

ACJRD NEWSLETTER

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Tuesday June 30th, 2026



Pictured: (From left to right) Gráinne Berrill, Dr Katharina Swirak, Senator Lynn Ruane, Mary Griffin, ACJRD Chairperson, at the 2026 ACJRD Annual Conference

ACJRD News

Annual Conference

CONFERENCE REPORT

COMING SOON...

The 29th ACJRD Annual Conference was held on Thursday, June 11th in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin 8, on the theme of **“Prevention First: Designing safer communities from Systems to Streets.”**

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The conference was a valuable opportunity to bring together colleagues and partners from the community and voluntary sector, local government, academia, and beyond for a day of discussion, learning, and knowledge exchange. Throughout the day, participants explored how collaboration across education, environmental design, and community service provision can help prevent crime before it occurs.

The conference was opened by **Senator Lynn Ruane**, whose powerful keynote address, *When Violence is a Part of Your Daily Rhythm*, set the tone for the day's discussions by highlighting the central role that socioeconomic inequality plays in driving crime.

The morning plenary sessions began with **Dr Katharina Swirak** of University College Cork, who gave a presentation on the role of social policy in crime prevention, and **Gráinne Berrill**, Director of the National Office for Community Safety, who discussed the role of local Community Safety Partnerships in enhancing community safety and voice.

Pictured: (From left to right) Graham Kavanagh, former Crime Prevention Officer for An Garda Síochána, Dr Natalie Walsh, University of Galway, and Eddie Mullins, CEO, Merchants Quay Ireland, who presented during the thematic session on “**Designing Out Crime**”

They were followed by **Professor Iain Brennan** of the University of Hull, who explored the relationship between school exclusion and violent offending, and **Gráinne Egan**, Principal Officer in the Social Inclusion Unit at the Department of Education, who gave an overview of the Department’s work on reducing school absenteeism and exclusion through out-of-school initiatives.

The conference then moved into three thematic sessions: **The Role of Education in Providing Better Opportunities that Support Crime Reduction, Community and Social Service Provision**, and **Designing Out Crime**. These sessions examined how education, community services and environmental design can reduce the risk of offending while supporting safer, more resilient communities.



The thematic sessions were followed by the afternoon plenary session. **Professor Graham Farrell** of the University of Leeds gave a presentation on situational crime prevention, which focuses on reducing opportunities for crime through practical, targeted interventions that increase the effort and risk involved in committing crime while reducing its potential rewards.

The conference proceedings concluded with a presentation by **Karyn McCluskey**, Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland, who outlined how prevention-first approaches across health, social services, education, and justice can reduce offending and improve outcomes for individuals and communities.

The conference programme is available [here](#) and a **conference report** featuring summaries of the discussions will be **published shortly**. Thank you to our speakers and to everyone who attended and contributed to the event's success. We would also like to extend a special thank you to our volunteers – **Anna Cano, Kim McLoughlin, Tosadi Ajiboye, and Wilona Siltrari Chen** – for their invaluable support.



Pictured above: (From left to right) Paula Hilman (Chair), An Garda Síochána; David Hoey, Cork Street Pastors; Dr Megan Coghlan, Maynooth University; Clare O'Connor, Researcher; and Robert Cullen, Peer Researcher, who presented during the thematic session on “**Community and Social Service Provision**”



Pictured above: (Left to right) ACJRD volunteers, Tosadi Ajiboye, Anna Cano and Wilona Siltrari Chen

Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture

LECTURE PAPER PUBLISHED

The lecture paper for the 19th Annual Martin Tansey Memorial Lecture is now available to download! Earlier this year, the Hon. Mr Justice White delivered a lecture on “The importance of rehabilitation as part of sentencing principles and the vital role the Probation Service plays in that principle throughout the Criminal Justice system.” He blended this presentation into his personal experiences of over 50 years involvement with the Criminal Justice system. Download the paper [here](#).

12th Irish Criminal Justice Agencies Conference

SAVE THE DATE

We are thrilled to announce that the 12th Annual Irish Criminal Justice Agencies (ICJA) Conference will be held on **Friday, October 9th** at the Revenue Commissioners, 15 O'Connell Street Upper, North City, Dublin, D01 R635.

The theme of this year's conference is *economic crime*. We'll explore how economic crime in Ireland is evolving technologically, institutionally, legally, and socially, and what this means for prevention, enforcement, regulation and public trust. More details are coming soon!

