

Loughan House Visiting Committee

Annual Report for 2016

The following are the Members who served on the Committee during 2016

Mr. Andrew Cullen (Chairperson)

Mr. Michael Smith

The Committee had a total of 12 meetings throughout the year, all of which were well attended by all members.

Mr. Edward Mullins served as Governor and Ms. Geraldine Carrick served as Assistant Governor during the year.

Number of Offenders in Loughan House

Loughan House remains a transfer Place of Detention, it received precisely 199 offenders on transfer for various committal institutions around the country. Generally there was good compliance with period of temporary release, while there were 2 absconders in 2016 both of which are back in custody

Visits by the Committee

During the year, other than during the Monthly Meeting, committee members visited unannounced and in rotation as per their panels. During these visits the members had the opportunity to check the condition of the House and Pine Lodge, the grounds and all other facilities under the jurisdiction of Loughan House Open Centre. At all times these areas were found to be in good condition. Members signed themselves in by signing the book provided in the General Office, this book also may contain the names of Offenders who might want to meet with them with any specific request they may have. As part of their tour of the facility they would randomly speak with offenders and ensure all as it should be.

Offenders Visits

The Visiting Block in Loughan House has received a total renovation throughout 2016. Governor Mullins wanted to make it more of a relaxed setting for visitors to be able get comfortable whilst on a visit. The addition of couches, partitions and potted plants have helped in this regard. As with all institutions, visits are extremely important to offenders in order to improve attitude and increase motivation whilst in custody. An issue we have here in Loughan is the difficulty Visitors have with a below average frequency of public transport, this reduces the ability for some offenders to receive visits on a regular basis.

Catering Department/Facilities

The Catering in Loughan continues to earn the high regard by both the offenders and the external agencies who audit the facilities on an annual basis. All Kitchen Staff are professionally trained in their field and motivated to achieve the usual high standards. The Kitchen employs 12-15 staff and this enables these offenders to earn a valuable skill which may initiate a future career in the Catering

Industry. Offenders also have access to Health Grills, Microwaves and Kettles outside of meal times in order to satisfy and additional meal requirements they may need.

Education Department

The School is a central element of Loughan House and provides daily activities for Offenders who avail of its services. Brenda McMullen is the Head Teacher and she leads the team who are dedicated to reach out to offenders and assist them throughout whatever individual difficulties they may have. Prison Management are fully supportive and encourage all offenders to enrol. In 2016 the school provided classes that include Literacy, Numeracy, ESOL, ECDL, ICT, Woodwork, Music, Art, Home Economics, Physical Ed. Outdoor Pursuits, and Yoga & Meditation. Students report high satisfaction levels with variation of subject available. Students also have the opportunity to undertake training such as Driver Theory Test and projects to Arigna Mining Experience and Eagles Flying project. Other courses offers during the year were basket weaving and Barbering.

All extra-curricular activities involve a wide range of Students and all have positive reports to offer.

Work Training Workshops

These Workshops provide training for many Offenders in many areas, such as Industrial Cleaning, Tiling, Painting, Car Valeting, Horticulture, and Waste Management among others. This training assists offenders to gather the training and certification in order to gain employment or start their own business upon release. The WTO's who take charge of these areas display a great interest in furthering the interests and accomplishments of all participants.

Social Enterprise Scheme

July 16th 2016, a new initiative was launched with the opening of the Coffee Shop. This has been a great success and is managed by the Offenders, all of whom have received training in Barista skills.

This Opening was attended by the Minister for Justice as well as the Director General of the IPS.

A Bike Workshop was part of this initiative and along with the Car Wash and Valeting Service has proven to be a successful program for the Prisoners involved.

Library Services

The Library is located in Pine Lodge, It is well stocked and is opened throughout the week and is staffed by the part-time librarian who is assisted by an offender who works as librarian assistant.

Probation & Welfare Services

Heretofore we had two part time probation officers assigned to Loughan House but for the majority of 2016 this was reduced to one Probation Officer.

