

*'On an imaginary lead': Defensibility and Post-Release Supervision of Life-Sentenced Prisoners by the Probation and Welfare Service*

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**Summary** This paper considers the Probation and Welfare Service's post-release supervision of life sentenced prisoners within the context of current policy and practice. The following is a description of some aspects of current practice in such post-release supervision and reflects attitudes of a number of key players in the process, including Probation and Welfare Service personnel and life-sentenced prisoners. A profile of life-sentenced prisoners on supervision in the community is also provided. Questions are asked as to how defensible is current practice and suggestions are made as to how it might be improved. This paper is based on research for a dissertation undertaken as part of a Masters Degree in Public Service Management at the Institute of Public Administration, Dublin. The methodology employed includes an examination of primary research, including a literature review, analysis of questionnaires and personal interviews.