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THEMATIC REVIEW

Doing More with Less: Prisoner Rehabilitation in Ireland

FEBRUARY 2019

Acknowledgements

This paper was prepared by Kristina Maslauskaite (CEB Research Analyst) and Conor Mooney (Technical Advisor, Directorate for Technical Assessment & Monitoring), and supervised by Monica Brezzi (Director, Directorate for Technical Assessment & Monitoring). Dr David Smith's (Consultant) work in collecting data during the prison visits and his contribution to the report are kindly acknowledged. The authors are very grateful the valuable inputs made by Hugh Chetwynd, Head of Division, Committee for the Prevention of Torture at Council of Europe. The authors are most appreciative of the comments provided by the colleagues in the Directorates of European Cooperation and Strategy (ECS) and Evaluation (EVD). This report would not have been possible without the unwavering support and co-operation of the Irish Prison Service management and officials in facilitating the prison visits and in providing feedback on the initial drafts.

Please cite this publication as:
Maslauskaite, K. and Mooney, C. (2018) Doing More with Less: Prisoner Rehabilitation in Ireland. Thematic Reviews, CEB, Paris.
https://coebank.org/media/documents/Doing_More_with_Less_Prisoner_Rehabilitation_in_Ireland.pdf

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Executive Summary

Prison overcrowding and the reoffending rates of former prisoners constitute significant challenges in most European countries. International recommendations foresee minimum requirements to ensure that prisoners' basic rights and well-being are met, but only a few countries in the world have developed prison systems to motivate and help offenders start a new, crime-free life after prison. Furthermore, negative social attitudes often determine the political choice to favour custodial sentences without allocating sufficient resources, which results in poor living conditions and fewer opportunities for breaking the cycle of reoffending while in prison.

This report provides a case study of the Irish prison rehabilitation system, carried out by the Directorate for Technical Assessment & Monitoring of the CEB, which co-financed the construction of the recently-inaugurated Cork prison. The Irish prison system is considered one of the most progressive in the world, particularly in light of the various reforms that have been carried out in the past decade to reflect international recommendations and best practices in prisoner rehabilitation, their reintegration into society and the fight against recidivism. Today, all prisoners in Ireland are provided with individual sentence plans, outlining their needs and preferences in terms of rehabilitation and health, which are reflected in a well-rounded rehabilitation offering that ranges from training or education to family and community involvement, or job and housing resettlement.

The Irish case stands out in particular because many of the reforms were carried out in the context of economic hardship, international bail-out and significant public spending cuts. As a result, the amount spent per prisoner per day dropped by around 30% in the period 2008-2016. Moreover, until recently, Ireland suffered from outdated prison infrastructure and significant overcrowding. Notwithstanding this challenging environment, a new Irish Prison Service leadership was appointed in 2011 with an objective to safeguard and even enhance the in-prison rehabilitative services and further upgrade prison infrastructure. In parallel, strong political will resulted in legislation to ease prison overcrowding by making imprisonment a last resort for fine defaulters.

This report presents the twelve pillars of the Irish rehabilitation programme, based on available information, policy documents and interviews with the main stakeholders, including the Irish Prison Service. For each pillar, the report highlights progress made and the outstanding challenges faced, and identifies good practices in implementing the rehabilitation programme within a strained public budget, which could be of interest to other countries.

The report also identifies a number of areas in the rehabilitation services that would require additional resources to enhance participation in the programme and contribute to reducing recidivism. These are addiction, psychology and resettlement, where more dedicated staff are required, both within and outside the prisons. Even as the Irish economy is recovering from the crisis and more resources are finally being made available to hire new prison staff, the rise in the prison population is expected to remain a serious concern, with immediate ramifications for the system's capacity to provide education, vocational training and other rehabilitation programmes.

> *"While it might seem easier in the short term to lock certain prisoners in their cells and provide an authoritarian regime, all prisoners, even life sentence prisoners, will at some stage return to their community and such action only serves to increase the risk that a prison would pose to society."*
>
> Michael Donnellan, Director General of the Irish Prison Service (IPS) 2011-2018 (*Irish Independent 2016*)

1. Introduction

Given the considerable financial and societal cost of the cycle of re-offending, the rehabilitation of offenders should be the overarching objective of all penal systems. The benefits of successful positive reintegration in society are enormous: for the individuals, for their families and for the community at large. Yet, the reoffending rates for ex-prisoners remain significant in many European countries, suggesting that merely depriving persons of their liberty is not sufficiently dissuasive against their re-engagement in criminal behaviour post release.

The European Prison Rules, developed by the Council of Europe, describe the basic principles of a rehabilitative prison regime, which can be adapted to national, local and individual circumstances (*Council of Europe 2016*). The main pillars of such a regime include humane living conditions, safety, frequent contact with the outside world, a balanced programme of activities, education, possibilities to work, and adequate healthcare. All these elements are necessary for a well-functioning rehabilitative regime to equip detainees with the morale and skills needed to succeed within a non-criminal community. The implementation of these recommendations varies widely between different countries and between different prisons in Europe. Building such a system, consistent with the overriding needs of secure custody, requires strong social and political support for rehabilitation and sufficient resources available for each prisoner.

Contributing towards these ends in its member states, the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) invests in prison infrastructure, which is built and operated in line with the European Prison Rules and the Recommendations of the Council of Europe's European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). The CEB recognises that (re)construction of judicial infrastructure is not an end in itself, but rather an instrument to increase the likelihood of reintegration into society and reduce the risk of recidivism. The Bank therefore provides financing for both the physical and non-physical aspects of new and reconstructed prisons. On the one hand, the objective is to improve living conditions, reduce overcrowding, facilitate more meaningful family visits, and provide appropriate space for training and rehabilitation opportunities. On the other hand, the CEB can also support the provision for prison staff and management of the training necessary to ensure that the prison's regime – its day-to-day operating modalities – will be consistent with proper practices.

In 2013, the CEB approved a loan to part-finance the construction of a new prison in Cork, Ireland, to house up to 310 prisoners in a medium-security environment. The pre-existing facility, built in the early 19th century as a military detention centre and used as a civilian prison since 1972, had suffered from severe overcrowding and did not have the types of features that would be considered necessary in modern, best practice prisons, such as in-cell sanitation or adequate training facilities. The CEB's participation in the construction of the Cork Prison, which opened in 2016, provided an opportunity to better understand the Irish system of prisoner rehabilitation and to witness the progress made in recent years.

This paper presents a case study of the prison rehabilitation programmes in Ireland, which have been in place for many years and have been continuously adjusted and reformed, especially in the past decade. Owing to strong political and institutional leadership as well as commitment to rehabilitation – even when faced with economic difficulty following the financial and economic crisis of 2008 – Ireland managed to optimise its penitentiary system by enhancing the rehabilitative offering to prisoners and, at the same time, cutting spending. Although more data and time would be needed to evaluate the long-term impact of the prison service reforms on the rates of recidivism, the available data indicate a significant improvement in the past years. Even though the effectiveness of rehabilitative systems depends on many factors, including the country-specific context, the Irish case study was selected as an example of good practice because of the country's ability to make impressive progress in reforming its penal system at a time of harsh austerity.

This paper describes the entire Irish Prison Rehabilitation Programme, the aim being to: i) highlight the innovative elements as well the challenges encountered in the different rehabilitative offerings; and ii) better understand how successfully the rehabilitation measures have been implemented while dealing with the challenges of underfunding and overcrowding. The paper is based on a background review of existing policy documents, data collected by visiting three Irish prisons in early 2018 and carrying out formal and informal interviews with providers of in-reach and out-reach programmes as well as with prisoners. The CEB did not finance any of the non-physical aspects of Cork prison or the services discussed in this report, which allowed the authors a greater degree of objectivity. The findings may be of use to the Irish Prison Service (IPS) officials to enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes, and to the international financing institutions, including the CEB itself, to identify effective practices that could be shared with other member countries.

The paper is structured as follows:

- Section 2 reviews literature findings on the positive effect of prison rehabilitation programmes in reducing re-offending and more generally in enhancing social cohesion
- Section 3 presents the Irish prison system against the backdrop of the recent economic crisis and prison overcrowding.
- Section 4 describes the twelve pillars of the prisoner rehabilitation services provided by the IPS, providing a synopsis of the main characteristics, examples of the innovative elements and challenges encountered in the implementation of each of the twelve rehabilitation services.
- Section 5 provides a discussion of the system and offers a number of conclusions.

2. Prisoner Rehabilitation: Opportunities and Challenges

The social and economic cost of crime to society is substantial, including the costs of crime prevention (such as police patrolling, installing of gates and alarms); costs as a consequence of crime to the victim; costs in response to crime (criminal justice system); and opportunity costs of offenders who could have worked and paid taxes instead of being deprived of their liberty. These costs are difficult to quantify, not least because it is hard to estimate the true financial cost of violent crimes and homicides. Some estimates suggest that the total annual cost of crime in England and Wales is around £59 billion, in the USA between $690 billion and $3.41 trillion, and in Ireland €7.6 billion, a large part of which (33%) goes to supporting the justice system (*Heeks et al. 2018, 6* and *Crowe 2017, 12*). The cost of reoffending makes up a significant part of these total amounts: up to €15 billion in the UK (National Audit Office UK 2010).

Recidivism is difficult to measure and to compare internationally because there is no general consensus on the definition, the time horizon or the exact metric (*Davis et al. 2015*). Nevertheless, data in some countries suggests that reoffending rates are high and incarceration may not be sufficient to prevent further crime. In France, Germany and the Netherlands around half of former prisoners find themselves back in prison (*Fazel and Wolf 2015*). In Ireland, almost two thirds of reoffenders of the 2010 cohort were convicted within the first six months of official release from custody (*Irish Central Statistical Office, n.d.*). This first six-month period after release from prison represents a critical period during which a former prisoner either secures employment and housing, or ends up jobless and homeless, and hence is significantly more likely to reoffend.

There are many reasons why former prisoners return to crime instead of starting an alternative life path. The level of education, work experience, substance addiction, mental health, institutionalisation, life skills, financial situation, housing and social relationships are among the most significant determinants of reoffending, but often, it is simply the only life they have known (*Eikeland et al. 2009, 6*). The majority of prisoners already come from disadvantaged social backgrounds, have a family history of criminality, are often in poor physical and mental health – not least because of substance abuse – and societies tend to stigmatise former prisoners, further hindering their re-integration.

However, there is a growing body of literature indicating that the rate of re-offending can be reduced through effective prisoner intervention programmes, many of which assist in the post-release re-integration of prisoners to assist with finding more secure, longer term employment. Programmes associated with positive intervention, such as education and training, can have a positive impact on rates of recidivism (*Fulton et al. 1997* and *Cullen and Gendreau 2000*). For example, in England and Wales, prisoners who undertook educational activities were 40%

less likely to reoffend (*Czerniawski 2016*). A recent study in the USA found that prisoners who participated in educational programmes in prison were also 43% less likely to return to prison, and those who received in-prison vocational training had a 28% higher chance of finding a job after prison (*Davis et al. 2013, 27*). Finding a job post release is associated with up to 50% lower probability of reoffending (*Social Exclusion Unit, 2000*). These estimates should be treated carefully as the prisoners who participate voluntarily in rehabilitative activities might simply be more motivated to stop offending; nevertheless, they indicate that rehabilitative programmes might help foster this motivation and the acquisition of the skills needed following their release. Estimates for the UK suggest that, in monetary terms, the benefit to society of prisoner education was more than double the investment, generated through reduced public spending and positive contributions to the economy by ex-prisoners (*Matrix Knowledge Group 2009*).

