

AHCPS Submission

Recruitment and Retention Issues in Senior Leadership Grades - Prison Governor grades

1 Introduction

This paper is divided into three parts. The first sets out why recruitment and retention are now emerging as critical issues for the grade of Prison Governor grade. Secondly the paper examines movements in public service and private sector pay as evidenced in the first report of the Public Service Pay Commission (May 2017) and highlights those factors which impact most directly on the grade of Prison Governor grade. The third part of the paper draws on a detailed pay analysis carried out by the IPA which looks at direct pay comparators for the various Prison Governor grade and shows the significant disparity that now exists between the public service posts and their private sector analogues. Our conclusions summarise the main arguments for the Pay Commission to recommend adjustments to the pay of the grades represented by the AHCPS.

2 Recruitment and Retention

Traditionally the various Prison Governor grades would have been a mid to late career posting, filled by internal promotion from the Prison Officer grades. However, because of the age profile, staff turnover in this grade is generally high.

The filling of expected vacancies has been made more difficult by two sets of factors, internal and external. The external factors relate to changes in the workplace generally with increased pressure and individual accountability, etc. in management level posts. In the Prison Service in particular, there is the management of 200-300 staff, with a similar number of prisoners, many of whom are gang members who require segregation from other gang members, others with mental health issues, deaths in custody issues etc. Dealing with Parole Boards, Inspector of Prisons, Minister, Politicians, Victim's groups, NGOs, management of budgets to mention just some. All these measures combine to bring significantly more stress to Prison Governor positions which impact on the attractiveness of these posts.

The second set of factors that have lessened the attractiveness of Prison Governor posts relate to a series of internal measures which were taken as part of, and in addition to, the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation. The FEMPI legislation introduced three rounds of reductions in pay which, as a matter of policy, were deliberately structured to bear disproportionately on the more senior grades. (The different approach taken in the private sector is discussed in section 3 below.)

3 Pay Trends in Public Service and Private Sector

The May 2017 report of the Public Service Pay Commission set out in Chapter 5 (and the accompanying Appendix F) a detailed analysis of pay trends in the public service and the private sector. A consistent theme emerging from this analysis is that the private sector sought to protect earnings of those with key skills, including those in leadership positions, to support business survival. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 (page 45) of the PSPC report show the differing approaches to pay reductions adopted by the public and private sectors in the periods 2007 to 2010 and from 2011 to 2014. In the first period – at the height of the financial crisis virtually all groups saw pay reductions, however in the public service these were highest in the 30th to 90th percentile, the opposite approach to that taken in the private sector.

As figure 5.5 shows, the period 2011 to 2014 marks a period of pay recovery in the private sector with the highest levels of recovery being shown in the 80th and 90th percentiles. In contrast the public service shows the highest levels of pay recovery in the 10th and 20th percentiles but with a further round of pay reductions for the 80th and 90th percentiles. There can be no dispute about the fact that the mathematical result of these two trends has been to push the pay of Prison Governor grades further and further behind their private sector pay analogues, however these are defined.

4 Pay Comparators for Prison Governor grade

The Commission's attention is drawn to the IPA Research Study in Appendix 1 to this paper. This study set out to evaluate the position of Principal Officer, Assistant Principal and Prison Governor and to use the evaluations to identify similar positions in the private sector. The study used published pay surveys (in particular those from CIPD and IBEC) to determine the pay and benefits of private sector positions comparable to the grades in question.

The study also sets out the changing environment facing the civil service and the greater challenges now facing senior management grades in the civil and public service. These include greater centralisation of authority, greater specialisation and professionalisation, new service delivery models including shared services, greater Oireachtas oversight and more public accountability. These changes have taken place in parallel with a major economic crisis which saw the state introduce a range of cost-cutting measures aimed at reducing the pay and conditions of service of public servants while increases in population and changes in the wider environment have demanded increased levels of service provision.

The leadership and management role of the various Prison Governor grade are set out in the study and an external comparator identified for the Campus Governor grade. While

attempts could be made to find comparators for Prison Governors by reference to staff numbers, direct reports, control of budgets, etc, in reality it is very difficult to find any external comparator with the range of security and potential life or death responsibilities of Prison Governors at all levels. They not only have responsibility for the safety and security of their prisons, but also the welfare of prisoners as well as staff and visitors. In these circumstances using traditional internal comparisons and relativities is probably the most useful approach that can be taken.

The comparative salary figures suggest that there is a pay differential of 30% for Campus Governors, rising to 50% when all external pay factors are considered. The equivalent figures for the Prison Governor 1, 2 and 3 suggest differentials of 21% of basic pay rising to 43% of total remuneration.

5 Conclusions

In the first part of this paper we have explained why demographic factors over the next number of years will see acute recruitment and retention difficulties for the four Prison Governor grades represented by the AHPCS. Quoting from the evidence produced by the Public Service Pay Commission's own first report, we have shown the very different approaches taken to senior management level remuneration. The rationale for the approach taken in the public service was in part 'political' – in that those with the broadest shoulders had to be seen to take the greatest hits to their remuneration as a measure of social solidarity, in a time of national crisis. Indeed, senior public servants largely accepted this rationale given the ethos of the public service.

Whatever about the rationale for different approaches taken by the public service and private sector in the past, the operational consequences for recruitment and retention of senior level grades is now posing acute problems. Persisting with crisis measures after the time of crisis has had the unintended consequence of significantly reducing the comparable public service remuneration 'offering' to senior management grades compared to the private sector. This is shown very clearly by the figures shown in the IPA study and discussed in the third part of our paper. It is simply not possible to operate two different pay economies in the long term.

Where the perceived balance between additional remuneration for more onerous duties is perceived to be out of kilter, fewer internal candidates decide to go forward for promotion, which weakens the future leadership 'gene-pool' for the public service.

In view of the very compelling analysis of pay movements already carried out by the Public Service Pay Commission, as well as the IPA study which shows in concrete terms the consequences of those pay movements, we consider that there is a strong case for the Pay Commission to recommend appropriate pay adjustments for Prison Governor grades to correct the pay anomalies that have been thrown up by the previous crisis measures. The

demographic time-bomb identified by the Official Side, and the need to ensure the quality of future leadership cadres for organisational reasons, mean that corrective measures need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.