Mental Health Among Probation Service Clients in Ireland

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- International research has shown a higher prevalence of mental health difficulties among persons subject to probation supervision compared to the general population.

- Mental health difficulties can impact compliance and re-offending.

- Second Report of Interdepartmental Working Group, 2018 recommended research to ascertain prevalence of mental illness in probation population.

- New Probation Service research provides insight into the mental health needs of people who come into contact with the service.
The Probation Service and Mental Health

• Responsivity – RNR Model
• Mental Health Working Group established in 2019
• Probation Service Mental Health Practice Guide developed in 2019
• Mental Health Training since 2018 has included:
  • STORM - Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Skills Training
  • ASIST - Applied Suicide Intervention Training
  • Working with Personality Disordered Offenders
  • An Introduction to Trauma
  • A – Z of Adolescent Mental Health
Moving Forward Together

The Mental Health Evaluation Studies, 2019

• 3 internal and incremental studies

• 1st exploratory study - analysis of the Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R) data collected between 2017 and 2018.

• 2nd pilot study - self-report survey with Probation Officers from one Probation Service team and the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF).

• 3rd larger scale study - replicated the second study using the previous learning and findings across a representative sample of five Probation teams.
Symptoms indicating presence of at least one mental illness

- Adults supervised by Probation Service: 40%
- General Population: 18.5%
Approx. 50%

Present with one or more of the following issues also - alcohol and drug misuse, difficult family relationships, and accommodation instability.
Key findings identified from the third and largest study in the Report indicate that:

- 43% experience Active Symptoms of Mental Health Problems (57% women, 40% men)

- 30% are engaged with a service for Mental Health Assessment and/or Intervention currently (49% women, 28% men)

- 56% have had some form of Mental Health Assessment and/or Intervention in the Past (70% women, 52% men)

- 41% are identified as having a known Mental Health Diagnosis provided by a qualified clinician (52% women, 38% men)
Active suicide ideation / plans

1 in 10

8%

16%
One specialist team reported:

• 43% with active symptoms indicative of mental health problems
• 14% with a formal diagnosis of Schizophrenia or other primary psychotic disorder
• 9.5% past contact with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
• 9.5% identified as engaging in deliberate self-harm
• 36% identified as having experienced childhood trauma
• 19% engaged with some form of service for mental health problems
One general team reported:

• 1 in 5 men (19%) have had In-Patient Psychiatric Care in the Past

• 14% expressed active Suicide ideation/plans

• 83% of women had Mental Health Assessment and/or Intervention in the past
Key issues for the Probation Service in the findings include:

• Significant unmet psychological and psychiatric needs among persons subject to Probation Supervision.

• Need to further strengthen and build upon knowledge and develop skills-based training in mental health for Probation Service staff to aid recognition of mental health problems and where identified, ensuring that the appropriate services are involved at assessment and/or intervention.

• Need to enhance Probation Service engagement with mainstream primary care and forensic and community mental health service providers and the development of joined-up strategies and interventions.
Responding to Mental Health Needs

- Draft Probation Service Action Plan, currently being finalised – respond to recommendations in research

- Recognition of need for greater collaborative working – Probation and Mental Health Services – Referral Pathways

- Enhance knowledge and skill base of staff through training

- Establishment of a cross-Departmental High Level Taskforce on Mental Health in April 2021 - Justice Plan 2021
Thank you!

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