Because the prison population is so diverse and has more particular needs than the general population, good rehabilitative regimes should consist of many dimensions, such as acceptable living conditions, safe prison environment, opportunity to maintain meaningful relationships, adequate healthcare, addiction counselling, psychological support, education, training and access to services facilitating the return to the community. According to the Council of Europe, life in prison should "approximate as closely as possible the positive aspects of life in the community" in order to "facilitate the reintegration into free society" (*The Council of Europe 1990, 7*). This aspiration is even more difficult in reality than it sounds in theory. On the premise that society has decided that imprisonment itself – the deprivation of liberty – is the punishment, then nothing else should be added to a prisoner's hardship. This implies that a prisoner should have every opportunity to, for example, stay up to date with the latest technology so as not to be disadvantaged or penalised in addition to the deprivation of liberty, upon release. However, to allow a prisoner to remain technologically literate is extremely complex in a prison environment, and, as mentioned later in this paper, requires considerable efforts to monitor and control. Despite every best effort, prisoners therefore often find themselves falling further behind just by being in prison.

To achieve maximum rehabilitative impact, each prisoner should have a tailored sentence plan with a unique mix of services offered in preparation for release (*Raffaelli 2017, 8*). Education and training activities have to be learner-centred, designed in a holistic fashion and offered in a flexible manner. In many European countries, these activities in prisons are still largely underdeveloped, as less than a quarter of prisoners participate in any form of in-prison education and training (*Hawley et al. 2013, 5*). From a societal point of view, this means a huge missed opportunity for released prisoners to become fully participating members of society and net economic contributors, without reliance on social welfare. Moreover, from a human point of view, this represents unfulfilled potential and exacerbates problems such as homelessness, family breakup, re-incarceration, and mental illness – all of which also have socioeconomic costs.

Ideal rehabilitative regimes are difficult to implement, especially since many prisons in Europe today are faced with a number of constraints that limit their capability to provide effective services. Overcrowding is a major issue, with many European prisons running at above their operational capacity (*Hawley et al. 2013, 5*). The prevalence of mental illness and substance addiction among inmates is also higher – by more than three times in the US – compared to the general population (*Skeem et al. 2011, 110*). In addition to this, the prisoner population has varying levels of skills including a significant proportion of low-skilled individuals with limited prior educational experience. Furthermore, a high proportion of the prison population serve only short sentences, which reduces their opportunity to absorb any meaningful rehabilitative services, especially if there are waiting lists.

Alternative sentences are widely considered as a way to reduce the number of people in custody and to free up more resources for the prison population. In most Council of Europe countries, there are more offenders serving non-custodial sentences than incarcerated in prison (*Bernardi 2016, 22*). Community-based sentences often apply to offenders with short sentences or as a final pre-release phase to longer term prisoners. There is some evidence to suggest that such sentences also reduce the rate of recidivism, provided that they are well designed and targeted (*Durnescu 2014, 7*). Hence, well-developed social and probation services are vital for reaching the ultimate win-win situation of lower financial costs of sentencing in the short term and lower rates of recidivism in the longer term.

3. The Prison System in Ireland

Ireland faces many of the aforementioned challenges and dilemmas related to prisoner reoffending and well-being. In order to provide a better understanding of how the rehabilitative regimes function in Ireland, this section offers a basic overview of the Irish prison system. The Irish prison estate consists of 12 institutions, including ten traditional "closed" prisons and two open centres with lower-level security. Some of the prisons have specific functions, for example, the Dóchas Centre is female-only, and half of the prisoners in the Midlands Prison are sex offenders (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Key facts on the Irish Prison Service Estate

Prison Name	Year first opened	Prison Type	Prison population	Bed Capacity	Number in custody 31 Dec 2017
Arbour Hill Prison	1975	Closed, medium security	Mostly long term sentenced male prisoners	142	136
Castlerea Prison	1996	Closed, medium security	Remand and sentenced male prisoners	340	268
Cloverhill Prison	1999	Closed, medium security	Primarily remand male prisoners	431	358
Cork Prison	1972	Closed, medium security	Remand and sentenced male prisoners	275	281
Dóchas Centre	1999	Closed, medium security	Remand and sentenced female prisoners	105	122
Limerick Prison	1822	Closed, medium security	Remand and sentenced male and female prisoners	220 (males) and 28 (females)	206 and 28
Loughan House Open Centre	1973	Open, low security	Adult males regarded as requiring lower levels of security	140	103
Midlands Prison	2000	A closed, medium security	Remand and sentenced male prisoners, half of them sex offenders	870	830
Mountjoy Prison	1850	Closed, medium security	Remand and sentenced male prisoners	554	608
Portlaoise Prison	1902	Closed high security	Offenders from Special Criminal Court and prisoners linked with subversive crime	291	231
Shelton Abbey	1973	Open, low security	Adult males regarded as requiring lower levels of security	115	76
Wheatfield Place of Detention	1989	Closed, medium security	Adult males and sentenced 17-year-old juveniles	540	399

Source: Irish Prison Service, Annual Report 2017, p.25 and the IPS website

A number of prisons, including Limerick, Portlaoise and Mountjoy, date back to the 19th century and largely reflect the penal philosophy of that period. In the late 1960s, the number of prisoners started to increase in Ireland, and by 1980 the capacity of the prison system was under strain (*Rogan 2013, 4*). Consequently, an unstructured and largely unsupervised temporary release programme was put in place; in addition to this, the requirement to have prisoners in single cells was removed (*Rogan 2013, 4*). Education units in some prisons were also reduced to make space for more cells (*Rogan 2013, 5*). Despite the efforts to reduce the prisoner population, the number of prisoners almost trebled between 1981 and 2001, from 1,196 to 3,165 (in part due to reoffending by the temporarily released prisoners) and living conditions in prisons deteriorated further (*Martin 2016*).

Four new prisons were opened between 1996 and 2000, a period of strong economic growth and significant increases in public investment spending in Ireland, and the most recent, Cork Prison, was inaugurated in 2016. The estate is therefore a combination of "a set of extremely old facilities that have, to greater and lesser degrees, been adapted or altered at various points over their lifetimes, as well as a sub-set of more modern facilities that reflect more contemporary penal principles and design standards" (*Irish Prison Service 2016a, 10*). The IPS recognises that, until 30 years ago, before the construction of the newer prisons, the prison estate suffered from underinvestment and poor maintenance (*Irish Prison Service 2016a, 16*).

Economic hardship following the financial crisis of 2008 exacerbated overall crime levels in Ireland, but fine defaulters were particularly numerous presumably due to strained financial circumstances. At the same time, the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014, signed between Ireland and the Troika of international lenders[1], included commitments to reduce spending across the prison system by using less costly non-custodial sentences and cutting spending (*Rogan 2013-15, 10*). The Fines Act, which came into effect in 2016, made imprisonment a last resort for fine defaulters (*Fines Act 2014*). As a consequence, in 2017, there were only 2,261 committals to prison for the non-payment of court-ordered fines, a decrease from 8,439 in 2016 (*Irish Penal Reform Trust, n.d.*). The prison population also decreased substantially to around 3,600 individuals across the Irish prison estate in 2016 and 2017, representing an over 20% reduction since 2010 (*Irish Prison Service, n.d.*). In 2015, the incarceration rate (78.1 per 100 000 inhabitants) was higher than in the Scandinavian countries, but remained well below the median Council of Europe rate (117.1) (*Aebi et al. 2016, 37*). In 2018, somewhat worryingly, the numbers started to rise again, with 3,852 individuals in custody on 17 October 2018 (*Irish Prison Service, n.d.*).

Today, the IPS defines its long-term strategic vision as ensuring that the prison estate "provides safe, secure and humane custody, that upholds the dignity of all users, and that reflects and supports a modern and progressive penal policy" (*Irish Prison Service 2016a, 19*). In recent years, the IPS has made significant efforts to improve living conditions in all prisons and to ensure in-cell sanitation, which increased from 75% of the prison population in 2012 to 99% in 2017 (*Irish Prison Service 2017, 24*). However, the IPS recognises that the pressures of providing sufficient prison capacity and modernising in-cell sanitation have in some cases taken precedence over the upgrading of out-of-cell facilities, necessary for effective rehabilitation (*Irish Prison Service 2016a, 22).* In addition, several prisons are still considered unfit for purpose, and remain in need of significant capital investment (Irish Prison Service 2016a, 16). The IPS budget for the period 2016-2021 caps the annual capital investment in the prison estate at €28 million (*Irish Prison Service 2016a, 17*).

Figure 2. Double and single occupancy cells in Irish prisons

Source: BreakingNews.ie, "Prison Service to Spend 120,000 on Spiritual Needs of Prisoners", published on 18 March 2018[2]
D'Arcy, Ciarán, "Midlands Prison Criticised over Dead Inmate's Accommodation", Irish Times, published on 9 November 2015[3]

Prison overcrowding is very closely related to the system's capacity to provide rehabilitative services, and this overcrowding can also make infrastructure improvements and upgrade works challenging as the prisoners cannot be easily relocated temporarily (*Irish Prison Service 2016a, 19*). The IPS has been operating at 85-90% of bed capacity in recent years, compared to 90.2% on average in Council of Europe countries (*Aebi et al. 2016, 37*). The Irish prison system is therefore operating close to its maximum capacity, but is not *de facto* overcrowded, especially when compared to other countries such as Belgium (119.4%), France (116.9%), Portugal (109.4%), Italy (109.3%) and Finland (100.5%) (*Aebi et al. 2016, 51*).

1 The European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
2 Available at: https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/prison-service-to-spend-120000-on-spiritual-needs-of-prisoners-833160.html
3 Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/midlands-prison-criticised-over-dead-inmate-s-accommodation-1.2422859

Figure 3. Prison density rates in Irish prisons on 17 October of each year (Percentage of bed capacity)

Name of prison	2015	2016	2017	2018
Arbour Hill	95	92	95	99
Castlerea	89	83	76	84
Cloverhill	88	95	91	97
Cork	100	89	90	94
Limerick (male)	103	100	98	104
Limerick (female)	104	89	89	104
Loughan House	81	84	79	80
Midlands	94	93	94	95
Mountjoy (male)	92	86	74	88
Mountjoy Dochas (female)	106	100	112	120
Portlaoise	70	65	76	74
Shelton Abbey	93	79	84	86
Wheatfield	82	80	76	80
Total	90	87	85	90

Source: Irish Prison Service, "2018 Prison Population"[4]

Significant differences can be observed between the different prisons, from an 80% prison density rate in Wheatfield to 120% in Mountjoy's female wing. In addition, a significant proportion of available beds in several prisons does not comply with the Inspector of Prisons'[5] bed capacity requirements that presuppose structured activity for a minimum of five hours per day, five days per week in addition to out-of-cell time, exercise and recreation periods. In Castlerea, 30 out of 340; in Arbour Hill, seven out of 138; in Limerick's male wing, 25 out of 210; and in the female wing, four out of 28 available beds are inconsistent with these requirements (*Irish Prison Service, n.d.*). This means that some of the prisoners who have an officially attributed bed do not actually receive sufficient rehabilitative activities in these prisons (*Irish Prison Service, n.d.*).

