

2019 Annual Report on Protected Disclosures



Seirbhís Phríosúin
na hÉireann
Irish Prison Service

Introduction

Under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 each public body is required to publish an annual report setting out the number of protected disclosures received in the preceding year and the action taken (if any). This report must not result in persons making disclosures being identifiable. The Irish Prison Service is an executive function of the Department of Justice and Equality and has in place a Protected Disclosures Policy to handle disclosures that are made directly through its dedicated Protected Disclosures Manager.

Irish Prison Service Protected Disclosures policy

The current Protected Disclosures Policy of the Irish Prison Service issued on 1st July 2018. The Policy is aimed at supporting the Irish Prison Service's values, ensuring employees can raise concerns about relevant wrongdoing which come to their attention in connection with their employment, without fear of penalisation, and providing a transparent and confidential process for dealing with concerns.

The principal objectives are to encourage staff to make Protected Disclosures at the earliest opportunity and to provide protection where such disclosures are made. Procedures are being strengthened in certain areas and are designed to further ensure that all protected disclosures will be subject to an independent investigation followed by appropriate action, based on the investigation findings.

Implementation of the Policy

To support the implementation of the policy the Irish Prison Service has committed to the *Integrity at Work Programme Membership* and the *Integrity at Work Pledge* with Transparency International Ireland ("TII"). Staff are made aware of the *Transparency International Ireland Speak Up Helpline 1800 844 866 for independent guidance* on reporting a concern or making a protected disclosure.

A dedicated **Protected Disclosure Manager** for the Irish Prison Service has been appointed and a dedicated confidential email address speakup@irishprisons.ie and Post Box Number has been set up. The revised policy provides for enhanced **independent external assessment and investigation**. All assessments, investigations and reviews of protected disclosures made under the revised policy are conducted externally.

Training and Communications

33 (+ 20 from June 2019) senior members of staff completed the introductory module and feedback was very positive. (Further Training will be delivered by TII to staff in 2020).



TI Ireland acknowledged that the Irish Prison Service has participated fully in the Integrity at Work Programme (“IAW”) and incorporated a number of changes into the protected disclosures policy and procedures that were recommended by TI Ireland. The Irish Prison Service will continue to work with TI Ireland as part of the IAW programme.

In 2019, information about the IAW Programme was disseminated via the Irish Prison Service intranet. Staff are made aware that free and confidential advice is available from TI Ireland’s Speak Up helpline and the Speak Up Safely Video is displayed. The Speak Up Safely Guide is also available for download from the staff intranet.

An awareness campaign regarding the IAW Programme was also featured in the internal staff newsletter. Information about the IAW Programme is included as part of staff induction. In terms of external communications, unions, membership bodies and the Department of Justice and Equality have been informed about the Irish Prison Service participation in the IAW Programme.

Recommendation from DPER Circular 25/2019

The Irish Prison Service and the Department of Justice and Equality are examining recommendation A.23 of DPER Circular: 25/2019, Minute of the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform for implementation in response to the Committee of Public Accounts Periodic Report No. 6 Oct 2018 - May 2019.

Protected Disclosures at end December 2019

During 2019, eight disclosures were received for examination under the Irish Prison Service Protected Disclosures Policy of which one investigation was transferred to be managed by the Department of Justice and Equality. Seven of these cases were submitted for investigation to the external investigator. Of the three protected disclosures outstanding at end 2018, one was discontinued. The remaining two protected disclosures from 2018 were under investigation at the end of 2019.

The below summary table does not refer to disclosures directly received by the Department of Justice and Equality.

Number of Protected Disclosures made to the Irish Prison Service in 2019	Action taken in response to such Protected Disclosures in a form which does not enable the identification of persons involved in protected disclosures
8	Allegations received for examination under Irish Prison Service Protected Disclosures policy
1	Investigation transferred to Department of Justice and Equality
7	Disclosures put forward for investigation by external independent investigator.