

# 2020 – 21

# About IPRT

---

## Who we are

---

The Irish Penal Reform Trust is Ireland's leading independent charity campaigning for a penal system that is just and humane; protects and promotes human rights, equality and social justice; and uses prison as a last resort.

## What we do

---

IPRT publishes a wide range of policy positions and research documents; we campaign vigorously across a wide range of penal policy issues; and we have established IPRT as the leading independent voice in public debate on the Irish penal system.

## What we have achieved

---

IPRT's effectiveness over recent years is demonstrated by real achievement in terms of progressive policy change, alongside a deepening of wider public debate around prisons and prisoners, and provision of a key central resource of research and information on prisons and penal reform.

In recent years, key reforms that IPRT's work has contributed to include:

- Strategic Review of Penal Policy, which endorses the principle of imprisonment as a sanction of last resort (2014)
- Stopping out reduced to 42 in April 2021, down from 1,000 in 2011
- Extension of the Inspector of Prisons' remit to include investigations into deaths in prison custody (2012)
- Extension of the Ombudsman for Children's remit to receive complaints from children detained in the adult prison system (2012)
- Legislation introduced to limit the use of imprisonment for failure to pay court-ordered fines (2014)
- Legislation introduced which allows certain minor convictions to become spent after 7 years (2016)
- End of the imprisoning of 16 and 17-year-old boys in the adult prison system (April 2017)
- Opening of a step-down unit for women leaving prison (summer 2019)
- Enactment of the Parole Act 2019, which establishes the Parole Board on a statutory footing and removes decision-making on the release of life-sentenced prisoners from Ministerial control (July 2021)

## How you can support our work

---

IPRT relies on the support of a diverse group of friends and donors to underwrite our mission. Contributions from both committed individuals and organisations are essential to our impact on the lives of prisoners and their families, and ongoing efforts to reform Ireland's penal system. We are deeply grateful to all our members and donors for their partnership in this work and are pleased to share this Annual Review detailing our achievements.

**For more information on how you can support IPRT's work, please visit our website [www.iprt.ie](http://www.iprt.ie) or call (01) 874 1400. IPRT is a registered charity (CHY 11091).**

# Contents

<b>Foreword — IPRT Chairperson</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction — IPRT Executive Director</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Vision and Our People</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Michael D. Higgins</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our Strategic Priorities</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Priority 1 — Progressive Penal Policy</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>FOCUS ON: COVID-19 and the impetus for policy reform (July 2020—June 2021)</i>	<b>7</b>
<b>Priority 1 — Progressive Penal Policy continued</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>FOCUS ON: Strengthening political engagement in penal reform</i>	<b>8</b>
<b>Priority 2 — Humane Penal System</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>FOCUS ON: Supporting Children and Families of Prisoners</i>	<b>9</b>
<b>Priority 2 — Humane Penal System</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>FOCUS ON: Accountability in the closed world of prisons</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>A Year in Images</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Priority 3 — Our Organisation</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Financial Statement</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Our Activities</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Communications</i>	<b>16</b>
<i>IPRT Media Coverage</i>	<b>17</b>
<i>Research and Policy</i>	<b>18</b>
<i>Alliances and Engagements</i>	<b>19</b>

## Foreword – IPRT Chairperson

**I am delighted to introduce this Annual Report on another year of work to advance progressive penal reform to our membership, stakeholders, supporters, and Friends.**

The work of IPRT has never been more critical. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to bring many of the issues IPRT has been campaigning on for years into stark relief. The penal system has faced considerable challenges in this context balancing safety, security, liberty and other human rights within challenging parameters. It is of concern that as I write this, the prison population is on the rise again, a significant portion of the prison population is being held on long lock-up, and there remains a continuing absence of effective accountability. This is happening against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic.

We believe these issues should be a priority not only for policymakers, but for all. If ever there was an opportunity to reflect on our reliance on imprisonment and consider alternatives, this is it.

While this report will give you an overview of some of what IPRT has achieved this year, I would like to draw attention to one project now underway. In 2020, IPRT secured funding for a new research and advocacy project on 'Access to Rights and Access to Justice for Migrants and Minority Ethnic Groups in the Penal System' under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission 'Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme 2020'.

The project aims to promote access to rights and access to justice for migrants, foreign national prisoners, and ethnic minorities in the penal system – an oft-overlooked population in research and policy. It will create a solid evidence base and raise awareness of potential inequalities and human rights breaches against migrants and ethnic minorities in probation and prisons in Ireland. The research has been commissioned by IPRT from Maynooth University and will be published in early 2022. As a member of the Steering Group for this project, I am committed to ensuring that this work will go some way toward empowering people who face the greatest barriers to justice to access their rights. We look forward to sharing it with you.

While the past year has been a time of ongoing challenges for the prison system, there are also signals of the potential to influence change, particularly with the upcoming publication of the review of penal policy options and the increased resourcing of the Office of the Inspector of Prisons. Opportunities are developing to provide more progressive solutions to some of the problems faced by our penal system. IPRT will continue to pursue its ways of working, which have contributed to policy change, to leverage further reform.

IPRT's current Strategic Plan will come to an end in 2021. I am pleased to note that most of the ambitious goals identified by IPRT in 2016 have been realised within the lifetime of the Strategy. Work is underway to identify key strategic priorities for the future.

The 12-month period covered by this report saw significant changes to the IPRT staff team. After almost five years of leading IPRT's research and policy functions, and a long history of contributing to IPRT's evidence base, Michelle Martyn departed IPRT in April 2021 to take up the role of Inspector with the Office of the Inspector of Prisons. We wish her all the best. We welcomed Molly Joyce as Legal and Public Affairs Manager in November 2020 and Sarahjane McCreery joined the team as Senior Policy and Research Officer in May 2021. Both Molly and Sarahjane bring a wealth of diverse expertise to the team. My sincere thanks to Fiona, Molly, Sarahjane, Lorraine and Pamela for their enthusiasm and drive in delivering IPRT's mission for another year.

