# Appendix C: Study ethical protocol

Approved by IPRT research ethics committee, September 2013.

**Research Application Form**

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| **1. Personal details** |
| **Name(s) Liza Costello****Address: Research and Policy Officer**  Irish Penal Reform Trust 4th Floor Equity House 16–17 Ormond House Ormond Quay Uppr. Dublin 7. **Telephone:**  01–8741400  **E-mail**  research@iprt.ie **Fax:**   |

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| **2. Title** |
| **Please state exact title of research**The experiences and needs of Travellers in the Irish prison system. |

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| **3. Description** |
| **Provide a brief description (approx. 200 words) of the research proposal, including aims and objectives** The aim of this research is to illuminate the experiences and needs of Travellers in prison. Objectives are to:* present what is already known regarding Travellers in prison;
* analyse the rights of Travellers in prison from an equality and human rights perspective;
* conduct primary research into the needs and experiences of Travellers in the Irish Prison Service;
* highlight models of good practice in meeting the needs of minority ethnic groups in prison.
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| **4. Research methods** ***Indicate the research methods, including samples, instruments, measures, procedures, analysis, personnel, time scale and location where research will take place.***Due to the lack of research in this area, three exploratory research questions present themselves here:1. What are the experiences and needs of Travellers in the Irish prison system?
2. What are the rights of Travellers in the Irish prison system?
3. What is good practice in relation to Travellers in prison?

A qualitative approach best lends itself to exploratory research: one of its most important features is its ‘facility to describe and display phenomena as experience by the study population, in fine-tuned detail and in the participants’ own terms’ (Ritchie and Lewis, 2009, p. 27). Qualitative analysis Data saturation, the point at which no new findings come up, is an important factor in deciding the number of interviewees in a qualitative study. This approach requires analysis to occur while the interviews are ongoing, until no major new themes emerge. Due to the relatively small size and profile of the total population of Travellers in prison[[1]](#footnote-1), this approach is realistic within the study’s constraints (time and budget), perhaps leading to about 15–20 interviewees. The research literature shows that various factors can impact on a Traveller’s experience of prison. In order to capture different experiences and needs, interviewees should include men and women, different age groups, parents, ex-prisoners of different prisons. It would also be useful to include interviewee(s) with family members in the UK. Interviewees’ experience of prison should be relatively recent to ensure that their experiences reflect current provision. A narrative approach will inform the conduct and analysis of interviews. This approach emphasises the experiences of interviewees ‘as expressed in lived and told stories’ (Creswell, 2007). One benefit of this approach is that it can help people to share information which might otherwise seem too obvious and even difficult to share (Gabriel, 1998). It can also help the interviewee and interviewer to make sense of an experience. This approach is reflected in the interview guide: the interviewee is invited to take a broadly chronological approach in sharing their experiences of being a Traveller in prison. Through this, various themes will be addressed and discussed as they relate to the interviewee’s experience.**Desk-based research**This study also involves an review of the relevant research literature and human rights and equality standards. This stage of the research is ongoing. |

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| **5. Outcomes** |
| **What are the expected benefits of this research for the population studied, in particular, and the Irish Penal Reform Trust in general**The output will be a research report, which will be submitted to the IPS, outlining a series of recommendations with a view to achieving better results for Travellers and for society in terms of recidivism and other measurable outcomes for Travellers leaving prison. The report will also be used to raise awareness on the experiences and needs of Travellers in prison. An awareness-raising event will take place, such as a launch (the exact nature of this event is to be decided).  |

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| **6a. Risks to research subjects** |
| **Are there any envisaged risks for the study participants (Subjects of the research)? Please detail, including procedures for minimising risk and for correcting any harm caused by participation in the study.** The following risks present for the study participants:* Risks to confidentiality of participation
* Risk of undue intrusion
* Risk of undue harm.

