

**PRESENTATION TO THE CHAIRMAN
AND MEMBERS OF THE
SUB COMMITTEE ON PENAL REFORM**

From

IASIO

(IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF OFFENDERS)

On

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chairman, we would like to thank you and the members of the sub-committee on Penal Reform for your kind invitation. The Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders (**IASIO**) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process with the Oireachtas Sub-Committee on penal reform. **IASIO** recognise this process as a significant and much welcomed undertaking for Irish criminal justice and for Irish society. In particular **IASIO** welcome the opportunity to reflect the role of the Community & Voluntary Sector (C&VS) within the Irish criminal justice system (CJS) and offer observations and recommendations based on that perspective. **IASIO** do not speak on behalf of the C&VS, but rather from its own operational experience as a national service provider with 11 years in the criminal justice field.

Let me firstly put our presentation and status into context: **IASIO** is an independent company formed in January 2012. It is the only national organisation for adult offenders in the criminal justice system with a specific focus on alternatives to both offending and re-imprisonment. This is achieved through the provision of direct services to offenders both in the community and in all Irish prisons. The twin pillars of **IASIO** services are: supported stability leading to change, and opportunity to do so. Indeed our strength lies in our ability to adapt to the changing needs of our funders and to the changing landscape of the external environment, while keeping the offender central throughout. In this sense **IASIO** services represent an important bridge between the criminal justice system and the community, one that is unique in Ireland.

IASIO works with all categories of offenders including high risk offenders and people convicted of a sexual offence. Its programmes: *Linkage*, is funded by the **Probation Service**; its *Mentoring and Gate Services* are funded by the **Irish Prison Service**. The 28 highly experienced and professional staff have their development and history firmly rooted in the past 11 years under the Employment Programmes section of **Business In The Community Ireland** (www.bitc.ie). The full transition of those programmes and staff from BITCI to IASIO will be completed by 30th March 2012. It is therefore from this strong background of knowledge and experiences that we bring our key facts and recommendations before you today.

Key Facts

- Access to employment allows for social integration and resettlement and provides financial independence. It boosts the economy at local and national level and brings prosperity and security to communities.

- Our national programmes are fully funded by The Probation Service and The Irish Prison Service and assist prisoners and former offenders in accessing training, education, employment and sustainable resettlement in the community.
- Over 15,000 people have been referred to our three criminal justice programmes to date, of which over 10,000 people have successfully engaged.
- Over 6,000 people have been successfully placed into training, education and employment.
- All our programmes have a proven track record of success while delivering outstanding results based on value for money principles.

Recommendations

From a C&VS perspective, and based on current pressing demands within our prison system, and our own accumulated experience of working within and across the Irish criminal justice system, **IASIO** respectfully puts forward the following recommendations toward a more positive, equitable, efficient and effective penal system:

Connecting Services

- All Community and Voluntary Sector activity related to criminal justice should be mapped as the first step in creating a cost-effective strategy that establishes the integration and coordination of criminal justice activities across the country, particularly those that inreach into prisons
- Clear procedures are written and communicated to relevant agencies so that access and entitlements to housing, welfare and medical supports for prisoners are expedient and consistent across the country
- Education and training links should be created between prison and community based colleges and programmes that recognise prior prison learning and accreditation
- Placement opportunities in the community should be formalised as much as possible to facilitate access for those who have a criminal offence

- The responsibility for post-release placement should be accepted as multi-departmental and where necessary operationalized through multi-disciplinary high support processes for released prisoners:

Working to reduce prison numbers: Early Release Strategies:

- The Community Return Programme move from a pilot phase to full implementation across the entire prison estate for prisoners serving 1 – 5 years
- Divert those prisoners not currently eligible for Community Return community service work due to for instance health issues to a Community Return Compulsory Mental Health or Drug Treatment Programme, or a Developmental or Work related Programme that is indoors and sedentary. People with less serious driving offences could be released to a Safer Driving Course.
- Establish a prison based Resettlement Support initiative to prisoners serving short term sentences, specifically, 6 - 12 months, with assessment for suitability and needs at time of committal and in line with Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) practices
- Divert those in receipt of sentences of less than 6 months away from prison and into a community based Resettlement Support programme which will address many of the underlying causes of criminogenic behaviour and encourage desistance from crime

Non-Custodial Sanctions: Community Service

- Establish the site-seeking initiative as a wholly independent national programme in response to the expected, and much hoped for, impact of the legislative changes in the Criminal Justice (Community Service) (Amendment) Act 2011, and the impact of the demand for Community Service projects arising from the Community Return Programme.

