



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt,
Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce
Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration

Building Pathways Together

Criminal Justice Reintegration Through Employment Strategy 2025 – 2027

Annual Report

2025

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Introduction

On 7 November 2024, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration launched the *Building Pathways Together: Criminal Justice Reintegration Through Employment Strategy 2025-2027*. This strategy was developed by the Department in conjunction with the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service, and in consultation with key stakeholders including Government Departments, agencies, and those with lived experience of the criminal justice system and those who have faced barriers to reintegration. The path to desistance is not always straight, nor is everyone's path identical. Those who have engaged in criminal activity are not a uniform collective, the causes of such activity are heterogeneous, and the supports needed to assist a long-term, meaningful transition away from a life that involves offending may be many and varied.

The Criminal Justice Employment Advisory Committee (CJEAC) was set up in 2025 to oversee delivery of the actions contained in the strategy with meetings chaired at Assistant Secretary level in the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration during 2025. In order to ensure the voice of those with lived experience of the criminal justice system is appropriately valued and integrated into the delivery of this strategy, the Advisory Committee appointed two members (1 male and 1 female) who have previous criminal convictions. In order to ensure the needs of employers are being addressed, the Advisory Committee also appointed representatives from appropriate organisations, including Ibec and Business in the Community Ireland.

To complement the CJEAC, a Criminal Justice Employer Network (CJEN) was established in 2025 and was chaired by the Department at Assistant Secretary level. The CJEN brings employers and business representative organisations together to promote the hiring of people with criminal convictions, discuss any barriers impacting hiring or retaining individuals and providing a centralised route through which important messaging around issues may be conveyed to the employers.

Following identification of the challenges faced when seeking to increase the number of people with previous criminal convictions in employment, it was identified that actions to address these challenges could be broken into three thematic pillars focusing on supports and structural matters relating to:

1. People with Criminal Convictions.
2. Employers.
3. Promotion and Knowledge Sharing.

A number of actions are set out under these three thematic pillars; significant progress has taken place to date to progress the actions detailed in the strategy. This first Annual Report outlines the development to implement the actions over the course of the first year of the strategy – 2025.

Background

Building Pathways Together seeks to provide effective interventions to ensure that those who have ceased offending, and those who are looking for stability to move away from a life which involves offending, have the appropriate supports and opportunities open to them to make the success of their endeavours more likely. In doing so, this strategy seeks to support the development of a fairer, safer Ireland.

A New Way Forward: Social Enterprise Strategy 2017-2019 was Ireland's first strategy specifically targeting social enterprises. *Working to Change: Social Enterprise and Employment Strategy 2021-2023* expanded beyond social enterprises with the goal of taking a whole-systems approach to increasing employment options for people with past convictions.

Building Pathways Together is the successor strategy to *Working to Change* and this strategy takes a whole of Government approach to removing systemic barriers to employment for people with criminal convictions, and to increasing opportunities for employment through engagement with employers of all types. *Building Pathways Together* will build on previous strategies, mainstreaming existing functions where appropriate, with a renewed focus on practical steps to increase employment in this cohort.

1. Pillar One: People with Criminal Convictions

Formal Supports for those with Criminal Convictions

A number of supports are currently provided to those in prison or those in the community under the supervision of the Probation Service. However, due to their design and intended focus, these same supports are not currently provided to those in the community who are no longer engaged with the criminal justice system in any formal way.

Work is under way to extend supports for those with previous criminal convictions, where appropriate, to address the needs of those outside of the criminal justice system. This facilitates continuing the path towards employment and desistance.

Education Supports for those on Community Sanctions

People subject to community sanctions, such as Probation Orders and Community Service Orders, can face barriers to accessing employment due to their convictions, low educational attainment or other challenges. Provision of training and education as part of community

sanctions is an opportunity to both address offending behaviour and support desistance through promoting prosocial pathways away from crime. Actions are progressing on a number of fronts to support those with criminal convictions by advancing access to educational supports.

