

2022 — 23

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Foreword – IPRT Chairperson

I am pleased to share this Chair’s Foreword for the IPRT Annual Review 2022-2023. As I reflect on the past year’s work undertaken by IPRT, I take pride in what we have achieved as a small national strategic organisation working for progressive penal reform.

Whilst this report will give you an overview of what IPRT has achieved in the past year, I would like to mention two projects. Firstly, in the past year IPRT developed and endorsed a new strategic plan for the years 2023 to 2026. This strategic plan reflects both a process and a product. It was built on consultation with key stakeholders, including very importantly, our members, and in particular, prisoner members and prisoners more widely. I am confident that the resulting strategy is all the better for the inclusive process through which it was developed. It provides an ambitious, stretching but realisable vision and direction for the work of IPRT over the coming years. It allowed us to reflect again on our vision which is one of a just, humane Ireland where prison is used as a last resort. Work is already well advanced in delivering on the *IPRT Strategic Plan 2023-2026*, as evidenced later in this report. The *Strategic Plan 2023-2026* is our guiding light as we engage with key stakeholders on the current work and plans for IPRT. I want to place on record our gratitude to Kathleen O’Meara, organisational consultant, for her excellent advice and support in its development.

Secondly, I want to mention our flagship project report, *Progress in the Penal System (PIPS): A framework for penal reform 2022* published earlier this year. As you will read elsewhere in this annual review, the 2022 PIPS report indicates a very mixed picture on progress in the penal system, progress in some areas at a policy level, a static position in many others and a notable regression in a number of areas, including a significant increase in the use of imprisonment. In this latest PIPS report, we spotlight the position of women prisoners, and I believe it provides a very clear evidence base and rationale for a gender-specific approach to the needs and situation of women prisoners in Ireland today. Taken together over the past five years the PIPS reports produced by IPRT have become a respected and authoritative evidence base on the nature and extent of progress in the Irish penal system against human rights standards of basic human decency. They make for sobering reading, and they provide no reason for complacency and an impetus for a sustained focus on progressive penal reform. They support

our long-held view that, in many respects, the best criminal justice policy is progressive social policy in the areas of education, employment, community and youth work, affordable housing, healthcare, area development and anti-poverty measures. Investment in these policy and service areas is, in the longer term, likely to reduce the number of people ending up in the criminal justice and penal systems.

The past year has seen the IPRT staff team grow, change, and develop. We welcomed Paula Dempsey, Governance and Administration Officer; Ashling Tobin, Children and Families Project Coordinator; Michelle Byrne, Communications Officer; and Helen Kehoe, Legal and Public Affairs Manager who all joined the staff team in the past year. We gladly welcomed back Pamela Drumgoole to a different role as Policy and Research Coordinator. We congratulated and missed our Executive Director Saoirse Brady who was on maternity leave for part of this year, whilst very ably replaced by Molly Joyce who did an excellent job as Acting Executive Director. One of the most rewarding aspects of the work of Chair of IPRT is the opportunity to work with such an able and competent staff team who consistently deliver high-quality evidence-based contributions on progressive penal policy.

As stated in previous Annual Reports, it is also a privilege to work with my fellow board members whom I wish to thank for their contributions, expertise, and ongoing commitment to the organisation. I continued to work this year with Professor Aislinn O’Donnell, Kevin Gregory, Ashling Golden, Dr Cormac Behan, Derval McDonagh, Dr Lisa Cuthbert, Noel Moloney, Luke Staines, Miranda Troubal and Liz Leavy. On behalf of my board colleagues, I would like to thank Miranda Troubal and Liz Leavy who stepped down during the past year. I want also to extend our sincere gratitude to Professor Aislinn O’Donnell who has served as Vice Chair of IPRT in recent years and provided excellent substantial input to realising the vision of the PIPS project and to shaping our next Strategic Plan. I also want to place on record our gratitude to Kevin Gregory who has served as Treasurer of IPRT for several years. Kevin has undertaken an excellent tenure as Treasurer and leaves IPRT in sound

financial health and with robust financial monitoring and reporting systems in place. I would also like to thank David O’Riordan who has served on our Finance, Audit Risk and HR Sub-Committee over the past year.

I would like to thank our funders including the Department of Justice, Pobal, the Community Foundation of Ireland, the Katharine Howard Foundation, the Mercy Congregation Solidarity Committee, the St Stephen’s Green Trust, Porticus and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for their ongoing support. Their continued generosity and belief in the value of our work allows IPRT to build a sustainable funding base and continue to champion human rights and progressive penal reform in Ireland. Finally, I want to extend a special thanks to our members, friends, and supporters. This key network of support provides very important input and funding for the core campaigning work of IPRT for which we are forever grateful.



Dr Seamus Taylor,
IPRT Board Chair,
August 2023

Introduction – IPRT Executive Director

It has been another year of considerable work to advance progressive penal reform in Ireland. It is our pleasure to now report on that work to our members, supporters and friends.

Over the last 12 months, our organisation has experienced a lot of change, saying farewell to some valued longstanding members of staff and welcoming new people with invaluable expertise and experience into our expanded team. While our current team of six is large by IPRT standards, we are still a very small national organisation, but one that continues to punch well above its weight. Despite a reduction in capacity at various points during the year. It is a testament to the team that IPRT maintained an impressive public profile throughout. In this period, we've worked tirelessly to set our new strategic path for the coming years, producing our new *Strategic Plan 2023-2026*. I want to thank those who fed into the process, in particular our members – including those in prison and those who were recently released – who helped to shape it. Our goals are ambitious, but we believe that they are achievable based on the volume and standard of work detailed in this Annual Review.

As always, IPRT's advocacy work over the 12-month period was underscored by our evidence-led research. In October 2022, we virtually launched *Access to Rights for People Detained in Secure Forensic Mental Health Facilities in Ireland*. This year our other major reports included *Maternal Imprisonment in Ireland: A Scoping Study and Progress in the Penal System: A framework for penal reform 2022 (PIPS 2022)*, both of which were launched to full houses at our first in-person events since the pandemic in March 2023 and May 2023, respectively.

Following a successful All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform meeting in summer 2022, the PIPS 2022 report examined the penal system across 28 standards with 'Women in Prison' receiving particular attention as the 'Spotlight Standard' for the year. In addition, our new dedicated staff role has enabled us to drive reform for – and reduce harms to – the children and families of people in prison, building on the work of the Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Network.

Following a reduction in the numbers of people in custody during the COVID-19 pandemic, regrettably we are again seeing

an increase in the number of people in prison leading to overcrowding across Ireland's prison estate. IPRT has continued to highlight this fundamental issue both to key decision-makers and the media, promoting alternatives to prison as a core solution to address the problem. Furthermore, we have commissioned a study on the barriers to employment for individuals with previous convictions and whether they face discrimination in accessing decent and sufficient work. We look forward to publishing this research in due course.

Over this period, we welcomed progressive moves forward in penal policy, such as the *Review of Policy Options for Prison and Penal Reform* which commits to consider incorporating in law the principle of 'prison as a last resort' and to explore alternatives to imprisonment. In addition, published reports such as the High Level Taskforce to consider the mental health and addiction challenges of those who come into contact with the Criminal Justice Sector; the Review of Prison Visiting Committees report; and the Thematic Inspection on Education & Work Training, all lay a strong path to reform the criminal justice system and we will continue to push for key recommendations to be implemented.

We made submissions to and appeared before Oireachtas Committees, including the Joint Committee on Justice to discuss the General Scheme of the Inspection of Places of Detention Bill 2022 which would pave the way to finally ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. Internationally, we made submissions and presented to both the UN Human Rights Committee and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Notably, the Human Rights Committee's recommendations reflected our contributions in Geneva including improving prison conditions, including eliminating overcrowding in places of detention, ensuring adequate mental health care for prisoners and guaranteeing swift and independent investigations of all deaths in detention.