IPRT is fortunate to have Board members who give their time, expertise, and commitment, contributing to the direction and success of our work. I was pleased to continue to work alongside Professor Aislinn O'Donnell, Kevin Gregory, Joan O'Flynn, Kathleen Leader SC, David Perry BL, Niall Walsh and Eddie D'Arcy. On behalf of my Board colleagues, I would like to thank Dr Suzi Lyons, who stepped down from this Board earlier this year. We also welcomed two new Board members. Liz Leavy and Miranda Trouabal were co-opted to the Board in May and July respectively, and their expertise is already strengthening our human resources functions and our ability to engage more directly with those affected by imprisonment.

I would like to thank our funders, including Pobal, the Department of Justice, the Community Foundation for Ireland, Katharine Howard Foundation, Mercy Congregation Solidarity Committee, St Stephen's Green Trust, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) for their ongoing support. Quite simply, without their steadfast belief in and backing of our work, the penal system would likely be a very different place for those who encounter it.

Finally, I would like to thank our members, Friends and supporters for their engagement and commitment, including financial contributions. It is no surprise that the supporters of IPRT have remained resolute in their support in the face of – and in recognition of – the challenges posed by the pandemic.

**Dr Seamus Taylor**  
IPRT Chairperson,  
August 2021



## Introduction — IPRT Executive Director

It is my pleasure to present this report on the activities of the Irish Penal Reform Trust over the past 12 months.

This represents a full year of working in the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges, the organisation continued to meet its purpose and objectives in 2020 and 2021. This meant reorientating our work to engage in urgent short-term actions on acute human rights issues in prison, while still maintaining focus on our long-term penal reform goals.

In the last 12 months, IPRT has made progress on key objectives in the Strategic Plan 2017-21. This included the establishment of the Parole Board on an independent statutory basis, reaffirmation by the Department of Justice of its commitment to evidence-informed policy, and the establishment of the Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee, which will support transparent sentencing practice through sentencing principles and publication of sentencing data and analysis. The capacity of the Office of the Inspector of Prisons was substantially increased and COVID-19 thematic inspections carried out in all prisons, and annual prison committal rates were reduced, for both men and women.

At the same time, there has been significant and serious regress on other objectives, most notably the realisation of rights for people within prison and the elimination of solitary confinement and restricted regimes. The prison complaints system is still not fit for purpose, and monitoring reports on the situation of people with acute mental illness in prison are truly harrowing. **IPRT is highly concerned by the impact of pandemic-related responses on the ability of men and women in prison to access their minimum rights and entitlements**, notwithstanding the low rates of infection and illness achieved through the departmental and agency response.

As we approach the 18-month point since the pandemic was first declared, the lived experience of men and women in prison has been severely affected and the situation risks reversal of a decade of positive reforms. We are dismayed that prisoners were not among groups prioritised for vaccination but were instead among the last. This context will inform the development of our next strategic plan and we look forward to engaging with all our members on current and future priorities, challenges and opportunities for reform.

Throughout the period, IPRT maintained our existing high levels of activities and outputs across research, policy, alliances, communications, and engagement and increased our advocacy and information in critical areas. We found new ways of working with each other and made the most of the new opportunities that online working presented.

A standout highlight was the launch of our fourth annual report on the penal system, *Progress in the Penal System: Assessing progress during a pandemic* (2020) which was attended by over 200 people. The report identified 10 positive lessons from the pandemic response, including: the role that strong leadership can play in effecting penal reforms in a short timeframe, such as reducing prisoner numbers; the critical importance of safe custody limits and the use of prison as a last resort; and that prison health is intrinsically linked with public health. In her keynote address at the launch, Secretary General of the Department of Justice Ms Oonagh McPhillips outlined a number of promising penal policy directions across alternatives to prison, mental health and imprisonment, and prisons accountability. IPRT looks forward to working with all stakeholders to maintain momentum behind these developments and reforms over the coming 12 months.

In short, IPRT has continued to punch above its weight despite its modest size and the challenges that everyone has experienced living and working remotely through a pandemic. Behind the scenes, all the organisational work continued across governance, human resources, health and safety, fundraising and finances, including the formal recording of our compliance with the Charities Regulator Code in November 2020.

This is down to the dedication, skills and camaraderie shared among the IPRT staff team. It is a privilege to lead a team of such high calibre and commitment. My sincere thanks to Molly, Lorraine, Pamela, Sarahjane and Michelle Martyn, who worked with IPRT until April 2021. Thanks also to Lyn Fallon who worked with us in early 2021 and all of our mighty volunteers over the past year.

The successful work of the IPRT office team is made possible by the guidance and support of our voluntary board of directors, who give so generously of their time and expertise across human rights, law, penal and criminal justice policy, governance, operations, finance and HR. Thank you to the Board of IPRT, in particular Dr Seamus Taylor as Chair, Prof Aislinn O'Donnell as Vice Chair and Chair of the PIPS Advisory Group, and Kevin Gregory as Treasurer. Every one of IPRT's board members has supported us in their areas of expertise throughout the year. Thank you.

Finally, thank you to our funders, donors, members and Friends whose support and belief in the importance of our work makes the quality, professionalism and impact of our work possible.

**Fiona Ní Chinnéide**  
Executive Director,  
August 2021



## Our Vision and Our People

IPRT's vision is of a penal system that is just and humane; protects and promotes human rights, equality and social justice; and uses prison as a last resort.

### Patron of IPRT



**Michael D. Higgins**  
President of Ireland

### Advocates of IPRT



**Paula Meehan**  
Poet



**Peter Sheridan**  
Author and Director



**Ivana Bacik**  
Teachta Dála



**John Loneragan**  
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  
Lecturer in Social  
Policy, Maynooth  
University



**Prof. Aislinn O'Donnell**  
Vice Chairperson  
Professor of Education,  
Maynooth  
University



**Kevin Gregory**  
Treasurer  
Director of  
Finance, IT &  
Governance with



Barnardos Ireland  
**Kathleen Leader**  
Secretary



Barrister, Senior  
Counsel  
**Eddie D'Arcy**  
CEO, Solas Project



**Joan O'Flynn**  
Independent  
Consultant, Acting  
CEO of Glencree



**David Perry**  
Barrister and  
Lecturer at the  
Honorable Society  
of King's Inns



**Niall Walsh**  
Manager,  
Pathways Centre



**Dr. Suzi Lyons**  
Senior Researcher,  
Health Research  
Board (until  
May 2021)



**Liz Leavy**  
Senior HR Manager  
(from May 2021)



**Miranda Trouabal**  
Teacher, Pathways  
Centre (from  
July 2021)

## IPRT Staff

In 2020-2021, the day-to-day work of IPRT was carried out by a team of 5 staff.