As these ethical considerations are relevant to all stages of the research, not just the data collection phase, here we set out a chronological account of all steps to address these issues from research design to dissemination. Certain steps address more than one of the above risks; a table below summarises all steps and which risks they address.**Adherence to ethical guidelines for social research**As with all community-based social research, ethical considerations are of central importance to all stages of this study, including design, conduct, analysis and dissemination of the findings.[[2]](#footnote-2) The project adheres to two key ethical guideline documents for social research: those of the Sociological Association of Ireland and the Social Research Association.[[3]](#footnote-3) These guidelines address the following ethical issues: * Avoiding undue intrusion
* Obtaining informed consent
* Ensuring participation is voluntary
* Ensuring the right to withdraw at any time
* Protecting the interests of subjects
* Avoiding undue harm
* Ensuring confidentiality.

*Note:* The study is limited to the experiences of adult Travellers (i.e. those aged 18 years or over). Ethics and research designThe research literature on ethics in conducting research on minority ethnic groups, highlights the importance of **involving the communities** being studied in the research process itself (Crigger *et al*, 2001; Nazroo, 2006). This approach contributes to ensuring that interviews are conducted in a culturally sensitive way (Crigger *et al*, 2001; Campbell and Dienneman, 2001; Atkin and Chattoo, 2006). For this reason, a consultative approach was adopted, whereby a research group comprising representatives of Traveller organisations play a very important and useful role in informing the research design, approach and research tools. Ethics and the fieldwork processQualitative interviews with Traveller ex-prisoners comprise the most important stage of the research, as the study aims to address the lack of primary research, in the Irish context, on Travellers in prison.The research group agreed that relevant voluntary organisations (e.g. Pavee Point, ITM, NWTF and local Traveller organisations) should act as **gatekeepers** for interviewees for ethical reasons (such as enabling potential participants to discuss the research with a known and trusted service provider, and providing a safe, trusted and neutral place for interviews to take place). To date, the national Traveller organisations who attended the roundtable meeting have disseminated the information sheet (and a brief project description) to their member organisations.[[4]](#footnote-4) Potential participants will have the opportunity to read the **information sheet** (or talk through its contents with a project worker from their relevant organisation) before considering whether or not to take part. They will have another opportunity to go through the information sheet with the researcher prior to the interview. Before each interview begins, participants (researcher and interviewee) will sign a **consent form**, which **confirms participants’ confidentiality and anonymity**.[[5]](#footnote-5) A process of **ongoing assent** will be adopted, whereby participants will be reminded of the voluntary nature of their participant at appropriate points during the interview. Regarding location, emphasis will be placed on finding a **neutral and private venue** that is convenient to the interviewee and where they feel safe. It is expected that most if not all interviews will take place in a private room in the offices of the gatekeeper organisation. If participants prefer, a room can be hired in a neutral venue (such as the Macro building in Dublin for example) or, if appropriate, it could take place in the participants’ home. **Undue harm** can arise in the context of a qualitative interview if the interviewee feels distressed either during or after the interview. This is firstly addressed by ensuring the interview is conducted in a sensitive way. Ritchie and Lewis (2009) and Rubin and Rubin argue that distress in itself is not necessary a negative outcome; rather, the key issue is the way in which the researcher responds to the situation. The key issue is to offer the interviewee the choice of taking a break, continuing or stopping the interview altogether. The researcher’s experience in researching sensitive subjects is also relevant here. A qualitative interview can prompt an interviewee to **identify service or support needs**. Here, the approach of accessing interviewees through voluntary organisations is relevant; the **contact in each gatekeeper organisation** will be an obvious contact point for interviewees following the interview. It is also possible that following an interview, an interviewee may decide they **no longer want to be part** of the research study. While rare, participants should be enabled to withdraw even at this late stage. For this reason, the research tools stress that interviewees **can withdraw at any stage**, and interviewees will be reminded again of this at the start of the interview. Ethics and the writing and dissemination of the reportThe recommendations will be mainly addressed to the Irish Prison Service. Prior to the research being completed the IPS will be consulted on the research; this approach maximises their engagement with the research.Confidentiality does not only relate to the data collection phase; it is also a point for consideration in the analysis and writing up of qualitative research. In qualitative research, confidentiality breaches through deductive disclosure are of concern (Kaiser, 2009). This is particularly the case in small populations, where individuals can be identified more easily, even when their names are not provided. In the written analysis of the qualitative data, caution will be exercised regarding any description of an individual case, which might compromise a participant’s anonymity. As one of many possible examples, if a participant lives in a sparsely populated rural area, the area will not be named. In addressing this issue, the researcher will take care to avoid the under-reporting of rich data (see Kaiser, 2009).**Table 1:** Summary of steps taken to avoid risks to participants