In April 2025, the Probation Service published the “*Community Service: New Directions Implementation Plan 2025 - 2027*” to promote the use of community service orders (CSOs) as an alternative to prison. A key goal of the plan is to improve secondary outcomes for people who have offended, including access to education, training and skills development and work. Training and Employment is addressed in all relevant Probation cases and referrals are made to and managed by Tosú/Community Based Organisations (CBOs)¹. Work remains ongoing to progress this action.

Cross Agency Protocol Review

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) works to promote active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services. DSP engages directly with agencies and organisations operating in the criminal justice system to ensure the appropriate services and supports which fall within their remit are in place for those with a criminal conviction through their journey to employment.

To achieve this, the Department of Social Protection developed a cross-agency protocol for individuals with criminal convictions. In order to ensure effectiveness, DSP has re-engaged with all parties to this protocol to review and revise where necessary. A working group was established comprising of key stakeholders and a revised protocol was developed. It is expected that a final version of the protocol will be available in Q1 2026.

Pilot eLearning Entrepreneurship Programme

Entrepreneurship remains an important avenue for individuals with criminal convictions to pursue where they may utilise their experience and training to develop new streams of business that may provide steady income to facilitate their desistance.

Many people with convictions possess traits strongly associated with entrepreneurship, i.e. resilience, creativity, risk-tolerance, informal trading experience. They often develop

¹ The Probation Service funds approx. 60 regionally located CBOs to provide vocational support to those who have offended.

entrepreneurial skills quickly when given structured support; training programmes report strong engagement and success. Entrepreneurship is a particularly effective pathway for this group, both for reintegration and reducing recidivism.

In support of this, the Irish Prison Service is facilitating the provision of an online eLearning course of entrepreneurship. This course is delivered by educators from Technological University Dublin (TUD) and has been developed under the EU-funded Prisoner Reintegration through Entrepreneurship and Psychology project (PREP).

The course was delivered to five education centres across the prison estate during 2025, with a total of 38 participants. Teachers and learners identified a range of strengths such as the design of the programme and the highly valued element of peer learning. The IPS has made a range of key recommendations in order to enhance the course going forward. These include engaging with guest speakers with lived experience of enterprise to provide 'real-world' exposure, simplifying complex theoretical material, increasing the number of sessions to allow for catch-up and reflection sessions, and providing specific periods during the year in which to run the course.

'DRAGONS' DEN'

Wheatfield Education Centre delivered the programme in June and July 2025. A series of guest speakers were invited to share real-world insights and inspiration with the students. The guest speakers were Peter Connolly (Enterprise Ireland), Tom Cooney (TUD) and Sean Kinsella (Life Skills Balance).

In addition, a 'Dragon's Den' style activity was incorporated where students were challenged to develop business ideas, create models and/or products and present them as entrepreneurs. It provided meaningful engagement, excitement and clear goal setting. The Dragon's Den activity also helped students to remain motivated and focused. Some of the students produced their products with the help of Work & Training. This was an important element which provided cross service co-operation.



Certificate of Commitment to Change

While an individual's criminal convictions are acknowledged, it is important to recognise efforts they have since made to rehabilitate themselves and to prepare to reintegrate into society fully, including through employment. Such efforts represent fulfilling a commitment, to themselves and to their fellow citizens, to make positive behavioural changes in pursuit of a better life. In Q2 2025, Spéire Nua², a social enterprise that supports those who have come into contact with the criminal justice system, engaged with the Department regarding a system they have developed to support those to gain a 'Certificate of Commitment to Change'. The certificate aims to support those who have a criminal conviction to demonstrate the progress they have made to rehabilitate and show they are prepared for employment by compiling a portfolio of achievements, etc. It is hoped that the Certificate of Commitment to Change and recognition of achievement(s) may be utilised through the employment application and interview process where accepted. Work continued throughout 2025 on devising the process for assessment of the portfolio and issuance of the Certificate of Commitment to Change and it is hoped that the first certificate will be issued in early 2026.