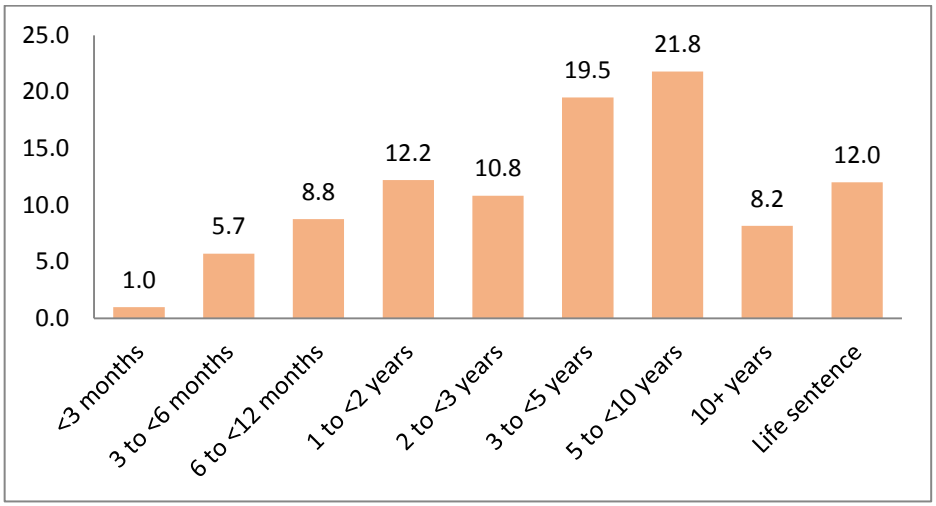
Both of the female prisons are the most overcrowded in Ireland, putting female prisoners at a disadvantage in terms of good quality living conditions and rehabilitative services. In line with most other European countries, females account for less than 4% of prisoners under sentence, but their facilities suffer from more underinvestment. In addition, female prisoners do not have a dedicated lower-security, or open, prison where they could spend the end of their sentences in preparation for release. The IPS is aware of this unbalanced treatment and is considering ways to upgrade existing infrastructure. The new female wing of Limerick prison has already been approved and is expected to be opened by 2021, catering for 50 female prisoners and hopefully easing overcrowding in the two female prisons (*The Law Society Gazette Ireland 2018*).

Prisoner profiles, in particular sentence lengths, can have an impact on the design and effectiveness of the rehabilitative regime. In 2017, 16% of prisoners in Ireland served short-term sentences of less than a year, which remains below the European average of 16.5% and significantly lower than other Western European countries, such as the Netherlands (39.2%), Norway (34%), France (32.2%) or Germany (27.1%) (*Aebi et al. 2016, 95*). More than 23% of all prisoners in Ireland were serving sentences between one and three years, 41% were serving sentences between three and 10 years, less than 8% were serving long sentences of over 10 years, and 12% were serving life sentences (Figure 4) (*Aebi et al. 2016, 29*). Ireland is also among the 10 Council of Europe countries with the youngest average prison population age, which stood at 33 years in 2016.

[4] Available at: https://www.irishprisons.ie/information-centre/statistics-information/2015-daily-prisoner-population/2018-prison-populations/

[5] The Office of the Inspector of Prisons is a statutory, independent office established under the Prisons Act, 2007 and its key role is to carry out regular inspections of all prisons in Ireland.

Figure 4. Sentence profile of prisoners in custody under sentence on 30 November 2017 (%)



Source: Own calculations based on IPS Annual Report 2017, p.29

Overall, around half of prisoners in Ireland are accommodated in single cells and over 10% are on a restricted or "protection" regime, spending a minimum of 19 hours a day in their cells. The vast majority of protection prisoners are secluded at their own request, using Rule 63 of the Irish Prison Rules (*Irish Penal Reform Trust, n.d.*). These requests have been increasing over recent years and are often related to criminal gangs that are becoming more prominent and powerful both outside and within Irish prisons (*The Irish Times 2018*). In some Irish prisons, between 12 and 14 major criminal groups are represented, many of whose members cannot be permitted to mingle in the same spaces. In one prison, the officers introduced a colour-coded system to distinguish the members of the different gangs (*The Irish Times 2018*). Having a high number of segregated prisoners creates a major problem for organising education, training, and other group activities within prisons. Nonetheless, the efforts to contain violent behaviour seem to have been paying off as the number of reported prisoner-on-prisoner assaults has decreased every year from 715 in 2012 to 417 in 2017 across the Irish prisons system, even though many assaults remain off record out of fear of retaliation.

In terms of financing, the IPS budget decreased from €404 million in 2008 to €332 million in 2016 as a result of post-crisis fiscal austerity. Consequentially, the amount spent per prisoner per day was reduced by almost 30% to €188 between 2008 and 2016 (*Aebi and Delgrande 2010, 95* and *Aebi et al. 2016, 122*). This amount is above the European average of €108 and median of €51, but significantly below the expenses incurred in Sweden (€380), Norway (€344), the Netherlands (€250) and France (€245) (*Aebi et al. 2016, 122*). In addition, a moratorium on the new recruitment of prison staff was in place between 2008 and 2016, leading to a reduction of 300 staff members (to approximately 3,200) (*Aebi et al. 2016, 144*). Even though the prisoner per custodian ratio is still lower in Ireland than in many other European countries (1 prison officer to 2.5 prisoners in all Council of Europe members, 1 to 4.2 in Germany, 1 to 3.8 in the UK and 1 to 3.5 Spain), it increased significantly from 1.1 to 1.6 in the same period even as the number of prisoners actually decreased (*Aebi and Delgrande 2010, 108* and *Aebi et al. 2016, 144*).

Within this difficult context, a new Director General of the IPS, Michael Donnellan, was appointed in 2011, and came to the position with a vision to improve rehabilitative outcomes for Irish prisoners and to shift the emphasis meaningfully from punitive regimes to reintegration. The reduction in the prison population allowed the IPS to refocus its strategy "from a reactionary process of dealing with overcrowding and the associated problems towards a more proactive approach investing in staff, building organisational capacity, improving accountability and providing better conditions, facilities, services and programmes to prisoners that will assist them on their road to desistance" (*Irish Prison Service 2016b*).

4. The Rehabilitative Regime in the Irish Prison System

This section sets out the different features of the Irish rehabilitative regime as it has emerged over the past two centuries to become a leading regime today that could be of interest to other countries. The twelve services offered in Irish prisons today are described separately, but they all feed into each other offering to optimally meet the needs of each person deprived of their liberty. Each subsection gives an overview of the innovations introduced, highlights the challenges encountered and provides some evidence as to the effectiveness of these services. Because of their interdependence, the attribution of success to any specific measure or set of measures should be treated carefully.

4.1. Integrated Sentence Management (ISM)

Key take-away: ISM is less a rehabilitation programme in its own right than a route-planning and co-ordination service with significant influence on rehabilitation. To the extent that this influence is well-aimed and properly deployed, it can catalyse and optimise the provision of actual rehabilitation services. Applied to prisoners sentenced to more than one year, plus to all sex offenders, the system has good coverage of prisoners, even though considerable staff resources are required. Community integration is the final output of the system, showing the pathway to be followed during the crucial transition to liberty.

In the past decade, the Irish Prison Service developed an individualised sentence plan for all sentenced prisoners, as outlined in international recommendations (*UNODC 2012*). The Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) system was piloted in Wheatfield and Arbour Hill prisons in 2005-2006 and rolled out to all other Irish prisons in the following years. The system aims to best mobilise the resources available inside and outside a prison, and to make prisoners responsible by giving them an active role in their sentence planning. Each prisoner's needs and preferences are assessed at the beginning of their sentence and an individual plan is agreed upon, including their education and training activities and participation in other prison services (see Box 1 for details). It is a central plank of the ISM system that prisoners participate in the processes, are consulted at key stages and, if willing to do so, take ownership of their own sentence plan. In its Strategic Plan, the IPS states that its objective is to "maximise the potential engagement of prisoners in constructive and structured activities during their time in custody by implementing enhanced sentence planning, with a specific focus on identifying and addressing underlying risk factors and promoting protective factors" (*Irish Prison Service 2016b, 24*).

Box 1

The ISM stages and outputs in practice

First Contact Assessment
Shortly after committal to a prison, each prisoner is assessed by one of the specialist ISM co-ordinators in terms of their accommodation, education and offending behaviour needs.

Referral
Referrals are made to the Education and Training Departments within the prison and to the relevant in-reach providers. These services do their own assessments and provide feedback to the ISM co-ordinator.

Personal Integration Plan (PIP)
This sentence plan details the activities that should be accomplished during the prisoner's time as an inmate. Enhanced ISM involves the incorporation of further assessments by the Psychology and Probation Departments.

Review
The PIP is reviewed semi-annually for standard ISM prisoners, based on written reports from the services and agencies involved, as well as from Chaplaincy and Healthcare. Enhanced ISM prisoners attend an annual case conference with prison, service and agency staff. PIPs are adjusted, if necessary, following these reviews.

Community Integration (CI)
With about one year left to serve, ISM moves into CI mode, in which the objective is to complete the sentence plan, achieve pre-release goals and arrange specific release interventions. A CI interview by the ISM co-ordinator, supported by referrals to and feedback from services and agencies as well as a case conference, aims to generate an agreed CI Plan nine months before release. Monitored during this period by the ISM co-ordinator, the CI Plan can, if necessary, be fine-tuned and updated.

In 2018, there were 23 prison officers working as ISM co-ordinators across the Irish prison network. In larger prisons, such as Midlands or Wheatfield, each ISM officer deals with a specific group of prisoners in order to best identify and meet their needs. These groups include youths (18-24 year-olds), life-sentenced prisoners, sex offenders, or prisoners serving short-term sentences of less than one year. The ISM officers work within multidisciplinary prison-based teams that include the Psychology Service, Education Service, Work Training Service, Chaplaincy Service, Probation Service, Resettlement Service, Addiction Service, and the Healthcare team. The ideal case scenario would be to develop an individualised sentence plan for each offender in consultation with these multi-disciplinary teams and to have each prisoner's plan discussed at their weekly meetings, but resources are constrained at present. Records of individual plans represent an opportunity for improvement, and the IPS is working to deliver an IT system to standardise the recording of sentence plans.

4.2. Education

Key take-away: Education is the cornerstone, externally-provided rehabilitation programme for prisoners in Irish prisons. It is a form of rehabilitation that can close gaps in prisoners' primary, secondary or even tertiary levels of education, to provide them with the confidence, skills and critical thinking capacity not only to find employment opportunities outside prison, but also to deal with issues in every aspect of their lives. The organisation of education in prison is quite a complex system that requires flexibility both from teachers and prison officers alike.

The level of education and the level of imprisonment have a strong negative correlation in all parts of the world. In Ireland, 4.7% of early school leavers will be imprisoned during their lifetime as compared to less than 0.2% for those having finished their secondary education (*Smyth and McCoy 2009, 50*). More than half of Irish prisoners left school before the age of 15 and a significant proportion are illiterate (*Irish Penal Reform Trust, n.d.*). It is therefore very difficult for these individuals to reintegrate into the employment market post release.

In Ireland, formal education for prisoners is provided through a partnership between the IPS and the Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI). This latter national body delivers its services to prisons through local Education and Training Boards (ETBs), which are statutory education authorities with responsibility for all education, training and youth work in Ireland funded by the Department of Education and Skills. The ETBs employ teachers who work in prison schools, and the IPS budget covers the remaining costs related to in-prison education, such as educational materials, equipment, software and premises. Curricula, staffing and organisational arrangements follow a Joint IPS and ETBI Education Strategy, which is also reflected in the IPS Strategic Plan.

In 2017, around 200 full-time-equivalent teachers were employed by the ETBs to provide education services in the Irish prison estate. On average, there was one teacher for every 20 prisoners across all institutions, but the variation between prisons was large. In Portlaoise and Loughan House prisons, this ratio was twice as high, with only 11 prisoners per teacher, while in Cloverhill prison, one teacher was employed per 42 prisoners (Figure 5).

