



An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh  
The Probation Service

# Responding to Cultural Diversity in the Probation Service

*Lisa Anderson, Senior Probation Officer &  
Tony Swaine, Probation Officer  
Staff Learning & Development Unit*

ICJA Conference – 22 June 2022

# Public Service Duty

- **Section 42, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014**
- (1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—
  - (a) eliminate discrimination,
  - (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
  - (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.



# Probation Service Strategy Statement – 2021-2023

## Pillar 3: Promoting Inclusion

We will further strengthen an organisational culture that recognises and supports diversity, integration and human rights; which is reflected in all aspects of Probation Service policy and practice.



# Our Values

- As a Criminal Justice Social Work agency, equality, diversity and inclusion are core values of the Probation Service.
- Recognising and responding to cultural diversity will support the relationships we build with our clients and allow for more effective interventions.
- By being culturally responsive, we strive to remove barriers to rehabilitation and reintegration.



# Culturally Competent Social Work Practice

- **Cultural sensitivity** – Workers respond to services users with culturally appropriate skills and services.
- **Cultural relativity** – Workers reflect on cultural difference and its implications for the professional relationship.
- **Professional competence** – Workers possess a high level of knowledge of the issues faced by ethnic minority service users and possess an ability to respond.

(Williams & Soydan, 2005)



# Cultural Competence

- We need to situate our clients' experiences within the communities from which they come as this may influence their attitudes to treatment and readiness to change.
- We need to reflect on cultural biases we as individuals and professionals may hold, as well as biases that may be inherent in practices or interventions and adapt accordingly.



# Data / Statistics



# Probation Service Ethnicity Data

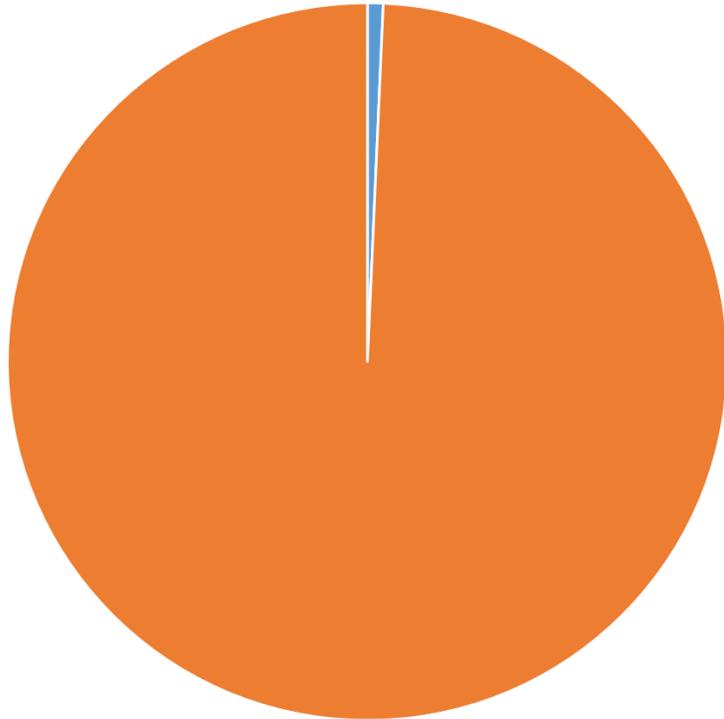
Probation Service (2019) Client Ethnicity Data:

White Irish – 79.64%  
Irish Traveller – 11.3%  
African or Black – 1.6%  
Roma – 0.3%  
Asian – 0.2%

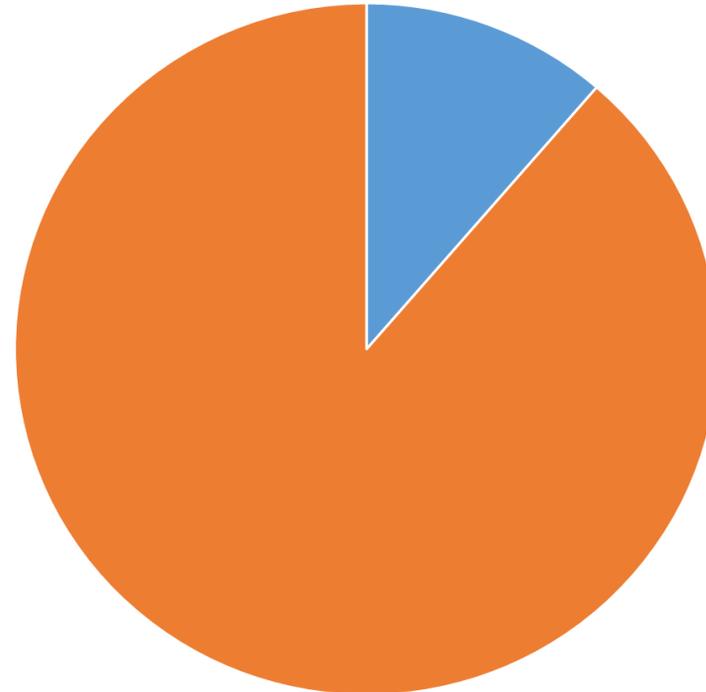
*Note: There is a gap in recorded data. However, this is improving.*



# Travellers in Probation



**Irish Travellers make up 0.7% of  
General Population (Census 2016)**



**Irish Travellers make up 11.3% of Probation  
caseload (Probation Service, 2019)**



# Travellers in the Probation Service

- There is an over-representation of Travellers in the criminal justice system and on the Probation Service caseload.
- Furthermore, Traveller women comprised 12.5% of all females engaged with Probation Service (23.23% of all Traveller engagement). (IPRT, 2022)
- Due to Travellers being the largest minority ethnic and cultural group on the caseload of the Probation Service, there is a particular need for staff to be equipped to respond in a culturally competent manner.