The work load for the Probation Staff assigned to Loughan House has dramatically increased due to the following;

Increased participation in the Community Return Scheme

Increased number of prisoners who have a post release supervision order

Increased number of prisoners serving life sentences in Loughan.

Addiction & Counselling Services

Our addiction counsellor's work closely with offenders on a one to one basis to assist them through issues in regard to addictions they have, they also organise help groups such as Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous to meet and help offenders. This service is imperative to assist them return to regular day to day drug free life style upon release.

Healthcare

Loughan House has two Nurse Offices providing day service to all offenders from 8am to 8pm. Dental services operate once a month. A G.P visits every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning and offenders can see him on a rotational basis. The Healthcare Department is an area that has been affected by cuts down the years, and with no night nurse cover, hopefully this is not affecting the safety of the Loughan offenders. Also where medical needs cannot be met in Loughan, such as psychiatric evaluation, these offenders may be transferred to Castlerea Prison or Midlands Prison where they have full time Psychiatrists to hand.

Chaplaincy

Fr. Charles O'Gorman attends Loughan House weekly to say mass and Ms. Ita Lohan was appointed to the position of Chaplain in 2016.

In this capacity she meets offenders, discuss issues and tries to assist them in ways that other services cannot. The religious and spiritual needs of all offenders are respected and encouraged. There is no evidence of any racial or religious discrimination in Loughan House.

Grounds

The Grounds have, on an ongoing basis, been worked on in order to make them a more hospitable and work friendly surrounding. The many flower beds are refreshed with seasonal flowers grown in the polytunnels and there has been a new rockery and water feature installed in front of the ACOs office. This was designed and build by two offenders. Compliments are extended to the offenders who work both inside and outside the centre keeping the area clean, tidy and welcoming. A word of thanks is extended to the supervising officers for making such work possible.

Sentence Management

Integrated Sentence Management is a method for managing offender's sentences and their time spent in prison. The aim is to ensure that from the time offenders are committed to the time they return to their community that each offender has a plan in place developed by all services and offenders themselves to assist remain at liberty and not re-enter the prison system. This position was formerly held by our Chief Officer James Keely. Currently this position is vacant and we are awaiting a replacement.

External Work Parties / Training Programmes

There were a number of work parties throughout 2016. Also, a number of offenders attended South West College, Enniskillen and participated in The Open University for college courses

The offenders carried out work for the local community in areas such as, IPS HQ Work Party, Manorhamilton Tidy Towns etc.

Charitable Work

Loughan House offenders and staff work together to further develop the Bothar and Bikes for Africa schemes that were launched in 2013.

The Bothar scheme works by local farmers and community groups donating calves to the charity and Loughan House rear them on site for two years until they are ready to be flown to needy communities in Africa.

The Bikes for Africa scheme works through the network of rotary clubs donating used bikes to Loughan House and together with offenders and staff they refurbish the bike to a suitable standard to be delivered to needy recipients in Africa. Later in 2016 there will be a ceremony in Loughan House to celebrate the 2000th bike to be refurbished.

Other charitable works in 2016 included, An Post Tour of Sligo / Acquired Brain Injury, Cavan Cystic Fibrosis, North West Hospice.

Summary

Loughan House remains an extremely valuable asset in the Irish Prison system. It serves as an important motivational tool for those inmates who have been deemed suitable for transfer and for those who aspire to gain approval for a transfer to an open centre.

It works as an incentive for good behaviour and for inmates to take responsibility for their actions.

Once an inmate transfers to Loughan House a collaborative approach between the inmate and all services is adopted and inmates are encouraged to take responsibility for their sentence plan. Through full engagement and remaining drug free inmates earn a wide range of privileges such as periods of temporary release which greatly assists inmates in their efforts to re-socialise. This in turn aids their re-integration into society.

There is an excellent relationship between staff and inmates and the ethos of the Centre is based on dignity and respect for all.

There is an extremely low level of complaint to this body and this is testament to a smooth running institution which is fit for purpose and is a beacon within the Irish Prison Service

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