In-prison schools offer all levels of education from remedial literacy and numeracy through to secondary education state examination certificates. Each prisoner is interviewed individually by teachers to identify relevant courses, but the education remains student-led and school attendance is voluntary. Approximately half of prisoners in Ireland attend education courses, but participation varies significantly between prisons, with some of the highest rates at the two open prisons, Loughan House and Shelton Abbey. In prisons where the teacher-to-prisoner ratios were the least favourable, (i.e., Cloverhill, Mountjoy and Midlands), student participation rates were also the lowest (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Education data in Irish prisons, September-October, 2017

Education Centre	Number of teachers	Population	Teacher to prisoner ratio	Participation rate
Arbour Hill	11.0	135.4	12.3	63.5%
Castlerea	16.2	274.1	16.9	42.7%
Cloverhill	8.5	357.4	42.1	20.4%
Cork	19.1	269.9	14.1	49.8%
Dóchas	8.5	116.5	13.7	43.7%
Limerick	16.1	225.5	14.0	51.6%
Loughan House	9.5	107.9	11.3	76.5%
Midlands	34.2	812.9	23.8	35.9%
Mountjoy	20.0	548.6	27.4	20.5%
Portlaoise	19.6	216.5	11.0	44.2%
Shelton Abbey	7.4	103.4	14.0	56.5%
Wheatfield	17.0	421.2	24.8	50.5%
Total	187.2	3 589.4	19.2	50.5%

Source: IPS

Once prisoners enter through a school door, they become known and addressed as students. On a normal school day, three classes take place during the cell unlock times: two in the morning and one in the afternoon. Evening classes (17:30-19:00) also take place once or twice a week. As a rough estimate, around 10% of all prisoners request basic reading, writing and mathematics classes, which are usually taught on a one-to-one basis. Students can study to obtain certification through the state examination programmes (the intermediate-level secondary school qualification, "Junior Certificate", or the higher-level secondary school terminal qualification, "Leaving Certificate") in standard subjects such as mathematics, history, geography, natural sciences, vocational subjects (e.g., metalwork/woodwork) and languages.

A wide variety of separate formal courses is also offered at different levels following an adult education approach. These are accredited by nationally-recognised boards to Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) standards (from primary to secondary education levels). The objective is to have fewer than seven students attend any single course. Some of the innovative popular courses include money management and crime awareness, including elements of criminology and sociology.

Figure 6. A library and a classroom in an Irish prison

Source: IPS

In addition to this, all prisons offer tertiary education through the Open University in Ireland. At any one time, each prison typically has between two and five prisoners enrolled in higher education – usually those serving long sentences. The range of Open University courses available is quite broad and a teacher acts as liaison between students and university. The Open University offers the flexibility to transfer credits and to continue courses post release. Despite being a form of education not requiring physical classroom attendance, studying via the Open University can still be challenging from a logistics perspective, as most subjects require Internet access for at least

some course elements. Since Internet is generally not permitted inside prisons, adequate staff and technical supervision is required to monitor on-line access against unauthorised diversion or inappropriate communication with the outside world.

Several prisons are already equipped with modern digital labs where prisoners can access laptop computers, tablets or video projectors. However, prisoners who have been serving their sentence for more than a decade can find themselves completely unfamiliar with the technologies that will be necessary in their life post release, and this can represent an unintended additional punishment for prisoners beyond the deprivation of their liberty, which is often difficult to overcome effectively. Efforts have been made in Australia, for example, to provide prisoners with limited internet access to allow them to complete online education and to remain as technologically up to date as possible, but even those efforts have been sabotaged on occasion by prisoners modifying the computing equipment to enable illicit communications with criminal associates in the outside world to take place. Nevertheless, it is important to continue to strive to ensure that prisoners' punishment for their crimes remains solely as the deprivation of their liberty and that it does not extend to disadvantaging them upon their release.

There has also been significant investment in technology to improve the delivery of prison education services. This includes a new Prison Education Management System (PEMS) which will record school/student timetables, attendances, and academic achievements and provide a weekly summary on an integrated planning tab accessible to all services. There is also a central network in place that makes educational resources available via computers in the education centres. In-cell laptops are provided to enable students to prepare assignments for courses, where required.

Four innovative features support the educational offering in Irish prisons. Firstly, some prison schools offer certification through external accreditation agencies such as the Rock School and the Royal Music Academy. A varied arts programme is offered in collaboration with the Irish Arts Council on "Artist in Prison" and "Writer in Prison" Schemes and a biennial creative art exhibition. Prison schools liaise with external organisations and facilitate in-reach programmes such as Red Cross Programmes and post-release support organisations. In addition to these, there are some education programmes specifically tailored to meet the needs of the prison population, such as the Pre-Release Programme and the parenting courses. For short-term prisoners with insufficient time in prison to complete a course or take the relevant examinations, arrangements are made to allow mid-term joining and leaving of suitable courses, so as to maximise learner interest.

Secondly, formal sports coaching courses are also offered in some prisons by bringing instructors of various sports to give professional training. Over the ten weekly sessions, a group of twelve selected prisoner participants are introduced to such sports as soccer, rugby, Gaelic football and basketball. They are also taught how to involve participants with disabilities. From the last such course in Cork prison, all twelve prisoners gained a QQI qualification in sports coaching which can form the basis for subsequent qualifications should the prisoners pursue them after their release.

Thirdly, some of the programmes offered at IPS prisons culminate in a "graduation ceremony" whereby the participants present a showcase of the skills they have learned to an audience of prison staff, management, and perhaps most importantly, their own families. This feature of the programme has the tremendous benefit of allowing prisoners to be seen in front of their families as successful, having achieved something, and possibly for the first time in their lives, being presented as role models for their children. It can have a profound effect on the prisoners' sense of personal value and worth, and can also enhance the family ties, which are under strain due to the imprisonment, and may have been difficult even before prison.

Finally, prison schools also serve as places for association and socialising. For example, the Wheatfield prison school organises meetings between former and current prisoners, all of whom have been engaged in prison education. Recently, the prisoners decided to establish a formalised group with regular meetings. The prison's governor is very supportive of various peer-to-peer initiatives and has agreed to sit on the group's Advisory Council and Steering Committee. In the Dillon's Cross Project, the Cork Prison school has extended its activities to prisoners' female family members, thus strengthening family ties and promoting interest in education (Box 2).

Box 2

Education opportunities for prisoners' families

Named after an area close to Cork Prison, the Dillon's Cross Project has been providing education and support to female relatives of serving and discharged prisoners since 1995. This is a unique initiative in Ireland, which has not yet been replicated elsewhere in the country. It is funded and staffed by the Cork ETB as an adjunct to the educational services provided within the prison, with the aim of giving female relatives the same educational opportunities as those available inside Cork Prison. Most of the women are early school-leavers with little or no positive education experience.

Courses at QQI Levels 1-3 (up to Junior Certificate) are offered in computing, mathematics, personal effectiveness and communications, while the childcare course extends to Level 4 and facilitates progression to paid apprenticeships and employment in kindergarten/pre-school facilities. Courses last one year, based on attendance for four half-days a week, scheduled to fit in with school hours for children. Access is facilitated by payment (the governor of Cork Prison contributes some funding) of a travel allowance of €7 per school day, which students consider to be significant support. Two groups of seven women, divided into two levels, attend the project and are required to complete seven courses (core and optional). The Project gets known by word of mouth and is reported as always having a waiting list due to lack of available places.

In addition to its educational value, the Project functions as a meeting place for the partners and mothers of prisoners, providing them with motivation towards a common purpose. Attendees realise they are not alone, and can share their burdens with others similarly affected. Many have reported increases in self-esteem and confidence that help in seeking employment. In addition, a shared educational experience with their imprisoned relatives may foster a positive outlook, strengthen family ties and encourage a longer-term interest in education and training.

The Project also hosts a popular summer camp for up to 45 children of prisoners and is currently looking for funds to be able to offer after-school activities.

Running a prison school effectively requires a lot of flexibility from both the teachers and the prison officers. First of all, providing many courses at different levels means that each prison school has to accommodate a wide range of educational offerings. For example, nearly 60 courses were available in Cork Prison and 88 in Wheatfield Prison in 2017. Secondly, all prisoners need to be escorted from their cells to the school area by prison officers, at least four of which are assigned full-time to this duty in most Irish prisons. Thirdly, teachers are required to visit the cells or wings of prisoners who are segregated for reasons of behaviour or for their own security. Finally, many prisons keep some groups of prisoners separate at all times, such as sex offenders in Midlands Prison or different gang members, so they must be escorted and taught separately. As a consequence, classes tend to get cancelled on a regular basis because of timetabling constraints, of which the greatest is the non-availability of escorting prison officers. Recent data show that the schools are heavily affected in the last month of each quarter when prison officers are less available due to staff roster. In March 2018, all Irish prison education centres were closed for an equivalent of 18 days on a cumulative basis due to the non-availability of prison officers (*Martyn 2018, 75*). Prisoners whose classes get cancelled usually remain locked in their cells, which can cause disappointment, frustration and disengagement.

4.3. Training

Key take-away: Vocational training is the longest established rehabilitation programme worldwide, even though it might originally have had overtones of utilising cheap labour. Done correctly, it can reduce prison operating costs while at the same time allowing suitable prisoners to upskill or reskill in useful fields of work (for which they can gain recognised accreditations or qualifications) and subsequently open up employment opportunities post release. A common challenge is the unavailability of supervisory staff during training periods, which may result in a reduction in workshop operating hours beyond the provision of core services.

The IPS has traditionally made a clear distinction between education and training, even though both forms of instruction can lead to formal qualifications and both are offered as key components of rehabilitation in prison. In total, more than 900 prisoners participate daily in the 126 workshops across the IPS estate, accompanied by 378 allocated staff (*Irish Prison Service, n.d.*). Training is done by uniformed prison officers who have either obtained teaching certifications after working as a prison officer or have become officers in addition to their former career as instructors. Most of these officers are also accredited to award relevant qualifications to prisoners such as City and Guilds, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and other certifying bodies. The IPS leadership has an ambition to strengthen the links between the skills prisoners acquire and the job market post release. According to the IPS, three professions offer the biggest chances of getting employment – namely catering, cleaning, and construction – also referred to as the "triple C".

Training takes place in dedicated workshops or core service areas. Certain services that are integral to the running of a prison have traditionally been operated by employing prisoners. In the modern Irish context, these comprise the prison kitchen, staff mess, laundry and waste management areas: they are all classified as workshops and under the control of prison officers in the Training Department. Since they run under a more fixed regime, with outputs that are vitally important to everyday prisoner welfare, they are viewed within the IPS as "core services".

The prison kitchen, which serves three meals daily and caters to special dietary needs, is usually one of the largest employers of prisoners within any prison: for instance, 32 at Wheatfield prison, up to 30 at Midlands Prison, and 18-20 at Cork Prison. Each kitchen is supervised by around six staff members. Prisoners in the kitchen can work towards accredited City and Guilds qualifications in food hygiene and basic catering. Staff catering needs are met through a cafeteria-style staff mess, usually manned by around seven prisoners under staff supervision, with a possibility to obtain more advanced City and Guilds qualifications. The prison laundry is another major employer of prisoners, numbering 32 at Wheatfield prison, 22-30 (exclusively sex offenders) at Midlands Prison and 10 at Cork prison. A recognised qualification from the Guild of Cleaners and Launderers is possible, with, for instance, seven prisoners from Midlands Prison receiving a certificate in 2017. Prisoners are very keen on working in the core services because of certain benefits such as getting better food in the kitchen or working shifts, implying more time out of cell.

