**Irish Prison Service statement - September 2018**

“The circumstances of each death in custody and incident of self-harm are examined by a suicide prevention group in each institution.  The groups are chaired by the prison governor, and include representatives from the various services: doctor, psychiatry, psychology, chaplaincy, probation, education, and prison staff.

“The suicide prevention groups are required to meet quarterly, or more often if necessary. Their examinations fully cover the background and circumstances of each death.  Their objective is to identify, where possible, measures which might be implemented to contribute to a reduction in the risk of deaths in the future.

“The prevention of deaths in custody and self-harm is a priority issue for the Irish Prison Service. The fact that the Irish Prison Service National Suicide and Harm Prevention Steering Group is chaired by Mr Michael Donnellan, Director General of the Irish Prison Service is evidence of this.

“This group provides a forum for collating the reports of the local Suicide Prevention Committees and disseminating significant findings throughout the prison system. This group also meets quarterly and reviews all deaths in custody including inter alia the governor’s Internal Review Report into circumstances of recent deaths and any lessons learned and actions now in place to avoid a recurrence in the future.

“Furthermore the group reviews investigation reports (including findings and recommendations) from the Inspector of Prisons into each death in custody and matters arising from any coroner’s inquest. The group also examines quarterly returns indicating the number of prisoners on Special Observations. Finally the group reviews self-harm incidents with a view to improving prevention and response measures. This Self Harm Audit & Data Analysis ensures the sharing of relevant information on risk factors and best practice with the local Suicide Awareness Groups.

“A high level of vigilance, awareness and care in the prevention of suicide exists in all institutions. Special arrangements have been developed for prisoners who have been identified as being at risk, including High Support Units, and Safety Observation Cells.

“Prison Officers receive appropriate mental health awareness training, including the recognition of, and response to suicidal behaviour.

“The Samaritans’ Prison Listener Scheme is available to prisoners in all institutions.

“More recently, an Irish Prison Service Working Group has developed an overarching model for the monitoring of prisoners, this includes a new Monitoring of Prisoners Policy, Healthcare Special Observation Policy, revised Close Supervision Cell Procedure, revised Safety Observation Procedure and a new Monitoring of Prisoners during periods of Night Guard Procedure. These proposals are currently being finalised.”