

Irish Penal Reform Trust: Invitation to Tender (<https://www.activelink.ie/node/114571>)



Tender: Exploring the links between social deprivation and the criminal justice system to shift focus from imprisonment to social investment for crime prevention

The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) is now **inviting tenders for research** (https://www.iprt.ie/site/assets/files/7591/invitation_to_tender_shifting_focus_from_criminal_to_social_justice_feb_2025_final_2.pdf) to explore the links between social deprivation and the criminal justice system to shift focus from imprisonment to social investment for crime prevention.

There is growing recognition that social deprivation is a significant driver of offending. People facing poverty and marginalisation often encounter systemic barriers including inadequate access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, which in turn can contribute to greater involvement with the criminal justice system.

Amid both a cost-of-living and a housing crisis, the prison population has reached all-time highs. An increasing number of people are entering prison from homelessness and exiting back into homelessness. We know that people from low-income backgrounds are disproportionately represented in prison populations, and that people from deprived areas are more likely to be imprisoned. This cycle of poverty and crime strains both social services and the justice system and is a phenomenon we should seek to understand.

The aims of this research

IPRT’s 2012 position paper *Shifting Focus: The Vicious Circle of Social Exclusion and Crime* (https://www.iprt.ie/site/assets/files/6264/position_paper_final.pdf) explored the overlap between people experiencing social deprivation and involvement with the criminal justice system. Given growing poverty and deprivation rates in Ireland, IPRT believes that updated research is both necessary and timely. This research will seek to identify and address the underlying reasons why people may break the law and look at meaningful diversions and interventions that we know can empower people, reduce crime and result in fewer people in prison.

It is anticipated that the research will make a strong and clear argument for both financial and political investment to provide greater access to wraparound social and health services as well as supporting and championing effective alternatives to prison.

The research will aim to:

- Analyse the **overlap between poverty, deprivation, and criminal justice involvement** identifying key factors that push people from marginalised communities into the criminal justice system;
- Explore how **social inequalities and inequities may contribute to criminal behaviour** providing a comprehensive understanding of the **systemic issues that perpetuate cycles of poverty and crime** including intergenerational poverty and better understand any direct or indirect links between social deprivation, crime and imprisonment;
- Propose **evidence-based recommendations** to redirect investment towards social services, education, and community support, aiming to prevent crime and reduce imprisonment ultimately leading to a reduction in the over-representation of individuals from deprived backgrounds in the criminal justice system.

Full details of the project are available here.
https://www.iprt.ie/site/assets/files/7591/invitation_to_tender_shifting_focus_from_criminal_to_social_justice_feb_2025_final_2.pdf

Tenders should be submitted by email to tenders@iprt.ie (mailto:tenders@iprt.ie) by 12 noon on Thursday 27 March 2025 at the latest. Queries should be directed to Saoirse Brady, Executive Director at director@iprt.ie (mailto:director@iprt.ie) . *Please note that tenders will not be accepted at this email.

We would like to acknowledge the support of Community Foundation Ireland for this important research.

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 Nationwide

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