KickStart

The KickStart Scholarship provides funding to those with previous criminal convictions to enter third level education. The pilot of this scholarship was launched with assistance of the MEND Universities in 2022, with a second year funded in 2023. Building on the success of the pilot, the expansion of this scholarship in terms of eligibility across all third level institutions in the State ensures equality of access for qualifying individuals across the island. In Q3 2025, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Probation Service and IPS commenced engagement with Maynooth University and the Department of Further and Higher Education to consider options regarding the national expansion of KickStart, noting the importance of mainstreaming and sustainability. An independent evaluation of KickStart will take place in early 2026 and will inform the future direction of the initiative. Whilst work is ongoing in this regard, and in recognition of success to date, the KickStart Scholarship will continue to be funded for Semester 2 of the academic year 2025 – 2026. An action under Pillar Two states that the KickStart Fund should continue to provide funding to social enterprises to hire people with criminal convictions. The KickStart Fund provides

² [Spéire Nua – Everybody wins when someone turns their life around](#)

funding to support new and existing social enterprises to create meaningful jobs for people with criminal convictions as a stepping stone to mainstream employment. This funding was provided towards the Job Creation Fund. An evaluation of the KickStart Fund has identified clear benefits to continuing to provide this funding, and this strategy commits to continuing the Fund as appropriate. The Department and the Probation Service are undertaking preparatory work with Pobal³ to progress Kickstart Round 4 in 2026.

Lived Experience Leadership Programme (L.E.A.D)

The LEAD (Lived Experience Action Development) Leadership Programme was developed through a partnership arising from the BPT Employment Strategy. It is funded by the Probation Service through Dormant Accounts Funding.

This innovative pilot training programme was co-designed by The Turnaround Project⁴ and PACE Organisation⁵ in collaboration with the Probation Service, Equal Ireland, Spéire Nua and a team of experts with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

The Turnaround Project (Belfast based) and PACE (Dublin based) are organisations working to provide support to help people who have been through the criminal justice system to integrate into the wider community. This Leadership programme, a North/South collaboration and the first of its kind, aims to strengthen an individual's ability to sustain and flourish in their employment setting, move into positions of influence and leadership within their communities, and be enabled to engage in future discussion of policy and practice.

The L.E.A.D. Programme commenced in April 2025 and the first cohort graduated in August 2025. The graduates emerged from the programme with enhanced skills, motivation and supports to become leaders, role models and advocates within their communities. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration attended the graduation ceremony and spoke on the work of the BPT Employment Strategy.

³ [Pobal | Pobal Programmes and Initiatives throughout Ireland](#)

⁴ [The Turnaround Project | social enterprise | The Turnaround Project, Hydebank Wood College, Hospital Road Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT8 8NA](#)

⁵ [Pace Organisation](#)

Following the delivery of the first full programme, a 'Programme Evaluation Report' has been carried out by an external evaluator, which contains core recommendations for future programme consideration.



Lived Experience (LE) Network

Following on from this LEAD Programme, an inaugural North/South Lived Experience Network event took place on 4 December 2025, in collaboration with The Turnaround Project, Spéire Nua, the Probation Service and the IPS. Three of the LEAD Programme graduates spoke powerfully about the value of the programme to their growth and development. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the IPS and the Probation Service spoke on the work of the BPT Strategy and the commitments within the Strategy to recognise lived experience as a critical resource in shaping rehabilitation and reintegration.



Lived Experience Network Event, 4 December 2025

'Experts by Experience' (EbyE)

The IPS currently employs Experts by Experience (EbyE) on a contract basis. The function of this role is to provide support to current prisoners via:

- a) relevant learning and development podcasts for the prison TV channel,
- b) co-facilitating groups with the psychology service,
- c) input to planning and roll-out of the annual Irish Prison Service Mental Health Week and related events,
- d) supporting the implementation of mental health and addiction recovery programmes across the prison estate, and
- e) sitting on various working groups and informing appropriate policy and procedures from an EbyE perspective.