We have continued to work collaboratively with all key stakeholders, identifying and acting on opportunities for constructive and critical engagement as they arose. We

developed and fostered relationships like our partnership with NIACRO, which facilitated an all-island conversation on spent convictions. As new organisational members of RESCALED and Children of Prisoners Europe we will expand the reach of our work and learn from our European counterparts.

Every Board member of IPRT provides ongoing support, guidance and direction to me as Executive Director; in particular Dr Seamus Taylor as Chair, both Prof Aislinn O'Donnell and Dr Cormac Behan as Vice Chairs during the period, and Kevin Gregory as Treasurer. My sincere thanks to the ever-dedicated, always hardworking and inspiring IPRT staff team: Dr Helen Kehoe, Pamela Drumgoole, Ashling Tobin, Michelle Byrne and Paula Dempsey along with the volunteers who supported our work over the last 12 months. I would particularly like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Sarahjane McCreery who left IPRT in September 2022. A special word of thanks is due this year to Molly Joyce who took on the role of Acting Executive Director for a number of months while I was on maternity leave. On behalf of the Board and staff, I'd like to acknowledge her profound contribution over the past three years and wish her the best of luck in her new role as she leaves IPRT in August 2023. Many of IPRT's achievements are the result of her excellent leadership of the IPRT team over the relevant period.

Finally, the quality, professionalism and impact of our work is only made possible by the support of all of our funders, members and friends – and for this, we are thankful. We look forward to working with you all over the next 12 months to ensure that urgent and necessary reforms are achieved and maintained.



Saoirse Brady,
IPRT Executive Director,
August 2023

Our People

Patron of IPRT



Michael D. Higgins
President of Ireland

Advocates of IPRT

- **Paula Meehan**
Poet
- **Ivana Bacik**
Teachta Dála
- **Peter Sheridan**
Author and Director
- **John Lonergan**
Former Governor of Mountjoy Prison

IPRT Board of Directors

IPRT is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, made up of a minimum of seven members with expertise in a range of areas relevant to penal reform. The Board focuses on the broader strategic goals of the organisation. At least seven members of the Board are elected at the organisation's AGM and further members may be co-opted by the Board.

- **Dr Seamus Taylor**
Chairperson, Head of Department, Department of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University
- **Dr Cormac Behan**
Vice Chairperson (from Nov 2022), Criminology Lecturer, School of Language, Law and Social Science, TU Dublin (appointed July 2022)
- **Kevin Gregory**
Treasurer, Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Business Development, Rehab Ireland
- **Ashling Golden**
Secretary, Justice Programmes Manager, Solas Project
- **Prof. Aislinn O'Donnell**
Vice Chairperson (from Nov 2022 until Sept 2023), Professor of Education, Maynooth University
- **Derval McDonagh**
CEO of Inclusion Ireland (appointed July 2022)
- **Joan O'Flynn**
Consultant (resigned September 2022)
- **Kathleen Leader SC**
Barrister (resigned September 2022)
- **Dr Lisa Cuthbert**
CEO of PACE (Prevention Accommodation Community Enterprise) (appointed July 2022)
- **Liz Leavy**
Human Resources Director at XS Direct (resigned May 2023)
- **Miranda Trouabal**
Teacher, Pathways Centre (resigned January 2023)
- **Luke Staines**
Solicitor with Michael Staines & Co Solicitors (appointed September 2022)
- **Niall Walsh**
Pathways (resigned September 2022)
- **Noel Moloney**
Director in an Irish Consulting Firm (appointed September 2022)

Our People

IPRT Staff

In 2022-2023, the day-to-day work of IPRT was carried out by a team of three to six staff.



Saoirse Brady
Executive Director
(on maternity leave
from January 2022
to September 2023)



Molly Joyce
Legal and Public
Affairs Manager,
Deputy Director.
Acting Executive
Director (from
January 2023)



Sarahjane McCreery
Senior Policy and
Research Officer
(until September
2022)



Pamela Drumgoole
Communications
Officer (until
September 2022),
Policy and Research
Coordinator (from
November 2022)



Paula Dempsey
Governance and
Administration
Officer (from
September 2022)



Ashling Tobin
Children and
Families Initiative
Coordinator (from
November 2022)



Michelle Byrne
Communications
Officer (from
November 2022)



Dr Helen Kehoe
Legal and Public
Affairs Manager
(from April 2023)



Kathleen O'Meara
Team Lead (on a
service basis, from
June 2023)

IPRT Volunteers

All of our work is underscored by our values. They are given expression in our work, and in our behaviours as an organisation.

- **Colleen Ralph**
July 2022 - August 2022
- **Ashleigh Pillay**
September 2022 - January 2023
- **Emma McLoughlin**
September 2022 - January 2023
- **Laura Baldwin**
February 2023 - May 2023

Our Strategic Goals

All of IPRT’s actions over the period were guided by our strategic goals and priorities.

At the beginning of the period, we were guided by our Strategic Plan 2017–2021, which had been extended by a year given the change in Executive Director.

In developing our new Strategic Plan 2023–2026, IPRT completed a thorough review of our achievements, conducted several workshops to develop key foundational statements including our vision, mission and values and interviewed key stakeholders, including those with direct lived experience, about IPRT’s work.

Our new Strategic Plan 2023–2026 was published in March 2023.

Our two strategic goals from our Strategic Plan 2023–2026 are:

01

We campaign for a progressive criminal justice system that upholds human rights. We do this through research, advocacy and changing attitudes.

02

We continue to develop a sustainable, well-governed, independent organisation.

The following are the areas for action to bring about the long-term goals we wish to achieve in our Strategic Plan 2023–2026:

1. Upholding human rights and respect for human dignity in Ireland’s criminal justice system for adults and young people.
2. Promoting effective alternatives to prison, where prison is only used as a measure of last resort.
3. Championing a criminal justice system that has social integration at its core.
4. Changing attitudes and challenging misconceptions about people in the criminal justice system among the public, policy officials, politicians, media and the legal community, including the judiciary.
5. Creating and sharing innovative solutions through strategic engagement, networking, and mobilising others.
6. Maintaining transparency and good governance in how we operate internally as an organisation and with members, our Board and stakeholders.
7. IPRT will be a great place to work with a high-performing team and where staff feel valued.
8. IPRT will continue to be a sustainable and independent organisation.



For more detail on our work during 2022, or our finances, our *Directors’ Report* and *Audited Financial Statements 2022–2023* is available on www.iprt.ie.

The following pages detail IPRT’s considerable efforts towards achieving these objectives, through research, legislative engagement, communications and advocacy.

Goal 1

We campaign for a progressive criminal justice system that upholds human rights. We do this through research, advocacy and changing attitudes.

ACTION 1.1: Upholding human rights and respect for human dignity in Ireland’s criminal justice system for adults and young people.

Focus on: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC)

A core part of IPRT’s work is upholding human rights and respect for human dignity in Ireland’s criminal justice system for adults and young people.

Children’s rights were under the spotlight over this period, with the review of Ireland under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Following a submission in 2022, IPRT attended the review of Ireland by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (‘the Committee’) in Geneva in early 2023 alongside others, including fellow members of the Children’s Rights Alliance, of which IPRT is a member. While there, we highlighted the need for urgent Government action on youth justice and children with a family member in prison in Ireland.

