

## **Implementation Oversight Group to oversee implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review Group (PPRG)**

**Dr Mary Rogan**  
**Chairperson of the Implementation Oversight Group**

### **Introduction**

The Penal Policy Review Group (PPRG) was established in 2012, in line with the recommendations of the Thornton Hall Project Review Group, to conduct a wide ranging strategic review of penal policy taking into account relevant work already carried out in this jurisdiction and elsewhere, the rights of those convicted of crimes, the perspective of those who are victims of crime and the interests of society in general.

The PPRG advocated an approach to crime and the penal system which emphasised rehabilitation and advocated for an improved penal system, the reduction of reliance on imprisonment as a sanction, and an increased focus on alternatives. A very strong thread running through all of its recommendations is the need to see the wider social context for offending, and to ensure that all the work the criminal justice agencies do are knitted in to social services, broadly conceived.

### **Terms of reference and background**

The terms of reference for the PPRG included an examination and analysis of the role of penal policy in crime prevention; sentencing policies; alternatives to custody; custodial accommodation; regimes; reintegration; rehabilitation; and any special issues relating to female offenders.

The report of the PPRG titled 'Strategic Review of Penal Policy' dated July 2014 was published on the Department of Justice and Equality website [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie) under media - publications - Prisons & Probation on 17 September, 2014. In November 2014, the report of the Group was submitted to Government.

One of the recommendations was that an implementation and oversight mechanism should be set up. The recommendation was that progress on implementing recommendations would be subject to review, that reports would be provided to the Minister for Justice and Equality every six months, and these reports should be published. The Implementation and Oversight Group was established in early 2015, to oversee implementation of the PPRG's recommendations and I was asked to chair it. Its primary function is to report to the Minister, on a six monthly basis, on the implementation status of the recommendations of the PPRG.

A Core Group from the Implementation and Oversight Group meets approximately every six months to coordinate the reporting regarding each of the recommendations and produces a report, for the Minister on the progress made in implementing those recommendations. This Group consists of Mr. Michael Donnellan, Director General, Irish Prison Service, Mr. Vivian Geiran, Director of the Probation Service, Assistant Secretary Mr. Jimmy Martin, Department of Justice and Equality with responsibility for Prisons and Probation Policy, Assistant Secretary Mr. Michael Flahive, Department of Justice and Equality with responsibility for Criminal Law Reform, Assistant Secretary Mr. Conan McKenna, Department of Justice and Equality with responsibility for Courts Policy and Deputy Commissioner Policing & Security, John Twomey, An Garda Síochána. In addition to the Core Group meetings, I also meet members of the Core Group on an individual basis at least once during this period and as the need arises in respect of specific issues.

Implementation of PPRG report and its recommendations, however, requires a much wider group of people. The wider implementation and oversight group includes: Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government, Department of Social Protection, Department of Education & Skills, Department of Health, Health Service Executive, Irish Youth Justice Service, Central Statistics Office, and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In the early stages of our work, we focused on those elements of the recommendations which the members of the Core Group have responsibility for and we presented our first report to the Minister for Justice and Equality in November 2015, and a second report in June 2016, copies of which are attached.

### **Methodology**

In the preparation of these reports, the Core Group met on three occasions and I have also met with each member of the Core Group on a number of occasions separately, as part of this process. Members of the Core Group also liaise with the members of the wider group regarding recommendations that they have responsibility for implementing, as the need arises.

The PPRG made 43 recommendations. The Core Group agreed on the measures of progress and milestones necessary to implement these recommendations. Timelines have also been agreed by the Group. As progress continues, some of these milestones will be amended, and some additional ones may be added.

Progress has been made in terms of some of the recommendations of the PPRG - for example, the pursuit of alternatives to custody, interagency working between the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service and the use of structured temporary release programmes such as the Community Return Programme and the Community Support Scheme.

Some of the PPRG's recommendations contain multiple elements, and we have identified a total of 51 recommendations arising from the report. As well as monitoring the implementation of specific milestones, the Group has also made a qualitative and overall assessment concerning the implementation of each of those recommendations. Each recommendation has been assigned one of three indicators: 'not complete; on track; and complete'. The application of these indicators is agreed by the Group as a whole.

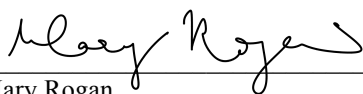
### **Current position**

Of the 51 recommendations, we have determined that 3 recommendations have been completed, 21 are within the 'not complete' category, and 27 are within the 'on track' category.

A particular focus of the Implementation and Oversight Group in the most recent period has been on advancing the recommendations in the area of interdepartmental and interagency working. The key actors in this area were invited to explore the recommendations of the PPRG at a Workshop on Interdepartmental and Interagency Co-operation which was held on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 in the Department of Justice and Equality. The workshop was well attended and keynote speakers included Mr. Michael Donnellan, Mr. Vivian Geiran, Mr. Jimmy Martin and Mr. Neil Rennick, Acting Director, Justice Directorate, Scottish Government, and me. I am pleased to say that Dr. Ruth Barrington was subsequently appointed by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice & Equality as Chairperson of this Group which is entitled the 'Interagency Group for a Fairer and Safer Ireland'. The first meeting of this Group was held on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 and I hope to have further updates regarding its work in future reports.

On behalf of the Implementation and Oversight Group, I am pleased to present the Group's First and Second progress reports. The work of the Implementation and Oversight Group will continue to prepare a third progress report which it is intended will be presented to the Tánaiste & Minister for Justice & Equality for publication in November 2016.

The Implementation and Oversight Group is happy to accept observations and comments on its reports, which should be directed to the Secretary to the Group, Mr Keith Lynn, Prisons Policy Division, Department of Justice and Equality, Montague Court, Montague Street, Dublin 2 or emailed to [prisons\\_policy\\_inbox@justice.ie](mailto:prisons_policy_inbox@justice.ie)



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Chairperson of the Implementation Oversight Group

26<sup>th</sup> October 2016