

Dear Minister Flanagan,

I have great pleasure in presenting you with the first annual report of the Interagency Group for a Fairer and Safer Ireland.

I was appointed by your predecessor, the Tánaiste & Minister for Justice and Equality, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald T.D., as the independent Chairperson of the Interagency Group for a Fairer and Safer Ireland. The main purpose of the Group is to implement two key recommendations of the 2014 Penal Policy Review Group Report (*July 2014 Report of the Strategic Review of Penal Policy* ([www.justice.ie/penalpolicy](http://www.justice.ie/penalpolicy)), which call for much greater interagency cooperation in the management and rehabilitation of offenders and crime prevention in general.

This report outlines the work the Interagency Group has undertaken during its first year. We have spent time analysing the nature of the problems faced by offenders when released from custody and how better interagency cooperation could assist in their reintegration into the community. We have learned about excellent examples of interagency cooperation in relation to prisoner release, such as the Community Return Programme and SORAM, which have demonstrated what can be achieved when agencies work together on common objectives.

We have identified a number of issues that are causing particular problems for the reintegration of offenders and which could be addressed by better interagency cooperation. The main issues are the deficit of suitable accommodation, easier access to income support and employment activation, the award of medical cards to all eligible prisoners before release from custody and the provision of a public service card for all prisoners who wish to have one before release. The Group believes there is a need to increase the amount of information and research about the experiences of offenders following release from custody so that policies can be evaluated and adjusted accordingly. We also draw attention to the need to ensure that data on offenders prior to release can be shared on a confidential basis with agencies that have a responsibility for their reintegration.

I would like to thank the members of the Group for their commitment to improving interagency cooperation in relation to offenders and to Keith Lynn, our Secretary for his hard work in supporting the Group.

I look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues in Government on the implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review Group Report.



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Ruth Barrington PhD

Chair

25 July 2018