Demand on Services

- Ensure the necessary resources are available within each prison, and within the community, to meet the demand for services by prisoners wishing to ‘earn’ their release, and keep it.

Public media campaign

- Address potential public concern around early release of prisoners through a positive media campaign

Observations on practices from other jurisdictions

IASIO have identified gaps in service provision to offenders in Ireland that are found to be highly effective in other jurisdictions. For instance, a Bail Supervision and Support Programme for remand prisoners and a Circles of Support & Accountability for high risk sex offenders (see below).

We further understand there are practices in other jurisdiction that link in with the sub-Committee's brief but which require legislative changes in sentencing policy that is beyond the range of IASIO's experience. However, these practices have had a significant impact on reducing prison numbers and are therefore worth noting here. We refer to a Drug Treatment and Testing sanction in Scotland, and the Finnish models of Conditional and Unconditional Imprisonment. See below.

1. Overview of IASIO (Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders):

1.1 The Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders is a new and independent company formed in January 2012. It is the only national organisation for adult offenders in the community & voluntary sector with a specific focus on alternatives to both offending and re-imprisonment. This is achieved through the provision of direct services to offenders in the community and to prisoners, services which range from 1-to-1 guidance counselling, group work, psychometric assessment, resettlement planning & support and placement in the community. The twin pillars of all IASIO services are: supported stability leading to change, and opportunity to do so. In this sense IASIO services represent an important bridge between the criminal justice system and the community, one that is unique in Ireland.

1.2 IASIO runs three distinct services: Linkage, a community based guidance and placement service for offenders that is funded by the Probation Service; the Gate Service, a prison based guidance and placement service funded by the Irish Prison Service; and the Mentoring Service, a resettlement planning and support service funded by the Irish Prison Service. IASIO work with all categories of offenders, including high risk offenders and people convicted of sexual offences. In response to the needs of one of our funders, the Probation Service, IASIO has recently extended its remit to include resettlement support to those released on the new Community Return Programme, and a Community Service site-seeking role (below). Although a new organisation, IASIO has 11 years of operational experience managing the employment and social inclusion programmes in Business in the Community (BITC) and employs 28 highly experienced and professional staff. As a result of this experience, IASIO has developed networks of companies, agencies, community groups and individuals offering supports to offenders. The full transition of programmes and staff from BITC to IASIO will be completed by 30th of March 2012.

1.3 Objectives of IASIO:

- To provide a range of services to persons who have come into conflict with the law or who are at risk of coming into contact with the law
- To assist those referred to become independent, socially integrated and personally productive through client-centred, desistance focused rehabilitative, employment, educational and vocational interventions
- To establish the development of excellence in practice across the full range of its criminal justice services

- To ensure the efficient use of resources in the pursuit of stakeholder objectives
- To develop collaborative working relationships that foster a more inclusive Ireland, promote opportunity and a shared responsibility in reducing recidivism
- To inspire hope

2. Connecting services

2.1 While IASIO understand the Orders of Reference for the sub-Committee are to look at the recommendations of the Thornton Hall Project Review Group in respect of non-custodial alternatives to imprisonment and in particular any ‘back door strategies’ for early release, we believe, based on our years of experience within the C&VS, that in order to bring about reform one must first look outwards and understand the landscape within which part of that reform will take place. We acknowledge that much progress has already been achieved in terms of political good will and judicial and legislative changes to sentencing practices. However, we firmly believe that in order to meet the ‘back door’ targets which will require the collaboration of the C&VS, there must be a clear understanding of the issues inherent in that sector in Ireland.