IPRT highlighted concerns regarding the administration of youth justice and the challenges facing children with a family member in prison in Ireland. In particular, IPRT called for the application of the Irish child justice system to all children, including those who turn 18 while awaiting trial; raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14; and the explicit recognition of children with a family member in prison as a vulnerable group in need of specific supports in the new policy framework for children and young people. Reflecting our submission, we also advocated for the need to include children’s voices in all decisions that affect them (including sentencing decisions) and for the roll-out of judicial training on children’s rights. IPRT raised these issues alongside other civil society groups, many of whom contributed to the comprehensive report *Are We There Yet – Civil Society Alternative Report* produced by the Children’s Rights Alliance in response to the Fifth and Sixth Combined Report of Ireland under the UNCRC.

Following IPRT’s advocacy on these issues, we welcome the strong Concluding Observations by the Committee relating to IPRT’s calls. These include the need for

the State to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into national legislation (echoing a similar recommendation in IPRT’s *Piecing It Together: Supporting Children and Families with a Family Member in Prison in Ireland* (2021) report) and the recognition of children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds as a cohort specifically in need of support. The Committee also echoed IPRT’s call to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age (from 12 generally or 10 in exceptional circumstances for certain serious violent offences) and to ensure that children below the age of 18 are not prosecuted as adult offenders, without exception.

We were pleased to see the Committee’s recommendations also call for the active promotion of non-judicial measures, such as diversion, mediation and counselling, for children accused of criminal offences, and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial sentences for children, such as probation or community service. The Committee further concluded that the Irish State must ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time and that it is reviewed on a regular basis, with a view to its withdrawal, and address the over-representation of children belonging to minority groups in detention.

The impact of IPRT’s engagement with the Committee as part of Ireland’s review can be seen strongly across the broad range of recommendations although we had hoped that the Concluding Observations would explicitly mention children with a family member in prison as a group in need of particular protection.

Work in this area will continue over the coming years, as IPRT continues to push for the full implementation of the strong recommendations that we secured from the Committee. In particular, IPRT will engage with all stakeholders to push for

the amendment of the Children Act 2001, so no child who turns 18 while awaiting trial for an offence they committed as a child loses the protections of the Act.



IPRT’s Children and Families Project Coordinator attended the Ombudsman for Children’s screening of the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child



IPRT’s Molly Joyce attending Ireland’s review under the UNCRC in Geneva, Jan 2023

Goal 1

We campaign for a progressive criminal justice system that upholds human rights. We do this through research, advocacy and changing attitudes.

ACTION 1.2: Promoting effective alternatives to prison, where prison is only used as a measure of last resort.

Focus on: Progress in the Penal System (PIPS): A framework for penal reform (2022)

In May 2023, IPRT was delighted to launch the sixth edition of PIPS. The overall objective of the PIPS project since its commencement in 2016 has been to provide a comprehensive report on human rights issues in Irish prisons, covering areas such as prison conditions, regimes, accountability and reintegration.

For another year, the PIPS project was made possible thanks to the goodwill and buy-in from relevant bodies, including the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service and the National Forensic Mental Health Service. The relationships IPRT has built and maintained with these essential stakeholders over the lifetime of the project is a testament to their willingness to respond to constructive criticism to improve the lives of those in their care. Due to IPRT’s previous efforts to place a more in-depth focus on a very small number of standards during the pandemic years, many of the standards assessed in PIPS 2022 have not been assessed in PIPS since 2019, with some not assessed since 2020. However, PIPS 2022 reviewed 28 of the 35 standards that have become synonymous with PIPS and shone a light on a cross-section of issues across the penal system.

Of the 28 standards assessed, four were classified as having progressed; five as having regressed; no change was registered in nine cases; there was insufficient data in order to make a thorough assessment in two cases; while eight standards were classified as ‘mixed’, indicating that there has been progress towards the standard in some areas and regress away from it in others.

This year the report spotlighted women in the penal system, honing in on the details of how women in prison in Ireland are among the most marginalised women in the State. One of the long-term goals of the PIPS project is to engage people with experience of the penal system as co-creators in monitoring progress into the future. While this remains a challenge given IPRT’s unique policy-focused but

experience-informed role, we were fortunate to be able to carry out informal peer discourse sessions with two groups of women with experience of imprisonment to inform the direction of this spotlight.

The launch event was the first in-person launch since October 2019 with His Honour Judge Paul Kelly, President of the District Court, providing the keynote speech. While providing nuanced reflections on the penal system during 2022, Judge Kelly highlighted the importance of such an annual report on the penal system, welcoming the “warts and all scrutiny” with its “suggestions for improvements articulated cogently”. Panel respondents at the launch were: Caron McCaffrey, Director General of the Irish Prison Service; Mark Wilson, Director of the Probation Service; Paul Grace, Team Leader at the Solas Project; John O’Callaghan, Deputy Secretary (Criminal Justice), Department of Justice; and Mark Kelly, Chief Inspector, Office of the Inspector of Prisons. We welcome that Caron McCaffrey, clearly set out her commitment to making greater levels of data available to enable a thorough analysis of all PIPS standards possible in future years.

While IPRT has facilitated letters and other inputs from people with experience at previous PIPS launches, this is the first launch where someone with lived experience spoke as part of the panel of respondents. Further to this, we were pleased that there was considerable input during the Q&A session from people who have had contact with the criminal justice system.

Attendees jumped back into the networking aspect of the event, which was particularly fruitful this year, given its absence in recent years. This was a great opportunity to interact with key decision-makers. We were pleased to welcome senior civil servants, legislators, members of the judiciary and Irish Prison Service management. Other attendees

included members of prison visiting committees, prison teachers, staff from the Central Mental Hospital, several inspectors from the Office of the Inspector of Prisons, and other relevant community-based organisations. Further to this, we also welcomed a strong attendance from various prison Governors, who are responsible for operationalising IPS policy and for the day-to-day functioning of each prison.

IPRT also received vast levels of media coverage on the PIPS 2022 report. As well as a host of other broadcast media, including the Newstalk Breakfast Briefing, Acting Executive Director Molly Joyce spoke in detail on the RTÉ Radio One Claire Byrne Show, highlighting the impact of prison overcrowding on all aspects of prison life. Other coverage was featured in The Irish Times, Irish Examiner and TheJournal.ie. Our research was also referenced in an Oireachtas debate in the days following the launch. Further to this, a strategically placed opinion piece on women in prison kindly penned by Professor Kathleen Lynch, expert in equality, social justice, and human rights and member of the PIPS Advisory Group received a huge amount of interest online.

Since the launch, IPRT has continued to focus on extending the reach of PIPS. For example, we have been developing a short easy-to-read version of the report’s ‘Spotlight’ on women in the penal system, designed for all audiences, but with a particular focus on people in custody. This is in addition to the work of PIPS 2022 in feeding into broader policy and legislative work as well as proactive and reactive media activities.

This project was kindly supported by our donor-advised family fund and Community Foundation Ireland.

FUNDED BY
**Community
Foundation
Ireland**

Goal 1

We campaign for a progressive criminal justice system that upholds human rights. We do this through research, advocacy and changing attitudes.

ACTION 1.3: Championing a criminal justice system that has social integration at its core.

Focus on: Children and families of people in prison

After the successful creation of a new staff role to lead our initiative for children and families of people in prison in 2022, we were able to further drive the ambitious objectives as part of our three-year project.

This year, the already established IPRT-led network, Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Network (the Network), continued to grow and create impact by mapping current knowledge and supports, and disseminating best practices and actions for change. Membership of the Network grew to 43 members, gaining eight additional members: Kids' Own Publishing, NIACRO, UL Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP-UL), St Stephen's Green Trust, Kinship Care, Exchange House and two individual members.

