



Invitation to Tender

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

About IPRT

The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) is Ireland's leading independent charity campaigning for a penal system that is just and humane, protects and promotes human rights, equality and social justice and uses prison as a last resort. Our work is underscored by the recognition that prison is inherently damaging in itself and impacts disproportionately on marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Our goal therefore is to shift the focus of Ireland's penal system away from its current emphasis on punishment towards approaches based on prevention, early intervention, diversion, and the integration of criminal justice policy with wider social policy.

Context

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*](#) 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

Tender Outline

IPRT is seeking to commission an expert researcher(s) to conduct mixed-methods research to explore the link between social deprivation and crime, aiming to shift the focus from imprisonment to social investments that prevent crime, improve lives, and reduce prison populations. Our research proposal envisages the basic model set out below which should:

- Conduct a **literature review** of the available national and international research on the relationship between poverty, deprivation and the criminal justice system;
- **Analyse existing data** (including the Pobal Deprivation Index) to identify any potential overlap and/or gaps on data for people experiencing disadvantage in Ireland and better understand any direct or indirect links between social deprivation, crime and imprisonment and whether there has been any increase related to the cost-of-living and/or housing crises;
- Consider **Ireland's national and international obligations** on socio-economic rights with particular reference to **the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Child Guarantee, the European Social Charter**, and any other relevant instruments;
- **Engage with individuals with lived and living experience of the criminal justice system, poverty and deprivation** in the design and roll-out of the research through methods including community mapping, focus groups, participatory action research, workshops and photovoice to ensure a thorough immersion into the communities most impacted and to identify potential factors other than poverty that should inform the scope of the project;
- Explore the **role of wider systems (e.g. social security, healthcare, housing)** in better supporting these individuals and communities to prevent interaction with the criminal justice system;
- Examine the growing international movement of "justice reinvestment" and share **successful strategies** with IPRT from both domestic and international contexts that have **demonstrated effectiveness in breaking the cycle between social inequalities and the criminal justice system**; and
- Propose evidence-based recommendations that will inform government strategies, policy formation and public budgetary allocations to ensure greater proactive social investment and better alignment between stakeholders to advocate for proactive change.

We are open to considering adapted models of delivery within the budget and time constraints of the project.

Project Deliverables

The successful tenderer will be expected to produce a research report of circa 25,000 words, with clear evidence-informed recommendations, within six months of the contract for services being agreed and signed. 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.

IPRT will establish and manage a high-level advisory group to support the research and the researcher will be expected to engage with IPRT and the advisory group to update on progress at regular intervals.

Requirements

- Postgraduate degree(s) in a relevant discipline (for example economics, social science, sociology);
- Proven experience of designing and carrying out research projects;
- Experience in qualitative and quantitative research methods, including undertaking desk-based research, conducting interviews in a sensitive manner, designing and conducting surveys, and data analysis;
- This research is seeking engagement with individuals who have experienced prison or the wider criminal justice system therefore experience and evidence of successfully applying for ethical approval from third-level institutions (if needed in the case of the tenderer being employed in such an institution) to conduct qualitative research is essential;

- Established understanding of how systemic inequalities, especially class-based, contribute to criminal justice involvement and demonstrated experience working with or within marginalised communities is desirable in addition to an understanding of social justice, poverty and criminal justice issues;
- Experience in producing high-quality, publishable documents to **agreed deadlines**, within **strict word-counts** and in an **accessible way**; and
- First-rate drafting abilities, exceptional writing skills, attention to detail, and ability to adhere to budgetary requirements.

Tender Process

Tendering individuals or organisations must submit a tender document of no more than four pages. Each tender should include:

- A profile or CV of the individual(s) making the proposal;
- Details of previous relevant work in this area;
- Two samples of written work (these may be URLs to work published online) preferably including examples of previous work relevant to poverty, deprivation and criminal justice involvement from a structural perspective;
- The methodology you propose to adopt in order to achieve the key deliverables;
- Costing and timeline with respect to the proposed work expressed within the overall budget for research of **€15,000** (inclusive of VAT if applicable) with a breakdown including daily rate and associated costs of research;
- A comprehensive risk assessment with mitigating actions; and
- Estimated number of days for completing the work.

Assessment of Tender Each tender received will be assessed on the basis of:

Criteria	Score
Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the brief	30
Approach/methodology including risk assessment	20
Availability to carry out the project within the stated timeframe	10
Track record in relevant work	20
Value for money	20
Total	100

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.
- IPRT 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.

How to Apply

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

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