2.2 It is important to note that unlike other jurisdictions there is no one organization that coordinates the numerous discrete and sometimes overlapping non-state services to offenders in Ireland. Instead, there is what is often a local response to an identified need which may or may not have a criminal justice remit, as in it may not specifically address crime. For example non criminal justice organisations may provide counselling, training, employment, or housing related services to people in need, while organisations with a specific criminal justice objective may be limited by geographic area, for example by providing resettlement services to people returning to a specific area only. This is not said by way of criticism of any single agency but rather to highlight the nature of the non-statutory criminal justice sector in Ireland. Two basic points are worth noting: firstly, that there is an uneven geographical spread of services that help reduce re-offending and re-imprisonment; and secondly that these services often operate under different organisational and funding arrangements and to different objectives, and hence potentially to different standards. The point must be made that many of these disparate services are excellent – the problem is they are disconnected from each other.

2.3 In addition to a lack of integration between existing Community and Voluntary services, there is also a disjunct between some State Agencies and the provision of services to offenders, especially at the point of release from prison. For instance, there seems to be confusion around the procedure

for accessing accommodation on release, which given the importance of accommodation to an ex-prisoner's stability could help reduce re-offending if it were improved. The same could be said of other services, such as addiction, mental and general health services – waiting lists and/or application procedures can conspire to make access difficult at the exact time it is most needed. Access to State services is fundamental to stability and therefore linked to re-offending. Yet access to State services during the transition from prison to community is highly problematic for ex-prisoners, especially outside of the large cities.

2.4 To summarise, current services available that encourage and promote desistance from crime can be characterised as follows: with respect to the C&VS, services are organisationally disparate and disconnected; with respect to State services, access can be problematic because of demand and application procedures; and with respect to overall service provision, there is an unequal provision of services in prisons across the country – all of which could perhaps be addressed through the coordination and integration of criminal justice activities within the C&VS. What seems imperative is that the strategic capacity of the C&VS be recognised beyond the individual contribution of its constituent organisations. IASIO believe that a necessary first step to the coordination of prison based and inreach criminal justice activities is a structured mapping process by county, ultimately linking services to offender needs.

Recommendation 1

- All Community and Voluntary Sector activity related to criminal justice should be mapped as the first step in creating a cost-effective strategy that establishes the integration and coordination of criminal justice activities across the country, particularly those that inreach into prisons

Recommendation 2

- Clear procedures are written and communicated to relevant agencies so that access and entitlements to housing, welfare and medical supports for prisoners are expedient and consistent across the country

2.5 Imprisonment is often of a relatively short duration. Hence it is necessary to have a realistic understanding of what is needed, and what is possible in the circumstances. This obviously depends on the actual length of sentence and time served, but for those serving shorter sentences (6-12 months) and who are likely to serve at least part of that sentence in prison, it is necessary to target

what is most beneficial, for example soft skills and introductory programmes, which can then be linked to community based training & educational programmes to facilitate progression. IASIO recommend the creation of formal links with community based colleges and programmes that recognise prior prison learning and accreditation.

Recommendation 3

- Education and training links should be created between prison and community based colleges and programmes that recognise prior prison learning and accreditation

2.6 There are a wide range of education and training opportunities in the community, but there are also concerns among community based agencies and even state services around working with offenders which can hamper placement opportunities. Protocols that address concerns, outline procedures for information sharing and cooperation, and open opportunities for ex-offender placement should be developed between criminal justice and community based service providers. An example of this is the Protocol between IASIO, in partnership with the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service, and FAS that identifies IASIO as the main referral source for criminal justice clients across the country. This Protocol is currently being expanded to include people convicted of a sexual offence.