The IPS continues to pursue such employment opportunities while exploring the possibility of expanding this role to incorporate an academic component which would provide people with practical experience and an academic achievement. This would include providing those in employment with a peer support qualification via an appropriate college or university (funding dependant). In 2025, research exploring the potential implementation of an Expert by Experience role in the IPS concluded. A guidance document with recommendations is currently being considered. The IPS secured Dormant Accounts Funding (DAF) for a Wayback-like initiative in Ireland which is intended to lead to the employment and personal development of persons with convictions as peer support workers for prisoners on release. The Probation Service is equally eager to integrate lived experience into their work and so a Lived Experience (LEX) role is being explored.

2. Pillar Two: Employers

Employer Guidance Document

The Open Doors Initiative, funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, initiated the development of an 'Employer Toolkit' to create awareness among employers, informed by the lived experience of those impacted by systemic barriers, of the benefits of hiring people with past convictions and provide supporting guidance in the hiring and retaining of these individuals. The Toolkit, developed by Dr Joe Garrihy and Dr Ciara Bracken-Roche of Maynooth University, is designed to help Irish employers successfully navigate fair chance hiring, that is to give employers the tools they need to help fairly assess candidates who have a criminal conviction.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Probation Service, and the Irish Prison Service are committed to supporting, promoting and advancing this resource as appropriate through the lifetime of the strategy. The Toolkit will be hosted on the BPT webpage when it goes live in 2026.

Criminal Justice Employer Network (CJEN)

Under Pillar Two, the BPT Strategy states that a new Criminal Justice Employer Network (CJEN) should be established to raise issues regarding hiring people with criminal convictions, share information, develop a network, and promote activities in this area. Employer representatives were invited to submit EOIs to join the CJEN at the BPT launch in November 2024. The CJEN held its first meeting in June 2025 and is now a fully established group with Terms of Reference (see [Appendix 2](#)). Biannual meetings have taken place and will continue to occur throughout the lifespan of the project.

Promoting Recruitment

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment along with the support of the Department of Social Protection has utilised channels for engaging with employers to promote the opportunity for employers to recruit those with criminal convictions.

As part of this, efforts are being made to target a small number of large employers who could act as advocates of the benefits of hiring people with previous criminal convictions. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment have engaged with the Department of

Social Protection and both Departments have proposed to link in with organisations such as IDA and Enterprise Ireland to progress this action.

It is also important for the State to demonstrate leadership in supporting people with criminal convictions on their path to desistance through employment. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is working with Public Jobs and other key partners to explore opportunities and address barriers to recruiting people with criminal convictions. As a result of initial discussions, the Department is preparing a proposal for a special access pathway for those with criminal convictions. It is hoped the proposal will go to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for consideration in Q1 2026.

Throughout the first year of the Strategy, the Department engaged with Cork Chamber and Chambers Ireland to further inform employers and the general public of the BPT strategy. The Department attended a *WorkAbility – Inclusive Pathways to Employment Showcase* on 18 November 2025. The event highlighted the progress of the WorkAbility Cork project and the value of inclusive employment, delivered in partnership between Cork Chamber and South East Cork Area Development (SECAD). The event showcased the range of employer supports available to drive inclusive recruitment and workplace practices, as well as shared insights from employers, participants and support organisations. The Department continues to engage with Cork Chamber and Chambers Ireland to promote the BPT strategy.

Training and Development

This Strategy seeks to increase the number of individuals who are referred to and engage with employment-related training. Ensuring individuals participate in training programmes leads to positive, measured outcomes, and increases the cohort of available employees for employers and facilitates addressing gaps in staffing levels where appropriate.

Tosú⁶ is a community-based organisation funded by the Probation Service and Irish Prison Service to support the reintegration of those who have offended into the community. Tosú works nationally with those who have offended in custody and those subject to community based sanctions.