**Fiona Ní Chinnéide**  
Executive Director



**Molly Joyce**  
Legal and Public Affairs Manager, Deputy Director



**Michelle Martyn**  
Policy and Research Manager *(until April 2021)*



**Sarahjane McCreery**  
Senior Policy and Research Officer *(from May 2021)*



**Pamela Drumgoole**  
Communications Officer



**Lorraine Whitty**  
Membership & Governance Officer

## IPRT Volunteers

Our work is supported by a team of dedicated Policy & Advocacy Volunteers, who bring their skills and passion for social justice and penal reform to their work with IPRT.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tommy MacDiarmada:</b><br/>August 2020</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sean Egan:</b><br/>February 2021 - June 2021</li> </ul>        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Jessica O'Connor:</b><br/>September 2020 - January 2021</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Declan McGovern:</b><br/>February 2021 - June 2021</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hazel Nolan:</b><br/>September 2020 - January 2021</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Danielle DerGarabedian:</b><br/>June 2021 - present</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shauna Armstrong:</b><br/>February 2021 - May 2021</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ella Woolfson:</b><br/>July 2021 - present</li> </ul>          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agnel Nidhi Shiji:</b><br/>February 2021 - May 2021</li> </ul>     |  |

## Our Strategic Priorities

IPRT is committed to reducing imprisonment, ensuring access to human rights in prisons, and progressive reform of the penal system based on evidence-led policies.

The focus of our activities is on: the use of imprisonment, including sentencing policy; alternatives to custody and diversion; and the treatment and rehabilitation of those in detention. All of our work is underscored by our commitment to promoting equality and to combating social injustice.

All of IPRT's actions over the period were guided by our new strategic priorities, as outlined in our *Strategic Plan 2017-2021*:

### 01

#### Progressive Penal Policy

IPRT advocates for a national penal policy that is:

- just and humane,
- promotes effective non-custodial responses to crime, and
- uses prison as a last resort.

### 02

#### Humane Penal System

IPRT promotes a national penal system that is:

- humane as experienced by people who are detained,
- protects and promotes human rights and equality, and
- strives to achieve international best practice in formal regimes, daily practices and overall culture.

### 03

#### Our Organisation

IPRT ensures that the organisation is a sustainable, well-resourced, respected and collaborative stakeholder in penal policy in Ireland.

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

For more detail on our work during 2020, or our finances, our Directors' Report and Audited Financial Statements 2020 is available on [www.iprt.ie](http://www.iprt.ie)

From next year, we will be consolidating the Directors' Report with our Annual Review to create one report. We look forward to sharing another year of progress with our membership, funders, and supporters.

## Priority 1 – Progressive Penal Policy

### FOCUS ON: COVID-19 and the impetus for policy reform (July 2020–June 2021)

It will come as no surprise that the most dominant area of vigorous advocacy by IPRT throughout the period was on conditions for people in prison, and in particular access to vaccination and the resumption of in-person visits for families and children.

All of our submissions, presentations and published work this year reflected on the impact of COVID-19 across a broad spectrum of penal policy issues. No corner of our work remained untouched by our COVID-19 response. The Irish Prison Service (IPS) did exceptionally well in minimising the number of outbreaks/cases of COVID-19 among the prison population. This achievement is widely recognised. However, it must not be the only measure used to determine success.

Since drafting our annual review last year, the pandemic has continued, and the key issues in need of response have developed. In the last 12 months, the first prisoner case of COVID-19 in Ireland was confirmed, outbreaks in other prisons followed, physical family visits were recommenced and suspended on a couple of occasions, and men and women in prisons continued to face harsh restrictions as a response to COVID-19. During all of this, IPRT remained alert to developments and adapted to the priority issue(s) of the day, engaging directly with those affected, using these engagements to inform our evidence-based work.

In April 2021, IPRT published a briefing *Irish Prisons and COVID-19: One Year On* in which we updated our recommended actions required of the State to meet human rights obligations and address the impact of the pandemic on people in prison and their families one year into the pandemic. In the briefing, IPRT made 17 recommendations for action across sentencing practices, parole, vaccination, mental health, family visits, release planning, inspection and parliamentary oversight. We also set out our concerns at the apparent lack of scrutiny and human rights impact assessment of measures and amendments introduced in response to COVID-19, including changes to the Prison Rules. This briefing anchored our focuses in the months that followed and have driven our engagements with stakeholders across the period.

We detailed the broader lessons learned from COVID-19 in *Progress in the Penal System: Assessing progress during a pandemic* ('PIPS 2020'). *PIPS 2020* provides valuable insights into the role the pandemic has played in exacerbating existing issues and creating further issues, while also driving advancements that IPRT and others had been calling on for years, including a safe reduction in the prison population. These positive developments are already at risk of reversal as the numbers of people in prison begin to climb again.

Across 2020/2021, we were unrelenting in our focus on the equitable vaccination of people in prison. We approached the situation as we do with all our work: we did our research and gathered the evidence for vaccination of those living and working in prisons in Ireland. The evidence – including from the World Health Organisation (WHO) – was clear: people living and working in prisons should be prioritised in national COVID-19 vaccination plans. We were concerned that this evidence was not adequately reflected in policy decisions.

Equipped with the evidence, IPRT engaged in direct and sustained engagement with all key stakeholders in relevant areas, including the Irish Prison Service, Department of Justice, Department of Health, Health Service Executive, Chief Inspector of Prisons, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, and others. This included raising issues with members of the Oireachtas via the new All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform, co-chaired by Deputy Ivana Bacik and Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill.