Recommendation 4

- Placement opportunities in the community should be formalised as much as possible to facilitate access for those who have a criminal offence

2.7 It is well accepted that prisoners have multiple needs and for some, for instance sex offenders, more specific needs such as social integration. The range of needs extend beyond the remit of any one agency, which necessitates a multi-agency approach. IASIO endorses the creation of high support case management panels whereby community resources and opportunities can target specific cases. A good example of this is the award winning Co Monaghan High Support Process (HSP). The main objective of Co Monaghan HSP is to adapt a multi-agency approach to implementing supports and interventions that enable marginalized clients to overcome barriers and progress into education, training and/or employment. This HSP is currently being explored as a pilot project by IASIO in collaboration with relevant agencies in the Dublin area to facilitate social integration for specific offenders.

Recommendation 5

- The responsibility for post-release placement should be accepted as multi-departmental and where necessary operationalized through multi-disciplinary high support processes for released prisoners:

3. Working to reduce prison numbers

3.1 IASIO is committed to the 2006 EU Prison Rules (and Human Rights) Principals of Normalisation, Progression, Reintegration and Individualisation adopted by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish Prison Service. While historically the main focus of two of IASIO's programmes was, and is, to promote desistance efforts through sustainable employment, with all its inherent benefits (see below for description of its programmes), IASIO has recently broadened its remit to include interventions and practices that advance its commitment by working toward the total social integration of adult offenders referred through the Probation and Irish Prison Services.

3.2 The opportunity to expand on our core business and work practices came through the Probation Service who is the sole funder for Linkage. The Probation Service offered us an option to work in partnership with them on one of the exciting new 'back-door strategies' that provides realistic alternatives to remaining in custody while easing overcrowding in our prisons – the Community Return Programme.

3.3 Community Return Programme

Linkage now offers practical resettlement support to Probation clients referred to us under the Community Return Programme, which is a structured early release Community Service initiative aimed at reducing overcrowding in identified prisons. Prisoners released under this initiative are carefully assessed prior to release and voluntarily agree to the terms of the release which involves serving 3 days per week on a Community Service project. Attendance for these 3 days is mandatory and includes working with the Linkage TEO to address practical resettlement needs. This pilot initiative currently looks at prisoners serving sentences of more than 1 year and less than 5, and it is understood that this particular criteria is to be expanded to include suitable longer term prisoners in the near future.

3.4 In the context of the Probation Service Community Return Programme (as opposed to a typical Probation Order), referral to Linkage of all those not on PSSSO's is obligatory. The role of

the Linkage TEO is to support the offender's commitment to attend Community Service, identify barriers to participation in Community Service and re-settlement in their community, and develop goals and actions to address these barriers. On an on-going basis, the TEO assists the offender to access services relevant to participation in Community Service and their re-integration into the community which can include:

- Social welfare/ finance issues
- Applying for a medical card if relevant
- Applications for social housing if relevant
- Access to addiction counselling/treatment services
- Referral to personal / family counselling services
- Literacy and numeracy courses
- Working on a plan for training or employment

3.5 Based on anecdotal evidence from our TEOs the Community Return Programme, although still in its pilot phase, is showing promising signs of success for the vast majority of clients released through this mechanism. Almost all those referred to Linkage attend and once there willingly engage in the process as resettlement support is seen as a very welcome service by people whose lives were disrupted by imprisonment. Early indications show that it is achieving its short-term primary function which is to alleviate overcrowding in selected prisons in a positive, practical, fair and structured manner. Long term effects for those released remain to be seen but intuitively one could realistically expect a greater integration outcome once the visible barriers are removed.

3.6 For prisons, the introduction of an 'incentivised' early release strategy will almost certainly result in prisoners exhibiting more motivation and engaging more with prison services to earn their early release. Once released, IASIO's role is to keep that momentum going and assist in resettlement efforts that enable released prisoners remain free. Overall, a very welcome initiative leading to a more positive penal justice system in Ireland, and one that we would like to see rolled out across the prison estate.