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|  | **Undue intrusion** | **Undue harm** | **Confidentiality** |
| Consulting with representatives of the Traveller community | X | X | X |
| Voluntary organisations as gatekeepers | X | X |  |
| Safe, private and neutral venue for interviews | X | X | X |
| Information sheet, highlighting voluntary nature of participation (at all stages) and confidentiality | X | X | X |
| Consent form, again highlighting voluntary nature of participation and committing researcher to confidentiality.  | X | X | X |
| Process of ‘ongoing assent’ in interviews | X | X |  |
| Researcher’s experience in researching sensitive subjects |  | X |  |
| Ensuring that written analysis of the qualitative interviews will not compromise participants’ confidentiality.  |  |  | X |

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| **6b. Risks for researcher**  |
| **Are there any envisaged risks for the researcher? Please detail, including procedures for minimising risk and for correcting any harm caused by participation in the study.**The ethics guidelines of the Social Research Association identify the following issues regarding risks for the researcher:* Ensuring safety and
* Minimising harm.

Good practice measures in terms of ensuring the researcher’s personal safety during data collection include: * Informing a colleague of the time and location of an interview.
* Following the interview, informing colleague that the interview is complete.
* Always having a mobile phone during interviews.

Regarding minimising harm, in relation to any qualitative research into a sensitive subject the researcher can experience emotional distress. After all, the interviewing and data analysis processes involve entering the lives of others, developing rapport and immersing oneself into what is often are difficult experiences of others. Sometimes this can result of feelings of exhaustion and vulnerability.However, there are many self-protection steps that a researcher can take. These include:* Debriefing with a trusted colleague
* Taking regular breaks during the transcription process
* Keeping a diary (Beale, 2004).

All the above steps will be followed in this study, as and when necessary. |

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| **7. Consultation with Irish Penal Reform Trust** |
| **Have you discussed your study with anyone in the Irish Penal Reform Trust? Please provide details** Not applicable. (This study is being conducted internally.) |

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| **8. Confidentiality** |
| **(a) Describe procedures for maintaining confidentiality**Risk to confidentiality is addressed in Section 6a. In summary:1. Participants will be recruited through voluntary organisations.
2. All consent forms will require a signature only. These will be kept in a locked cabinet for the duration of the research study. On publication of the study, they will be destroyed.
3. Interviews will be tape recorded, by permission of interviewees, on an electronic Dictaphone. The audiofiles will not be transferred to a computer but will be kept on the Dictaphone, in a locked cabinet. The researcher will transcribe these tape recordings, after which they will be destroyed.
4. The transcriptions will be saved as a password protected Word document. Printed copies will be kept in a locked cabinet. The transcripts will be anonymised; no name (either the interviewee’s or that of anyone else mentioned during the interview) will be included on the transcript.
5. Once the analysis is complete, the transcripts will be shredded.
6. The names of interviewees will not be recorded in any documentation pertaining to the study. An Excel spreadsheet will be kept of participants, but all participants listed here will be given a code name (e.g TIP007). This will also be password protected.
7. In the written analysis of the qualitative data, caution will be exercised regarding any description of an individual case, which might compromise a participant’s anonymity.
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| **(b) Describe procedures when confidentiality may be broken**It will be explained clearly to interviewees prior to beginning the interview that intentional disclosure of information may be necessary in certain circumstances where the participant has shared a risk of self-harm, or where they have shared information on a child being at risk of harm.Regarding an accidental breach of confidentiality, the risk of this happening is very low; Wiles et al 2008 note that in relation to qualitative research, this issue is rarely, if ever, raised in relevant ethical guidelines, the implication being that ‘breaches of confidentiality are seen as such bad practice that the possibility of their happening does not even need to be addressed’ (Wiles et al, 2008, p. 421). Clearly, great care will be taken to avoid this happening, as outlined above. In the unlikely event of it happening, the participant will be informed and any further actions required to minimise damage will be guided by the wishes of the participant. Such a breach, and any learning arising from it, will be addressed in the Reflexivity section of the report.  |

