



## **Opportunities for Assistant Psychologists in the Irish Prison Service**

### **Overview**

The Psychology Service in the Irish Prison Service were the first in country to hire paid Assistant Psychologists (APs) in 2006, which are recruited annually. The number of posts has increased from five in 2006 to twelve in 2020.

A recruitment campaign for Assistant Psychologists is advertised in approximately Feb/March each year on the IPS, PSI, BPS websites, with interviews typically held in approximately April, and a start date in mid-August each year. Appointments are currently for a period of 12 months only, subject to serving a satisfactory probationary period, but we are hoping to extend this to two year contracts from August 2021.

The IPS Psychology Service is currently made up of the Head of Psychological Services, a Principal Psychologist, Senior Psychologists, Staff Grade Psychologists and Assistant Psychologists. The IPS Psychology Service Headquarters is based at Arbour Hill Prison, Dublin 7. Assistant Psychologists are assigned in order of merit on a panel based on their performance in the recruitment campaign to prisons across the estate (typically one of the traditional “closed” institutions in the Dublin/Leinster, Munster and Connaught regions) for the duration of their contract. They will be required to undergo a two week induction programme, upon commencement in the role.

### **Typical Essential Requirements:**

- A 2.1 Honours Degree in Psychology (level 8 under the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework)

**OR**

- A Level 8 honours degree in another subject (2.1 or higher) together with an accredited conversion qualification at a minimum of (2.1) as conferring eligibility for graduate membership of the Psychological Society of Ireland

**OR**

- A qualification<sup>i</sup> equivalent to the above accredited by the British Psychological Society for graduate membership of the British Psychological Society;

**AND**

- Evidence of 96 days' work experience in a clinical setting or with a marginalised or vulnerable client population (this can include full or part time, paid or voluntary work);

**AND / OR**

- A Masters qualification in a Psychology-specific field e.g. Applied Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Psychological Science, Counselling Psychology (Masters must have been completed and final result obtained by closing date of application).

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<sup>i</sup> \* “Qualification Level” refers to the qualification level in the National Framework of Qualifications as set by the Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2. (QQI Phone number: +353-1-9058100)



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### **Typical Desirable Requirements:**

- Evidence of excellent Interpersonal Effectiveness and Communication (written communication WILL BE assessed via the application form and rated accordingly)
- Evidence of relevant knowledge of Psychology and Psychological Services;
- Evidence of excellent Organisational Skills;
- Evidence of the capacity to Self-Reflect, (in the context of supervision, in the receipt of developmental feedback, and in clinical work);
- Previous experience of evidence based mental health interventions with vulnerable/in-need populations;
- Previous experience of clinical interview and use of a variety of psychometric assessment;
- Proven capacity to work in a high pressure environment with competing demands;
- Knowledge of the factors that lead to offending behaviour;
- Capacity to 'sit with' client distress;
- Awareness of and ability to work in an inter-disciplinary manner;
- Awareness of issues of confidentiality and child protection when working with clients;
- Demonstrate an awareness of the value of effective supervision;
- Demonstrate flexibility and openness to change.
- Information technology skills.

### **Job Description:**

The role of an Assistant Psychologist in the IPS is:

- To support local IPS Psychological Services and enhance the contribution of qualified Psychologists to the primary care mental health needs of those in custody. This includes primary care mental health interventions (psychoeducation, 1-1 up to 12 sessions or workshops / groups).
- To support the Community Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA; Red Cross).
- To support the implementation of recommendations made in the 'New Connections: Embedding Psychology Services and Practice in the Irish Prison Service' report by Dr Frank Porporino, specifically in relation to supporting effective sentence management for young people in custody. (Dr Porporino's report is available on [www.irishprisons.ie](http://www.irishprisons.ie)).
- To provide admin support for local Psychology Service.
- To provide Mental Health Awareness Training for staff.
- To engage in Sentence Planning for 18 – 24 year olds (1+ year sentence, non PRSO).
- To complete data collection for in-service audit and research.

Our Assistant Psychologists are clinically supervised by a qualified Psychologist (assigned by the local Senior Psychologist) and line managed by the local Senior Psychologist (or his/her nominated designate). Supervision is strictly in line with Psychological Society of Ireland Guidelines. Assistant Psychologists are also allocated 10 CPD days per year.

***Assistant Psychologists form a critical part of both the Psychology Service and the multi-disciplinary team in that prison.***



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## **Other Relevant Information on Employment, Placements & Opportunities**

### **Essential Criteria to work as a Psychologist in the IPS:**

In order to be employed as a Prison Psychologist in Ireland presently, you must have a formal professional qualification in Clinical or Counselling Psychology (D. Clin. Psych or D.Couns. Psych). If you qualify in another country you must have your qualification validated by the Irish Department of Health in order to apply for a permanent vacancy.

### **Voluntary Placements:**

At the current time we do not provide voluntary, unpaid placements.

We currently support the following approved placements:

- 6 month placement in partial fulfilment of the MA in Applied Psychology (Mental Health) in the University College, Cork (2 days per week).
- Trainee Psychologists on an accredited Clinical or Counselling Doctorate programme (D. Clin. Psych or D.Couns. Psych).

### **Recommended Reading:**

"New Connections" Embedding Psychology Services and Practice in the IPS (Porporino, 2015) is an excellent read and will inform you about the IPS Psychology Service.