Sex offender management in Northern Ireland

Colin Reid NSPCC
Marcella Leonard PPANI Coordinator
Key Points

- NI arrangements, structural differences
- Drivers in public protection
- Some key issues: cross border; controlled disclosure
- Managing the media
- Challenges ahead
• We spent a lot of time looking at arrangements outside of Northern Ireland

• Smaller nation policy making very dependent on arrangements elsewhere

• But on public protection have developed our own arrangements and different from MAPPA
Some NI facts... what you didn’t know

- 1.8 million population
- Invented the defibulator, injector seat, Deloren... and Rory Mcilroy
- 90% of all government functions devolved including criminal justice/complex arrangements with UK Parliament
- 108 MLAs.... Parish pump politics
- Very different structural arrangements: integrated health and social care, 1 police force, Housing Executive
- Interface with a euro zone
NI structures

NI arrangements, structural differences
Seem familiar.....?
History of NI arrangements - Drivers

- Sex offenders Act 1997
- Multi agency sex offender risk assessment and Management (MASRAM)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Criminal Justice Act 2003 led to Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008 to place public protection arrangements on statutory footing
- Established Public Protection arrangements (PPANI)
Article 49-51 of the Criminal Justice Order

- PPANI agencies: PSNI, Pdni, Dept of Education, Dept of Learning, DHSSPS, Health and Social Care Boards and the NSPCC

- Statutory guidance to agencies on assessing and managing risk to the public

- Review of arrangements and reporting

- Appointment of Lay Advisors
Different:

- PPANI eligible cases: Convicted sex offenders
  - Violence against Child / vulnerable adult
  - Domestic Violence
  - Hate Crime
  - RoSHO

- Category of Risk Management: Category 3 and 2 Multiagency
  - Category 1 single agency
Different?

• Each Health and Social Care Trust has a dedicated Principal Social Worker to work within PPANI

  Attend Local Area Public Protection Panel meetings in their Trust
  Oversee all child and vulnerable adult protection issues
  Deliver PPANI awareness training to their Trust staff
  Trust link to all PPANI related issues

• Establishment of a Victims Advisory PPANI Strategic Management Board Subgroup

• All GPs and Psychiatric services have PPANI awareness leaflets
PPANI stats: the nature of NI problem

April 2012- March 2013

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sex offenders</th>
<th>Violent offenders</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>1509</td>
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<td>Category 3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1375</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>2016</td>
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Cross Border
CROSS BORDER CHALLENGES

ROI issues have featured in developments

- Missing sex offenders
- European arrest warrants complexity
- Some imaginative approaches
- Moves to harmonise our arrangements
- UK ROI agreement on information sharing
- Moves in ROI to parallel public protection arrangements
- Adoption of stable and acute/joint training
- NI legislation influenced by Sex offenders Act ROI on out of state notifications
CROSS BORDER Developments

- Adoption of stable and acute/joint training of PSNI/GARDA/Probation staff
- NI legislation influenced by Sex offenders Act ROI on out of state notifications
- All Island Sex Offender research
MEDIA handling
3 cases have exerted a huge influence on NI arrangements

Trevor Hamilton

Donagh

McElhill- the Omagh Fire
'Flawed system mismanaged killer'

By Declan Lawn
Reporter, BBC Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland man Trevor Hamilton has received the news that he will grow old in prison.

The sentence was a landmark one, but it was hardly unexpected.

Hamilton’s crime was as vicious as it was grotesque, and by all accounts he has never once shown any remorse for it, or even admitted that he committed it.

More surprising, perhaps, is the fact that the authorities who dealt with Hamilton, 24, are now admitting that there were flaws in the system that was supposed to manage him.

Speaking to BBC Northern Ireland’s Spotlight programme, which has been investigating the risk management process with regards to Hamilton for three months, PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Drew Harris admitted that there had been "serious failings".

On Friday, the police, probation service, and prison service released internal reviews they conducted into the case - and
'Failings' in Omagh fire deaths

There were "failings on the part of the health and social services" in the case of a family who died in a house fire in Omagh, the health minister has said.

Michael McGimpsey was speaking after an independent report said the authorities involved with the family could not have known what was about to happen.

Arthur McElhill, Lorraine McGovern and their five children died in the blaze.

Mr McElhill, a registered sex offender, was suspected of starting the fire in November 2007.

