



AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY



IRISH PRISON SERVICE

Press Release

Minister Fitzgerald launches the second Joint Probation Service - Irish Prison Service Strategy 2015-2017 and publishes the Irish Prison Service and Probation Service Annual Reports for 2014

The Minister for Justice and Equality Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, today launched the second Joint Probation Service – Irish Prison Service Strategy which covers the two years 2015 to 2017. This joint strategy sets out how the two Services will work together with their statutory, community and voluntary sector partners to provide a multi-agency approach to offender management and rehabilitation from pre to post imprisonment.

Launching the Joint Strategy Minister Fitzgerald said ***“The purpose of the joint strategy prepared by the Prison and Probation Services is to focus on interventions that encourage the development of a multi-agency problem solving approach. The second joint strategy builds on the work already underway reflecting the integrated approach to working with offenders by the two Services – work which is closely aligned to the focus of rehabilitation and reintegration contained in the report of the Penal Policy Review Group.”***

The strategy contains Eight Actions designed to achieve a reduction in re-offending and improve prisoner outcomes. One of these actions, the Joint Approach to Reducing Crime, is an inter-agency response to and co-operation in the management and rehabilitation of offenders.

The Minister highlighted this action saying: ***“The aim of the Joint Agency Response to Crime Protocol, signed between the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service and the Garda Síochána, is to target, in a co-ordinated way, those prolific offenders who cause a high level of harm or disruption in communities. I am confident that, in collaboration with statutory, community and voluntary partners they will achieve an effective outcome.”***

The joint strategy also reflects on the similar needs and risks of offenders sentenced to sanctions either in the community or in detention and details the co-ordinated response of both Services in a combined effort to address the cycles of sustained offending behaviour.

On this the Minister commented: ***“One of the factors which contribute to offending behaviour is the misuse of drugs and alcohol. A previous survey conducted by the Probation Service indicated that the number of adult offenders who had ever misused drugs and/or alcohol was very high at 89%. In this context I have given my approval to the commissioning of a Review of Drugs and Alcohol Services to Offenders.”***

The Minister went on to say that: ***“The purpose of this review is to set out a pathway for the provision of improved alcohol and addiction services for offenders which will facilitate improved outcomes for them. Consultation with HSE, as the principal funder for drug and alcohol services, will form part of the review. The final report is to include a number of recommendations based on the evidence collected and I look forward to working with my Ministerial colleagues in addressing the addiction needs of offenders, both in custody and in the community, in a comprehensive and integrated way.”***

Irish Prison Service Annual Report 2014

Speaking about the Prison Service Annual Report Minister Fitzgerald said: ***“Despite a small increase of 2.7% in the total committals to prison the overall daily average number of prisoners in custody has continued to fall. The overall daily average number of prisoners in custody in 2014 was 3,915 compared to 4,158 in 2013, a decrease of 5.8%.”***

There were 16,155 committals to prison in 2014 compared to 15,735 in 2013. The increase is attributed to an 8% increase in the numbers committed on sentences of less than 3 months specifically those committed for the non-payment of a court ordered fine.

The Minister responded to this saying: ***“The aim of the Fines (Payments and Recovery) Act is to eliminate, in so far as possible, the option of imprisonment as a sanction for fine default. Once the significant changes required to the fines system are implemented, the effects of this legislation on the number of committals to prison for the non-payment of a court ordered fine should be seen. The system will be operational from October this year.”***

The 2014 Annual Report for the Irish Prison Service sets out the progress made in relation to its strategic actions and also outlines developments during the year. The report provides an overview of the Service, general information on the prison estate, and reports on progress made to the end of 2014 on the Service’s Three Year Strategic Plan which was launched in April, 2012. The Report also includes a reference to the action plan put in place to ensure the recommendations of the Commission of Investigation into the Death of Gary Douch, relating to the Irish Prison Service, are being implemented.

The Minister said ***“I am pleased with the substantial progress made across a wide range of areas in the management of offenders in prison achieved by the Irish Prison Service in 2014.”***

Probation Service Annual Report 2014

Speaking about the publication of the Probation Service Annual Report 2014, Minister Fitzgerald said, ***“The Probation Service continues to focus on increasing efficiencies in the way it does business within the criminal justice sector. Working with their colleagues in other agencies I can see that they are firmly on the road to supporting a just and effective penal system as envisaged by the strategic review of penal policy.”***

The 2014 report outlines out how the Probation Service focussed its work on the delivery of effective programmes, women offenders, young offenders, the provision of assessment reports for the Courts and the management of sex offenders. Progress is reported on implementing the key objectives in the Probation Service Strategy Statement for 2011 - 2014 and developments during the year are outlined..

The Minister said ***“Despite the Probation Service having the capacity to manage more offenders the drop in the number of Community Service Orders made has continued. There were 2,190 Community Service Orders made in 2014 compared to 2,354 in 2013 and 2,569 in 2012. The Minister added “While the figures remain better than before the 2008 value for money review of community service greater use of community service needs to be made. The report of the Review of Penal Policy group focused on the use of non-custodial alternative sanctions, where appropriate, as the best environment in which to achieve the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and thereby reducing crime.”***

The Irish Prison Service Annual Report 2014 is available at www.irishprisons.ie

The Probation Service Annual Report is available at www.probation.ie

The Joint Probation Service – Irish Prison Service Strategy 2015-2017 is available at both www.irishprisons.ie and www.probation.ie

ENDS

NOTE FOR EDITORS

Review of Drugs and Alcohol Services to Offenders

The Probation Service intends to commission the review of drug and alcohol services to offenders by tendering for a suitable organisation or agency to undertake the work on a fixed price contract basis (at most €15,000). The reviewer will liaise with the Irish Prison Service and Probation Service sub group which will be established to provide oversight of the research and any advice or guidance to the reviewer that is required. The final report will be provided within an agreed research timeframe. The report is to include a number of recommendations based on the evidence collected.

Joint Approach to Reducing Crime (JARC)

Three operational initiatives have been “opted-in” to the JARC to ensure communication between agencies and the alignment of offender management processes in targeting the prolific offenders.

- **Ballymun Initiative** – targeting prolific adult offenders within East Ballymun whose offending behaviour is undermining the community’s quality of life. Two year pilot programme. First intake of clients – Quarter one 2015. Interim Review December 2015.
- **Bridge Change Works Programme** – targeting adult male offenders living in Dublin with a history of violent crime. Two year pilot programme. First Intake – Quarter two 2015. Target group up to 50 offenders over a 24 month period. Interim Review December 2015)
- **Opt-In Acer Initiative** – multi agency approach to the management of offenders charged with burglary. Two year pilot programme. First Intake – Quarter two 2015. Target group up to 50 offenders over a 24 month period. Interim Review December 2015.

First Joint Strategy

Both the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service Reports for 2014 contain an update on progress in implementing the **Joint Irish Prison Service/Probation Service Strategic Plan 2013 – 2015** which was published in May, 2013. On foot of a commitment contained in the Programme for Government, this joint strategy sets out how these two organisations can co-ordinate with each other to integrate offender management programmes.