Tosú currently provides three specific programmes to support reintegration; the Linkage Programme, which is funded by the Probation Service, and the Gate and the Resettlement

⁶ [Tosú | New Beginnings](#)

Services, both of which are funded by the IPS. Throughout 2025, Tosú served 5,119 new clients across all services. The following is a brief synopsis of each service:

- Resettlement: provides people in prison with access to accommodation, medical cards and social welfare payments.
- Gate: provides guidance and placement support to service users in prison.
- Linkage: Funded by the Probation Service to assist service users in the community to access the labour market, by providing employment training and education supports.

Tosú also runs the Community Support Scheme, a structured release programme for people serving prison sentences less than 18 months, and an Individual Placement & Support Service, supporting patients in the Central Mental Hospital.

Linkage Training and Employment Officers work towards identifying appropriate education, training and employment supports for service users.

On 8 October 2025, Tosú hosted an Employer Engagement Event at Loughan House Open Centre. The event highlighted the benefits of hiring individuals with criminal convictions to prospective employers. It also offered those living at Loughan House nearing the end of their sentence a space to engage with employers and scope out potential employment opportunities when they leave prison. The event also offered useful information on relevant supports available to employers.

The Prison Education Taskforce (PET) was re-established in 2025. The PET was established in May 2023 and is co-chaired by the Ministers of State at the Department Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

The aim of the Taskforce is to ensure greater alignment between prison education and work training and the tertiary education system by supporting prisoners to benefit from education and training opportunities while in custody, which in turn aids their rehabilitation and access to employment post-release. Taskforce membership includes key agencies such as the Irish Prison Service, Solas, the Probation Service, and the Education and Training Boards.

Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) Retrofitting was piloted in Wheatfield and the Midlands. Following the pilot, it was decided to expand to Mountjoy and Castlerea prisons, which will happen in Q2 2026.

In conjunction with Technological University of Shannon, the IPS piloted two Special Purpose QQI Level 6 awards in Culinary Skills and Baking & Patisserie in Limerick and Castlerea prisons. Following a review of the pilots it was decided to expand to all prisons on a phased basis during Q1 and Q2 of 2026.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) has responsibility for ensuring that skills are identified and met through alignment of education and training provision and any skills shortages may be met, as required, through targeted and efficient economic migration. The identification of these needs represents an important opportunity to align current education and training provisions in the criminal justice system with current and future skills needs, which will ensure the target cohort are well placed to find employment in relevant fields.

In line with Action 2.9, in 2025 DETE and Solas undertook to identify skills and qualifications they considered most beneficial for those with criminal convictions in order to broaden their access to employment opportunities. IT, communication, confidence and green skills were identified as most desirable. Safe Passes and manual handling courses were also pinpointed. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will continue to engage with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to progress this action.

In Q4 2025, DETE conducted an analysis of employment permit applications to assist in the identification of skills and labour needs and to inform the development of training and skills for those in prison or serving a community-based sanction. Analysis of work permit applications provides unique insight into areas of employment currently serviced by those from outside the State which may be filled by individuals with criminal convictions where appropriate and subject to relevant training and education as required. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration continues to work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to determine how to best utilise this data.

3. Pillar Three: Promotion and Knowledge Sharing

Launch of the Building Pathways Together Strategy

Building Pathways Together launched on 7 November 2024 by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration at an event attended by employers across the business community, stakeholders working in the area of criminal reintegration, and people with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

Under Pillar three and relating to promotion and knowledge sharing, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Probation Service, and the Irish Prison Service, are each required to host an open event promoting the

actions and achievements of this strategy and the benefits to employers and public safety to supporting people with criminal convictions on their journey into employment and desistance. This event was organised and hosted by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.



Launch of Building Pathways Together Criminal Justice Reintegration Through Employment Strategy 2025 - 2027, 7 November 2024



Launch of Building Pathways Together Criminal Justice Reintegration Through Employment Strategy 2025 - 2027, 7 November 2024



Building Pathways Together Strategy celebrated at the Department's Excellence & Innovation Recognition Event, 23 May 2025

The event celebrated teams in the Department that have found new and better ways to collaborate, break down barriers and find a common ground with projects coming together to demonstrate a strong commitment to the values of justice, fairness, dignity, and inclusion.

