

Irish Prison Service Press Release

Irish Prison Service Joins GLEN (Gay, Lesbian Equality Network) Diversity Champions Programme and Launches New Peer Support Group called INSIDE-OUT

The Director General of the Irish Prison Service, Michael Donnellan, today, announced that the Irish Prison Service had joined the GLEN (Gay, Lesbian Equality Network) Diversity Champions Programme. In addition, a staff support group for lesbian, gay, and bisexual transgender (LGBT) employees has also been established by LGBT prison staff.

The GLEN Diversity Champions Programme is designed specifically to assist Irish employers with the inclusion of their LGBT employees. The programme has seen the Prison Service introduce a Diversity Champion in each of the States 14 prisons. As part of the programme specific diversity training has been provided to the Diversity Champion who will now be a point of contact for LGBT staff thus ensuring a climate of support and encouragement within the prisons.

Speaking at the launch in the Prison Service College, Portlaoise, the Director General said that he was committed to ensuring that the Prison Service was an organisation characterised by dignity and respect for all and that he expected all staff to treat each other in this manner. **"Our 3-Year Strategic Plan, published by Minister Shatter in April last year, includes a Strategic Goal to introduce a Dignity at Work Charter and to launch a prison wide dignity and respect campaign"**, he said. **"I am determined to continue driving all initiatives in relation to equality, diversity and dignity as committed to in our Strategy"** added Mr Donnellan.

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence Alan Shatter TD also gave his support to the staff involved in the setting up of the new peer support group saying **"I wish to offer my congratulations to the founding members of INSIDE-OUT for the work that you are doing in openly forming this peer group and I have no doubt that today's launch will provide courage to other LGBT staff members, both in the Prison Service and across all areas of employment, who may still feel under pressure to conceal their true personality when doing their job"**

"As Minister for Equality, I regard dignity and equality in the workplace as of paramount importance and any form of discrimination due to a staff members sexual orientation or gender identity as entirely unacceptable, I welcome the fact that the Prison Service is an organisation whose management and staff recognise diversity and equality".

Welcoming the Prison Service as a member of GLEN's Diversity Champions Programme for employers, along with other leading employers such as University College Dublin, IBM and Ernst & Young, Davin Roche, from GLEN Diversity Champions said **"It can be hard to disclose your sexual orientation or gender identity to your colleagues or clients at work if you are LGBT"** . **"Many LGBT people have been harassed or discriminated against at work because of who they are. This can have a very negative impact on staff and on organisations. It is excellent to see the commitment of the IPS and other leading employers who work to ensure that their staff are fully respected irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity"** he continued.

For further information or to speak to a member of the INSIDE-OUT founding committee contact:

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ENDS.