Doncha O’Sullivan appointed Secretary General

In April, Minister Jim O’Callaghan, announced the appointment of Mr. Doncha O’Sullivan as Secretary General of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. Prior to this appointment, Doncha was the Deputy Secretary for Civil Justice, where he led the development, implementation, and critical review of policies and programmes in the areas of immigration, international protection, civil law reform, and access to justice. Doncha O’Sullivan was formerly a member of the ACJRD Council from 2012 until 2016. Congratulations to Doncha from the ACJRD on his appointment! [Read more.](#)

Upcoming Sector Events

Rethinking Remand: Report Launch

IRISH PENAL REFORM TRUST

On **20 July**, the Irish Penal Reform Trust will launch their new report titled “Rethinking Remand,” which focuses how pre-trial detention is used in Ireland and its impact on individuals, families and communities. The research highlights key gaps, systemic issues and opportunities for rights-focused reform. The event will take place in the Ormond Meeting Rooms, Ormond Quay, Dublin 7, and registration is from 14.30. [Register here.](#)

Recent Publications

Restorative justice referrals, victim participation, increase again in 2025

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE (RJS4C)

The seventh annual data collection mapping the use of restorative justice within Ireland's criminal justice system has been published. The findings indicate that, although both the availability and uptake of restorative justice services have increased since last year, restorative justice continues to play a relatively limited role within the criminal justice process. Key findings show that the Probation Service and five community-based organisations received 1,030 referrals to explore restorative justice in 2025 – the highest number recorded since data collection began in 2019. This represents a 22.3% increase on the 842 referrals recorded in 2024. [Read more.](#)

Young Peoples' Experiences of Professional Relationships within Youth Justice Services

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

An article by members of REPPP, a research collaboration between the School of Law in the University of Limerick and the Department of Justice, has been published in Contemporary Justice Review. The article explores young peoples' experiences of professional relationships within youth justice services and found that these relationships are an important contributor to diversion. [Read more.](#)

Persuadability and LLMs as Legal Decision Tools

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY & UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Maynooth School of Law and Criminology Associate Professor Dr Oisín Suttle and UCD School of Computer Science Associate Professor Dr David Lillis have published research on the extent to which Large Language Models deployed in legal decision-making and decision-support roles are subject to persuasion based on the quality of arguments presented by the parties. The research found that LLMs tend to agree with the stronger advocates up to 90% of the time, highlighting the risks this poses for fairness and access to justice if these systems are widely deployed. [Read more.](#)

Final Report of the Joint Committee on Drugs Use

OIREACHTAS

The Joint Committee on Drugs Use published its Final Report on Wednesday, 24th June, in which Members recommend the repeal of Section 3 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 in order to fully decriminalise the possession of drugs for personal use. In the report, the Committee makes 161 recommendations across family and community supports; kinship care; intergenerational trauma; addiction, sports and wellbeing; young people; substance use and neurodiversity; women, drug use and addiction; the National Drugs Strategy; nitrous oxide and other inhalants; and legal and policy issues. Ultimately, the report concludes that drug use in Ireland should be approached primarily as a public health issue as opposed to a criminal matter. [Read more.](#)

Criminal Justice News Round-Up

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Legal bodies unite against planned criminal legal aid reforms

29 June, *Irish Legal News*

Several national legal, human rights and civil society organisations have come together to voice their concerns over planned changes to Ireland's criminal legal aid scheme and the potential consequences for access to justice. [Read more.](#)

Couple's FGM convictions declared miscarriage of justice

19 June, *RTÉ*

A couple have had their convictions for the female genital mutilation (FGM) of their one-year-old daughter, which were quashed after they spent two years in prison, declared a miscarriage of justice. The couple were the first people to be convicted of the charge in the history of the State. [Read more.](#)

Prison service plans €30m rollout of body-worn cameras

18 June, *Irish Legal News*

The Irish Prison Service is seeking a contractor to supply body-worn cameras for prison officers as part of a nationwide rollout expected to cost up to €30m. The rollout is due to begin at Mountjoy Prison from July before being extended to other prisons, subject to funding. [Read more.](#)

30-point action plan to tackle financial crime, money laundering

17 June, *RTÉ*

The Government has launched an action plan to strengthen the State's response to financial crime, money laundering, and terrorist financing. The plan sets out measures to improve intelligence sharing between State agencies, strengthen oversight of crypto-assets, and increase transparency around company ownership and control. [Read more.](#)

Commencement of International Protection Act 2026

12 June, *Irish Legal News*

Justice Minister Jim O’Callaghan welcomed the commencement of the International Protection Act 2026, which represents the most significant reform of Irish asylum laws in the history of the State and gives effect of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact.