Gaisce Award Ceremony

Gaisce, the President's Award, is Ireland's national youth award and is a self-development programme for young people aged 14-25. Gaisce participants achieve a Gaisce Award by completing Challenge Areas: Personal Skill, Physical Recreation, Community Involvement, and an Adventure Journey.

Pillar One of the Strategy details that the Gaisce Award should be promoted within prisons and amongst those serving community-based sanctions, emphasising the significance of this award to employers.

Achieving a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award is an achievement to be marked by any individual, including those who are currently serving custodial or community-based sanctions, and represents a significant commitment to self-development.

The Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service continue to support individuals in their progress towards Gaisce awards and continue to promote the achievement and what it represents to employers so that a criminal conviction alone will not be a barrier to employment.

To further promote Gaisce, highlight its benefits, and educate future employers on the significance of such an award, *Generation Change: Embracing New Horizons* took place on 9 October 2025. The Generation Change event was hosted by Gaisce – The President's Award, in collaboration with the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service and was joint-funded by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration through the BPT Employment Strategy. The event promoted the Gaisce Award to those in custody and those serving community-based sanctions, while also highlighting its value to employers. Gaisce helps build inclusive pathways to rehabilitation, recognition, and long-term success for individuals with experience of the justice system.

The event brought together a diverse group of people united by a shared goal; creating fair and inclusive employment opportunities for those with lived experience of the criminal justice system. The event also highlighted how the Gaisce Award helps those in custody to enhance their confidence, develop new skills, and set goals for the future.

GENERATION CHANGE

Embracing New Horizons



Seirbhís Phríosúin
na hÉireann
Irish Prison Service



An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh
The Probation Service



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt,
Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce
Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration



Fair Chance Hiring Panel



Partnership Panel



Research and Data

The Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service continue to engage with the Central Statistics Office to build on recent advances in relation to data collection on levels of employment and earnings for those with previous criminal convictions, particularly considered against the relevant figures for those without criminal convictions. This work continues to provide important data to inform the development of effective strategic policy interventions where appropriate.

To further build on existing academic publications, the Department is commissioning research to explore the attitudes of public service employers towards hiring people with criminal convictions. It is expected that this research will be commissioned and under way in 2026 as initial preparations commenced in 2025.

National Promotion Campaign

The Department is developing a national campaign to promote the BPT strategy to the general public, employers and those with criminal convictions, including those on a probation sanction in the community and those with historical criminal convictions who continue to face difficulties securing employment but are no longer formally engaged with the criminal justice system. Work remains ongoing to develop the campaign, and it is expected to launch in 2026. The campaign will promote the positive skills and traits of those with criminal convictions to potential employers and highlight the supports available to employers and those with criminal convictions. This awareness campaign will serve to increase understanding and support for hiring and retaining those with criminal convictions, both amongst employers and the public more generally, and foregrounds social inclusion and reintegration, along with the positive impact this has on public safety.

Website Launch

The BPT strategy outlined the need to develop a long-term website to act as an information and empowerment hub for both individuals and employers. The Department is currently developing the BPT webpage hosted on gov.ie for accessibility purposes, which is due to launch in 2026 to coincide with the launch of the national promotion campaign.

Content on the website will be maintained by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, with input from all agencies and relevant organisations, and represents a one-stop-shop to provide comprehensive details and directions as appropriate to meet the needs of all

visitors. The website will act as a single, stable, up-to-date and easily accessible source for those looking to hire people with criminal convictions and those seeking employment.

Appendix 1: ToR of CJEAC

Building Pathways Together

Criminal Justice Employment Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

Proposed membership of the Criminal Justice Employment Advisory Committee.