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| **9. Informed Consent** *Specify who will give consent and procedures for obtaining same (please attach a copy of the consent form and of subject information leaflet. If subject has literacy difficulties the researcher must read the material to the subject). If a consent form is not required (e.g. An anonymous survey) a description of the study, specifying all the elements of consent, must be given to all participants.*Please see above (as well as the attached consent form, information sheet and projection description. (National Traveller organisations on the research group for this study circulated the latter to their member organisations.) Summary of steps taken to ensure informed consent:* Development of a consent form and information sheet in consultation with representatives of the Traveller community;
* Circulation of information sheet among Traveller organisations (which can be passed on or read to people interested in taking part in the research);
* Reading again of the information sheet prior to starting the interview;
* Giving time for the interviewee to ask any questions they may have;
* Signing (both interview participants) the consent form prior to the interview beginning;
* Ongoing assent to remind interviewees of the voluntary nature of their participation and ensure they wish to continue (as appropriate).
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| **10. (a) Please insert below any personal and or professional competencies that you have that would assist you in carrying out this research?** |
| * MSc Applied Social Research (II.I) 1999
* 13 years experience as a professional social researcher (focus on qualitative research with vulnerable populations)
* 2007–ongoing: teach qualitative research (design, conduct, analysis, ethics), through bi-annual workshops, to the MSc in Bereavement Studies (Royal College of Surgeons & Irish Hospice Foundation).
* Previous experience conducting research with the Traveller community; e.g. an evaluation for the Department of the Environment and Local Government’s Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees and a research study of the needs and experiences of minority ethnic women in relation to gender-based violence (the latter involved training minority ethnic women to act as peer researchers, including Traveller women).
* See brief resumé in Appendix A for further detail.
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| **11. If this research is being funded please indicate the following:****Funding body:** St Stephen’s Green Trust**Please submit confirmation of funding**: **Contact person:** **Contact number:**   |

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| **12. Dissemination of research findings** |
| **Outline plans for the dissemination of research findings and/or publication**A research report will be published. An awareness-raising event will take place (e.g. a launch, seminar) once the report has been published. In line with good practice, this report with include detailed information on the methodological approach taken.  |

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| **13. Conflict of interest** |
| **Please give details of any potential conflict of interest, including employment with Irish Prison Service or membership of any bodies** |

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| **14. Signature** |
| **Signature: Date:** 19 September 2013**Liza Costello** |

Note:

\* The IPRT Ethics Committee advise that you refer to the appropriate sections of the Declaration of Helsinki and give due consideration to the ethical principles/guidelines of your own discipline regarding research.

### References

Atkin, K, Chattoo, S (2006), ‘Approaches to conducting qualitative research in ethnically diverse populations.’ In *Health and Social Research in Multiethnic Societies* (ed. Nazroo, J.), Routledge, London.

Beale, B, Cole, R, Hillege, S, McMaster, R, Nagy, S (2004), ‘Impact of in-depth interviewing on the interviewer: roller coaster ride’, *Nursing and Health Sciences*, Vol. 6(2), 141–147.