Since July 2022, the Network has met four times. Some of the key actions arising from those meetings have included:

A joint letter to the Director of the Irish Prison Service (IPS) and subsequent meetings with the IPS regarding the ongoing issues currently impacting children and families of prisoners;

- Commencing a consultation process to ensure the framework for the Network aligns with the objectives of the network members; and
- Highlighting the impact of prison visits on children with disabilities and the impact of the cashless approach of the IPS on newly sentenced prisoners directly with the IPS.
- Advocating for and advising the IPS around the creation of a new 'National Family Connections Officer' role within the service.

- Facilitated collaboration between members e.g. between Barnardos and Traveller Justice Ireland, leading to the creation of a new project worker role to supporting Traveller women in prison.

In March 2023, we launched *Maternal Imprisonment in Ireland: A Scoping Study*, which examined the numbers and experiences of mothers imprisoned in Ireland and their children. The report contains 29 recommendations including suggested actions aimed at reducing female imprisonment through alternatives to custodial sentences. It examines the rights of the child and the need to consider the impact on children when sentencing their mothers. Contributors at the event included members of the Network, the Ombudsman for Children; a person with lived experience of the impact of parental imprisonment; the Probation Service; the National Forum of Family Resource Centres; and Ireland's newly appointed Special Rapporteur on Child Protection. This up-to-date piece of research serves as a useful tool for the rest of our work within the Children and Families Initiative.

Other actions undertaken to progress this discrete stream of working during the period included:

- A meeting with the Governor and staff of the new Limerick female prison about the specific needs of children/families of women detained in prison and a visit to the new facilities (which are much more child-friendly than the existing facilities).
- Relationship building with Hub na nÓg located in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY), supporting implementation of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making (2015-2020). Through this medium, IPRT and our partners on the Network continue to push for the recognition of children with a family

member in prison as a specific cohort that ought to be included in consultations that Hub na nÓg run on behalf of Government departments and agencies.

- Becoming full members of Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) and speaking at their 2023 annual conference. The conference highlighted novel and creative approaches to protecting and promoting the rights and welfare of children with a parent in prison.
- Laying the groundwork for further engagement with the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) on the rights and needs of children impacted by imprisonment.
- Discussing our views on the gaps in the protections and supports for children impacted by familial imprisonment with Ireland's newly appointed Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC.
- A submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth consultation on their Statement of Strategy 2023.
- Supporting Kids' Own Publishing Partnership to create a book written by young people, for young people with experience of familial imprisonment. This project received funding from the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal and Community Foundation Ireland.

This work was kindly supported by St Stephen's Green Trust, Porticus, Katharine Howard Foundation and Community Foundation Ireland.



Goal 1

We campaign for a progressive criminal justice system that upholds human rights. We do this through research, advocacy and changing attitudes.

ACTION 1.4: Changing attitudes and challenging misconceptions about people in the criminal justice system among the public, policy officials, politicians, media and the legal community, including the judiciary.

Focus on: Communicating our message

With IPRT’s effective communication strategy, we have been able to convey our mission, values and achievements clearly, as well as highlight issues and call for change. Through various channels such as social media, press releases, newsletters and more, IPRT has been able to disseminate information promptly to the public, policy officials, politicians, media and the legal community, including the judiciary.

IPRT raises awareness and provides information by maintaining the IPRT website as a resource on penal policy topics; maintaining a social media presence, producing quarterly ebulletins; and engaging extensively with media on these issues.

Media

Our consistent media work is an important way for IPRT to reach new audiences, help shape public debate on crime and punishment, and persuade policymakers of the need for progressive reform. This complements our other engagement, research, and advocacy. IPRT plays an important role in fostering wider public and political understanding of the role that penal reform plays in creating safer and more equal communities with better outcomes for everyone.

Through the combined use of social and traditional media, IPRT extends the reach of our core messages and nurtures increased engagement with the issues at stake and those affected.

Our high public profile and standing with media outlets is due to our commitment to evidence-based analysis of the issues. Across the period, IPRT has been able – due to its authoritative voice – to shape the debate on crime and justice.

As well as responding to media queries and relevant news items when journalists turn to us for comment, we also

proactively seek media coverage on important issues, and provide an alternative voice in public discourse on crime and penal policy. Our research and campaigns are normally covered in the media reasonably and fairly.

We had significant levels of engagement with public debate in this period, issuing four editions of the IPRT ebulletin, contributing to nearly 100 print and online stories and radio and TV appearances. IPRT also featured on podcast episodes for both Activist Lawyer and Conversations on the Margins.

Some of the media coverage highlights include an opinion piece in the Journal by IPRT’s Executive Director on visiting family in prison at Christmas, an opinion piece in the Irish Independent on spent convictions, a review on ratifying UN OPCAT in the Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA) bulletin and TV appearances including interviews with RTÉ News and Virgin Media Ireland AM.

IPRT contributed to two shortlisted entries in the Law Society Justice Media Awards – ‘Moving on from a conviction’ by Evelyn O’Rourke for the RTE Radio 1 Today with Claire Byrne show and ‘Homeless prisoners: ‘It was better to be in prison than on the streets’’ by Shauna Bowers for the Irish Times. We also contributed to the winning story of the Headline Awards ‘How a desperate Cork family’s pleas for help ended with their beloved Kay in prison’ by Noel Baker in the Irish Examiner.

IPRT also contributed to upcoming pieces including an ongoing Noteworthy investigation into children’s access to parents in prison and to an upcoming documentary on Limerick Prison.

Web and online presence

Online channels have become a key tool for achieving progressive social change in Ireland.

IPRT’s online presence is an invaluable resource acting as an archive of nearly 30 years of IPRT research and providing a hub of relevant research and emerging policy developments, which serves as a central repository of information and updates on penal reform for media, policymakers, researchers, and other key stakeholders.

IPRT proactively uses social media tools to extend our audiences, foster wider debate, and nurture international relationships with prison reform movements around the world. IPRT makes active use of Twitter as our primary form of social media. Twitter allows IPRT to engage in debate and respond to the issues of the day in real-time. Twitter also allows us to directly engage with our peer organisations, media and decision-makers. We had sustained growth in followers across social media platforms during the period, particularly on Instagram where we saw a 20 per cent increase in followers and on our LinkedIn page, which saw a 40 per cent increase in followers. We encouraged all of our stakeholders to join us on social media to hear our reactions to the issues of the day and to see recent developments from around the world.

 iprt.ie

 twitter.com/iprt

 facebook.com/irishpenalreformtrust

 instagram.com/irishpenalreformtrust

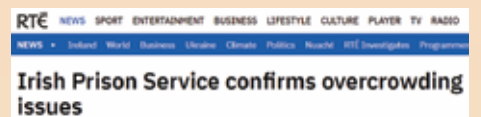
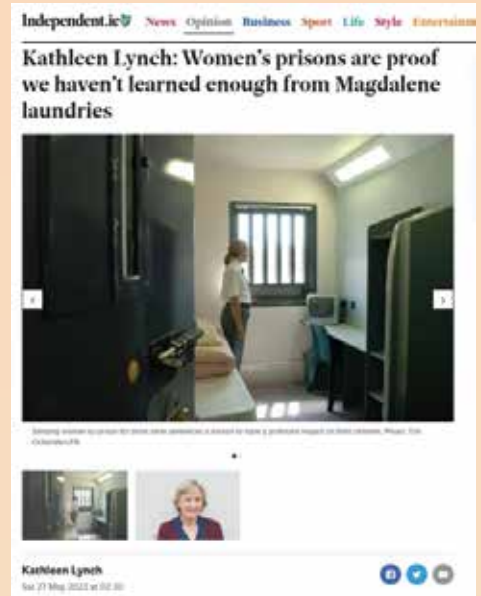
 youtube.com/@IrishPenalReform

 linkedin.com/company/irish-penal-reform-trust/

IPRT Media Coverage

IPRT works hard to keep human rights and penal reform issues on the public and political agenda. We continue to have a respected voice and stimulate informed debate in this space.