Alongside direct advocacy, we regularly appeared in the media to express dismay that men and women in prison were being left behind in Ireland's pandemic efforts. Often, IPRT was a lone voice in drawing attention to this significant gap in pandemic decision-making.

Following months of uncertainty for men and women in prison and their families, the roll-out of vaccinations on a prison wide basis commenced in June 2021 and is expected to be completed by the end of August 2021. Now, in late July, the resumption of in-person visits is taking place in most prisons.

Our position has remained clear since the outset of the pandemic and is as true today as it was in March 2020: if basic human rights cannot be met for all people in prison, then the State is obliged to take steps to reduce numbers in prison. We are urging the State to progressively move from the management of risks to seizing opportunities that the pandemic has created.

Our work on COVID-19 is set to continue well into the next period. The pandemic has exposed inequalities in Irish society and has shone a spotlight on the decades-long dearth of investment in services and accountability structures in prisons. Now exposed, these deficiencies cannot be allowed to continue. The full effects of the pandemic on the criminal justice system cannot yet be known, but we can act now to minimise harmful effects and seize the opportunities for progressive reform of penal policy that have arisen.

## Priority 1 – Progressive Penal Policy continued

### FOCUS ON: Strengthening political engagement in penal reform

**IPRT has a long history of engagement with all members of the Oireachtas to work towards the creation of safer communities for all.**

Building constructive relationships with Oireachtas members is an effective way of putting penal reform issues on the political agenda, strengthening legislation, and encouraging debate. Limitations in published prisons data also means that Oireachtas questions and debates play an important role in placing information on the public record. The recruitment in November 2020 of a Legal & Public Affairs Manager has built important capacity within IPRT to further develop our work in this area.

During the period, IPRT had continuing engagement with members of the Oireachtas on the legislative process, sending briefings on proposed legislation, raising potential issues, and proposing solutions by way of amendments. This included engagement with Senator Lynn Ruane on the Criminal Justice (Rehabilitative Periods) Bill 2018 and providing a briefing to a range of Oireachtas members on the *Criminal Justice (Amendment) Bill 2021*.

We raised priority penal reform concerns with the Joint Committee on Justice and Sub-committee on Mental Health, made a submission to the Oireachtas Special Committee on COVID-19 Response, and communicated specific concerns to the Ministers for Justice and Health. In briefings and reports, we outlined our specific concerns at the lack of parliamentary scrutiny of amendments to the Prison Rules made in response to the pandemic, and we echoed calls by IHREC and others for the establishment of a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Equality, Human Rights and Diversity to examine the proportionality of the legislation and Ministerial regulations adopted as part of the COVID-19 response.

In January 2021, IPRT met with Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD to discuss priority issues. Areas of discussion at the meeting included the treatment of people with mental illness, the pressing need for a robust prisoner complaints system, the importance of commencing the Parole Act and establishing an independent Parole Board, the urgent need to strengthen the Office of the Inspector of Prisons in legislation and resources, and the ongoing need to focus on alternatives to prison, particularly in the light of COVID-19. At the meeting, the Minister noted the constructive relationship that IPRT has developed with the Department of Justice over the years, and IPRT was encouraged by the Minister's commitments to promoting wider accountability and mental health in the criminal justice system.

In April 2021, the All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform was re-established. The Group is jointly chaired by Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill and Deputy Ivana Bacik, with secretariat support provided by IPRT. It provides 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. Activities of the Group to date have included an open meeting for all TDs and Senators, at which the Chief Inspector of Prisons spoke on the work of the Office, as well as individual meetings with the Department of Justice to discuss current penal reform developments and priorities. The co-chairs also met with the Chairperson of the High Level Taskforce on mental health and addiction challenges of persons interacting with the criminal justice system in May 2021, and a visit to prison is planned for autumn 2021.

Over the period, IPRT met with justice spokespeople from the Green Party, Sinn Féin and the Social Democrats on priority penal reform issues. To promote discussion, IPRT took part in an information event on the solutions to crime and antisocial behaviour with the Fingal branch of the Social Democrats, Chaired by Joint Party Leader Catherine Murphy TD.

**We are pleased to report that, overall, both IPRT and related penal reform issues continued to enjoy strong and growing support among TDs and Senators this year.**

We expect the return of several significant pieces of legislation to the Seanad and Dáil in autumn and winter 2021. Work is already underway in preparation for our engagement around these pieces of legislation, and we look forward to updating our membership on these developments.

## Priority 2 – Humane Penal System

### FOCUS ON: Supporting Children and Families of Prisoners

In summer 2020, IPRT launched a new three-year project that aims to reduce harm for children and families affected by imprisonment. The initiative aims to build a unified cross-sectoral voice to bring about change for these families.

The first activity was the establishment of the Action for Children and Families of Prisoners network, which is co-led by IPRT and the Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights, UCC. The network is comprised of community-based organisations, researchers and academics, and advocacy groups and was created to map current knowledge and supports, and disseminate best practices and actions for change. The network has met three times and has a strong and engaged membership.

The inaugural network meeting offered an opportunity for members to share preliminary insights from the sector and to engage with the goals of the project. We welcomed Rachel Brett (Vice President, Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE)) to speak about the role of COPE and the advantages of a network organisation. This was an opportunity for us to think strategically as a network about how we would achieve our goals.

At the second meeting in December 2020, the membership had an opportunity to engage on the prevailing situation for families with family members in prison with a guest presentation from Governor Peter O'Brien of Cork Prison. Direct engagement with stakeholders is pivotal to the network if it is to achieve its aims.

The key focus of the third network meeting was to inform the drafting of IPRT's updated research report, with all network members presenting their key policy recommendations. Network members presented their research to support the updating of the policy paper, with Dr Daragh Bradshaw, Dr Sinead O' Malley and Dr Kieran O' Dwyer presenting on their discrete areas of research in the area.

In addition to our work with the network, focus on this cohort of children remained at the core of IPRT's work in 2020 and 2021.