Specially created workshop areas in addition to the "core services" were first built in Wheatfield prison, which opened in 1989, and was the first modern work and training prison in Ireland. Since then, all new prisons have been equipped with custom-designed workshop areas with well-arranged services and access. In the older establishments, workshops have also been retro-fitted into sometimes unsuitable and inconvenient locations presenting many constraints. The number of workshops, their size and specifics in each prison depend on size: up to ten in large prisons such as Midlands and Wheatfield prisons and fewer at smaller ones (for example, seven in Cork Prison). Construction workshops, including training in block laying, plastering, tiling, concrete moulding and stone carving and metal workshops offer real employment opportunities post release, but are only available in the bigger prisons since they require a lot of space and equipment. In 2016, Wheatfield Prison had 10 City and Guild certification graduates in construction and carpentry, six in the laundry and two in the kitchen. Importantly for the recipients, the certificates do not mention that they were obtained in prison.

In general, one officer trains eight prisoners in each workshop. The ratio is higher in the kitchen, since prisoners work with knives and other dangerous tools under a certain level of stress, and unfortunately, fatal stabbings have occurred in prison kitchens. The highest officer-to-prisoner ratio is found in waste management because prisoners often go outside of prison walls to carry out their tasks. Incidents in the workshops are nonetheless rare because the prisoners are busy and have they themselves chosen to participate in the activity (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Whitfield Prison: available training opportunities

Training area	Officer to prisoner ratio	Type
Laundry	4 to 32 (in shifts)	Core
Kitchen	5 to 32 (in shifts)	Core
Waste management	1 to 4	Core
Staff Mess	1 to 8	Core
Industrial cleaning	1 to 8	Workshop-based
Grounds maintenance and horticulture	2 to 16	Workshop-based
Picture framing	1 to 8	Workshop-based
Printing	1 to 8	Workshop-based
Construction	2 to 16	Workshop-based
Carpentry and joinery	2 to 16	Workshop-based
Welding	2 to 16	Workshop-based
Electronic equipment repair workshop	1 to 8	Workshop-based
Painting	1 to 8	Workshop-based

Source: IPS

Some of the output from prison workshops can be used within the prison service, such as printed materials produced in the print shop, metalwork, wood crafts and flowers from horticulture for decoration. Some of the items are offered to local civic bodies or charities (for example, woodwork, construction and embroidery) to involve prisoners in community life. In addition, prisoners can, upon payment for materials, also send their work to their families (almost any portable product). All of these uses are visible to prisoners or their family members, allowing those working in the relevant workshop to take a degree of pride in their achievements. Prisoners and staff note that competition rules prevent external sales, and food hygiene regulations within prison kitchens mitigate against the wider use of edible horticultural produce.

Figure 8. Workshops in Wheatfield Prison

Source: IPS, Strategic Plan 2016-2018, p.55 and Independent.ie, "From the Prison Yard to Farmyard for Inmates on Learning Curve

Available at: www.independent.ie/irish-news/from-the-prison-yard-to-farmyard-for-inmates-on-learning-curve-34312417.html

The objective is to assign each prisoner to a workshop according to their own preferences (with the exception of the protection prisoners), but participation remains voluntary. Around a quarter of all prisoners in Irish prisons participate in workshops at any given time (*Casey 2017, 24*). Figure 9 shows that there are significant differences between prisoner participation in different institutions with some of the highest participation rates observed in the two open prisons (86% in Loughnan House and 58% in Shelton Abbey). These prisons generally house well-behaved and motivated individuals, whose sentence is coming to an end. Conversely, in Cloverhill and Mountjoy prisons, the participation rates can be, on average, as low as 8% and 11% respectively. These prisons also have some of the lowest training capacity rates, with only 51 available workshop places per session for 368 prisoners in Cloverhill Prison, for example. Around two thirds of the available workshop placements are filled during each session in Irish prisons, but these numbers also vary significantly between prisons, from 41% in the Dóchas centre to 127%, or overcapacity, in Loughan House. Some prisoners sign up for workshops, but might never turn up. For example, in Wheatfield Prison, out of 172 prisoners who are voluntarily assigned to a workshop, around 40 systematically fail to attend.

Figure 9. Data on workshop attendance, capacity and open hours, September-November, 2017

Name of prison	Prison population on an average week	Number of participants per session	% of prison population working in workshop per session	Capacity of workshops	Attendance as a % of capacity	Potential Open Hours	Actual Open Hours	% Open hours
Arbour Hill	135	79	59	111	72	1 036	978	94
Castlerea	277	67	24	103	65	2 544	1 425	56
Cloverhill	368	31	8	51	61	1 205	1 011	84
Cork	273	79	29	70	113	1 611	1 242	77
Dóchas	119	24	20	58	41	1 300	385	30
Limerick	233	80	34	97	82	1 532	1 073	70
Loughan House	109	94	86	74	127	1 157	1 135	98
Midlands	815	164	20	164	100	2 193	1 710	78
Mountjoy	558	64	11	163	39	2 598	1 893	73
Portlaoise	220	39	18	73	54	1 612	1 078	67
Shelton Abbey	102	59	58	68	86	754	751	100
Wheatfield	418	105	25	217	49	2 600	2 112	81
Total	3 627	886	24	1 249	71	20 140	14 791	73

Source: IPS
Note: Data reported is for an average week and for a given session (morning or afternoon). Some individuals may attend the workshop during either mornings or afternoons or both; therefore, the average number of participating individuals is understated.

The main challenge encountered in the functioning of workshops in Irish prisons is linked to the limited number of prison staff, identified as one of five matters of particular concern by the Inspector of Prisons in the 2015 and 2016 reports to the Minister of Justice and Equality (*Casey 2017*).[6] For example, due to staff shortages, two of the seven workshops in Cork (crafts and horticulture) have not yet opened since the inauguration of the prison in 2016. Similarly, at Wheatfield Prison, three workshops, namely car maintenance, computer software and repair, and home decorating skills, are ready, but not running.

Moreover, given that training staff are prison officers first and instructors second, operational requirements in the prison and outside, notably for escorts for prisoners in transit or attending hospital, can mean that workshops are unmanned and must close while the prisoners remain locked in their cells. Figure 9 shows that the workshops were open on average 73% of the potential hours, with a variation from 30% in the Dóchas centre to almost 100% in Shelton Abbey Prison. Wheatfield and Midlands prisons reported a further seasonal effect due to quarterly prison officer rostering, leading to significant workshop closures when staff time is constrained at the end of each quarter and security duties must take priority. At Wheatfield Prison, only around three non-core workshops out of ten remain open at the end of each quarter. A similar situation can be observed in Cork Prison where only one or two out of five running non-core workshops remained functioning towards the end of the quarter.

[6] The decrease in prison staff was caused by a recruitment freeze from 2008 to 2016 and, in more recent years, by a negative balance between recruitment and retirement/voluntary departures.

In light of this, work and training within the core services is favoured among inmates, since these services are not subject to the withdrawal of staff for custodial duties. These core services are, therefore, also core training functions in terms of the reliability and quantum of the training actually achieved.

4.4. Psychology Service

Key take-away: The availability of psychological services in prisons has grown in importance over recent years. The core of the Irish Prison Psychology Service is evidence-based mental health and offence-related intervention. However, even the best psychological intervention is only a building block, which should be supplemented by other positive rehabilitation measures. As a general rule, the best sequence is for psychological intervention to precede entry onto these other rehabilitative programmes. However, this poses real difficulties, in the context of waiting lists and the length of time it takes to intervene and witness "change".

The IPS acknowledges that mental health issues and personality disorder presentations remain a big challenge in Irish prisons, as indeed is the case worldwide. Psychology services have been historically considered as an important building block for prisoner wellbeing and rehabilitation. As an indication of their success, the suicide rate in Irish prisons, at 2.7 suicides per 10 000 prisoners, is half that of the European average (5.5) and much lower than in Germany (10.4), the UK (10.4), the Netherlands (12.2), Belgium (12.5), Switzerland (14.5) and France (15.4) (*Aebi et al. 2016, 117*).

Following issuance of the Psychology Service Strategy 2016-18, all prisons now provide psychology services to a standardised level under the leadership of a Head of Service at the IPS headquarters (*Irish Prison Service 2016c*). Each prison normally has a senior psychologist, a staff grade psychologist, and an assistant psychologist, together with some trainees under instruction, to deal with the mental health and offence-related needs of the prisoners. The service is working towards international standards of one psychologist to 150 prisoners, as recommended in the Porporino "New Connections" Report which reviewed the IPS Psychology Service in 2015 (*Porporino 2015*).

The IPS perceives a reduction in recidivism associated with targeted mental health and offence-related psychological interventions. Interventions are delivered through group sessions or one-on-one sessions. Interventions range in intensity from primary care through to tertiary care and case consultation/risk management. The large majority of referrals are in relation to mental health, including mood disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorder, complex bereavement, self-harm and suicidal behaviour, eating disorder, bipolar disorder, psychosis and schizophrenia, addiction, impulse control, obsessive compulsive disorder, and personality disorder. The psychology service provides a range of group and individual evidence-informed approaches to intervene with these presentations. It works with individuals presenting with developmental disorders, learning difficulties, traumatic brain injuries and cognitive decline. There is also a specialist programme for people convicted of sexual violence called "Building Better Lives". The service also proactively assesses more vulnerable groups such as people serving life sentences, 18–24 year-olds with a sentence of two years or more, and prisoners serving a sentence of two years of more for having been convicted of a violent offence.

Prisoners either express their wish to see a psychologist themselves or are referred to one by prison officers, chaplains or any other member of staff. Demand for psychological services is very high across the prison estate and significantly exceeds supply. Consequently, numbers on waiting lists are high, as is the length of time waiting to be seen. Even though Psychology Services often have one prison officer assigned to escort prisoners to their sessions, some sessions get cancelled because of staff redeployment. This is seen as an important problem by the prison psychologists as many of their clients have difficulties with attachment and it is very important for them to be provided with the reliability and safety of their planned appointments.

There was a general view in the Porporino Report that the Psychology Service needed to be better embedded within the IPS organisation. To assist in this realignment, the Service is making a significant effort to get involved in the training of prison officers recruits, the professional development of prison officers, policy development, IPS working groups, and to sit on the senior management team of each local prison.

4.5. Addiction Counselling

Key take-away: Ceasing substance abuse, whether through complete withdrawal or through substitution with methadone, clears the way to a prisoner making good use of the other rehabilitation services available in prison, but is jeopardised by drug availability inside prisons. Like any form of counselling, that for addiction is best offered over the medium-long term, meaning that it is difficult to help short-sentenced prisoners in a structured manner. Yet, with very high substance abuse percentages among prisoners entering prison, there is a great need to act swiftly. The consequence is that considerable addiction counselling resources are devoted to short-term, emergency interventions, likely, at best, to be only partially successful.

It is widely recognised among addiction counsellors working for the IPS that some 50 to 66% of prisoners are affected by substance abuse when they enter prison. A 2014 report found that lifetime cannabis and heroin use among all Irish prisoners was 87% and 43% respectively; last year's use was 69% and 30% respectively and last month's use was 43% and 11% respectively (*NACDA 2014, 1*). A major effort is made, through specialised counselling, to help prisoners reduce their usage, but prisoners seem to have easy access to illicit substances, which conflicts with this objective. Counsellors also believe that more than half of those identified with addictions do not, at least initially, wish to come off drugs, believing that nothing can be done about their addiction. At the same time, addiction counselling is still undersupplied: on average, it is requested by 40% of prisoners, but only available to six out of ten of those who ask, and with a very high uptake when places become available (*Drummond 2014, 104*).

