



## REQUEST FOR TENDERS FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

### **EXAMINING THE USE OF EARLY RELEASE SCHEMES IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN IRELAND AMONG THE TRAVELLER PRISON POPULATION**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This study is being commissioned by the Traveller Justice Initiative (TJI).

The Traveller Justice Initiative (TJI) was established in 2014 as a response to the particular needs and circumstances of Travellers within the 14 prisons in Ireland. The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) currently hosts the TJI, which is funded by the Irish Prison Service (IPS) and the Probation Service.

Travellers as a whole – and Traveller women in particular - are over-represented in Irish prisons. Although only accounting for 0.7% of the population in the Republic of Ireland, 10% of the entire prison population and 15% of the female prison population (based on a census of Travellers in prison undertaken by the Irish Prison Service in November and December 2018).

The overall aim of the TJI is to embed positive change in policy and practice. The TJI has identified five key action areas that have the potential to inform policy and practice in a pragmatic and sustainable manner. They are:

- Building a knowledge base about Travellers in prison
- Increasing and improving access to prison-based services for Travellers
- Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and after prison, using a multi-agency approach
- Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison by mainstreaming a peer-support model
- Increasing awareness and capacity through training and learning programmes to prison service and probation service staff.

An inter-agency Steering Group has been appointed to guide the direction of the TJI which is chaired by the National Traveller Women's Forum and includes representatives from Pavee Point, the Irish Traveller Movement, IASIO, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, the Irish Penal Reform Trust, Mincéirs Whiden, Traveller MABS, Exchange House, Traveller Counselling Service, the HSE Social Inclusion Unit, the Irish Red Cross, the Education and Training Board, the Traveller Mediation Service and Parish of the Travelling People.

#### **2. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

There are a number of early release schemes operational across the prison estate in Ireland. These are resettlement and rehabilitation schemes for those on custodial sentences, and they enable prisoners to serve a portion of their sentence in the community. There are a number of schemes that apply different eligibility criteria and conditions for participants. These include pilot and established schemes including:

- The Community Return (CRS) Scheme

- Temporary release (TR) Scheme
- Community Support Scheme (CSS)
- Structured temporary release scheme for female offenders (a pilot scheme)

The TJI wishes to commission a piece of research to explore the use of early release schemes in Irish prisons. The aim of the research is to understand the representation and engagement of Travellers in early release programmes, in order to identify ways to improve access and outcomes, where necessary.

### **3. RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

#### **3.1. Objectives of research**

##### **Primary objectives**

- Document the range of early release programmes for prisoners in Ireland and their availability across the estate, including an outline of their eligibility criteria.
- Identify the participation rates of Travellers in early release schemes.
- Evaluate any barriers and challenges preventing Traveller eligibility and participation.
- Identify good practices and provide actionable recommendations for improving access to these schemes for Travellers.
- Assess the outcomes for Travellers who engage in these schemes (e.g., completion, resettlement, personal development).

##### **Secondary objectives:**

- Describe the roles of statutory and community partners in delivering these schemes.
- Consider any relevant benefits to family members.

The above objectives will be met through the research which will take the form of analysis of data of schemes through accessing data available from the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Services. It will also include semi-structured interviews, undertaken with prisoners, former prisoners and a range of other stakeholders as outlined below.

#### **3.2. Outputs and outcomes**

The output will comprise a research report, which will include the research findings, an analysis of themes arising and a series of recommendations for the delivery of early release programmes across the prison estate.

The report will be written for dissemination to a wide audience of policy makers, criminal justice professionals, education and training providers, community and advocacy organisations and Traveller activists and representative organisations.

By adding to the body of knowledge and to practice on post-custody resettlement in Irish prisons, we expect the research can have the potential to enhance access to early release programmes for Travellers as well as non-Travellers in Irish prisons, thereby supporting the rehabilitation process, improve opportunities post-release and reduce recidivism.

#### **3.3. Timeline**

It is envisaged that the research will begin in November 2024 and will be completed by March 2025.