Recommendation 5

- The Community Return Programme move from a pilot phase to full implementation across the entire prison estate for prisoners serving 1 – 5 years, with immediate effect

3.7 An Expanded Community Return Programme

IASIO believe that the Community Return Programme is a necessary and efficient method of dealing with the current crisis of overcrowding within our prisons. As mentioned above, it currently targets those prisoners serving 1-5 years who are deemed to be of no threat to public safety. While it behoves the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service to exercise caution when selecting suitable prisoners for this early release mechanism, the fact is that the majority of Irish prisoners are non-violent offenders, many of whom have underlying and unresolved mental health and addiction issues.

3.8 IASIO believes the Community Return Programme should be expanded to include cohorts of prisoners with specific issues which may best be addressed in a community setting. For instance, prisoners suffering from a mental health illness could be released to a specified treatment programme, with mandatory attendance supervised by community based Probation staff. People imprisoned for certain driving offences could be released to attend a Safer Driving Course. The same can be said for other types of cohorts such as those in need of addiction services, drug treatment programmes and soft skills or developmental programmes. As always, prisoners selected to participate on this type of early release programme would be deemed to pose no threat to public safety and would be subject to the same conditions and responsibilities as those released to Community Service projects.

Recommendation 6

- Divert those prisoners not currently eligible for Community Return community service work due to for instance health issues to a Community Return Compulsory Mental Health or Drug Treatment Programme, or a Developmental or Work related Programme that is indoors and sedentary. People with less serious driving offences could be released to a Safer Driving Course.

3.9 Resettlement Support

IASIO are also aware of the lack of services on offer to those serving sentences of <12 months, and where there are services on offer, the inability of short-term prisoners of both genders and all ages to successfully engage with those services due to the fast turnover in Irish prisons to ease current overcrowding. The fact that the majority of Irish prisoners are in receipt of short term sentences compels an urgent response to this situation. The fact that many of these prisoners' desistance efforts are disrupted by their inability to navigate the maze of bureaucracy that surrounds their,

typically multiple, resettlement needs clearly identifies a place to start – with a resettlement support initiative.

3.10 While our Prison GATE and Mentoring Services currently participate in standard – those serving 1-4 years - and enhanced – those serving more than 4 years - Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) practices and procedures, in particular at the Community Integration Planning (CIP) stage, IASIO respectively propose two recommendations that complement ISM principles while taking into account the operational difficulties specific to short term prisoners. We offer two recommendations in response to the need to further separate those serving <12 months sentences into those serving between 6-12 months and those serving <6 months.

Recommendation 7

- Establish a prison based Resettlement Support initiative to prisoners serving short term sentences, specifically, 6 - 12 months, with assessment for suitability and needs at time of committal and in line with Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) practices

Recommendation 8

- Divert those in receipt of sentences of less than 6 months away from prison and into a community based Resettlement Support programme which will address many of the underlying causes of criminogenic behaviour and encourage desistance from crime

3.11 Community Service: Site-Seeking Role

In addition to the role of the Probation Service to manage and supervise persons placed on Community Service Orders by the Courts, the Service is now tasked with expanding that role to include persons released early from prison through the Community Return Programme to participate in Community Service in lieu of completing a prison sentence.

3.12 Community Service tasks are undertaken in two ways:

- In *small groups* supervised by Community Service Supervisors
- *Individual placements* where the accepting organization provides support through a link person

3.13 Persons on Community Service provide thousands of hours of unpaid labour on work projects which enables organisations in the community to complete work that might otherwise remain undone. The use of this form of non-custodial sanction is expected to increase over the

coming years due to the legislative changes in the Criminal Justice (Community Service) (Amendment) Act 2011 which was signed into law by the President last August 2011. This new legislation requires the sentencing judge to now consider community service when a custodial sentence of 12 months or less is being considered.

3.14 At the beginning of 2011, in order to make best use of existing resources the Probation Service recruited a 'JobFinder' to locate, assess and co-ordinate worksites suitable for Group and Individual Community Service placements in the Dublin area in close consultation with the local Senior Probation Officers, and based on demand.

