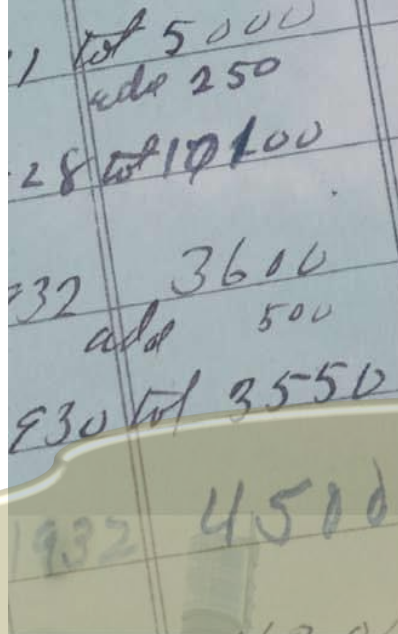


An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh
The Probation Service

www.probation.ie

gpmcnally@probation.ie

**Gerry McNally, Assistant Director,
The Probation Service,
Haymarket,
Smithfield,
Dublin 7
Ireland.**



www.irishprisons.ie