In July 2021, IPRT launched *Piecing it Together: Supporting Children and Families with a Family Member in Prison in Ireland*. The report examines whether progress has been made to support the rights of children and families with family members in prison and sets out a roadmap to help ensure the State meets its obligations to children under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC). While the report details some pockets of good practice, a number of significant gaps remain, including: limited national recognition of the rights of children with a family member in prison; the continued lack of any national support services for these children; visiting conditions that are not child-friendly; limited data and research; and stigmatisation.

Launching the report, Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon, described children with parents in prison as "forgotten victims of crime" and outlined his role "to remind our State and our Society that they need to be supported." The launch also heard from international experts and national policy leads, including Professor Ann Adalist-Estrin (Director of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Rutgers University) and Dr. Lorna Brookes (Founder of Time-Matters UK and Senior Lecturer Liverpool John Moores University).

To support the launch of the report, we released a short animation to raise awareness of the core issues among the public. We also launched the website and branding for the Action for Children and Families of Prisoners network. Visit [www.actionforfamilies.ie](http://www.actionforfamilies.ie) for more.

Other actions by IPRT on this issue:

- 'Family Contact' was one of 12 (out of 35) standards highlighted in *Progress in the Penal System* ('PIPS 2020'). The report notes positive measures introduced to support family contact but also outlines the inconsistent roll out of such measures, for example, low numbers of successful video calls in certain prisons.
- The experience of children and families with family members in prison featured at the IPRT Prison Law Seminar in February 2021. Solicitor Matthew Kenny spoke in-depth on the issues and about the voice of the child and advocated that practitioners present take the best interests of the child into account in any test cases on restrictions.
- We conducted two separate surveys of families and children affected by imprisonment on their experiences of COVID-19 restrictions in July/August 2020 and June 2021. We are grateful to the people who took part and shared their often challenging experiences with us. The responses have been used to inform all corners of our work, with respondents, quotes being referenced during events, in advocacy meetings with stakeholders, in briefings and in publications.
- IPRT did significant work in raising awareness of the challenges facing children and families of prisoners throughout the year, with regular appearances in the media, including RTE Six One News, local and national radio, as well as extensive print media coverage.

We're very grateful to our funders, **Katharine Howard Foundation** and **St Stephen's Green Trust**, for supporting such a timely piece of work.



## Priority 2 – Humane Penal System *continued*

### FOCUS ON: Accountability in the closed world of prisons

**It is only through a rigorous inspection and monitoring regime, along with an independent complaints mechanism, that the rights of people in prison can be safeguarded.**

Accountability in the penal system was the theme of *Progress in the Penal System 2019*, and it continues to be a priority area of our work. In 2020 and 2021, IPRT highlighted critical gaps in accountability at national and international level, including submissions to inform Ireland's upcoming reviews under the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Universal Periodic Review.

In November 2020, the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Degrading Treatment (CPT) published its report on its 2019 visit to places of detention in Ireland. Among its findings, the CPT stated that the treatment of mentally ill people in prison was "one of the most pressing issues within Irish prisons" and that the prison complaints system was "not fit for purpose".

IPRT engaged with the Committee in advance of its visit as well as briefing the Committee directly during their visit to highlight these areas of concern. In the absence of any published national inspection reports of prisons, IPRT's research and advocacy was instrumental in informing the CPT of areas of progress, regress and new areas of concern since its previous visit to Ireland.

The CPT report was effectively the first inspection report of a closed prison in Ireland published since its previous report in 2015. IPRT raised public awareness of the Committee's findings on prison conditions across media, outlining that the ongoing lack of published inspection reports represents a glaring gap in prisons accountability. The findings and recommendations contained within the report have significant implications for the protection of the human rights of people detained in Ireland. The pandemic response should add impetus and, we hope, the political will to act on these recommendations. The lack of published prison inspection reports during the first 16 months of the pandemic has been a major gap in accountability. IPRT continues to call on the Minister for Justice to fulfil the Government's promise to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) by December 2021. Had OPCAT been ratified, and a National Preventive Mechanism been in place, this would have provided for additional safeguards to people in all detention settings during the pandemic. IPRT has continued to engage in direct advocacy with other stakeholders in this area throughout the year, including with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Office of the Inspector of Prisons.

In 2020 and 2021, promising developments included additional resourcing of the Office of the Inspector of Prisons; the publication of the Framework for Inspection of Prisons; and commitments to reform prison visiting committees and ratification of OPCAT in the Programme for Government. While these are all welcome, gaps in accountability mechanisms leave the human rights of people in our prison system exposed. This is especially acute during a time of a national and global emergency. Prisoners are still without access to a fully independent complaints mechanism, and commitments to introduce a revised internal prison complaints system by end 2020 were not met.

In written correspondence and a meeting with Minister for Justice Ms Helen McEntee TD in January 2021, IPRT raised the pressing need for a robust prisoner complaints system, and the urgent need to strengthen the Office of the Inspector of Prisons in legislation. IPRT notes positively that since this meeting we have seen Visiting Committee annual reports, prison chaplains' annual reports, and the first four COVID-19 Thematic Inspection reports by the Office of the Inspector of Prisons published within a reasonable timeframe. IPRT welcomed the publication of the COVID-19 Thematic Inspection reports but shared the concerns of the Inspectorate that increased restrictions risk becoming "*the new norm*". We await the publication of the remaining reports and hope that further full prison inspection reports will follow in due course.

In addition to inspection, monitoring and effective independent complaints systems, parliamentary oversight has a role to play in supporting transparency, accountability and public confidence in the justice system. See *Strengthening political engagement in penal reform* on page XX for more on our work to bolster parliamentary oversight of the penal system during the pandemic.

IPRT continues to articulate and promote a deeper appreciation of the concept and benefits of accountability in the penal system among all relevant stakeholders.

## A Year in Images



**1** *Piecing it Together: Supporting Children and Families with a Family Member in Prison in Ireland* was published on 15 July 2021. (See page 9)



**2** Members of the Action for Children and Families of Prisoners at the third network meeting, March 2021. (See page 9)



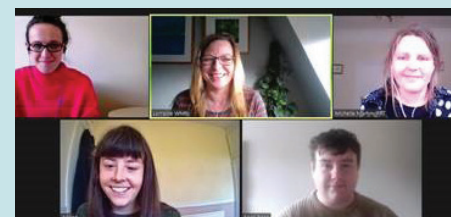
**3** Kevin Gregory, IPRT Treasurer, was shortlisted for 'Trustee of the Year' at the Charity Impact Awards, November 2020.