3.15 In November 2011, in order to make further best use of resources, the Probation Service included Linkage in the task of locating suitable sites for Group and Individual Community Service placements outside of Dublin, and Linkage Training and Employment Officers (TEOs) who have the capacity to do so now help find, evaluate, prepare and co-ordinate suitable work projects for groups and individuals on Community Service also in close consultation with the local Senior Probation Officer, and based on local demand.

3.16 While historically this task could be described as a non-core function of Linkage whose ultimate objective is to assist offenders find suitable, worthwhile employment, it is however in harmony with IASIO's values and overall objectives. Further, it complements our role in the Community Return Programme in that the increase in Community Service caseloads for Probation will inevitably result in an increased demand for Community Service projects. From a pragmatic perspective, it simply makes good sense to use the expertise and skills base of TEOs who, by virtue of their existing practice, are constantly and consistently profiling their areas for suitable opportunities for their clients and as such have a detailed knowledge of their local communities, across all sectors including the C&V sector to which Community Service applies. However, the impact on caseload and capacity to fulfill their ongoing guidance and placement role has yet to be determined.

Recommendation 9

- Establish the site-seeking initiative as a wholly independent national programme in response to the expected, and much hoped for, impact of the legislative changes in the Criminal Justice (Community Service) (Amendment) Act 2011, and the impact of the demand for Community Service projects arising from the Community Return Programme.

4. The demand for services

4.1 IASIO believe that while incentivised early release strategies are an excellent development in the Irish Penal system, thought must be given to the demand these strategies will place on existing resources, both inside and outside our prison walls. The Community Return Programme and similar release strategies will incentivise prisoners to earn the right to be considered for participation which will place a greater demand on services within prisons to allow prisoners that privilege. Further, community based organisations must be in a position to respond to an increased demand for their services by funders and released prisoners. While it is understood that resources to meet these demands are scarce, it seems a futile exercise to introduce penal reform strategies without the means to implement them.

Recommendation 10

- Ensure the necessary resources are available within each prison, and within the community, to meet the demand for services by prisoners wishing to ‘earn’ their release, and keep it.

5. Public media campaign

5.1 IASIO is aware of current public concern about the often publicised early release of prisoners. We believe this concern is fuelled by a lack of knowledge and information among the general public around sentencing, the impact of imprisonment on individuals and families, and the social and financial costs of imprisonment to Irish society. Given that our penal system is currently under review with a view to reform, it seems timely to consider conducting a public media campaign led by a respected public figure, that outlines the need for reform and that includes reference to the cost savings for the taxpayer.

Recommendation 11

- Address potential public concern around early release of prisoners through a positive media campaign

6. Observations on practices from other jurisdictions

6.1 There appears to be gaps in service provision for specific categories of offenders when compared to other jurisdictions. One example is the absence of an Irish Bail Supervision and Support Programme¹ which has been found to be very successful elsewhere, and which would address concerns around the lack of TR or early release mechanisms for remand prisoners (who have been formally charged with a crime but have not yet been convicted of that crime, and in some cases may never be).

6.2 Another example of a successful intervention is the Circles of Support and Accountability (CO²SA)² programme, also found to be highly effective in other jurisdictions. Basically, CO²SA is a community based volunteer programme that works with people convicted of a sexual offence, and involves a number of volunteers (4-6) who are assigned to a high risk sex offender living in the local community. The sex offender is the center of the circle and receives daily support from the volunteers, and is held accountable by them for current behaviour. Each circle is supervised by a Coordinator who has knowledge and experience of this target group, and who in turn reports to the Probation Service on the clients' progress toward reintegration. The Probation Service has recently funded a feasibility study on this intervention within an Irish context, and it is hoped that the recommendations from this study will soon be implemented.

6.3 While it is beyond the scope of IASIO's expertise to comment on legislative processes, and while the following refer to sentencing policy and sanctions which require legislative changes, we believe that, because of their evident success, they are worth noting here.

6.4 The Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) in Scotland³ is an effective direct alternative to prison for those whose motivation to commit offences is related to a personal addiction to drugs.