For its addiction counselling services, the IPS contracts Merchants' Quay Ireland (MQI), a national non-profit organisation that was started by priests from the Franciscan order who have been helping the homeless and people with addictions at their church on Merchants' Quay in Dublin for almost two centuries. In each of the prisons visited, up to five MQI counsellors, not all full-time, provide addiction counselling services through specific group therapeutic courses, less-structured group therapy sessions in meditation, mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy, as well as via one-to-one counselling. In addition, they also provide reports for the Courts and Probation Service as well as making post-release referrals to outside addiction agencies to facilitate transition from prison to the community.

In all IPS prisons, addiction counselling is organised in a similar way and a number of long term programmes are offered, such as the Relapse Prevention course, which runs 2.5-hour sessions for 15 prisoners over an eight-week period. Similarly, Advanced Relapse Prevention courses and therapy groups for up to 15 participants are organised several times throughout the year. The addiction counsellors, in conjunction with colleagues in ISM, and the Health and Psychology Departments, are ready to provide short, emergency, one-to-one interventions for any prisoner, regardless of the length of the sentence. As part of the clinical pathway, some people with opiate addictions are prescribed Opiate Substitution Therapy (usually methadone), on a detoxification, maintenance or stabilisation programme. The time taken for the administration of methadone to a significant cohort of people can impact on the scheduling of attendance at daily activities such as education, workshops or recreation.

A common challenge in the organisation of counselling is that the majority of prisoners (and therefore prisoners with addictions) are on short sentences and do not have the necessary time to receive group counselling. Indeed, at one prison, a current waiting list of three to five months and basic course lengths of at least six weeks means that any prisoner with a sentence of less than eight months is unlikely, with automatic remission, to complete any course. Since up to two-thirds of prisoners are struggling with various addictions, the counsellors are unable to meet the demand for help. The waiting lists are constantly updated and prioritised, and those sentenced to longer terms will generally be able to attend a course at some point, once a vacancy arises.

4.6. In-Prison Probation Services

Key take-away: The probation schemes on offer by the Irish Probation Service are aimed at facilitating early release while incentivising good behaviour on release to reduce the likelihood of a return to prison. The impact of the in-prison probation service on rehabilitation is real but indirect, as it provides guidance to prisoners when they are being prepared for release and work in parallel with counselling from other rehabilitative services. Voluntary groups, such as the Cork Alliance Centre, provide vital input into prisoner probation and ultimate reintegration into the community. Prisoners who participate in the IPS probation schemes are much less likely to find themselves recommitted to prison.

The Irish Probation Service dates back to 1907, when it was established to supervise the conduct of offenders released on probation on behalf of the courts and the relevant ministry, currently the Department of Justice and Equality. Probation sentences are considered an important alternative to custody in Ireland: they imply less than 10% of the costs of imprisonment, and, more importantly, 63% of offenders on probation do not reoffend within three years after release (*The Probation Service, n.d.*). Most of the probation work takes place in the community, dealing with offenders placed on probation by the courts, but up to four probation officers also work in each Irish prison. In-prison probation staff work closely with other rehabilitative services, attending regular multi-disciplinary meetings to co-ordinate prisoner interventions. In-prison probation officers evaluate the risk to the community of each prisoner, create risk management strategies, work with prisoners' families prior to release, and carry out the following programmes:

- Split sentences, known as part-supervised suspended sentences (PSSOs), were established in 2006 and involve release on probation after a specified period of imprisonment. Around half of all custodial sentences are PSSOs and the in-prison probation officers are primarily responsible for preparing PSSO prisoners for the community phase of their sentence. Group courses are offered well in advance to reduce offending behaviour by the time of release from prison. These group courses, for up to 14 prisoners, typically involve 12 sessions over five to six weeks carried out several times per year.
- Community Return Scheme (CRS) was jointly created in 2011 by the Irish Prison Service and the Irish Probation Service. The scheme is available to all prisoners sentenced to between one and eight years and who have already completed at least half of their sentence. Eligible offenders may be released in a structured manner in return for doing work of value to the community, subject to risk assessment and ongoing supervision by the probation services. The CRS remains conditional on adherence to a tailored programme of activity, daily reporting to a Garda (police) station, and weekly reporting to prison. A study of the CRS showed that 91% of the programme participants released in 2011 had not been committed to prison on a new custodial sentence (*The Probation Service, n.d.*). The latest IPS annual report suggests that the scheme continues to have a 90% compliance rate (*Irish Prison Service 2018, 5*). During 2011-2017, 2,000 prisoners were released back into the community via the scheme. On 31 December 2017, there were a total of 60 prisoners on CRS (*Irish Prison Service 2018, 25*). The programme received a runner-up accolade in the Confederation of European Probation Awards 2016 for its innovation and outstanding contribution to rehabilitation (*Irish Prison Service 2016d*).
- Community Support Scheme (CSS) was established in 2013 as a measure against prison overcrowding. It is aimed at prisoners serving short sentences of between three and 12 months, as this cohort represented 90.2% of overall committals to prison in 2014 (*Irish Prison Service 2014, 28*). The Probation Services identify suitable candidates for the CSS together with Integrated Sentence Management Officers and a community-based organisation such as Care After Prison in Dublin, The Linkage and SOLAS in Portlaoise, and the Cork Alliance Centre in Cork. Offenders are then given a more structured form of temporary release. On 31 December 2017, there were a total of 46 prisoners on CSS (*Irish Prison Service 2018, 25*).

In-prison probation staff co-ordinate their work closely with the probation services in the community. Some specific initiatives, such as the Cork Alliance, have been created to facilitate such co-operation and propose continuous support for ex-offenders (Box 3).

Box 3

Bridge between prison and community probation: The Cork Alliance Centre

The Cork Alliance Centre works with ex-prisoners, other than sex offenders, who need assistance in reintegrating and desisting from crime. It is jointly funded by IPS and the Probation Service, supplemented by religious and philanthropic sources and has been active since 2003. In-reach services are offered at Cork, Portlaoise and Midlands prisons for the benefit of prisoners who will reside in Cork on release. The centre provides an open, safe and non-judgemental environment where multi-faceted support can be dispensed to its service users. The staff comprises a manager and three counsellors, with additional support from some ex-prisoners who have graduated from CSS. Five psychotherapists and an acupuncturist provide part-time professional assistance.

Following acceptance onto the scheme at their mid-sentence release point, prisoners are signed on at the centre upon release to serve the remainder of their remitted sentence in the community, taking into account that sentences are automatically remitted to 75% of the Court sentence. They commit to attend the centre for set hours on three days a week; failure to do so, or disruptive behaviour at the centre, results in the prisoner's return to prison and removal from the CSS. Two of the centre's counsellors each handle up to 40 clients on the CSS.

Whilst attending the centre, CSS clients develop and implement their own reintegration plan with assistance from staff, covering such areas as addressing offending behaviour, recovering from addiction, seeking employment, accessing social welfare payments such as Jobseekers Allowance and Disability Grant, improving thinking skills, developing coping mechanisms and generally managing life positively. Facilitating clients' reconnection with family, friends, community, society and, most importantly, with themselves is fundamental to the work of the centre.

A third counsellor at the centre engages with ex-prisoners who are not on the CSS, providing support in meeting the challenges of desistance from crime and reintegration upon release from prison. In the years since its inception, the centre has built up a wide network of contacts, enabling it to direct its clients to relevant sources of assistance.

One important task that remains is to convince potential employers to consider hiring ex-offenders; the centre believes it is making progress towards this objective, which should enable more of its clients to obtain paid employment post release.

The centre links with the IPS College to facilitate a workshop for Recruit Prison Officer training, using the services of one of the centre's former clients. This is included as part of the innovative community focus element of this training.

4.7. In-Reach Programmes

Key take-away: In-Reach Programmes are free-standing activities organised by local agencies and associations that can take the form of training, and have proven very popular amongst prisoners and staff alike. Not only do such programmes provide important services to the prison, they also imbue participants with a real sense of contributing to their prison community. The waiting lists for prisoners to take the relevant training testify to the esteem in which the positions are held. Furthermore, it is these trained prisoners who are at the forefront of occasional initiatives to improve internal safety.

Irish prisons have a long-standing tradition of bringing in outside agencies to offer their services, either as a free-standing activity within a prison or as a selection and familiarisation process for an activity that will continue after a prisoner's release. Many of these agencies are local – though some have national coverage – so each prison has its own eclectic mix of in-reach programmes depending on its location.

One of the programmes found in most Irish prisons is the Samaritans Listeners. Samaritan volunteers attend the prison to deliver training to interested prisoners who subsequently become Samaritan volunteers themselves. Once cleared by prison security, the cohort of Listeners within the prison are identified on noticeboards and can

be accessed confidentially by other prisoners wishing to use their services. Although Listeners have no formal standing in the prison, it seems that staff in the Probation, Healthcare, Psychology, Chaplaincy and ISM departments, as well as prison officers on units, are usually appreciative when matters of general or specific prisoner welfare interest are highlighted by a Listener.

Another popular programme is delivered by the Red Cross trainers once a week over six months. Prisoners who have completed the course become Red Cross Volunteers with skills in three general areas: a) first aid in accidents; b) hygiene monitoring; and c) detecting self-harm signs around the prison. A community-based health and first aid manual developed by the Red Cross is also available in each prison. These services are not intended to substitute the professional services available from Healthcare or other emergency arrangements within each prison, but they add another layer of potential lifesaving assistance as prisoners tend to be more receptive within a peer-to-peer framework. For example, 700 Red Cross volunteers have been trained at Wheatfield Prison during the last eight years, with around 25 onsite at each point in time. In general, around 10% of all prisoners are Red Cross volunteers at all times. Red Cross volunteers have advocated some life-saving initiatives around the prisons in which they operate, including a weapons amnesty aimed at reducing the number of illicit knives possessed by prisoners; the introduction of hand-sanitising facilities during a bird influenza alert; and a "Staying Alive" campaign to reduce the prevalence of illegal drugs, particularly new psychoactive substances, over the sensitive Christmas/New Year period. A number of staff members in each prison are also Red Cross volunteers and co-ordinate various initiatives.

Alternative to Violence is another programme, developed originally by the Quakers in an American prison environment, which has grown and evolved internationally to provide training in the wider de-escalation of violent behaviour. Courses for up to 15 prisoner volunteers over a weekend are offered in some Irish prisons as an in-reach programme.

The Dublin-based Jobcare charity is an example of an in-reach service available through the Resettlement Service, in this case at Wheatfield Prison. The Jobcare representative organises a group of prisoners nearing release onto a Jobseekers course: volunteers then give familiarisation presentations on the realities of employment in relevant sectors, such as cleaning, construction, catering (the important "triple C") and IT.

4.8. Families and Imprisonment Programmes

Key take-away: Programmes in support of prisoners' families are moving into the mainstream of rehabilitation efforts, given the importance of family ties for future re-integration in the community. With successful attendance at joint family training sessions being rewarded by better and more frequent family visits, incentives and prisoner effort are well-balanced. Programmes of this nature tend to have high reliance on external and voluntary groups to provide such schemes, but they are acknowledged as being important in paving the way for successful family reconfiguration when a prisoner rejoins upon release.

Maintaining close family relationships while in prison is one of the most important factors in successful social post-release reintegration. These relationships not only offer resources and opportunities related to financial needs, housing and access to employment, but can often provide a criminality-free environment, crucial for a new beginning (*Armstrong and Durnescu 2017, 306*). As an example, incarcerated fathers who have an opportunity to maintain good relationships with their children are six times less likely to reoffend in the future (*Social Exclusion Unit 2000*). At the same time, these relationships are also vital for family members too. Spouses and children often suffer the harsh but unseen punishment of having to struggle through life by themselves and endure social pressure without having committed any crime. Perhaps as a consequence, almost two thirds of sons whose fathers have been sentenced to prison have been found to offend later in life (*Farrington et al. 2001*).