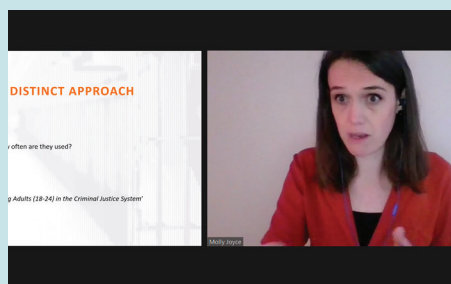
**4** All panellists at the launch of Progress in the Penal System (2020), January 2021. (See page 19)



**5** Throughout the year, the Steering Group for the Access to Rights and Justice Project has continued to meet remotely.



**6** Aisling Meyler from Care After Prison was one of many guest speakers who joined us to discuss their work this year. (See page 19)



**7** Molly Joyce, Legal and Public Affairs Manager (Deputy Director) speaking at a Social Democrats Fingal event on solutions to crime and antisocial behaviour, June 2021.



**8** All panellists at our Prison Law Seminar on the Prison Rules, February 2021. (See page 19)



**9** The second meeting of the IPRT staff team since pandemic-related restrictions began, June 2021.

## Priority 3 – Our Organisation

**Ensure IPRT is a sustainable, well-resourced, respected and collaborative stakeholder in penal policy in Ireland.**

### 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), the Charities Regulatory Authority (RCN 20029562) and as a Registered Charity with the Revenue Commissioners (CHY Number 11091) and meets all requirements to file returns to the Register of Lobbying.

IPRT recorded its full compliance with the Charities Regulator Code in November 2020 and continues to meet all relevant regulatory reporting requirements. In 2020, IPRT was shortlisted for a Good Governance Award for our annual report, and Treasurer Kevin Gregory was a finalist in the Charity Trustee of the Year Award.

### IPRT Office

IPRT ensures that robust levels of organisational systems, structures and practices are in operation to ensure a sustainable organisation and a high-quality place of work for staff.

In line with government advice, IPRT facilitated remote working for all staff throughout the period. The IPRT team has continued to upskill and maximise our use of online tools to enhance collaborative working and will retain these new ways of working together on our return to the physical office. In January 2021, the Board approved payment of a remote working allowance to staff towards relevant home-working costs, such as electricity and broadband. This allowance only applies for days worked at home and will end when government advice permits a return to the office.

### 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. 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 2019 accounts, prepared by Best Practice Accountant – Chartered Accountants (Mary-Louise O'Loughlin ACA) were approved at the IPRT AGM in September 2020 and submitted to the Companies Registration Office. The 2020 accounts are for approval at the IPRT AGM in September 2021.

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 2020 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 Finance, Audit & Risk Committee 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.

### Sustainability

IPRT's core funding has been secured up to end 2022, but work on developing new revenue streams is continuing. With IPRT entering the third and final year of our multi-annual core funding streams, the sustainability of the organisation beyond 2022 will be a critical focus for IPRT over the coming 6 to 12 months.

## Our Funders

IPRT is in receipt of multi-annual funding from a number of diverse sources.

IPRT was awarded Pobal funding under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) in the Community and Voluntary Sector for 2019-2022; and in July 2019, IPRT secured a multiannual grant from the Department of Justice and Equality for a further three years.

This combined funding represents an annual core grant of approximately €220,000 per annum and covers the core costs of the organisation, including core staff and office costs. Alongside other funding, this affords us the position to work on longer-term projects to continue to achieve real systemic change in the penal system in Ireland.

The Community Foundation for 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. In 2019, the Community Foundation for Ireland facilitated IPRT in securing a renewed multi-annual donor-advised grant for a Senior Policy and Research Officer and the flagship 'Progress in the Penal System' (PIPS) project of €200,751 to run 2020-2022.

## 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 3-year funding through the Community Foundation for Ireland and the Mercy Congregation for a project targeted at lasting legal and policy reform (€120,000 to run 2020-2023). This allowed us to expand our team through the recruitment of a Legal and Public Affairs Manager and leverage our existing research, expertise, and maximise opportunities for change. This work builds on our longstanding networks and relationships with government, Oireachtas, criminal justice system, and the media.

Another multi-annual funding stream commenced in 2020, with Katherine Howard Foundation and the St. Stephen's Green Trust supporting IPRT to lead a 3-year initiative that aims to reduce harm for children and families affected by imprisonment (€45,000 over 3 years, to run 2020-2023). *(See more on page X.)*

We were pleased to be awarded funding through the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's Human Rights and Equality Grant 2020-2021 for a research and advocacy project on *Access to Rights and Justice for Migrants and Ethnic Minority People in the Penal System*.

In late 2020, we also secured a grant of €2,500 from RTE Does Comic Relief (administered by the Community Foundation for Ireland) as part of their Demand for Digital stream towards 'Supporting Remote Engagement'.

At the time of writing, we have received good news about two further sources of project funding to further expand our work to ultimately make communities safer. While we can't announce the news just yet, we are eager to share the news with you via our newsletter and social media as soon as we can.

## 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. Our membership continued to grow over the period, with increasing numbers of organisational members, individual members and members in prison or who have family members in prison. This speaks to both the reach of our work and growing support for penal reform.