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (Chair and Secretariat)
Irish Prison Service
Probation Service
Ibec
Business in the Community
Tosú
Open Doors
Pobal
Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Rural and Community Development
Department of Social Protection
Lived Experience Representatives

Additional Departmental representation on the Committee:

Specialist advice & guidance:

Where specialist advice and guidance is required in order to progress certain actions of the strategy, external experts will be sought and invited into the Advisory Committee meetings for a period of time. Such specialist areas can include but are not limited to:

- Insurance

- Social impact measurement
- Employment Law
- Human Rights

Role & responsibilities of the Committee:

1. To work in partnership with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and other relevant Departments and Agencies in order to advance the individual actions contained within the strategy.
2. To ensure that members of the target group⁷ are consulted with and kept informed of all developments throughout the term of the strategy.
3. To monitor the overall implementation of the strategy throughout its three year term.
4. To provide advice, guidance and a solution focused approach in order to address potential obstacles experienced in its implementation.
5. The Committee will provide sector relevant updates and developments as they emerge that could assist with the implementation of the strategy, including the complementary stream of work being undertaken by the Prison Education Taskforce.
6. The Committee may establish sub-groups to support its work. Sub-groups may include members external to the committee but must include at least one member of the Group who will be responsible for reporting back to the Advisory Committee. This includes the Criminal Justice Employers' Network which was established in April 2025.
7. Members of the committee are nominated for the three year term of the strategy.
8. Membership of the committee is voluntary and not remunerated.

Formation of sub-committees & Delegation authority

From time to time, it may be necessary to establish time-limited sub-committees in order to progress a particular action(s) within the strategy or emerging issues. These sub-committees will have, as a minimum, a representative of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, Irish Prison Service and/or the Probation Service as well as other relevant members from the Advisory Committee.

To ensure decisions are made in a time efficient manner and to prevent unnecessary delays, the Advisory Committee delegates authority and final decision making on matters related to the implementation of the Building Pathways Together strategy to the three criminal justice agencies. This delegation of authority can be made by one, all or a combination of the three agencies and is based on the premise that these agencies will act reasonably and in good faith. Such decisions will be communicated to the wider Advisory Committee.

Committee input to relevant Government policies

⁷ The target group for "*Building Pathways Together*" consist of: 1)Those currently in prison; 2)Those currently on a probation sanction in the community; and 3)Those with historical criminal convictions who continue to face barriers to securing employment but are no longer formally engaged with any criminal justice service.

There may be occasion where an input or observations in the form of a written submission, compiled on behalf of our inter-departmental advisory committee, would be beneficial to other relevant Government or public body strategies or policies. In these cases, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will draft the submission and disseminate it to all committee members for comment.

Each submission will include the following wording to clarify and make the distinction between committee views and those of individual Departments:

'The position(s) presented herein are an articulation of the collective views of the representatives of the Advisory Committee within the scope of their roles and functions relevant to the work of the Steering Committee, as opposed to being representative of wider Departmental positions. Departments therefore may adopt divergent positions from that of the Advisory Committee and Advisory Committee views are without prejudice to Departmental positions'.

Frequency of meetings:

Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis – May, September & December. Dates for the coming calendar year will be agreed at the first meeting in June.

Secretariat support:

Secretariat support to the Steering Committee will be provided by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Date of ratification:

This version of the Terms of Reference are to be agreed and ratified by members at the first Committee meeting.

Agreed review period:

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis or as required.

Appendix 2: ToR of CJEN

Building Pathways Together

Criminal Justice Employer's Network

Terms of Reference

Vision of the Employers' Network

The vision for the Network is to increase recruitment opportunities and long-term secure employment retention for individuals with criminal convictions, contributing to a decrease in the likelihood of reoffending and leading to a fairer, safer Ireland.

Network Roles and Responsibilities

The Network will be a space where employers can come together and discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with recruitment of individuals with criminal convictions. It will adopt a problem-solving approach to address the challenges identified.

The Network will progress relevant actions under the Employment pillar of Building Pathways Together: Criminal Justice Reintegration Through Employment Strategy 2025-2027.

Network Chair and membership

The Network will be Chaired by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration at Assistant Secretary Level and will meet biannually for the duration of the Building Pathways Together Strategy, i.e. throughout 2025-2027.

