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INVESTIGATION: WARDEN WAS PREVIOUSLY QUESTIONED FOR SNOOZING WHILE GUARDING PAEDOPHILE

SLEEPING DUTY

Probe is launched as prison officer is caught napping while he was meant to be working

THE Irish Prison Service is investigating the circulation of an image on a messaging app which allegedly shows a prison officer asleep while on escort duty in a public building.

EXCLUSIVE
BY PATRICK O'CONNELL



The image, which has been widely shared on WhatsApp, purports to show the prison officer who is in uniform sleeping while lying across three chairs.

Sources say the prison officer in the image is the same officer who was investigated earlier this year over an allegation he was discovered asleep in a hospital bed while on escort duty in the Midlands Regional Hospital.

The most recent image began circulating on Thursday last.

Sources have said the circumstances in which the image was captured will be closely examined by prison bosses.

"There may be a legitimate explanation," said a source. "It may have been the case the prison officer took ill and was lying down for a short time.

"The facts of the case will have to be examined and an explanation sought from the personnel involved."

Contacted by the *Sunday World*, a spokesperson said: "The Irish Prison Service does not comment on matters relating to individual staff. The Irish Prison Service sets high standards in respect of its staff and requires that all staff carry out their duties with integrity, commitment and professionalism.

"The vast majority of staff adhere to these standards at all times. In circumstances where the conduct of a staff member does fall below the high standards expected, this is treated with the utmost seriousness in accordance with the Civil Service Code of Discipline."

The officer at the centre of the probe was previously investigated for being asleep while on duty by prison authorities after a member of staff in the Midlands Regional Hospital made a complaint paedophile Bill Kenneally had been left unguarded during a stay at the hospital in January.

The Waterford man and former basketball coach, who has previously raised his health issues in court, was being treated at Portlaoise hospital for diabetes-related issues giving rise to concerns his foot would have to be amputated.

One of the escort officers was alleged by the hospital staffer to have been found asleep in the adjacent hospital room, according to sources.



Because of the large prison population in the high-security Portlaoise Prison and the Midlands Prison, there are two secure rooms in the hospital for prisoners.

Access to the adjoining rooms ,which each have a secure door, is through another secure door from a corridor. Staff often use the second room if it is unoccupied while carrying out escort duties.

While it is believed Kenneally (75), who is unable to walk unaided, did not pose a significant risk to anyone, the complaint was being taken very seriously, sources added.

STANDARDS

When contacted about the allegations at the time, a spokesperson for the Irish Prison Service said it "does not comment on operational or security matters".

Kenneally is regarded as a high-profile sex offender after a series of trials and a Commission of Inquiry into his case.

He was first convicted in 2016 and is currently serving a prison sentence of over 18 years for the abuse of 15 children between 1979 and 1990.

In a 2024 letter, he brazenly complained about being described as a paedophile in the *Sunday World*.

In the bizarre letter he also claimed he only pleaded guilty because he wouldn't get a fair trial.

Kenneally suggested that because his victims were aged 13 and over, this means he is not a paedophile, and he is the victim of hate speech.

Kenneally lost an appeal against his first sentence in 2018 and in 2023 was given another four-and-a-half years after more abuse came to light.

Crime World previously revealed how there were fears Kenneally would escape justice by dying on hunger strike in prison before he got to trial.

The basketball coach went on hunger strike at the Midlands Prison in an attempt to stop his second trial going ahead.

Kenneally, is now facing a release date some time in early 2030 when he will be 78 years of age.



CAUGHT NAPPING: The prison officer sleeping on duty. Right, paedophile Bill Kenneally

'The Irish Prison Service sets high standards in respect of its staff'