**How is the Probation  
Service responding?**



# Responsivity

- Key principle for probation practice.
- Interface between the characteristics of the client and the characteristics of the intervention, including the practitioner style and programme type.
- Probation Officers need to be responsive to the bio-social characteristics of their clients – e.g. gender, cultural beliefs and attitudes.



# Culturally Responsive Probation Practice

- Exploring and responding to education, language and literacy issues.
- Recognition and encouragement of cultural identity.
- Reflect and consider the potential for bias to influence decision-making.
- Awareness of the barriers facing ethnic minority service users, e.g., experiences and fears of racism and discrimination; mistrust; fear of being misunderstood or stigmatised.
- Trauma informed approaches.



# Probation Service Training Programmes

- Cultural Competence and Intercultural Awareness Training – Get Real, NIACRO
- Traveller Inclusion in the Probation Service Training
- Working with Travellers & Roma Clients (input from members of the Travelling & Roma communities)
- Gender Module – Intersectionality



# Additional Responses to Cultural Diversity

- Core Probation Skills Handbook and Training
- Irish Offender Supervision Framework (IOSF)
- Policy and Guidelines on Intimate Partner Domestic Abuse 2022
- Cultural considerations in Pre-Sanction Reports
- Committed to ensuring the voice of ethnic community members and user participation in the development and delivery of our services and training
- Provision of approx. €17 million annually to Community Based Organisations
- Department of Justice's 'Working to Change – Social Enterprise & Employment' Strategy



# Ethnic Equality Monitoring

## Good Practice Guidelines for Probation Officers in Ethnic Data Collection

- Rationale for ethnic data collection
- Support to frontline staff in collecting this data
- Address challenges in ethnic data collection



**PAVEE POINT**  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE



# Ethnic Equality Monitoring – Next Steps

- Launch of practice guidelines.
- Roll-out of training to Probation Officers nationally.
- Quality assurance to ensure adherence to guidelines.

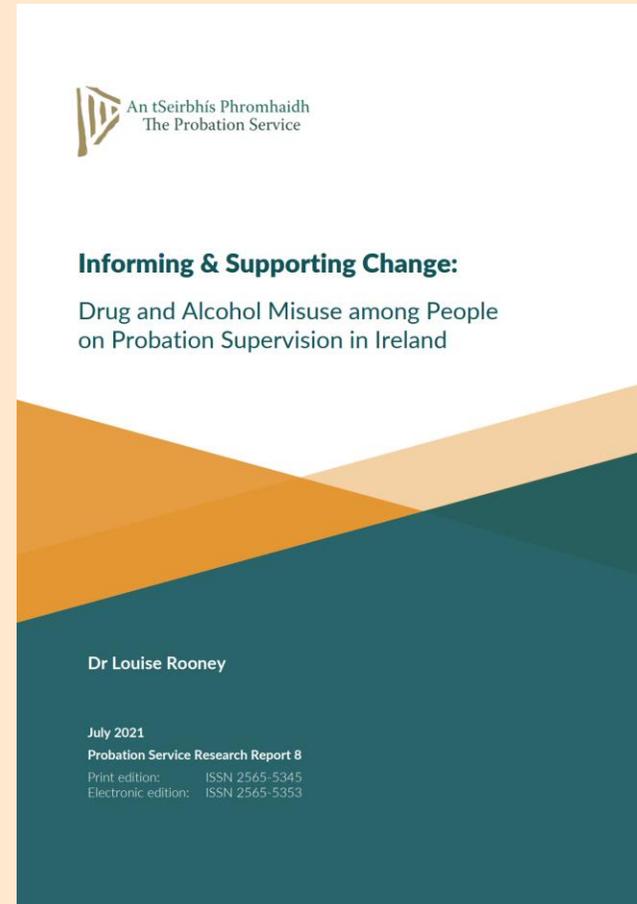
## Analysis of the data

- Address any negative outcomes highlighted for ethnic minority service users.
- Effectively monitor outcomes.
- Propose evidence-based responses that will enhance our approach in working with ethnic minority groups.



# Using Data as a Driver for Practice

- Probation Service Report – *Informing & Supporting Change: Drug and Alcohol Misuse among People on Probation Supervision in Ireland* – Dr. Louise Rooney (2021)
- Data aggregated by ethnicity



# Findings & Implications

- Ethnicity - significant predictor for the types of drugs misused by Probation Service clients.
- Irish Travellers - highest level of **alcohol related offending behaviour** of all ethnic groups.
- In contrast, White/Black Irish (54%) were identified as having the highest rates of **drug related offending**.
- Clients from the Traveller Community (17%) were significantly more likely to misuse gateway substances with **family members** than other ethnic origins.
- Findings evidence the need for the development and roll out of culturally appropriate substance misuse interventions.
- Importance of Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity training for Probation Officers.



# Thank You!



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