6.5 Finland's Conditional and Unconditional Imprisonment⁴ offer a more effective way of dealing with the range of sanctions available to the judiciary. For example, Conditional Imprisonment makes it clear to the offender that s/he is receiving a prison sentence that is being converted to a

¹ See NACRO website www.nacro.co.uk and the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales website www.yjb/justice.co.uk/publications for information on Bail Supervision and Support programmes.

² See www.circles-uk.org.uk for information on the UK model of CO²SA

³ See The Scottish Parliament Justice 1 Committee's Report on A Comparative Review of Alternatives to Custody: Lessons from Finland, Sweden and Western Australia (2005).

⁴ See Houseman, L. *Reducing Reliance on Incarceration in Texas: Does Finland hold answers?* Texas International Law Journal. Vol 46:209.

community based sanction, supervised by the Probation Service who can revoke the community sanction if conditions are breached. Unconditional Imprisonment relates to those who are convicted of the most serious crimes such as murder and those who pose a threat to public safety. However, under this practice, sentences are for a determinate period and offenders are eligible for early release depending on certain criteria being met such as evidence of engaging with services on offer and good behaviour. Of note, Finland require the sentencing judge to adopt the least restrictive sanction available at all times.

7. Did you know that:

7.1 While many offenders are committed to starting their own businesses, they are blocked at the final hurdle by Insurance Companies who refuse to offer insurance to people with criminal convictions, regardless of the nature of the offence or the seriousness of the crime? IASIO will continue to address this issue on behalf of those most affected.

7.2 The fact that Ireland has no mechanism to expunge certain categories of offences (spent convictions) continues to impede many people in their desire to move away from their past offending behaviour and become financially independent for themselves and their families. The Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders in conjunction with Business in the Community Ireland and the Irish Penal Reform Trust will continue to take an active part in trying to address this major issue for 1000's of ex-offenders.

Linkage Statistics

- Almost 13,000 people have been referred to Linkage by the Probation Service since 2000
- Of those, more than 8,000 clients engaged
- Of which 2,445 went into employment
- 2,771 went into further education and training
- The remainder are currently in progress (active clients)

Services offered

Linkage offers a holistic guidance service to people referred by Probation, as mentioned above. This involves 1-1 guidance counselling, psychometric assessment, progression planning and placement services and recently resettlement support to clients on the Community Return Programme. It should be noted that while Linkage is a community based employment programme, it offers inreach services to all Irish prisons not covered by the Prison GATE Service (below) which includes our range of services offered to community based offenders, prison based and prison centered group work, co-facilitation on the Soft Skills Programme now rolled out to most prisons, a Day Release Work Programme in Shelton Abbey Open Prison, Expo Days for Employers and Information Days for Prisoners in which external agencies such as the DSP, FAS, Community Welfare, HSE, MABS, set out their tables and answer any questions put to them by the prisoners. Linkage TEOs also source funding for much needed training within the prisons such as Start Your Own Business and Mechanics courses in Castlerea Prison and Safe Pass, Manual Handling, HACCP and First Aid courses in Loughan House and elsewhere.

For the most part, Linkage inreach services offers practical support and guidance to those referred by prison based Probation Officers and where possible a continuity of those services into the community, usually through inter-programme transfers. Linkage TEOs work in close collaboration with colleagues across all of the other IASIO programmes, and it must be said that part of the success of each of our programmes lies in that fact.

Appendix ii The Prison GATE Service:

The successful resettlement of prisoners is a fundamental challenge to the Irish Prison Service (IPS), to prisoners, and to Irish society itself. In that the resettlement of prisoners affects families, communities and statutory services in the community, it is properly described as a social challenge stretching beyond the responsibility of the IPS. Unplanned prison release can destabilise vulnerable prisoners and as such contribute to further crime. The Prison GATE Service is a unique prison based ‘through-the-gate’ employment service that fosters stable resettlement and reintegration, which results in positive outcomes for the ex-prisoner, their family and the wider community.