### **4. CALL FOR TENDERS**

The TJI seeks proposals from individuals and organisations for the coordination and management of the research project, and to lead the research team.

#### 4.1. Tasks

The tasks will include:

1. Working closely with the TJI Coordinator and an advisory group established to oversee the research in planning and reporting the research process.
2. Review materials and research undertaken on the subject matter by the IPS, Probation Service, TJI, Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) and others.
3. Planning the research process, including preparation of a research design document for consideration by the TJI and advisory group.
4. Developing a project management plan for the research which will set out coordination and delivery tasks and their timeline, and reporting on these regularly.
5. Engage with relevant agencies and stakeholders to gather data based on the research objectives and undertake analysis of data gathered.
6. Undertaking a consultation process to include:
  - Criminal justice sector organisations (Irish Prison Service officials, Prison Officer Association, Integrated Sentence Managers, prison governors, Probation Service staff and probation officers)
  - Resettlement, in reach organisations, Traveller organisations and community and voluntary organisations that engage with the programme.
  - A selection of current and former participants on programmes (all from the Traveller community) to ascertain their experiences, needs and impacts of the schemes on them and their families.
7. Carry out analysis of findings and devise recommendations.
8. Produce a research report of circa 13,000 words, in clear, plain, and succinct language complete with an executive summary and clear recommendations, by end March 2025. The editing and proofing work is the responsibility of the researcher, and the final report must be ready for design and print.
9. It is anticipated that the report would be published and launched within two months of the final draft being delivered to IPRT. The successful tenderer is expected to attend the launch and present the findings of the research.
10. It is expected that the research coordinator will work closely and collaboratively with the TJI as well as the research advisory group throughout the process.
11. Researchers must ensure compliance with the highest ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and adhering to data protection regulations.

#### 4.2. Requirements and expectations of researcher

Competencies of the tenderer should include:

- Analytical and written skills
- Knowledge and understanding of the Traveller experience of the justice system

- Knowledge and understanding of the criminal justice system
- Excellent interpersonal, listening and communication skills
- Experience of research design
- Demonstrated commitment to equality and anti-racism

## 5. INSTRUCTIONS FOR TENDERER AND TENDER PROCESS

Tenders are requested to submit proposals of no more than 3,000 words using the following format:

- Overall approach to the research project and methodology
- Proposed team details including relevant expertise and experience (please include examples of previous work in the tender)
- Approach to the individual tasks outlined above
- Costings for the work to be undertaken, including breakdown of number of days per task, price per day)
- Timeframe for the completion of the tasks of the research
- Details of two referees
- Ethical approaches which will apply to the research project

All queries in relation to this tender should be submitted by email only to [tenders@iprt.ie](mailto:tenders@iprt.ie)  
**Anne Costello, Co-ordinator, Traveller Justice Initiative, [Acostello@iprt.ie](mailto:Acostello@iprt.ie)**

Tenders should be submitted to [tenders@iprt.ie](mailto:tenders@iprt.ie) by 5pm on 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2024

The budget for this piece of work is €15,000 (including VAT).

### 5.1. Award criteria

Criteria that will be used in the evaluation of tenders:

- Experience and understanding of issues affecting Travellers, and in particular Travellers in prison/ criminal justice system (30%)
- Proven track record in delivery of similar projects (25%)
- Quality of the proposal (25%)
- Understanding and experience of community development work, and working from an equality and anti-racist perspective (10%)
- Cost effectiveness (10%)

#### NOTE:

- Valid tax clearance certificates will be sought from the successful tender.
- Additional information may be sought at the assessment phase.
- Before the final decision, a number of the most competitive tenders may be invited for further discussions on their proposals for elaboration, clarification, and/or aiding mutual understanding.
- TJI shall not be liable for any costs and/or expenses incurred in respect of the preparation or the submission of any tender documents or associated material. The lowest price tender is not a guarantee of success.



**Seirbhís Phríosúin  
na hÉireann**  
Irish Prison Service



**An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh**  
The Probation Service