

IRELAND**Women's programmes**

In Ireland there are no in-prison treatment programmes for women victims of gender violence. Inside prison, interventions for women who have been victims of gender violence are undertaken on an individual, needs-led basis, by either a psychologist or a probation officer.

The organisation Women's Aid (www.womensaid.org.uk) has made few visits to The Dochas Centre (a women's prison) to give information about the services they offer. Moreover, they sent leaflets and cards to the centre, which outline their services and they gave the organisation free phone Helpline number to women inmates.

On the other hand, they have delivered training on gender violence to some staff members of the Women's Prison via the Homeless Agency. Homeless Agency is an organisation that is responsible for the planning, co-ordination and administration of funding in relation to the provision of quality services to people who are homeless in the Dublin area and for the development of responses to prevent homelessness.

Men's programmes

In Ireland there are no in-prison treatment programmes for men perpetrators of gender violence. Inside prison interventions for men perpetrators are undertaken on an individual, needs-led basis, by either a psychologist or a probation officer.

The only structured group programme being developed inside Irish prisons is the 'Building Better Lives' programme (BBL), which targets the needs of those who have perpetrated sexual violence, whether against women or children.

The main aim of the programmes is to reduce the risk of further sexual violence on release from prison by targeting those factors that put perpetrators of sexual violence at risk of recidivism. The BBLP is a psychotherapy programme. It is carried out in the Arbour Hill, a medium secure prison, by the Psychology Service of the centre. The programme started in January 2009, replacing an earlier Sex Offender Programme that had been running since 1994.

The programme is tailored to the needs of each individual, so depending on need, the amount of time each offender spend on the programme will vary. The range of time spent on the programme is likely to vary from 3 to 4 month, up to 12 month. It is a group based programme and runs 2 to 3 times per week for 2 to 2 ½ hours.

The participants are men who have been convicted for sexual crimes (approximately half are convicted of offences against women). It is a voluntary based programme. Men participating in

the programme must admit responsibility for their offences and they have to show some motivation to address their needs and be functioning reasonably well psychologically.

There will be 60 place per year when the programme will be fully functional. In Ireland, there are currently 327 sex offenders in prison. Approximately 100 sex offenders are released from prisons in Ireland annually.

The BBL programme is eclectic since it is a psychotherapeutic programme embedded primarily within a Cognitive Behavioural model. The BBL programme focused on the victims' perspective. A key aim of the programme is to facilitate, among the participants a full understanding of their victims perspective and to foster within them both the skills and the motivation to maintain appropriate relationships in the future.

The programme is implemented through both individual and group sessions by psychologists. At the beginning of the programme a contract between the therapist and the inmate is signed. The inmate's participation in the programme does no influence his sentence. However, sometimes a Court may order an individual to participate and his participation may be a prerequisite for his release.

The programme has three phases:

- 1) Exploring Better Lives: an introduction to the programme and to working in group. Enhancing the motivation and supporting them in their commitment to change is critical at this stage.
- 2) Practising Better Lives: this represents a deepening of the working carried out on the BBL, particularly around offence-related needs and future planning.
- 3) Maintaining Better Lives: designed to support men incorporating what they have learnt of the programme as long-term lifestyles changes.

The programme is individually structured following the needs of each participant.

The psychologist deliver the programme under the on-site supervision of an experienced Senior Clinical Psychologist. Formal group supervision is provided to those delivering the programme. Informal individual and group supervision is also provided on a needs-led basis.

The programme only started in January 2009. However, plans are in place to set up an on-going evaluation of the programme. The evaluation will start in 2010 and it is likely to include pre and post treatment psychological questionnaires for participants.

The monitoring or follow up of the participants vary from participant to participant. A number of participants have what is called 'Post Release Supervision Orders'. These entail follow up offenders post-release by the Probation Service.



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