A small sample of the headlines of pieces we contributed to in 2022 and 2023 are featured below.



Goal 1

**We campaign for a progressive criminal justice system that upholds human rights.
We do this through research, advocacy and changing attitudes.**

ACTION 1.5: Creating and sharing innovative solutions through strategic engagement, networking, and mobilising others.

Focus on: Building our strategic vision

At the beginning of this reporting period, IPRT's annual programme of activities was guided by our *Strategic Plan 2017–2021* whilst we engaged in our new strategic planning process. The IPRT Board had previously agreed to extend this plan by a maximum of 18 months. This was done in light of delays experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and staff turnover, and particularly to allow for the appointment of IPRT's new Executive Director. The *Strategic Plan 2017–2021* accordingly continued to guide IPRT's work in 2022. In order to achieve further and sustained progress on our strategic objectives, IPRT's key activities in 2022 were in the areas of research, advocacy and submissions, media and awareness raising, events and publications, and engagement. Once our new Executive Director, Saoirse Brady, was appointed and in place at the helm of the team, she led on the task of carrying out substantial work to devise the organisation's new strategy.

Defining our vision for the future and setting our intentions is an important part of driving IPRT's work. During this period, we led a strategic planning process to establish a clear and well-defined roadmap for the next number of years. Our new *Strategic Plan 2023–2026* was developed over five months during 2022. The process, which was completed in December 2022, was facilitated by independent consultant Kathleen O'Meara, and led by a Steering Group, chaired by our Chair Dr Seamus Taylor.

The Strategic Plan was developed using the Appreciative Inquiry methodology, which is an approach to organisational development that focuses building on the strengths of the organisation and allows for the generation of self-determined change, helping it to move towards a shared vision of the future and the actions needed to make it happen.

The process included: a review of IPRT's achievements; one-to-one online interviews with external stakeholders to gain their perspectives on the work of IPRT; a review of key internal and external documents; an analysis of the political, social, legal and technological environment; and a key part of the process were three Appreciative Inquiry workshops that shaped the key elements of the Plan. IPRT particularly acknowledges the participation of "critical friends" in the Appreciative Inquiry process.

Engagement with stakeholders on the draft Strategic Plan was another important part of the process. A meeting with IPRT members took place online, as well as an in-person workshop with a group of people in the Progression Unit in Mountjoy Prison, and with a group of women with experience of the criminal justice system who are taking part in the SAOL Project. We are grateful to all who contributed to helping us shape our future path.

Our Strategic Plan will aid us in making informed decisions through its provision of a comprehensive understanding of IPRT's objectives and the steps required to reach them. It has and will continue to facilitate us in effective resource allocation, prioritisation of initiatives and the ability to adapt in changing circumstances. Through this planning process, IPRT has ensured that it will have a sustainable yet ambitious future.

The IPRT Strategic Plan 2023–2026 is available at www.iprt.ie/what-we-do.



A year in photos



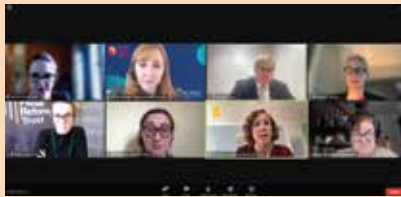
IPRT presented to the Joint Committee on Justice to inform its Pre-legislative scrutiny of the Inspection of Places of Detention Bill, Oct 2022.



IPRT and RESCALED visited Shelton Abbey open prison in Wicklow, March 2023.



IPRT attending the stream session of Ireland's ICCPR review in the IHREC offices. July 2022.



IPRT prison law seminar on access to rights for people detained in secure forensic mental health facilities in Ireland, Oct 2022.



IPRT is at the Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Mental Health to discuss our recently published report on *Access to Rights for People Detained in Secure Forensic Mental Health Facilities in Ireland*, Dec 2022.



IPRT Living with Conviction All-Island Seminar with NIACRO event, Nov 2022.



IPRT was invited to see the garden designed by young people at Oberstown Children Detention Campus at #BordBiaBloom, June 2023.



IPRT staff visit the new Limerick Prison, January 2023.



IPRT staff, Ashling Tobin and Pamela Drumgoole attend the National Traveller Women Forum Day on International Women's Day, March 2023.



IPRT staff, Molly Joyce and Michelle Byrne visited Midlands Prison, March 2023.



Pamela Drumgoole, IPRT Policy and Research Coordinator, OIP Thematic Inspection on Education & Work Training report launch, June 2023.



Ashling Tobin, IPRT Children and Family Project Coordinator, represents IPRT at the Children of Prisoners Europe Conference, where we become full members



Saoirse Brady, IPRT's Executive Director responded to the Evidence Review of Community Service Policy, Practice and Structure launched by the Probation Service, Dec 2022.



IPRT welcomed the Department of Justice Secretary General Oonagh McPhilips to IPRT HQ to discuss shared priority penal policy issues, July 2022.

Goal 2

We continue to develop a sustainable, well-governed, independent organisation.

ACTION 2.1: Maintaining transparency and good governance in how we operate internally as an organisation and with members, our Board and stakeholders.

Focus on: Maintaining strong governance

Governance

As an organisation that seeks to hold the State to account, it is crucial that IPRT itself maintains the highest levels of governance and accountability.

IPRT is registered with the Companies Registration Office (CRO Number 21844) and has submitted a full clean statutory audit. IPRT is also registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority (RCN 20029562) and as a Registered Charity with the Revenue Commissioners (CHY Number 11091). IPRT also meets all requirements to file returns to the Register of Lobbying.

IPRT recorded its full compliance with the Charities Governance Code and continues to meet all relevant regulatory reporting requirements.

IPRT ensures that robust levels of organisational systems, structures and practices are in operation to ensure a sustainable organisation and a high-quality workplace for staff. Policies are reviewed at regular intervals with the Board to ensure best practice is adopted. Board recruitment for gaps in expertise will begin towards the latter half of 2023.

IPRT has moved to Multi-Factor Authentication, created a disaster recovery plan and devised a data back-up procedure, to minimise risk of data breaches and enhance cyber security. The IPRT team has further developed their knowledge of both GDPR and cybersecurity by each undergoing training in these areas.

Finance

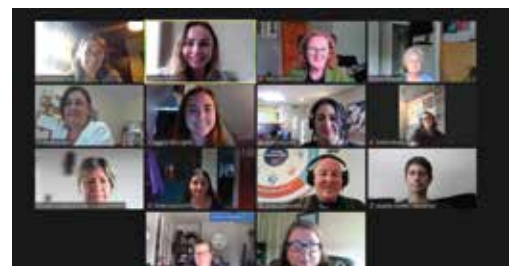
IPRT is committed to ensuring that the organisation's finances are managed to the highest standard, and in line with established accounting practices.

Since 2015, IPRT has produced FRS 102 SORP compliant accounts, in advance of SORP becoming a required accounting standard for charities in Ireland. The FRS 102 requirements relating to the trustees' annual report, fund accounting, the format of the statement of financial activities and additional disclosures are aimed at providing a high level of accountability and transparency to donors, funders, financial supporters, and other stakeholders. The 2021 accounts, prepared by Best Practice Accountant – Chartered Accountants (Mary-Louise O'Loughlin ACA) were approved at the IPRT AGM in September 2022 and submitted to the Companies Registration Office. The 2022 accounts are for approval at the IPRT AGM in September 2023. An independent audit is conducted each year by the auditors who bring to the attention of the Board any matters of concern. The auditors found the 2022 financial statements to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of IPRT and of its resources and have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014. IPRT's auditors are Crowleys DFK, who are authorised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland. The auditors are invited to the IPRT AGM each year.