The IPS strategic vision recognises the importance of building prisoner family relationships and efforts are being made to foster these relationships. In accordance with its 2016-2018 Strategic Plan, the IPS is committed to rolling out the Family Links Programme, developed in co-operation with a non-governmental organisation, Childhood Development Initiative, and the Parents Plus charity. The project is financed by community-based foundations. Formal education courses are given to prisoners who have children as well as to prison officers, to increase awareness of the importance of the family within the context of rehabilitation and child protection issues, and to teach them how to facilitate these relationships. Participating prisons have a dedicated Family Liaison Officer to support prisoners and their families in their communication. In addition, the visiting conditions have been

improved in a number of prisons to offer more convenient visiting times and more suitable rooms and facilities for family visits (Figure 10).

Figure 10. A new family meeting room in Limerick Prison

Source: LimerickLeader.ie, "New Homely Room Unveiled at Limerick Prison"[7]

4.9. Chaplaincy

Key take-away: The Chaplaincy has always been an important function within a prison, catering to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the prisoners. The need for pastoral assistance is often associated with stressful periods or events in the life of a prisoner's family members. While the chaplaincy is not there primarily for rehabilitation purposes, chaplains motivate prisoners to make positive lifestyle changes and to engage with other rehabilitation programmes.

The chaplaincy service is very important to the wellbeing of prisoners, not only for the provision of routine spiritual and pastoral care, but also because it is well-positioned to identify any cases that fall into the cracks between the other care services. Chaplains, who may be ordained, lay order or lay persons, are generally well-respected by all and able to informally refer cases to the most appropriate service. They are also willing to assist staff and, if necessary, intercede on their behalf.

Prison chaplains were traditionally appointed and paid by the local Roman Catholic diocese, the religion that nominally covers 95% of all prisoners in Ireland. Since 2015, however, Chaplains' salaries have been paid by the IPS and their terms of engagement now require them to serve prisoners of all denominations or none. A spiritual link is maintained with the Roman Catholic Church authorities, but chaplains have also developed lines of communication with leaders of other denominations, and can call upon them for assistance with prisoners of other faiths – notable examples being Muslim Imams, Russian Orthodox Priests, and Protestant Ministers of various hues. Worship facilities within the prison, whether called Chapels or Multi-Faith Rooms, are available to other faiths on suitable occasions. The equal treatment and equal offering of all spiritual needs is seen as a response to increasing religious diversity and an attempt to avoid religious radicalism (*Becci and Roy 2015, 2*). However, national and religious diversity is not a major issue in Irish prisons with only a handful of prisoners adhering to other denominations. As an indication, in the past decade, the number of foreign prisoners has remained small and stable at around 10% of the prison population: half of these prisoners come from the EU (excluding the UK), and one quarter from the UK.

[7] Available at: https://www.limerickleader.ie/news/home/328351/new-homely-family-room-unveiled-at-limerick-prison.html

Chaplains also take part in the initial interview stage for prisoners entering their prison; a most crucial event for first time prisoners. Thereafter, Chaplains make daily visits to the vulnerable prisoner unit, the critical behaviour unit, the committal unit, prisoners subject to restriction and any remand prisoners. Prisoners can also ask to see a chaplain as needed without any restrictions. Chaplains also respond to instances of prisoner or family crisis. Since prisoners can phone out, with restrictions, but family members cannot phone in to prisoners, chaplains provide a link by taking family calls and passing messages to prisoners. Chaplains help with letter writing for illiterate prisoners, in the issuing of chocolate or tobacco to desperate prisoners, and in arranging small grants for clothing and a myriad of other small favours, with the aim of giving a humane touch to prisoners facing personal difficulty.

Each Irish prison has between three and five chaplains, some of them working part-time and others as volunteers. Midlands and Wheatfield prisons each have a nun from a Catholic order as acting-lead Chaplain with a visiting priest holding Mass for prisoners at weekends. As with all other group activities, special arrangements have to be made for prisoners under restriction who cannot attend Mass. In 2018, the IPS announced that it would be hiring up to 25 new full and part-time prison chaplains in the coming years to ensure sufficient availability and support (*Breaking News Ireland, 2018*).

4.10. Incentivised Regimes

Key take-away: Incentivised Regimes primarily constitute a tool for maintaining good order through the granting and withdrawal of privileges, based on behaviour. Prison officers report that it has improved discipline within Irish prisons and made them easier to run. Learning to behave well under the influence of incentives can also have an enduring influence after release.

An Incentivised Regimes (IR) Programme was introduced in several Irish prisons in 2010 and rolled out to all prisons in 2012 with the dual objective of maintaining order in the shorter term and reducing reoffending after release in the longer term. IR guidelines for each prison, taking into account local circumstances, were developed soon after to give effect to the policy. Modelled after a similar system in the UK, the scheme differentiates privileges between prisoners according to their level of engagement with prison services and quality of behaviour. There are three tiers of regime: basic, standard and enhanced, through which a prisoner can progress or regress, according to behaviour. Prisoners enter a prison at standard level for the first time, but keep their existing level if transferred from another institution. Rising through the tiers entitles a prisoner to greater privileges in terms of money, environment, visits and phone calls. In addition, a prisoner may only be considered for various release schemes or transfer to an open prison, when at the enhanced level.

Reward for good behaviour has proven to be motivational, particularly because the benefits relate to key elements of prison life. Some prisons, such as Wheatfield, have special renovated wings with a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere which are inhabited exclusively by enhanced level prisoners. Only six prison officers are needed to supervise 154 prisoners on four floors with virtually no major incidents. However, the incentive impact could easily be reduced if prisoners thought their behaviour, a somewhat subjective concept, was being unfairly assessed by prison staff. For this reason, a highly detailed matrix of behaviour monitoring and measurement has been devised to make the assessment as objective as possible, combined with an appeals mechanism. Prisoners are expected to enter into an agreement with the prison about their participation in the IR to ensure there is clear understanding of the aspects of behaviour to be assessed, reasons for upgrade and downgrade, and the consequences of changing level. The main rehabilitation elements, such as a possibility to participate in education and training activities, are not impacted by prisoners' IR status. Prisoners under protection can only move between standard and basic, according to the rules, but if they do participate in some activities, they might be considered for enhanced status. Every week, prisoners are graded as having "acceptable" or "unacceptable" performance with the Incentivised Regimes framework.

Figure 11. An Example of IR Privileges in one prison[8]

IR Level	Basic	Standard	Enhanced
Daily Gratuity	€1.10	€1.95	€2.35
Better Quality Accommodation (varies by prison)	No	Eligible	Priority
Gymnasium access	No	1hr/wk min	2hrs/wk min
Wearing own clothes	No	Eligible	Eligible
Possession of games consoles	No	Eligible	Eligible
Visits per week (30 minutes)	1	2 (can be combined)	2 (can be combined)
Approved visitor names	6	12	20
Family visits	No	Eligible	Priority
Phone calls (6 minutes)	3/week	7/week	14/week
Phone calls – approved names (including solicitor)	6	12	20
Temporary release and open prison recommendation	No	No	Eligible

Source: IPS

An IR downgrade does not in itself constitute a disciplinary offence, but one or more guilty adjudications on disciplinary charges will result in a one or, potentially two, stage IR downgrade, depending on the severity of the offence and the prisoner's existing IR level. For example, incidents related to violent behaviour, possession of weapons or drugs result in an automatic downgrade to the basic level. Once the prisoners are downgraded to basic level and keep this status for 28 days, they are given a plan outlining how to get back to standard and enhanced again. Yet, many of the basic level prisoners remain in this level just because they refuse to take a drug tests or test positive on a regular basis. As outlined in Figure 11, even the basic level prisoners get some phone calls, visits and in-cell television because the link to the outside world is considered key for rehabilitation and resettlement after prison.

Despite the attempts of the IPS to standardise the IR across the prison estate, wide variations are shown in the percentages of prisoners at each IR level. Some variation may be attributed to lack of consistency in implementation, but more importantly different prisons offer different opportunities. Wheatfield offers more training and education and therefore could perhaps be expected to have a higher percentage of enhanced prisoners in comparison to Cork. The data below indicate population percentages at different levels for Cork, Wheatfield and all Irish prisons on similar dates:

Figure 12. IR Levels at Different Prisons

Prison	Date	% Basic	% Standard	% Enhanced
Cork	22 Jan 18	6	61	33
Wheatfield	17 Jan 18	12	34	54
All	1 Jan 18	10	43	47

Source: IPS

Overall, prison officers report that, since the introduction of IR, there has been wider compliance with prison rules and an improved working environment. In addition, the system's implementation was not costly: a dedicated IT system was developed to monitor each prisoner's status and behaviour, which allowed to minimise the administrative burden and meant that no additional staff resources for IR were needed.

[8] This summary of privileges is from a local protocol tailored to the needs of a particular prison and is not the same in every prison. The national privileges of gratuity, visits and phone calls are standard, other privileges listed are at the discretion of each Governor according to a locally agreed protocol having regard to the facilities and activities available in each location.

4.11. Co-ordination of Resettlement

Key take-away: The overall objective of co-ordination services is stable resettlement and reintegration, achieved through advocacy on behalf of the prisoner with a range of community services in gaining access on release to accommodation, work, welfare, health and family reintegration. The staff input is highly concentrated on the last nine months before release and appears to generate good, short-term results, but the lack of stable accommodation post release is the main challenge for resettlement.

Many resettlement services are available to prisoners in prison around the time of release and, subsequently, in the community upon release. The main categories of resettlement service offered in Irish prisons are accommodation provision, searching and applying for employment, accessing welfare grants, ensuring ongoing medical care and reintegrating families. Assistance in these areas is offered through a mix of charities, specialised organisations and government departments to facilitate smooth onward referral. With these range from local to regional to national bodies, an important task within a prison is the co-ordination of efforts to ensure that prisoners are efficiently assigned to the most appropriate resettlement service at the optimal time point before release.

Through a national contract with the IPS, closed prisons in Ireland now have six Training and Employment Officers (TEOs) and seven Resettlement Officers employed via contract with the Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders (IASIO), plus one Resettlement Officer provided by the Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force in Cork Prison (*IASIO, 2015*). The TEOs' mission is to provide life guidance, help identify and access suitable training, education and employment opportunities. TEOs start working with offenders 12 months prior to their release date, offering six weekly personal guidance sessions of 15 to 40 minutes to address barriers to their stable re-integration. Resettlement Officers help with access to accommodation, medical insurance, social welfare and other services after release. The prison-based resettlement services can only be accessed through a referral from the Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) officer, psychologist, Governor, Chief Officer, Medical Unit, Chaplain, among others. The IASIO employees are not prison officers and they usually provide assistance to prisoners on a one-to-one voluntary basis.

Resettlement Officers acknowledge that the great majority of their work relates to finding suitable housing solutions for released former prisoners. For various reasons, approximately 50% of prisoners have no home to return to after they are released from prison. It takes on average three months to submit an application for accommodation on a prisoner's behalf and another nine months to get a vacant place, so it is very important for resettlement services to do their work in time.

In close collaboration with housing charities, hostels and local councils, the Resettlement Service attempts to arrange accommodation for every released prisoner. While there is a good record of placement from most prisons, around 80% of potentially homeless prisoners are placed in emergency accommodation, available on a night-to-night basis (usually hostels in dormitory style arrangements). Some areas in Ireland, such as the Midlands region, face bigger challenges because fewer facilities for homeless people are available than in Dublin where there are 30 hostels run by charitable organisations. Another complication arises from the fact that housing providers are often unwilling to take known drug users or prisoners who have failed to maintain enhanced IR status.