A maximum of **20** employers from a range of sectors will be sought to become members by Expression of Interest. Ideally, the employment sectors will include but are not limited to:

- ICT
- Hospitality
- Catering
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Retail
- Warehousing
- Logistics
- Waste management
- Textile industry
- Agriculture
- Community services & supports
- Public Service
- Representatives of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

Membership of the Network is voluntary and not remunerated.

Frequency of meetings:

Meetings no longer than 90 minutes will initially be held biannually with the first meeting in 2025 to confirm the membership and Terms of Reference for the Network. Subsequent meetings will

examine progress to date and any issues, where identified, which the Network should consider. Meetings will take place in person.

Sub-group meetings may be arranged in addition to the full Employers' Network in order to progress an agreed action by Network members. The Network will report on progress, at regular intervals, to the Criminal Justice Employment Advisory Committee.

Dates for future meetings will be agreed during the initial meeting.

Secretariat support:

Secretariat support to the Network will be provided by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Date of ratification:

05 June 2025

Agreed review period:

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Appendix 3: Overview of 2025 Actions

Pillar One: People with Criminal Convictions

Action	Owner (s)	
1.1	Develop formal supports through the appropriate bodies to ensure access to work training and job opportunities, including entrepreneurship, and related structures for all those with previous criminal convictions, not just those in prison or serving a community-based sanction	DoJ/IPS/PS
1.2	Provide for the use of training or education courses within community sanctions	DoJ/PS
1.3	Review, update and agree the current cross agency protocol for individuals with criminal convictions with key stakeholders	DSP
1.5	Facilitate pilot eLearning entrepreneurship programme with TUD	IPS
1.6	Scope the potential to develop a certificate of recognition of prior learning, to establish a record of positive contributions and achievements since an individual's previous criminal conviction	IPS/PS
1.7	Promote the Gaisce Award within prisons and amongst those serving community-based sanctions, and promote its significance to employers	IPS/PS
1.8	Expand the KickStart Scholarship to provide access routes and dedicated financial supports across all third level institutions in the State	DoJ/IPS/PS
1.10	Deliver the Lived Experience Leadership Programme	PS
1.11	Provide 'Experts by Experience' (EbyE) employment opportunities	IPS/PS

Pillar Two: Employers

Action	Owner (s)	
2.1	Establish a public service working group to explore opportunities to develop and promote centralised recruitment and employment policies across the public service and funded organisations that are inclusive of people with previous criminal convictions	DoJ/IPS/PS
2.2	Support, promote and advance the development of a detailed guidance document, incorporating a trauma-informed approach, for employing and retaining people with criminal convictions	DoJ/IPS/PS
2.4	Establish a new Criminal Justice Employer Network, to meet biannually, to raise issues regarding hiring people with criminal convictions, share information, develop a network, and promote activities in this area	DoJ/IPS/PS
2.5	Continue the KickStart Fund to provide funding to social enterprises to hire people with criminal convictions	DoJ/PS/DRCD
2.6	Engage with key organisations and large enterprises to promote the benefits of hiring people with previous criminal convictions to achieve their enterprise goals in Ireland	DETE/DSP
2.8	Increase the number of those in prison and in the community referred for training and employment related engagement	IPS/PS
2.9	Use skills intelligence data to identify future skills needs at entry level position or above that would be suitable for marginalised communities, namely or including those with previous criminal convictions	DETE
2.10	Conduct analysis of employment permit applications to assist in the identification of skills and labour needs and to inform the development of training and skills for those in prison or serving a community-based sanction	DETE

Pillar Three: Promotion and Knowledge Sharing

Action		Owner (s)
3.1	Host an annual event promoting activity in this area, achievements to date, and opportunities in relation to hiring people with previous criminal convictions	DoJ/IPS/PS
3.2	Deliver a national promotion campaign	DoJ
3.4	Support ongoing progress in data collection on levels of employment and earnings for those with previous criminal convictions	CSO/IPS/PS
3.7	Develop a long-term website to act as an information and empowerment hub for individuals and employers	DoJ