The Finance, Audit, Risk and Human Resources Committee (FARHR) consults in advance of each Board meeting, and updated management accounts are disseminated to the whole Board at each meeting. Detailed information on our financial management processes, as well as copies of IPRT Financial Policies and Procedures, is available on request. [-we-do](#)



IPRT Children and Families Project launch and publication of Maternal Imprisonment in Ireland – A Scoping Study, March 2023



Meeting of the Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Network, Sept 2022

Goal 2

We continue to develop a sustainable, well-governed, independent organisation.

ACTION 2.2: IPRT will be a great place to work with a high-performing team and where staff feel valued.

Focus on: Adapting to changes in our team and strengthening capacity

The last 12 months have been a period of growth, change and development in the organisation. The current IPRT team is the largest in our history with six staff members working in legal and public affairs, policy and research, communications, children and families of people in prison, and governance and administrative support.

While a small organisation by national standards, IPRT continues to make an impressive impact and secure progressive change. This is despite a reduction in staff capacity at various points during the period of this Annual Review due to changes in staffing and a period of maternity leave.

Although IPRT was saddened to see our then Communications Officer, Pamela Drumgoole, part ways with IPRT in September 2022, after a rigorous and competitive recruitment process, IPRT gladly welcomed her back to the team in November 2022 as the new Policy and Research Coordinator.

IPRT welcomed Paula Dempsey as our new Governance and Administration Officer in September 2022 and Michelle Byrne as Communications Officer in November 2022.

After successfully obtaining funding from the Porticus Foundation, Katharine Howard Foundation and the Community Foundation Ireland for a full-time coordinator of the Children and Families Initiative, Ashling Tobin joined IPRT in this role in November 2022.

IPRT Executive Director, Saoirse Brady, commenced maternity leave in January 2023, returning in September 2023. Molly Joyce, Deputy Director, assumed the role of Acting Executive Director until June 2023.

Dr Helen Kehoe was recruited to fill the role of Legal and Public Affairs Manager (Maternity Cover) in April 2022.

In June 2023, Molly Joyce commenced maternity leave. For the period 1 June 2023 to 4 September 2023, Kathleen O'Meara, an external consultant who had facilitated the development of a strategic plan with IPRT in 2022, assumed the role of Interim Team Leader. Kathleen reported to the Chairperson and the Board, provided guidance to the team, and managed any day-to-day issues as they arose.

After consultation with the team, IPRT revised weekly and performance review templates to structure work and feedback for staff.

IPRT commenced roll-out of HRLocker, a human resources software system that helps manage IPRT's HR processes. This supported us to streamline HR requests across the team.

IPRT continued to facilitate hybrid working for all staff throughout the period. The IPRT team has been operating on a hybrid basis, with a hybrid work policy now in place and being trialled amongst the staff.



IPRT staff saying our farewells to two amazing volunteers Ashleigh Pillay & Emma McLoughlin, January 2023.



Saying farewell to two Penal Reform champions - Pamela Drumgoole from the position of Communications Officer and Sarah Jane McCreevy from the position of Senior Policy and Research Officer, Sept 2022.



The IPRT team welcome their latest staff editions - Ashling Tobin and Michelle Byrne, Dec 2022.



The IPRT team after a successful launch event of PIPS 2022.

Goal 2

We continue to develop a sustainable, well-governed, independent organisation.

ACTION 2.3: IPRT will continue to be a sustainable and independent organisation.

Focus on: Diversifying and strengthening our funding streams

Sustainability

Considerable efforts in this area in recent years meant that IPRT's core funding was secured up to end of 2025. Work on developing new revenue streams as well as innovatively demonstrating impact for existing funding renewals continued over this period.

Our Funders

IPRT is in receipt of multi-annual funding from a number of diverse sources. IPRT is deeply grateful to our funders for their belief in both the issue of penal reform and in IPRT's approach.

In June 2022, we were successful in securing Pobal SSNO funding 2022-2025 which continues to support us during the period of this review and into the future. This multi-annual core funding, alongside our other diverse donors, allows us to plan long-term strategic penal reform advocacy work.

IPRT secured a renewed grant from the Department of Justice in early 2023. This combined funding covers the core costs of the organisation, including certain core staff and office costs and will be renewed annually for a period of three years.

The Community Foundation Ireland continues to be a close partner in IPRT's work. The Foundation, through its own generous commitments and donor-advised funds, has helped us to realise ambitious initiatives that are transforming our penal system. Our multi-annual donor-advised grant for our Policy and Research Coordinator and the flagship 'Progress in the Penal System' (PIPS) project supported our work over the period.

IPRT also benefited from pro bono support on areas such as data protection and sentencing research, thanks to the support of the PILA Pro Bono Programme operated by the Free Legal Advice Centres

(FLAC). Thanks to this pro bono support, in the coming months we will be able to provide accessible explainers of key sentencing concepts.

IPRT's continuing independence is recognised by all funders as essential to the integrity of our work.

Project Funding

Funding from grant-giving bodies is essential to allow IPRT to carry out important research projects in line with organisational strategic objectives.

In 2020, we received new three-year funding through the Community Foundation for Ireland and the Mercy Congregation for a project targeted at lasting legal and policy reform. This funding continued during the period. Funding from Katherine Howard Foundation and the St. Stephen's Green Trust for IPRT's three-year initiative that aims to reduce harm for children and families affected by imprisonment also continued. In 2022, IPRT secured renewed and additional multi-annual project funding to allow for the hiring of a full-time Children & Families Project Coordinator, further growth and development of the Action for Children & Families of Prisoners Network and associated costs. This funding is provided by Porticus, The Community Foundation for Ireland and the Katharine Howard Foundation.

In 2022, IPRT was successful in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's Grant Scheme 2022/2023. This funding allowed us to commission much-needed research on the attitudes of employers to hiring people with convictions, which we look forward to publishing over the coming months. This work has also been supplemented by funding kindly provided by the Open Doors Initiative.

IPRT also acted as a partner organisation on two Irish Research Council 'New Foundations' projects, both through academics in Maynooth University. We have been supporting 'Advancing the Rights of Prisoners in Ireland Through Strategic Litigation', led by Dr Amina Adnan, 'Boxed Out: Higher education, criminal convictions, and perceptions of risk', led by Dr Joe Garrihy and Dr Ciara Bracken-Roche.

IPRT supported the Conversations from the Margins podcast, which was created and presented by Lynn Ruane and is a GoLoud Original Podcast funded by the Rowan Trust.

IPRT, along with partners NIACRO, secured funding in February 2023 under the Community Foundation Ireland's All-Island Fund to deepen our partnership and broaden cross-border collaboration for the second year.

Friends and Members of IPRT

IPRT's Members are integral to our organisation and make an important contribution to our work. Their belief in and commitment to penal reform is a driving force for our organisation. Despite a small drop in individual members, our membership continued to grow over the period, with substantial increases in numbers of members in prison or who have family members in prison; student, senior and unwaged members; and organisational members. This speaks to both the reach of our work and growing support for penal reform.

The continued support of our Friends of IPRT has enabled us to be responsive and dynamic. Thank you to our Friends, a dedicated group of supporters who have placed a high value on IPRT's mission. Friends of IPRT are asked to contribute €250 or more, with many pledging to give over three years.

Financial Statement

Supplementary information relating to the financial statements.

