



‘A NEW WAY FORWARD’ SOCIAL ENTERPRISE STRATEGY 2017-2019

**MID-TERM REVIEW:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY





INTRODUCTION

The mid-term review of 'A New Way Forward – Social Enterprise Strategy 2017 – 2019' takes place at an interesting time in Ireland. At 5.1%¹, the unemployment rate is the lowest it's been since October 2007; a decrease from 6.6% in May 2017 when the strategy was launched. However, the employment rate of people leaving prison and those on Probation remains poor. Having a criminal record, regardless of how long ago it was, remains a significant barrier to securing gainful employment. Recently released figures by the UK government show that only 17% of people with a criminal record are employed in steady work in the 12 months following release from prison³.

Since the launch of this strategy, a lot of work has been undertaken to support social enterprises operating within the criminal justice sector (CJS). Their role, as a mechanism for creating jobs for people with a history of offending behaviour, is pivotal to the strategy and its ability to make a difference to individuals, families and the wider Irish society.

This executive summary provides a snapshot of achievements and progress made to date, as well as highlighting the areas we have not progressed as quickly as we envisaged. Full details of actions under each of the 24 objectives is contained in the Mid-Term Review of the strategy available on the Department of Justice and Equality, Probation Service and Irish Prison Service websites³.

'I wanted to make a change but I didn't think anybody would give me a chance'

Full-time employee of Boomerang Enterprises, Cork, who spent most of his adult life in prison.

People with education and training, who are in work, are less likely to offend.

¹ Source: Central Statistics Office, July 3rd, 2018.

² Barras, C, (2018), 'Why more ex-offenders may be about to get a second chance', BBC. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20180824-why-more-ex-offenders-may-be-about-to-get-a-second-chance>

³ <http://www.justice.ie/>; <http://www.probation.ie/>; <https://www.irishprisons.ie/>

2 UPDATED DEFINITION OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE



In a recent report by CPA Ireland⁴, the definition of social enterprises was simplified as:

‘...social enterprises essentially sell products or services or both for a profit. They then use this surplus to deliver their social mission. The more profit they have, the more of the mission they can accomplish.’

Social enterprises are increasingly being seen as real contributors to the economy providing much needed goods and services to their customers. According to the CPA Ireland Report⁵, the social enterprise sector has the potential to create up to 40,000 jobs and contribute €2 billion to the exchequer.

What this means, at an operational level within criminal justice organisations, is learning and understanding as to what a business focus is. It will also require a change of perspective of business type from State funders as well as state agencies becoming customers of social enterprises through their procurement processes. For both ends of the sector, this is just the beginning.



⁴ CPA Ireland, (2018), 'Social enterprise: The Irish and International Landscapes', Dublin, available at: <http://www.cpaireland.ie/media-publications/institute-news/2018/04/16/cpa-ireland-social-enterprise-the-irish-and-international-landscapes-report-launch>

⁵ Ibid

3 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - STATISTICS

20 Social enterprises nationwide now employing people with convictions and growing
Additional eight social enterprises in development

46 Total number of jobs in these social enterprises in October 2018

Brand new Business Planning & Mentoring Programme created in partnership with UCD Innovation Academy and the Rotary Clubs, Ireland

Probation Service KickStart Fund supporting social enterprises launched

First Market Testing exercise to operate a social enterprise cafe put out by IPS

Two social enterprises in the criminal justice sector successfully **secured CSP funding**



New insurance scheme for social enterprises negotiated and made available



National Manufacturing Network of social enterprises established

First social enterprise pop-up shop opens in Haymarket

Mattress Recycling initiative implemented between Dublin prisons & Eco Mattress social enterprise creating jobs for people with convictions



4 STRATEGIC UPDATE AT A GLANCE

COMPLETED	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	SOME PROGRESS	LIMITED PROGRESS
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Objectives

PILLAR 1

Address insurance restrictions for SEs				
Prisoner pay for engagement in SEs				
Establish a Gaps & Blocks process				
Feasibility & implementation of Certs of Employability				
Ensure Progression from SEs into m'stream employment				
Introduction of a ring fenced funding stream for SEs				
Structures & supports for assessing SE applications				
Ensure procurement processes are accessible to SEs				
Liaise with IASIO to refer people into SEs				
Develop a positive media strategy for SEs				

PILLAR 2

Develop a range of training supports & resources				
Access resources to support the Strategy				
Organise awareness raising events on SE for the CJS				
Develop learning communities to support SEs				