One example of long-term housing provision is TRAIL, a religious-based housing charity with a small number of houses in various locations, including the Midlands and Dublin, available to ex-prisoners who have demonstrated exemplary behaviour. Being long-term, however, means that, once occupied, these houses are unavailable until the occupant moves on, often after several months or even years.

Finding a job is recognised as another key factor in resettlement. Some prisoners, including many short-term prisoners, will return to their previous employment and the main resettlement task is arranging contact with employers to confirm a release date. At the other end of the spectrum, prisoners who have served long sentences may not only have no job to return to, they could have become so institutionalised in prison that they are, effectively, incapable of obtaining or holding down any job. For this category, the resettlement challenge is extreme. In between, there are prisoners who have gained a work or educational qualification in prison; those who have never worked; those who aspire only to receive welfare benefits; with others at every point on the scales of motivation and capability. TEOs run guidance sessions with prisoners to assess their need for training in preparation for employment, including writing a CV, completing an application form, and developing interview technique. Furthermore, TEOs can assist with online access to employment websites. In 2015, IASIO staff placed 449 ex-prisoners in training, a further 260 in education and 357 into employment.

Welfare payments are important in Irish society, providing a safety net for certain categories of disadvantaged individuals. The release of a prisoner marks his eligibility for welfare grants, but this may also mark curtailment of grants previously received by his family. Navigating the complex web of interlinked welfare grants and assessments can be a daunting task for a prisoner, so each prison has a Welfare Officer who does a financial assessment six to nine months before their release. The general headings for welfare allowances relevant to ex-prisoners cover job seeking, disability and housing. Right after release, prisoners can get a Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance of between €100 and €190 per week for a single person, depending on their circumstances, and subsequently apply for a slightly more generous jobseeker's allowance.

Certain aspects of a prisoner's health can impact their opportunities for resettlement and these can, with permission, be dealt with by the Resettlement Service. As a rule, medical care is provided in prison and, upon release, is available to an ex-prisoner in the community. Direct linkage of records and prescription medicines is managed through the health system, preserving appropriate confidentiality. A new initiative aims to issue prisoners with a Medical Card upon release. The management of addiction, including prescribed methadone use, is assisted by staff from the local Drug and Alcohol Task Force. Some ex-prisoners are placed directly in long-term addiction rehabilitation institutions, but there are not enough spaces to meet all the needs. The particular needs of the elderly and those suffering from mental illness are also taken into account.

One innovative output of the Resettlement Service is a release plan for every prisoner. With a brief description of the recommendations developed in each of the above areas, this one-page document acts as an *aide memoire* for the ex-prisoner and a handy checklist for those agencies responsible for his later care in the community. However, some obstacles remain in the path of an orderly resettlement for every prisoner. Impediments have arisen in the past from timetabling difficulties, imperfect inter-agency awareness, competition between agencies and staff, as well as reluctant engagement by prisoners. These are compounded by the disproportionate number of very short sentences, in which there is little time to absorb any services (other than emergency housing assistance), and an overall shortage of resources.

4.12. Special Support for Life-Sentence Prisoners

Key take-away: A support programme for life-sentence prisoners which can help those prisoners transition from a long period of being institutionalised to life once again in the community. This is provided through a combination of a change in physical detention environment (to replicate living conditions and personal responsibilities outside prison) while also allowing greater contact with family and friends outside prison to foster relationships which will ease the transition to life in the community.

Life-sentenced prisoners in Ireland have no specific release date and their only route to release is through an advisory parole board which makes recommendations to the Minister for Justice and Equality, with whom final decision power rests. In 2017, there were 352 life-sentenced prisoners in Irish prisons, 10 of whom were women (*Larkin and Armstrong 2018*). The average term actually served before release was 17 years in 2015 and 22 years in 2016; this increase was the result of a political will to keep lifers incarcerated longer (*Larkin and Armstrong 2018*). Life-sentenced prisoners are usually prepared for their first Parole Board hearing seven years into their sentence (unless the sentencing judge has instructed that a longer minimum sentence be served), with the Board receiving a risk assessment report from the Probation Service. Work on this report commences nine months before the date of the Board hearing. Release is usually deferred to subsequent Parole Board hearings, held at two to three yearly intervals and each supported by an updated Probation Report.

Most of the life-sentenced prisoners will eventually be released from prison, but there is a risk that they will have become too institutionalised to then lead a normal life. In Ireland, seven life-sentenced prisoners have served sentences of 25 to 30 years, 12 have served 30 to 40 years and two have served more than 40 years (*Gallagher 2018*). They might also find the prospect of living by themselves difficult, and actually sabotage their release process as a result.

The Council of Europe 2003 Recommendation on the sentence management of life or long-time prisoners includes six mains principles: individualisation of sentence implementation; normalisation of life in prison; opportunities to exercise personal responsibility; security and safety; non-segregation of long-term detainees from other prison inmates; and an individual planning with opportunities for progression through the prison system (Raffaelli 2017, 9).

The IPS is currently piloting the Independent Life Skills Unit (ILSU) in Wheatfield Prison for life-sentenced prisoners who are on enhanced status and expected to be moved to an open prison soon – a final incarceration phase

before release. The ILSU tries to recreate some conditions of outside life and provide a degree of normal life within a prison. For example, the ILSU prisoners live in a separate area furnished with a home-like setting, including a common living area with sofas and a TV, and a self-catering kitchen. The prisoners receive a weekly financial allowance to collectively do their grocery shopping in a supermarket and cook their own food. These prisoners also have in-cell phones to facilitate contact with families.

5. Main Conclusions

Crime, including reoffending, implies huge financial, social, and emotional costs to every community. Rehabilitation of convicted prisoners is thus not only an act of humanity, but, even more importantly, a way to prevent further crime. As many prisoners come from very disadvantaged backgrounds with low levels of skills, poor mental and physical health, addictions and broken relationships, rehabilitation opportunities can help break the vicious cycle of reoffending. Investing in prisoners' rehabilitation can be a much more effective and cheaper alternative for society in the long run, creating a win-win situation for all.

Of course, spending public resources on convicted criminals today in the hope of achieving positive outcomes for society as a whole in the future is bound to be a difficult and unpopular decision, especially in times of fiscal austerity. Ireland provides an extraordinary case study of strong vision and leadership, where significant fiscal constraints were seen as an opportunity to reform judicial and penitentiary systems – indeed to do more with less. This was achieved by combining national legislation to replace many short-term prison sentences with structured non-custodial sentences and by introducing new measures within prisons. Irish lessons can therefore be useful not only for prison systems wishing to improve the availability, quality and completeness of rehabilitative services to prisoners, but also to do so without necessarily spending more.

Today all prisoners in Ireland are provided with individual sentence plans, outlining their preferences and needs in terms of rehabilitation and health, among other things. Prisoners have access to all levels of education from basic literacy and numeracy to Open University degrees as well as a wide array of vocational training, often with a possibility to acquire a recognised qualification. In addition, prisoners use addiction, psychology, spiritual guidance, resettlement services and various in-reach programmes such as the Red Cross volunteers. The in-prison discipline is governed by the Incentivised Regime Scheme, which determines the prisoners' privileges, such as a number of family visits, phone calls and daily gratuities, based on their behaviour. All these opportunities constitute a well-rounded rehabilitative offering for the prisoners who are willing to engage.

Despite the historical legacy of centuries-old prisons, the Irish prison estate has been constantly upgraded in recent years to ensure decent living conditions and create dedicated spaces for rehabilitative activities. Overall, the prison system today does not suffer from overcrowding as it is the case in many other European countries; all cells provide for single or double occupancy with in-cell sanitation. Some parts of the estate, especially the female prisons, still suffer from chronic underinvestment, but plans have already been made to build new facilities and upgrade the existing ones in the coming years.

The IPS faces a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure the system's continuous success. The system's ability to provide high quality rehabilitative services is dependent on the flows and stocks of the prisoners it has to cater for. Irish policymakers have made significant advancements in reducing the number of prisoners by replacing short–term prison sentences with non-custodial alternatives. However, in recent months the prison population has started to grow again, which could strain the system if the trends persist over time. Admittedly, the size of the prison population largely depends on policymakers and the judiciary with no direct decisional power held by the prison authorities. However, as showcased by the Irish example, strong leadership by the prison authorities can have a positive impact on these developments.

Another issue that emerged in this report and that is closely related to the size of prison population is the impact of insufficient numbers of staff on the system's ability to provide the necessary services. In Irish prisons, the shortages are particularly acute four months per year due to the end-of-quarter staff rostering constraints. Consequently, many vocational training workshops remain closed as the workshop instructors are redeployed to carry out other duties as prison officers. Other services that are provided by non-officers, such as school education, psychology or addiction counselling also suffer badly simply because there are not enough officers available to escort the prisoners out of their cells. This issue is becoming more acute because of gang violence and the rising numbers of prisoners who request to remain in separate groups or locked in their individual cells at all times for their own protection. Hopefully, prison understaffing will be reduced over time now that the IPS began recruiting officers again in 2017, after almost a decade of a hiring moratorium.

The report identified three areas of rehabilitation services – namely addiction, psychology and resettlement – that require additional resources so that the system as the whole can be better equipped to reduce the rates of recidivism further. The majority of prisoners have poor health in general, more often than not in combination with substance abuse and mental health problems. If not addressed urgently, these can cause violent behaviour and an incapacity to benefit from other rehabilitative services, especially as drugs seem to be rather easily accessible within prisons. Yet, the waiting lists to access addiction or psychological counselling are long in all prisons observed, sometimes up to six months or more. Short-sentence prisoners are therefore often excluded from these services and others may see their sessions cancelled, depending on the availability of escorting officers.

Resettlement services are also crucial because they can smoothen the transition from prison to the community – housing and employment are the most effective means to desist from further offending activity. This is especially the case for the half of Irish prisoners who have no home to go to upon their exit from custody. The social environment of the currently offered dormitory-style emergency accommodation is often conducive to reoffending and substance abuse. Resettlement services also admit that their assistance with finding a job tends to be limited and job opportunities are scarce, even for individuals who managed to acquire certifications, because of the negative social stigma attached to ex-prisoners. More co-operation with local employers is urgently needed, as this would give opportunities to motivated individuals post release.

Even though all of the rehabilitative services discussed in this report may be inter-dependent or are designed to improve co-ordination of several different rehabilitation programmes, the report discusses each of them separately, so they may be considered and activated autonomously depending on available resources and local needs. Of course, we should remain mindful that the ability to provide programmes is a function of the prison architecture and purpose of each establishment and, in that respect, the construction of new prisons must, at the earliest design stages, factor in areas for the various programmes and ways to ensure prisoners can access these areas with minimum supervision/escort, so as to facilitate inmate participation.

It should be emphasised that, despite the consequences of the recent financial crisis in Ireland, the IPS is in a fortunate position compared to many of its European peers. First of all, it is well endowed in terms of the financial resources at its disposal – even though it managed to significantly cut costs in the aftermath of the crisis and is spending half the amount per prisoner when compared to Sweden or Norway. It is also important to keep in mind that the Irish prison population is very homogeneous, with just 10% of foreign inmates, three quarters of whom are European. This implies that the Irish prison system may not experience the difficulties caused by segregation or radicalisation which may be prevalent in other countries.

Despite the remaining challenges, many of the learnings of the IPS in their quest to build a better and more efficient rehabilitative approach can be applied in other countries in Europe and beyond. By adopting a more-for-less attitude, Ireland has managed to achieve impressive progress in the context of significant spending cuts and a hiring freeze. This was done by combining strong leadership, clear vision, and the political will to avoid reverting to deprivation of liberty until other avenues have been exhausted.

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