[Read more.](#)

How can judges use social science evidence to inform sentencing? A dialogue between legal research and practice

9 June, *Irish Legal News*

the latest in a series of articles facilitating dialogue between criminal justice policymakers, practitioners and researchers, published in collaboration with the [CORD Partnership](#). [Read more.](#)

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland prison population rises almost 50 per cent

29 May, *Irish Legal News*

Northern Ireland’s prison population has risen almost 50% in five years, with assaults on staff and drug seizures also increasing as overcrowding intensifies across the prison estate. [Read more.](#)

Eighty per cent of Northern Ireland crime victims have no confidence in justice system

3 June, *Irish Legal News*

More than 80% of crime victims in Northern Ireland are not confident they will receive justice, according to researchers from Queen’s University Belfast. [Read more.](#)

Money laundering surges to unprecedented levels in Republic

5 May, *The Irish Times*

Money laundering crime has surged to unprecedented levels in Ireland. Last year, Gardaí dealt with close to 2,800 cases of money laundering and are struggling to deal with the volume. The article notes that during the Covid-19 pandemic, money laundering cases rose sharply due to email and text scams – but that the rate of offending has increased exponentially since then. [Read more.](#)

Podcasts

Should Ireland decriminalise drugs for personal use?

29 June, *Crime World*

Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice in Maynooth University Dr Cian Ó Concubhair discusses the final report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Drug Use, which has called for the full decriminalisation of drugs possession for personal use in Ireland. [Listen here.](#)

Alternatives to Violence Project Ireland with Lisa Oelschlegal and Robert Cullen

21 May, *Social Justice Ireland*

Lisa Oelschlegal, Coordinator of the Alternatives to Violence Project, and Robert Cullen, a past participant of the AVP Project and current MA in Criminology student at UCC, chat about the work of AVP and the transformative impact it has on individuals and communities. [Listen here.](#)

Scholarship Opportunity

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

School of Law and Criminology Postgraduate Scholarship 2026-2027

The School of Law and Criminology at Maynooth University is pleased to offer the Postgraduate Scholarship, providing financial assistance to postgraduate students. This scholarship awards €2,000, which will be deducted from the recipient's course fees. For the academic year 2026-2027, eight scholarships will be awarded to students pursuing postgraduate qualifications within the School.

Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria includes:

1. A minimum academic achievement of a 2.1 at the degree level.

2. Demonstrated motivation to pursue postgraduate study.
3. A strong interest in the fields of law or criminology.

All applicants must be an incoming postgraduate student on one of the School's full-time postgraduate Master's programmes (LLM Global Legal Studies, LLM International Business Law, LLM International Justice, Dual LLM, MA Comparative Criminology and Criminal Justice).

The deadline for applications is 12pm (Irish Standard Time) on July 9th 2026. [Learn more.](#)



Maynooth University

National University of Ireland Maynooth

Request for Tender

CANAL COMMUNITIES REGIONAL ADDICTION SERVICE

The Canal Communities Regional Addiction Service (CCRAS) is seeking a researcher to support the design, analysis and learning from Ireland's first Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programme. With anonymised data and case studies already in place, this role will focus on presenting findings and lessons learned, engaging with a sample of the community and service stakeholders, and translating emerging insights into clear, useful learning.

This role sits between research and practice, ensuring that what is being learned on the ground is captured in a way that supports both delivery and future development.

The purpose of the role is to work with community members, stakeholders, and service providers to design and implement a participatory evaluation and monitoring framework for the Canal Communities Community-Based Public Safety Strategy.

The ideal researcher should have strong participatory research skills and the ability to engage respectfully and meaningfully with communities, particularly those most affected by violence.

The deadline for applications is 28 August, 2026. [Learn more.](#)

Canal Communities
Regional Addiction Service



INCHICORE

ACJRD Membership

BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT

ACJRD 2026 Membership Fees

- Organisations: €100
- Registered Charities: €50
- Individuals: €25
- Students (Associate Membership): €10

Why become a member?

- Join the leading Irish Criminal Justice Network
- Get priority access to events, seminars, conferences & news
- Connect with professionals and experts across the sector
- Gain insights through publications and policy discussions
- Help build a more informed, collaborative justice system

Be part of the movement.
Become a member of
ACJRD [here](#).

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