Schedule 2: charitable activities and other expenses.

For the financial year
ended 31 December 2022

Income	2022	2021
Donations	5,491	4,415
Core funding - Department of Justice and Equality	132,500	132,500
Membership	3,190	2,510
Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO)	89,020	90,000
Research and Policy (CFI)	59,166	50,897
Impact (CFI)	-	6,283
Migrants and Minority Ethnic Groups in the Penal System (IHREC)	704	16,452
Children and Families Initiative (SSGT and KHF)	3,164	13,909
Penal Policy and Law Programme (CFI)	39,329	50,176
Demand for Digital (CFI)	-	289
Mental Health Advocacy (CFI)	4,370	90
Equipment (MACRO)	500	-
Children and Families Initiative (Porticus, KHF and CFI)	5,750	-
All Island Network Survey (CFI)	20,000	-
Podcast (Rowan Trust)	11,400	-
Working with Conviction (IHREC)	90	-
Speaking engagements	100	-
Other income	25	2
	374,799	367,523
Cost of generating funds	(1,762)	(264)
Gross surplus	373,037	367,259
Charitable activities and other expenses	(368,850)	(353,905)
Net surplus	4,187	13,354

Financial Statement

For the financial year
ended 31 December 2022

Expenses	2022	2021
Wages and salaries	219,595	224,902
Social security costs	24,266	24,835
Staff pension costs	6,211	8,186
Staff training	2,355	4,598
Human resources	17,571	930
Rent and utilities	7,937	7,907
Insurance	1,221	1,229
Office equipment	308	12
Cleaning	690	451
Repairs and maintenance	544	403
Stationery	705	1,197
Postage	673	498
Courier	-	146
GDPR implementation and training	2,103	-
Website and social media	3,657	3,687
Prisoner engagement and building alliances	195	1,017
Events	129	-
Telephone and broadband	2,093	2,952
Computer hardware and software	1,486	4,043
IT support	2,116	3,329
Migrants and Minority Ethnic Groups in the Penal System expenses (IHREC)	-	15,590
Children and Families Initiative expenses (SSGT and KHF)	164	7,409
Demand for Digital expenses (CFI)	-	352
Mental Health Advocacy expenses (IHREC)	4,200	90
Podcast expenses (Rowan Trust)	11,400	-
Equipment expenses (MACRO)	440	-
Working with Conviction expenses (IHREC)	90	-
All Island Network Survey expenses (CFI)	13,029	-
Research and Policy expenses (CFI)	14,014	13,932
Penal Policy and Law Programme expenses (CFI)	320	1,698
Impact expenses (CFI)	-	6,281
Publications and reports	247	941
Commissioned research	-	1,500
Staff travel	1,074	-
Other staff expenses	819	2,584
Meetings	1,544	484
Volunteer and intern expenses	257	440
Board expenses	122	162
Strategic planning and development	14,838	-
Accountancy	5,756	5,749
Audit fees	4,305	3,690
Bank charges	266	319
General expenses	465	468
Membership and subscriptions	1,394	1,471
Depreciation	251	423
	368,850	353,905

Research, Policy and Public Affairs

Based on almost three decades of in-depth research and careful analysis of policy and legal issues, IPRT has formulated a distinct, constructive and effective perspective on criminal justice issues that has earned us a credible reputation. Our published research and policy papers are available at: www.iprt.ie/research-centre

IPRT regularly makes written and oral submissions to consultation processes on penal policy but also on linked issues such as human rights, women's rights, the rights of minority groups and crime policy issues, where they relate to our core objectives. IPRT both promotes the need for a national criminal justice policy that is informed by robust data and research, and also develops evidence-informed policy solutions to support policy development and decision making. Furthermore, IPRT actively monitors Ireland's international treaty obligations and leverages these to ensure adequate compliance with international human rights standards.

As well as Oireachtas presentations and engagements based on the submissions below, this period also saw previous legislative engagement come to fruition with IPRT appearing before Joint Committee on Justice to discuss pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Inspection of Places of Detention Bill in October 2022, and with IPRT appearing before the Subcommittee for Mental Health to discuss access to rights for people detained in secure forensic mental health facilities.

Opportunities to engage with international human rights processes have begun to return following COVID-19, including travelling to Geneva to appear before the 93rd pre-session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in August 2022. IPRT's track history of achieving real and lasting reform through engaging with these processes is set to continue and grow over the coming period (see page 6 for more).

Policy Submissions

- *IPRT Submission to the Department of Justice Review of the Prison Visiting Committees (August 2022)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Department of Justice Consultation on the Disregard of Convictions for Certain Qualifying Offences related to Consensual Sexual Activity between Men (December 2022)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Department of Justice consultation on diversion for young adults 18-24 (January 2023)*
- *IPRT Submission on the Review of Ireland's Civil Legal Aid Scheme (February 2023)*
- *IPRT submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Statement of Strategy 2023-2025 (May 2023)*
- *Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Network submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Statement of Strategy 2023-2025 (May 2023)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Equality Data Strategy (May 2023)*

Oireachtas Submissions

- *IPRT submission to the Review of the Department of Justice Operating Model (March 2023)*

Publications

- *Irish Prisons and COVID-19: Lessons Learned from the Pandemic (Sept 2022)*
- *Access to Rights for People Detained in Secure Forensic Mental Health Facilities in Ireland (Oct 2022)*
- *Maternal Imprisonment in Ireland: A Scoping Study (March 2023)*
- *IPRT Strategic Plan 2023-2026 (March 2023)*
- *Progress in the Penal System: A framework for penal reform (2022) (May 2023)*



IPRT stakeholder session for our annual 'PIPS' report, July 2022.



Pamela Drumgoole, IPRT Policy and Research Coordinator, launching our *Progress in the Penal System - A framework for penal reform (2022)* report, May 2023.



Panel speakers from OIP, Department of Justice, Solas Project, the Probation Service and the Prison Service at the launch of IPRT's *Progress In the Penal System (PIPS) - A framework for Penal Reform (2022)*.

Alliances and Engagement

Our vision for the penal system cannot be achieved alone. We continue to build strategic links and alliances with others in order to strengthen our overall capacity for creating change.

Given the size of IPRT, where possible, we proactively try to increase our impact through working in partnership and in alliance with other organisations to achieve common policy goals. To demonstrate our support for common human rights issues, in 2022/2023 IPRT was an active organisational member of Mental Health Reform, Children's Rights Alliance, Irish Network Against Racism, Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN), the Wheel, the Association of Criminal Justice Research and Development, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and the National Women's Council. We also become new members of RESCALED, Children of Prisoners in Europe (COPE) and Trans Equality Together.

Constructive Engagement

Over this period IPRT has maintained longstanding relationships with stakeholders, as well as developing new alliances. A comprehensive overview of the stakeholders we regularly engage with is available in previous editions of the IPRT Annual Review, including those in civil society, statutory bodies, the State, legislature, academia and international bodies.

Throughout the period IPRT enjoyed positive engagement of note with the Office of the Inspector of Prisons, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Mental Health Commission, Prison Officers' Association, and Ombudsman for Children, along with the Department of Justice, Irish Prison Service, Probation Service, the Courts Service and other relevant policymakers and oversight bodies. New and strengthened relationships over the period include NI-based NIACRO, SAOL Project, HAIL Housing, Traveller Justice Initiative, National Traveller Womens' Forum, Bedford Row, Fusion Community Prison Link and Prison Insider.

Further alliance building during 2022 included the continued engagement with our 'Solicitor Panel'. Formed in 2021, it brings together solicitors working in areas relating to prison litigation so that we can hear directly from those who are regularly engaging with the courts and prisons about what is happening on the ground. This feeds into our broader advocacy work.