The issue of community re-entry is fundamental to offender management and the Gate Service is designed for this purpose alone. The Gate Service works with individual prisoners and groups of prisoners to develop plans for release while they are still in prison, and based on these plans, organises placements in the community post-release. The ultimate objective is the ex-prisoner’s independence through employment. It is a unique service with a proven track record of success.

Main Objective:

The main objective of the Gate Service is to promote desistance through the provision of guidance and placement services for prisoners referred by the many different agencies operating within the prison. The focus is vocational, the identification of appropriate training, education and employment opportunities that lead to the ex-prisoner’s ultimate resettlement and independence.

Gate Service Profile:

The Gate Service began as a joint initiative between Business in the Community (BITC) and the Irish Prison Service and is now also coming under the management of IASIO. The Gate Service is delivered through Training and Employment Officers (TEO) assigned to the following prisons: Mountjoy, St. Patrick’s Institution, the Dochas Centre, the Training Unit, Midland and Portlaoise Prisons, and recently Wheatfield and Cloverhill on a part-time basis. The Gate Service deals with the full range of offences, including sex offences.

TEO Profile:

Similar to the Linkage Service, entry criteria for TEOs to the Gate Service is a Diploma or Higher in Adult Guidance & Counselling or relevant Third Level qualification leading to membership of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, a thorough understanding of the target groups needs and issues, a good understanding of the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, the criminal justice process, agencies operating within prisons, and the Reintegration process and at least 2 years’ experience of

working with this target group. Exceptional experience may, all other things being equal, be accepted in lieu of formal qualifications. All TEOs are also qualified Psychometric Assessors (Level B) accredited by the British Psychological Society. Currently there are 4 TEO's employed in GATE.

GATE Service Impacts

Since August 2007 when the programme began, with 3 TEOs covering 6 prisons (a fourth TEO was recruited in 2011 to try to cope with demand):

- 1949 referrals
- 900 total placements
- 242 pre-release placements
- 658 post-release placements
- 144 inter-programmes transfers
- 426 currently in progress (active caseload)

Appendix iii The Resettlement Mentoring Service

The Mentoring Service is an innovative resettlement service that offers a ‘through-the-gate’ resettlement support to prisoners. This involves building a trusting relationship with the prisoner, whereby release plans are made that identify the necessary supports the prisoner needs on release. The Mentor accompanies the ex-prisoner into the community to ensure access to these services and provide continued support. It is a holistic role that encompasses both prison and the community, and in that it supports access to other essential services the Mentoring relationship can be described as encompassing many needs. The Mentoring Service is hence an essential element in stable resettlement with benefits to individual prisoners, their families and communities.

Main Objective:

The main objective of the Mentoring Service is to promote desistance through the provision of support and access to essential services identified through the Mentoring process. The focus is holistic but in each case is adapted to the needs of individual prisoners. Following release Mentors support the ex-prisoners access to housing, addiction and any other required services, while at the same time offer continued personal support. The ultimate aim is the ex-prisoners desistance and independence, which realistically is best described as a process rather than a single event.

Mentoring Service Profile:

The Mentoring Service is also currently a joint initiative between Business in the Community (BITC) and the IPS but is also moving over to the new IASIO on March 31st 2012. It operates under Dormant Accounts and IPS funding. The Service is currently delivered by 3 Mentors assigned to the following prisons: Castlerea and Loughan House, Cork Prison, and the Training Unit in Dublin.

Mentor Profile:

The entry criteria for Mentors to the Service is a third level qualification in a relevant area of social care and direct knowledge and experience of prisoners and their needs on release, as well as knowledge of the wider criminal justice system, social welfare and health service provision. IASIO also provides access to relevant training and continuous professional development for all of its staff.

Volunteering is also an important part of the Service. Volunteers have been recruited and trained and where matched have done outstanding work in befriending those clients who need a more intense level of support than the mentors were able to give.

The Resettlement Mentoring Service is currently being reconfigured to more effectively address resettlement planning and support in participant prisons. IASIO is working with the IPS to optimise caseloads with respect to resettlement and reintegration. This work is an extension of the Service's objectives to date rather than a change to them and builds on existing experience and capacities.