Creswell, J., Maietta, R. (2002), ‘Qualitative Research,’ in *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement,* eds. Miller, D, Salkind, N, Sage Publications, London.

Crigger, N J, Holcomb L, and Weiss J (2001), ‘Fundamentalism, Multiculturalism and problems of conducting research with populations in developing nations,’ *Nursing Ethics,* Vol. 8 (5), pp. 459–468.

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Social Research Association (2003), *Ethical Guidelines.* London: SRA.

Sociological Association of Ireland (2004), *Ethical Guidelines of the Sociological Association of Ireland.* Dublin: SAI.

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Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. (2006), *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and* Researchers, Sage Publications, London.

Wiles, R, Crow, G, Heath, S and Charles, V (2008) ‘The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol. 11 (5), pp. 417–428.

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# Appendix D: Research tools

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### Travellers in prison study

#### Participant’s Consent Form

Participation is voluntary and all information will be treated confidentially.

Please tick each statement to show you agree to take part in this study.

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|  | **Please tick** |
| I have received and read the information sheet. |  |
| I have had time to ask questions about the study. |  |
| I agree to take part in an interview about my experiences of prison. |  |
| I give permission for the researcher to tape record the interview. |  |
| I understand my participation is voluntary. |  |
| I understand that all my information will be made anonymous and treated confidentially. |  |

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| I would like a copy of the report when it’s published. |  |

*Participant’s signature Date*

*Researcher’s signature Date*

# IPRT Logo RGB

# Travellers in Prison study

# *Information Sheet*

### What is IPRT?

IPRT stands for the Irish Penal Reform Trust. IPRT works to make things better for people in prison and to protect their rights. IPRT is independent and has nothing to do with the government, the Gardaí, the courts or the prison service.

### What is this study about?

We want to write a report about what it is like to be a Traveller in prison. We will give this report to the prison service. We hope they will use it to make things better for Travellers in prison.

### Why are we contacting you?

We want to interview Travellers who have spent time in prison. We think this is the best way to learn about any needs or problems Travellers have in prison.

### What happens if I want to take part?

If you want to take part, please tell the person who told you about this, or you can call Liza, the researcher, on the number below. Then we can set up an interview.

### What would happen in the interview?

During the interview, Liza will ask you questions about being in prison. You are free to take tea/smoke breaks whenever suits. Liza will tape the interview. After it, she will listen to the tape and make notes.

### Will anyone else know what I say in the interview?

No. If you choose to take part, everything you say will be **completely confidential**. Liza won’t write your name, or anyone else’s name, anywhere on the notes she writes. After she writes her notes, she will destroy the tape recording. (She will keep notes from the interviews for just six months after the report is published, but no one’s name will be in these notes. Then the notes will be destroyed.) No one else will ever know you took part.

### Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part is completely up to you. Even if you do decide to take part, you can change your mind at any time, even in the interview.

### Where will the interview happen?

The interview will happen at a time and place that suits you. For example, this could be in a room in the Traveller organisation where you heard about it, or in your own home.

### Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions, please call Liza Costello at: 01 874 1400.

**Thanks for your time.**

1. The All Ireland Traveller Health Study estimates 150–300 Travellers are in prison. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Note:* While research ethics committees exist in a range of institutions in Ireland, none considers proposals for a study that its institution is not directly involved in. The only exception to this is the ICGP, but they only consider health-related research. (While working in the Women’s Health Council, we undertook a scoping exercise on this issue for a study we conducted on violence against women.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. While some of the principles in the Helsinki Declaration can also be found in ethical guidelines for social research, the Declaration is ‘a statement of ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects’ and is therefore not relevant to this particular study. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. To date, two interviews have been arranged through this process, to take place on Wednesday 25th October. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The issue of literacy was raised at the research group meeting regarding the information sheet and consent form. It was agreed that both documents should be available to all interviewees, but that all should also have the option of the contents being read out as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)