The report, by Henry Toner QC, did cite deficiencies in how agencies communicated his record and made 63 recommendations.
Common factors

- Terrible tragic cases but some commonality:
  - In all cases something went wrong
  - Media and political frenzy finding someone to blame
  - Not in my back yard/rurality
  - Stereotypes and misconceptions playing a part
  - Handling by the agencies individually and collectively could be better
• Development of a media handling protocol
• Public affairs strategy
• Communications subgroup: very active
  • Frank and open relationship with media
  • Invited media to meetings
  • BBC week about arrangements
  • Development of media protocols
  • Victims Advisory Subgroup
  • PPANI website – ask us a question?
Role of PPANI website
GUIDANCE FOR MEDIA REPORTING ON...

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
Thompson House: a case study

• Thompson House one of only 5 approved premises
• Accommodation next to disclosure is a major handling issue

• Invited media to ‘on the record’ briefing with all agencies/quotes
• Supported PBSW – significant opinion formers
• Facilitated media to visit
• Worked closely with police
• Agencies met all media requests
Protect our Children! Say NO to Sex Offenders in North Belfast

SIGNATURES
548 [11%] 5,000

SIGN THE PETITION

Full Name: [ ]

Sign Petition

Discover Ireland Coach Tours

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Belfast sex offenders’ hostel to reopen in weeks

A hostel in north Belfast that houses ex-prisoners, including sex offenders, is to reopen shortly, despite a campaign for its permanent closure.

Thompson House on Antrim Road has undergone a £2m refurbishment, with the number of CCTV cameras rising from four to 64 and can house 19 offenders.

The hostel is run by the Presbyterian Board of Social Witness.

Linda Wray from the board said it was safer to have offenders where they could be monitored.

"Not all those residents will be sex offenders, they will have a range of offending behaviour," she said.

"Most of those there will not be sex offenders, numbers will fluctuate but
Pipe bomb at offenders' hostel in north Belfast

A pipe bomb found in north Belfast was left at the site of a hostel, currently being extended, which holds former prisoners, including sex offenders.

The building site manager came across the device while doing a routine check at Thompson House on the Antrim Road on Monday. The Army made it safe.

The hostel run by the Presbyterian Church offers accommodation to men leaving prison.

It was the focus of recent protests by local residents.

They were concerned at plans to resettle sex offenders in their community.

Linda Wray, residential services manager for the Presbyterian Board of Social Witness, said she would be "scandalised" if there were a connection.
The issue of where offenders live

Marcellia Lennard explains why the Probation Board has reached an arrangement with the Simon Community to provide temporary accommodation to offenders in the Waterside.

The issue of where offenders and where they live tends to create public interest that is completely understandable.

The agencies that work in public protection - the Probation Board, the police, the prison service, assisted, through the public protection arrangements (PPAs), the housing executive and the health service - have one priority and that is ensuring communities' safety and preventing people becoming victims of crime or abuse. Offenders who are committed to public protection to fully protect the public we need to ensure that the arrangements are in place to ensure that the offenders are re-integrating, to protect families and to ensure our service and services are safe.

It is not only the statutory agencies who believe that this arrangement will better protect the public. Those groups who work with victims, including Victim Support and Nexus and who also contribute collectively as a group to the PPA arrangements, have emphasised the importance of this type of accommodation in achieving better public protection. The victim group has said that: “At times it is important that those who have offended, can access structured accommodation. This can help maintain or provide a period of assessment before information on the community can be provided.”

It is essential that offenders have access to a range of accommodation such as Rosehill.

Working with offenders we know that providing stable and appropriate accommodation helps prevent recidivism. We also know that offenders can be rehabilitated more easily if they are integrated back into their own local communities. The Simon Community provides that accommodation which PPA includes in the North West and this was targeted to end up in accommodation in Derry.

A further solution is to have an option for offenders to return to their own community and to do so in a safe and controlled way. Otherwise, many of these offenders may return to the community in private rented accommodation, without the appropriate level of support and management.

As part of this solution, the Probation Board, the Simon Community NI and Nexus have worked closely to provide innovative services and support to offenders, for example: providing a small number of offenders licences, applying for other accommodation in Derry Waterside has long term benefits, providing support for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and it will continue to do so.

Marcellia Lennard is the area manager for the Probation Protection Area in Derry.
Learning into practice

- meetings with Police and Community Safety Partnerships
- meetings with concerned residents
- proactive media not just at crisis time
- briefing media prior to a perceived public reaction
Challenges ahead
• Unconvicted persons who pose a risk

• Disclosure scheme: NI specific issues

• Legislative improvements- a floor not a ceiling
  • Positive SOPOs
  • Registration on entry to NI
Some questions

- Same systems with slight but significant differences
- Border and cross border issues: no man or woman is an island...
- How we can learn from each other across UK