

## The Emergence of Probation Services in North-East Ireland

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**Summary:** This paper is the result of integration of two journeys into the past from the contrasting perspectives of the voluntary and statutory sectors. It looks at the emergence of the probation services in North Eastern Ireland and focuses on Belfast as the model. It examines the socio-economic and cultural factors that influenced the kind of probation service that appeared and shaped its early evolution. It traces the history of the voluntary societies that provided the first police court missionaries, and examines their motivations. It makes the case that, rather than being a foreign idea transplanted, the concept emerged in a garden with suitable soil and from plants that were already flourishing: the stunted growth of the early years had more to do with the gardeners and the weather. The authors use recent publications (Whitehead and Statham, 2006; Vanstone, 2007; McNally, 2007) as a base from which to pick out the distinctive features for the area now constituting Northern Ireland and how these influenced the evolution of the probation services here.

**Keywords:** Probation Act 1907, charitable institutions, industrialisation, church, prison.