

2018 Annual Report

Dochás Visiting Committee

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Dochas Visiting Committee
Dochas Centre
North Circular Road
Dublin 7

The Minister for Justice & Equality
Charlie Flanagan TD
Department of Justice & Equality
Montague Court
7 — 11 Montague Street
D02 FT96

Dochas Visiting Committee
Dochas Centre
North Circular Road
Dublin 7

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Dochas Centre Visiting Committee, I have the pleasure of submitting for your consideration the Annual Report for 2018.

The Committee members meet on the last Thursday of each month. There are four members and every meeting is fully attended. Two members visit Dochas every week, meet with the women and report back to the Committee with their concerns. We also meet with staff and tour the Centre regularly. Discussions are also held with Professionals and non-Professional staff in the prison.

Pastoral Care:

We note that Sr Esther and Mary have a great connection with the women. They are an invaluable connection with the women, particularly for those women who have no family outside the prison, both Irish and Foreign Nationals.

Health & Safety:

We met with ACO Dave Miller and found that fire equipment was up to standard and in full working condition. Fire drills are carried out at regular intervals. We also inspected all written records regarding same.

The Library is a fully stocked resource which provides a quiet space for users during its scheduled opening hours (5:30 to 6:30 each day).

Staff:

We received a number of complaints about staff. Some women complained of aggressive language being used when dealing with the women. We want to acknowledge the difficulties and challenges faced by Officers in discharging what are highly responsible duties. However, there can never be any justification for the uneven treatment of certain women or the use of aggressive bullying language towards them.

Reception:

This area which is a woman's first contact with the Centre is well kept and has good store of clothing for women who are in need. It is important that women are given up to date information about the Centre and leaflets are available in reception. Management have put procedures in place to ensure these information leaflets are up to date and brought to the women's attention. The reception area is well serviced and the staff are efficient and courteous.

Mother & Baby Unit:

Located in Phoenix House, this unit is dedicated to the exclusive use of Mothers and their babies. It is kept to a high standard. The Unit is well stocked, nicely decorated, clean, bright and warm. A small yard or play area is available to the Mothers and babies off the Unit.

Tuck Shop:

The women are constantly complaining that prices in the Tuck Shop are too high. These women have very meagre resources. They have been informed that because of the Central Procurement system nothing can be done. We are at a loss to understand this and would ask that this long outstanding complaint is taken seriously and addressed.

Drugs:

We are aware of and have received complaints about the presence of illegal drugs within Dachas. Many women have told us, that at times they are afraid to leave their rooms for fear of the aggressive behaviour of those who are under the influence of these illicit drugs. This problem seems to be growing and we would urge that all the necessary resources are used to tackle this serious development.

The Big Yard:

The "Big Yard" is very damp and mucky. We also found that the surfaces were very slippery. This is as a result of the recent construction that went on there. We would like to see grass seed and plants added to the area as soon as possible, along with more tables and benches as there has been an increase in population at Dochas.

Gym:

All equipment in the gym is in working order and the room is very clean and tidy. A variety of classes are held there and are well attended.

Education:

The Centre covers a wide and varied range of subjects covering all levels such as Fetac, Junior and Leaving Certificate. Other subjects on offer include computers, hairdressing, beauty, art, cookery, life

skills, food safety and photography. The Red Cross run a Programme of Instruction which is of interest to some.

Healthcare:

The Healthcare Centre is very well run, with efficient, committed and dedicated staff. The systems in place to administer drugs on a daily basis as required are excellent. However the issue of cleaning in this area is of concern. Presently random cleaning is undertaken about three times per week. We understand that this concern has been referred to the Health & Safety Committee who are looking into the matter. It has come to our attention that the toilet and treatment area need updating/upgrading. The staff in the Centre continue to be in contact with the Community Drug Centres with regard to caring for females upon their release.

Numbers:

The Dochas Centre is designed to hold ICS females. On random checks undertaken by the Visiting Committee throughout 2018 we found that numbers regularly reached 130. Management try to alleviate this problem as best they can. It is ongoing and leads to disruption, behavioural problems and serious unrest. The Visiting Committee have constantly referred to this overcrowding both in discussion with Management and in our reports. It remains frustratingly unresolved. A Step Down facility for females has been recommended on many occasions in the past. We would stress that this issue is urgent and needs to be addressed.

Kitchen & Canteen:

The Kitchen and Canteen continue to be kept to a high standard and provide a plentiful supply of good food to the women. They are also continuing to provide work/training facilities to women in the Dochas Centre. When we visited the kitchen during 2018 we found the staff and the women working there very professional in their work ethics. The food we tasted was excellent.

Conclusion:

We would like to thank and acknowledge the contribution of all the different agencies who give their time and services on a daily/weekly basis to the benefit of the Dochas Centre.

We would like to thank Governor Mary O Connor, Assistant Governor Patricia Kelleher, Chiefs, ACO's, Officers and staff for their co-operation and assistance throughout the year.

We also acknowledge the support of the Campus Governor Eddie Mullins. We also want to thank Anne Delaney for her work and commitment to the workings of the Visiting Committee and we wish her good health into the future.

The Committee has exercised its duties diligently and is committed to exercising them in full in 2019.

We the Committee finally wish to thank you Minister and trust we have been of service during the year and continue to be of service.



Christine Ryan

Chairperson

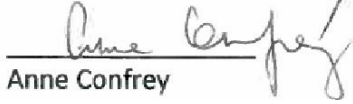
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Noel Cloak
Dochas Visiting Committee



Imelda Henry
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Anne Confrey
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