The All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform continued to provide a forum for members of all parties and independents, across the Dáil and Seanad, to discuss penal reform issues, engage directly with leading experts in the field and work together to create positive and lasting reform of the Irish penal system. During the period the Group was jointly chaired by Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill and Deputy Ivana Bacik, with secretariat support provided by IPRT. Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill has since stepped down as co-chair due to her appointment as a Minister of State. In July 2022, the third open meeting for all TDs and Senators was held, focusing on women in prison, with contributions from women with lived experience from the SAOL Project (BRIO Programme), Maria Joyce (National Traveller Women's Forum) and Carol Conway (Chairperson of the Dochás Centre Visiting Committee). IPRT deepened engagement with many members of the Oireachtas, including Justice Spokespersons in particular.

In November 2022, IPRT chaired its fourth meeting of the All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform, a closed roundtable of with key stakeholders to inform Ireland's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT). The gathering heard directly from international experts Steven Caruana, specialist advisor on OPCAT to the Australian Human Rights Commission and Pétur Hauksson and Sharon Shalev, members of NPM Observatory who shared their vast expertise on best practice and lessons learned from ratification elsewhere. Attendees included representatives from key relevant statutory bodies in the criminal justice and mental health sphere as well as civil society organisations who work with people who would be impacted by OPCAT ratification. IPRT also facilitated a meeting between the experts and key officials from the Department of Justice responsible for drafting the underpinning legislation. Following the roundtable, the international experts alongside Mark Kelly, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, hosted by Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, briefed legislators in Leinster House on the international experience of OPCAT ratification.

Separately, IPRT met with Minister for Justice Helen McEntee in November 2022. This provided IPRT with an opportunity to raise key concerns directly with the Minister, including progress of key legislation such as the Criminal Justice

(Rehabilitative Periods) Bill 2018; plans to extend the remit of the Parole Board to determinate sentenced prisoners; plans for monitoring implementation of the High Level Task Force recommendations; and the increasing overcrowding within the prison system and ways in which this might be addressed.

In addition to speaking at our event on maternal imprisonment, we further met with Ireland's newly appointed Special Rapporteur for Child Protection to discuss our specific views on the work that is needed to improve protections and supports for children impacted by familial imprisonment.

Work of the Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Network continued apace during the period, with four meetings of the full network and additional meetings with stakeholders by network Co-Chairs IPRT and UCC Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights. Visit www.actionforfamilies.ie or see p8 for more.

Presentations

During the period, IPRT delivered presentations to key groups and diverse audiences, ranging from policy stakeholders to students. We spoke at a number of external conferences and seminars, including events hosted by the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission (IHREC), the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development, the Probation Service, Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE), RESCALED, student groups, and others. Prison on our work, key current issues, and the importance of accountability and penal reform for the prison system.

In October, IPRT presented to the EU Equality Data Sub Group on Strengthening the Equality Data Agenda in the Justice Sector.

IPRT presented to IHREC on the need for criminal convictions to be considered as one of the grounds of discrimination. IPRT presented at the COPE conference on a panel discussing the topic 'It takes a community raise a child'.

We continued to make presentations to Recruit Prison Officers in Wheatfield Prison on our work, key current issues, and the importance of accountability and penal reform for the prison system.

Alliances and Engagement

Events

Many of IPRT's events over the period have been detailed in other sections of the Review, as an overview, these included: an All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform meeting (Nov 2022); a Knowledge Exchange Seminar on Living with Conviction with NIACRO (Nov 2022), the launch of Children and Families Project launch and publication of *Maternal Imprisonment in Ireland: A Scoping Study* (March 2022); and the launch of our report *Access to Rights for People Detained in Secure Forensic Mental Health Facilities in Ireland*. Events also included two meetings of the IPRT 'Solicitor Panel' (June September 2022).

In October 2022, IPRT and the Irish Criminal Bar Association (ICBA) held a Prison Law Seminar on the topic of Access to Rights for People Detained in Secure Forensic Mental Health Facilities in Ireland. At the event, IPRT launched our new scoping study examining the rights frameworks applicable to people detained in Ireland's Central Mental Hospital (CMH). Key external speakers included: Researcher Professor Eilíonóir Flynn; Michael Lynn SC, Barrister; Shalom Binchy, Solicitor and Member of the Policing Authority; and Ber Grogan, Policy and Research Manager at Mental Health Reform.

In the same week in November, IPRT and NIACRO hosted a successful cross-border event on Living with Conviction. Senator Lynn Ruane provided the keynote address and chaired the first panel session on the lived experience, hearing directly from people about barriers to accessing education and employment post-release from prison as well as employers who employ people with convictions. Speakers included Paul Donoghue, CEO and founder of New Creation Cleaning Services; Damien Quinn, Founder of Spéire Nua – New Horizon and a representative from Farrans Construction Company. Jonny Pardoe, Intreo Partners Regional Assistant Manager with Louth Local Development chaired the second panel focusing on the cross-border dimension and key issues arising around spent convictions in each jurisdiction. There were key contributions from Sinéad Gibney, Chief Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equality

Commission, Htaik Win, solicitor with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Fiona Greene, Chief Executive of NIACRO.

IPRT published and launched *Progress in the Penal System: A framework for penal reform (2022)* (or 'PIPS 2022') in May 2023 as spotlighted on p. 7 of this Annual Review.

IPRT also attended a number of launches and conferences including but not limited to – the launch of the Thematic Report on Work and Training, the North South Criminology Conference, Bloom to visit people from Oberstown Detention Centre, Children's Rights Alliance Know Your Rights conference, OCO Annual Report launch and the Howard League Crime, Justice and the Human Condition conference.

Consultations

IPRT took all opportunities to further the penal reform agenda and to gather knowledge about broader issues in the criminal and social justice landscape to inform our work this year. Details of our submissions to formal consultations are noted on page 18.

IPRT continued to participate on the steering committee of the Traveller Justice Initiative in 2022/2023, and as a member of the steering group of a Mental Health Reform project on 'Mental Health in Irish Prisons'.

IPRT accepted an invite from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to share perspectives on governance frameworks, accountability mechanisms and interdepartmental or interagency cooperation in a joint OECD project entitled "Towards a new governance framework for children and youth policies in Ireland".

Prisoners and their families

Through our qualitative interviews for research, our annual prisoner members' survey, responding to queries, and conducting occasional prison visits IPRT regularly engages with prisoners and their families. This informs our strategic priorities and provides impetus for further action, investigation or research.

Although not service providers, we regularly receive queries from prisoners and prisoners' families regarding legal or administrative concerns about the prison system. This was all the more pronounced with prisoners and their families contacting IPRT in relation to the continued impact of COVID-19, particularly in relations to prison visits.

As restrictions lifted, we were pleased to be able to resume more regular visits including visits to Arbour Hill, Limerick Female Prison, Midlands Prison in Portlaoise, Shelton Abbey Open Prison in Wicklow as well as attending an event at the Dóchas Centre, Mountjoy in Dublin where we met people in custody and/or staff.

In the community, IPRT continued to promote our online version of the Know Your Rights booklet on: www.rightsinprison.ie.

IPRT dealt with over 170 information queries over the period. Common queries raised by prisoners and their families in 2022 and 2023 include: spent convictions; parole for determinate sentenced prisoner; access to education and services; temporary release; family support, mental health; human rights; access to healthcare; and disability in detention.

The information obtained through these various channels all feeds into IPRT's advocacy work and helps inform our policy asks.

The key issues raised by people currently in prison, by way of the Annual Prisoner Member Survey, will be presented at the 2023 AGM.

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