



## **Terms of Reference for the review of the current provision of health services for women in custody to address physical, mental health and well-being needs**

### **Background**

This document sets out a terms of reference for a review of health service for women in custody to inform the future delivery of supports.

The [Health Needs Assessment \(HNA\)](#) of the Irish Prison Service was jointly commissioned by the Department of Health and the Department of Justice and published in 2023. The report identified that women detained in prison present with complex health and wellbeing needs and poorer health status than the general population and that prison should provide an array of new opportunities to address health inequalities and gain access to healthcare. It is estimated that up to 85% of women in Irish prisons have substance misuse and addiction challenges, many with adverse childhood experiences and trauma, with a much higher prevalence of mental health issues and histories of abuse outside prison.

The HNA also noted that there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence from IPS healthcare stakeholders and charitable organisations, such as the Irish Penal Reform Trust, that women present themselves within the criminal justice system with increasingly complex needs. These challenges are often related to chaotic lives in the community due to drug, housing, and mental health issues. Women in Ireland tend to be imprisoned for short sentences for repeat low-level offending, and when services become disconnected and disengaged, it may result in the continuation of this damaging cycle and exacerbation of health concerns and inequalities.

### **Purpose of the Review**

With funding from the Women's Health Fund through the Department of Health, and managed through the Genio Trust, the Care & Rehabilitation Directorate of the Irish Prison Service are implementing a 12-month funded programme which aims to address the physical, mental health and wellbeing of women in custody. In particular, the programme focuses on two specific areas: *women at midlife and older living well and living longer* and *services and supports for marginalised women*.

One of the core objectives of this funding is to review the current service provision for women in custody to address physical, mental health and well-being needs. This review while complementing the HNA will have a more specific and in-depth health focus and will aim to review the progression of the women's health recommendations previously put forward under the HNA. This review will also aim to identify gaps in healthcare within the IPS (Dóchas Centre and Limerick Prison) and inform future service design and delivery to improve healthcare for women in prison and continued access to community healthcare supports thereafter. A key component to this review will be the inclusion of experts by experience and the incorporation of the voice of women through interviews with female prisoners and people with lived experience of imprisonment.

## **Evaluator / Researcher Required**

Genio will recruit an evaluator / researcher to lead the review of the current service provision for women in custody to address physical, mental health and well-being needs. This will occur in both the Dóchas Centre and Limerick Prison. The use of surveys will also be considered as a way to reach wider staff across both prisons. This review should also align with further research currently underway across the IPS, Department of Health and other relevant bodies and identify opportunities for collaboration through the project. This should compare what is available in the community to what is available in prison, identify any additional needs that are not currently being met in prison and identify any gaps in service provision.

The successful evaluator/researcher will work directly with the Care & Rehabilitation Directorate of the Irish Prison Service and provide regular updates to the Genio Trust for the duration of the contract.

## **Methods**

It is envisaged that the research will involve a site visit to both the Dóchas Centre and Limerick Prison to conduct focus groups with prisoners, consultations with service providers, the Irish Prison Service and the HSE to review the current level of provision and to recommend priorities for future services in order to ensure equitable access in prison to services available in the community.

## **Core Competencies expected:**

- Excellent project management skills
- Strong judgement and decision-making skills
- Facilitation/Co-production experience
- Ability to engage with a range of stakeholders and cross-sectoral departments
- Ability to convene meetings, focus groups and to develop contacts and networks on own initiative
- Multi-platform communication skills
- Self-motivated
- Excellent professional writing skills
- Examples of previous work with people with lived experience of inequality and exclusion, which influenced practice
- Cultural competency and trauma-informed care experience, specifically for working with diverse groups
- Ability to work closely with people who use services and staff to develop practical, implementable plans
- Strong analytical skills, experience implementing recommendations from research to actionable projects etc.

**Timeline:** Six Months

**Budget:** €20,000 (inclusive of VAT)



**Deliverables:** The requirement is to provide a review of the current service provision for women in custody to address their physical, mental health and well-being needs. This review should identify existing gaps in service delivery for women when compared to community based services, identify the need for additional services and inform service improvements.

**Application Process:** Genio are inviting interested individuals to submit:

1. *Cover note*
2. *Examples of previous research and references*
2. *A draft project plan on how they will undertake this project*
3. *The methodology they will undertake*
4. *A full breakdown of costs*
5. *Skills and background*

**Selection Process:** A selection panel will review all applications submitted and invite suitable candidates for an interview.

**Timeline:** Applications due by **5.00pm Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025**. Please send applications to [louise.conlon@genio.ie](mailto:louise.conlon@genio.ie) by the specified deadline date.