The continued support of our Friends of IPRT during the pandemic 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 year ended 31 December 2020		2020(€)	2019(€)
	Income		
	Department of Justice & Equality	132,500	102,579
	Pobal	90,000	89,812
	Membership	2,130	1,660
	Donations	4,913	9,554
	Projects	71,988	114,179
	Miscellaneous	-	200
	Research services	1,216	-
	<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>€302,747</b>	<b>€317,984</b>
		2020(€)	2019(€)
	Expenditure		
	Wages and salaries	196,225	206,678
	Social security costs	20,412	27,595
	Staff pension costs	6,000	5,607
	Staff training	1,671	318
	Human resources	1,430	2,666
	Rent and utilities	7,907	7,908
	Insurance	1,418	1,534
	Office equipment	828	55
	Cleaning	172	696
	Repairs and maintenance	546	576
	Stationery	979	1,256
	Postage	725	613
	Courier	39	36
	GDPR implementation and training	-	246
	Website and social media	3,302	3,185
	Prisoner engagement and building alliances	485	1,767

	2020(€)	2019(€)
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Events	621	-
Telephone and broadband	2,766	2,099
Computer hardware and software	2,268	622
IT support	2,642	2,395
Migrants and Minority Ethnic Groups (IHREC)	89	-
Children and Families Initiative (SSGT and KHF)	78	-
Demand for Digital (CFI)	2,211	-
Human rights in prisons expenses (CFI)	-	11,377
Making Rights Real for those with Disabilities in (IHREC)	-	18,689
Research and Policy expenses (CFI)	392	-
Penal Policy and Law Programme expenses (CFI)	90	-
Impact expenses (CFI)	5,198	43,937
Publications and reports	3,379	45
Staff travel	69	1,209
Other staff expenses	441	858
Meetings	411	413
Volunteer and intern expenses	429	483
Board expenses	-	45
Legal and professional	-	250
Accountancy	5,891	5,518
Audit fees	3,690	3,739
Bank charges	256	219
General expenses	117	349
Membership and subscriptions	1,320	1,150
Depreciation	1,519	2,076
<b>Total</b>	<b>€276,016</b>	<b>€356,209</b>

## Communications

While IPRT informs political debate on crime and punishment through direct engagement, research and advocacy, IPRT also 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.

IPRT raises awareness and provides information through maintaining the IPRT website as a research centre on penal policy topics; maintaining a social media presence and regular production of an ebulletin; and engaging extensively with media on these issues.

### Media

IPRT responds to media queries and relevant news items, proactively seeks media coverage on important issues, and provides an alternative voice in public discussion of crime and penal policy. We have a strong presence in the media, with our research and campaigns normally covered in the media reasonably and fairly.

IPRT continued to grow its media profile during 2020 and 2021, often acting as a lone voice on human rights in prison during COVID-19 and the vaccination of prisoners. Media engagement included interviews on RTÉ's Six One News, One O'Clock News and Primetime; Radio 1 News, Drivetime and Morning Ireland; Newstalk FM's Breakfast Show, The Hard Shoulder, Pat Kenny Show and Newstalk News; along with regional radio stations ranging from Waterford to Castlebar, Cork to Donegal and Dublin to Kilkenny. IPRT comment appeared in The Irish Times, Irish Examiner, Irish Independent, the Irish Mirror, the Sunday World and The Times (Ireland edition), along with regular inclusion in online news outlets TheJournal.ie and Irish Legal News.

- Online articles: **100+**
- Radio interviews: **35**
- Print publications: **35+**  
(including several front-page reports)
- TV appearances: **4**
- Press releases: **15**

### Website and Online Presence

IPRT's online presence is an invaluable resource acting as an archive of over 25 years of IPRT research and providing a hub of relevant research and emerging policy developments, which serves as a central source of information and updates on penal reform for media, policy-makers, researchers, and other key stakeholders.

Visits to the IPRT website increased by 11% during the period, which reflects the high quality of this central resource on penal reform in Ireland.

Social media serves as one of our main communications channels with both our supporters and the wider public, where we take opportunities to respond and inform on issues not appropriate for traditional media.

[iprt.ie](http://iprt.ie)  
[twitter.com/iprt](https://twitter.com/iprt)  
[facebook.com/irishpenalreformtrust](https://facebook.com/irishpenalreformtrust)  
[instagram.com/irishpenalreformtrust](https://instagram.com/irishpenalreformtrust)

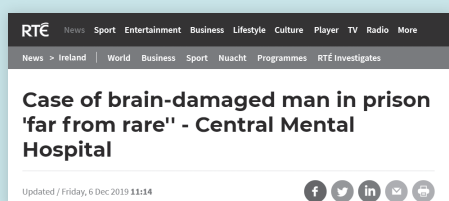
### Media Releases

With COVID-19 continuing as the leading news story over the period, IPRT continued to work hard to put penal policy and conditions for men and women in prison on the media radar. Alongside direct engagement with media on issues of interest, 15 releases were issued across the period.

Releases this year focused largely on accountability, mental health, COVID-19 and reducing reoffending. We issued two joint releases during the period, one with Mental Health Reform and the other with Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, in recognition of our shared goals and common approaches.

## IPRT Media Coverage

We continue to hold a strong media and public affairs profile, stimulating active and informed debate on penal reform issues. Some of the headlines from 2020 and 2021 are featured below.



## Research and Policy

The quality of IPRT research and the importance of its contribution to the body of knowledge on the criminal justice system has earned us a credible reputation. Our published research and policy papers are available at: [www.iprt.ie/research-centre](http://www.iprt.ie/research-centre)

We regularly make 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. We actively monitor Ireland's international treaty obligations and leverage these to ensure adequate compliance with international human rights standards.

As well as submissions and action on the below, it is worth noting that this period also saw previous policy engagement come to fruition with the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 including positive commitments on bail supervision, diversion, and new responses to offending by 18-24 year olds.

### Policy Submissions

- *IPRT Oral Submission to the Department of Health Women's Health Taskforce (October 2020)*
- *IPRT Submission to Department of Justice Strategy Statement (November 2020)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Public Consultation on Spent Convictions (November 2020)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Prison Health Needs Assessment (November 2020)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Probation Service Strategy 2021-2023 (March 2021)*

### Oireachtas Submissions

- *IPRT Submission to Oireachtas Special Committee on COVID-19 Response (September 2020)*

### Submissions to International Monitoring Bodies

- *IPRT Submission to LoIPR Process on Ireland's Fifth Periodic Examination under the ICCPR (October 2020)*
- *IPRT Submission to Ireland's third UN Universal Periodic Review (March 2021)*
- *IPRT Submission to Initial State Report under the UN CRPD 2021 (April 2021)*

### Publications

- *Progress in the Penal System: Assessing progress during a pandemic (January 2021)*
- *Know Your Rights: Your Rights as a Prisoner (February 2021)*
- *Piecing it Together: Supporting Children and Families with a Family Member in Prison in Ireland (July 2021)*

### Briefings

- *Irish Prisons and COVID-19: One Year On (April 2021)*

## Alliances and Engagements

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

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, our focus on working together with other organisations to achieve common policy goals has not been diminished. To demonstrate our support for common human rights issues, in 2020/2021 IPRT was an active organisational member of Mental Health Reform, Children's Rights Alliance, Irish Network Against Racism, PEIN, the Association of Criminal Justice Research and Development, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and the National Women's Council.