PILLAR 3

Ensure prison/CBO training is employment focused				
Conduct an employer needs assessment				
Feasibility & promotion of incentivised employment schemes				
Support prison / CBOs to sell products				
Develop a universal brand & marketing plan				
Seek a relevant main street partner to sell goods				
Pilot effectiveness of an urban outlet				

PILLAR 4

Establish an input & outcomes framework for measuring impact				
Develop national information system to support analysis of impact				
Undertake cost benefit analysis/SROI to measure social impact				

EMERGING PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

Since the launch of the SE strategy, a number of new and emerging themes have arisen that were not originally listed as one of the 24 objectives. In brief, these additional actions are:

- 1.1 Support people with a criminal conviction to progress into long-term, sustainable jobs. Develop an action plan for onward progression into the mainstream labour market following employment in a social enterprise.
- 1.2 Maximise efforts to ensure SEs can access public and private sector supply chains through fair procurement processes
- 1.3 Reduce waste while creating jobs – create more links between Irish Prisons and environmental SEs
- 1.4 Roll out the Prisoner Entrepreneurship Programme (PEP) Nationally
- 1.5 Individual supports provided to new and existing social enterprises operating in the criminal justice sector
- 1.6 Shared Learning - Supporting SE and Entrepreneurship amongst the Traveller & Roma communities



OBSTACLES & RESPONSES

The implementation of any strategy will always experience some challenges and the same can be said for this SE strategy; barriers and obstacles have been experienced during the past 18 months since its launch. This section outlines some of these obstacles. The plans developed in order to address them are outlined in full in the Mid-Term Review report.

6.1 Existing procurement frameworks do not promote the inclusion of SEs

Current procurement frameworks in operation make it near impossible for SEs to compete and become part of any supply chain. In order for SEs to ensure sustainability, they need to be able to compete fairly with mainstream businesses from the public and private sector through procurement processes that acknowledge their model of working.

6.2 Irish prison rules do not currently permit deductions from the wages of serving prisoners in approved employment (for bed and board)

Securing employment prior to release from prison has been proven to greatly assist with the reintegration back to the community as having a job provides stability. For suitably qualified prisoners, securing employment prior to their release is likely to provide a head start, reduce the likelihood of them having to rely on social welfare payments while also being a possible solution to identified skills shortages in certain employment sectors in the labour market. Unlike several other countries, prison governors in Ireland are not currently permitted to deduct any money from a prisoners salary to cover bed and board which means that they are at an unfair advantage over other employees in the community who have to cover all of the usual living expenses.

6.3 The transition from grant funded to SE cannot be understated

Managing a community based, grant funded organisation is significantly different to running a social enterprise. These differences should not be underestimated. Moving from a grant funded mindset to one of traded income, profit and loss and cashflows requires upskilling if the SE is to have a chance at being sustainable and meeting its social mission.

6.4 There is no clarity on models and what proportion of state subsidy should be provided per SE job

The majority of SEs operating in the criminal justice sector are always going to require some form of state subsidisation in addition to their traded income. The type, duration and potential for a tapering off of this financial support needs to be explored further in order to ensure all SEs have the opportunity to avail of this support.



CONCLUSIONS AND A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

This executive summary provides a snapshot of key achievements to date, progress on agreed strategic actions as well as emerging priorities and actions. The summary highlights that while significant progress has been made on a number of objectives, there remains a lot of work to be done in order for SE to become embedded as a core aspect of Ireland's approach to rehabilitation and community safety.

The impact of an employer to employer work reference cannot be under-estimated. Coupled with skills, training and the right attitude to work, a recent employer reference plays a significant role in increasing opportunities to access the mainstream labour market for people with a history of offending behaviour. SEs play a key role in an individuals' journey to long term, well paid, sustainable employment. By creating a much needed buffer between prison, or engagement in a community Probation project, and the mainstream labour market, they create a pathway, which for many does not exist outside of these developments.

The full mid-term review draws attention to some of obstacles faced by the Department and the Steering Committee in overseeing the implementation of this strategy. These challenges have been the catalyst for further innovation and a 'think differently' approach. An openness to doing things differently can be seen at all levels within the sector, from service providers and existing SEs to policy makers. Additionally, the achievement of the objectives to date has been supported by the business and academic communities, who share a common vision centred around the creation of real opportunities for integration and ever reducing recidivism rates.

As we look to the future, the Department of Justice & Equality and its executive agencies, the Irish Prison Service and Probation Service, are committed to the pursuit of meeting the objectives of their ambitious SE strategy.

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PHOTOS

Photos kindly provided by many of the social enterprises operating in the criminal justice sector

CREDITS

Photo by Andrew Ruiz on Unsplash
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