



RECOMMENDATIONS

Irish Prisons and COVID-19: Lessons Learned from the Pandemic



Lesson 1: Penal moderation is imperative and possible

- 1. The Department of Justice and Irish Prison Service should use all measures at their disposal to ensure the sustained reduction of the prison population.**
- 2. The Irish Prison Service should facilitate life-sentenced prisoners in fulfilling all parole requirements insofar as possible and even during periods of restrictions.**

Lesson 2: Restrictions in prison must be proportionate and time-limited

- 3. The Irish Prison Service should conduct and publish an investigation of the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of people in prison, and its plans for addressing the harms caused.**
- 4. The Irish Prison Service should review, publish and regularly update its plans for the use of isolation / quarantine measures in the future.**
- 5. The Irish Prison Service should, without further delay, restore physical visits to pre-pandemic levels in all prisons and take all measures necessary to ensure that physical visits are not fully suspended in the future.**
- 6. The Irish Prison Service should ensure that virtual visits and telephone calls are retained as a supplement to physical visits as they are restored to pre-COVID levels.**

Lesson 3: Communication and accountability are key

- 7. The Department of Justice should empower the Office of the Inspector of Prisons to publish its reports independently of the Minister for Justice and review timelines for publication of Prison Visiting Committees reports as part of the ongoing review of the Prison Visiting Committees.**
- 8. The Irish Prison Service should ensure that people in prison are provided with timely and prison-specific information about restrictive measures in the event of COVID-19 outbreaks in the future (as similarly recommended by the Office of the Inspector of Prisons).**
- 9. The Minister for Justice should revoke the Prison (Amendment) Rules 2020 without further delay, or at the very least amend its provisions to limit their scope.**