### 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. Throughout the period IPRT enjoyed positive engagement with the Office of the Inspector of Prisons, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Mental Health Commission, National Forensic Mental Health Service, and Ombudsman for Children, along with the Department of Justice, Irish Prison Service, Probation Service and other relevant policy-makers and oversight bodies.

IPRT further engaged with the community by inviting guest speakers to meet with the team, expand our understanding of issues on the ground, and discuss priority areas of work. These included representatives from Alternatives to Violence, Bedford Row, Care After Prison, Citywide, Cork Alliance, Focus Ireland, IASIO, Merchants Quay Ireland, PACE, Release, Saol Project and the Travellers in Prison Initiative. New and strengthened relationships from over the period include: NIACRO, Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO); Talbot Centre; and Pavee Point.

This period also featured developing relationships with legal bodies including ICBA and DSBA, with work underway to develop a solicitor's panel whose expertise IPRT can draw upon to inform our work.

### Presentations

During the period, IPRT delivered presentations to key groups and diverse audiences, ranging from policy stakeholders to students. We spoke at a large number of external conferences and seminars, including events hosted by the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission, National Disability Authority, the ACJRD, EPIC, the Irish Criminal Justice Agencies, universities, student societies, and others.

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

### Events

The launch of *Progress in the Penal System (2020)* in January 2021 was among the most successful and well-attended events in IPRT's 27-year history. Chaired by Prof Aislinn O'Donnell, we were pleased to invite contributions from esteemed speakers and respondents, including keynote speaker Ms Oonagh McPhillips, Secretary General of the Department of Justice; Dr. Brie Williams, Professor of Medicine at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) and Director of Amend at UCSF; Ms Caron McCaffrey, Director General, Irish Prison Service; and Ms Fiona Coyle, Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Reform.

In February 2021, IPRT hosted a Prison Law Seminar on 'The Prison Rules: Current Impact and Opportunities for Reform' that brought together legal practitioners, statutory oversight bodies, academics, and activists to discuss the opportunities for strengthening the protection of people in prison under the Prison Rules. The seminar was chaired by Professor Mary Rogan, Principal Investigator of the PRILA project. Damien Coffey, Senior Associate at Sheehan & Partners; Matthew Kenny, Partner at O'Sullivan Kenny LLP; David Perry BL, Barrister and IPRT Board member; Patricia Gilheaney, Chief Inspector at the Office of the Inspector of Prisons; John Farrelly, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission; and Professor Dirk van Zyl Smit, Expert Adviser to the Council of Europe on the European Prison Rules. As part of the launch, IPRT launched the revised *Know Your Rights: Your Rights as a Prisoner* booklet. Following the seminar, the Director General of the Irish Prison Service committed to a public consultation on the review of the Prison Rules, which IPRT welcomed as a positive step.

Other events included an IPRT members event with Dr. Lisa Cuthbert from PACE who spoke on her qualitative research study into the lived experience of men serving a life sentence, and a briefing session co-hosted with Care After Prison (CAP) and Senator Lynn Ruane to inform submissions to the Department of Justice consultation on spent convictions and the launch of *Piecing It Together: Supporting Children and Families with a Family Member in Prison in Ireland* (details on page 9).

## Alliances and Engagements *continued*

### 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.

This included participation at consultations by: Mental Health Reform on COVID-19, and its pre-budget submission; IHREC on its next Strategy Statement; the Restorative Justice Strategies for Change (RJS4C) on the development of restorative justice services in Ireland; the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the National Action Plan Against Racism, and a UNCRC civil society stakeholder consultation.

In April 2021, the High Level Taskforce on mental health, addictions and imprisonment was established, with former Minister of State Kathleen Lynch appointed as independent Chairperson. IPRT has had two opportunities to meet with the Taskforce since then, including an opportunity to consult on the Terms of Reference, and we look forward to engaging further with its important work and ambitious timeframe.

We also took part in a consultation session on the Prison Health Needs Assessment in October 2020, which we followed with a written submission.

IPRT continued to participate on the steering committee of the Travellers in Prison Initiative in 2020/2021. IPRT is also a member of the steering group of a Mental Health Reform project on 'Mental Health in Irish Prisons: Mapping Services and Supports'. We also attended a stakeholder meeting on Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

### Prisons and Prisoners' 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.

The pandemic has further highlighted the significant gap that exists in terms of individual advocacy services for prisoners and their families. Although we are 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 impact of COVID-19.

IPRT dealt with over 250 information queries over the period. Common queries raised by prisoners and their families in 2020 and 2021 include: the complaints system for prisoners in Irish prisons; access to temporary release and open prisons; access to healthcare; access to education and services; supports (both financial and psychological) for children and families of prisoners; parole; and access to supports and accommodation on release. Many of these issues were further compounded by COVID-19 restrictions. COVID-19 also brought new queries, including: access to vaccinations; issues with the operation of video calls; conditions in prisons; and access to temporary release for humanitarian reasons.

The key issues raised by people currently in prison, by way of the Annual Prisoner Member Survey, will be presented at the 2021 AGM.



## Irish Penal Reform Trust

MACRO Building,  
1 Green Street,  
Dublin 7, Ireland

+353 1 874 1400  
info@iprt.ie  
www.iprt.ie

CHY: 11091  
RCN: 20029562



### Supported by:



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
agus Comhionannais  
Department of Justice  
and Equality



The Community  
Foundation for Ireland