

VISITING COMMITTEE MIDLANDS PRISON

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

CONTENTS

Area	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. PRISONERS' REQUESTS	4
2.1 <i>Health Care Issues</i>	5
2.2 <i>Loss of Enhancement</i>	5
2.3 <i>Inter-Prison Transfers</i>	5
2.4 <i>Missing Clothes and Other Property</i>	5
2.5 <i>Prison Visits</i>	5
2.6 <i>Response to Complaints</i>	5
3. SENTENCE MANAGEMENT	6
3.1 <i>Integrated Sentence Management</i>	6
4. PROBATION SERVICE	6
4.1 <i>Living with Life Programme</i>	6
5. NEW DEVELOPMENTS	7
5.1 <i>Building Better Lives (BBL) Programme</i>	7
5.2 <i>Work & Training Area</i>	8
5.3 <i>New Polytunnel & Greenhouse</i>	8
5.4 <i>Charity Fundraising</i>	9
5.5 <i>Lifers' Garden</i>	10
5.6 <i>Time Server Magazine</i>	10
6. MEDICAL SERVICES	10
7. EDUCATION	
7.1 <i>Curriculum</i>	10
7.2 <i>Participation</i>	11
7.3 <i>Accreditation</i>	11
7.4 <i>Red Cross Community Based Health & First Aid Programme</i>	11
7.5 <i>GAISCE Award</i>	11
7.6 <i>Other Areas</i>	12

8. LIBRARY	12
9. PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE	12
10. CHAPLAINCY	13
11. MIDLANDS VISITOR CENTRE	13
12. DEATH IN CUSTODY	13
13. KITCHEN/CATERING	13
14. INDUSTRIAL AREA/WORKSHOPS	14
<i>14.1 Certification</i>	14
15. HORTICULTURE	15
16. CONCLUSION	15

1. INTRODUCTION

The Midlands Prison is a closed, medium security prison for adult males. It is the committal prison for counties Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Monaghan. The committee notes that c.40% of the the prison population of the Midlands in December 2015 were convicted of sex offences. This, we understand, represents approximately 70% of all prisoners in the State convicted of such offences.

The Midlands Prison Visiting Committee have a function of ensuring that all prisoners in the care of the Irish Prison Service at the Midlands Prison are treated fairly and humanely and also with dignity and respect.

The Visiting Committee of the Midlands Prison in 2015 consisted of the following members: Colette Fennelly (left the committee in October), Margaret O'Dwyer, Ted Laffey, John Kelly (joined the committee in August 2015) and Joe Leahy (joined the committee in November 2015).

The committee meets in the prison on the second Thursday of every month. We hold our monthly meetings and meet with any prisoners requesting to see us. Also members visit on at least one other occasion during the month. The committee may also conduct an unannounced visit and will, if requested by prison management, visit the prison on other occasions.

On our many visits, during the year 2015, we listened to prisoner complaints, concerns and requests privately and in confidence. We raised all issues with the authorities, at governor level, and sought to bring all issues to a satisfactory conclusion.

We wish to confirm that all staff and services working within the prison and those external services working with prisoners do so in a professional manner with the interest of the prisoners' welfare as a priority.

2. PRISONERS' REQUESTS

In 2015, the committee met with 36 prisoners during the course of the year and heard all concerns raised by the prisoners. We outline below the main issues raised at our meetings:

- Health Care Issues
- Loss of Enhancement
- Inter-Prison Transfer Requests
- Missing Clothing and Other Property
- Prison Visits
- Response to Complaints

2.1 Health Care Issues

A number of prisoners were unhappy with access to medical / psychological care. They had issues regarding appointments as it did not appear possible to always get one. The committee met with the doctor and discussed medical provision in the prison. The committee believes that the medical service in the Midlands is seriously under-staffed and that, despite the doctor's best efforts, he struggles to provide the service he would wish to deliver.

2.2 Loss of Enhancement

A number of prisoners believed that they had unfairly lost their enhancement status. Having discussed this issue with the governor, the committee were satisfied that fair procedures were followed.

2.3 Inter-Prison Transfer Requests

During the year a number of prisoners requested transfer to another prison, including possible transfer to open-prisons. Having discussed such requests with the governor, the committee is satisfied that proper procedures are being followed in considering the requests.

2.4 Missing Clothing and Other Property

Due to the high number of inter-prison transfers we had some complaints from prisoners of clothing and other personal articles being misplaced or lost. Prisoners also believed that some items of property not allowed in the Midlands were allowed in other prisons. The committee visited the prisoner reception area and discussed how property is logged in the Midlands. In our investigations, we found that the prison, having conducted inquiries, have either located /replaced items or have explained how certain items are not allowed in the Midlands Prison.

2.5 Prison Visits

A number of prisoners spoke with the committee regarding visitors being barred and/or restricted to screened visits. Some prisoners were experiencing difficulty in securing visits from family members. Having discussed the issue with the prison authorities the committee is satisfied that the decisions around visits are made in a fair, reasonable and proportionate manner. Prison authorities were actively working to help arrange visits for prisoners, where necessary.

2.6 Response to Complaints

Concern was raised by some prisoners that there was undue delay in getting a response

to official complaints made to the authorities. The committee was satisfied that proper procedures were being followed in the prison regarding the processing of complaints.

3. SENTENCE MANAGEMENT

Prisoner applications for temporary release and transfers are considered on an on-going basis. The Midlands Prison conduct a monthly review meeting attended by a Prison Operations Official, Prison Governor and Heads of Functions - Chief, Chaplain, Work & Training and Education in order to access applications and agree suitable prisoners for early release and transfers to open centers.

3.1 Integrated Sentence Management

Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) is a method of managing prisoners sentences and their time spent in prison. The aim of ISM is that from the time prisoners are committed to prison to the time they return to the community, each prisoner will have a plan developed by all the prison services and agencies along with the prisoners themselves, to help them make the best use of their time in prison and to assist in their re- integration into the community.

Any prisoner committed to prison and serving over one year is eligible to take part in ISM. Prisoners are assessed on committal to establish their needs and a plan is put into place. They are then reviewed through out their sentence.

There are a significant number of agencies and services involved in the provision of ISM to participants. These include Probation Service, Psychology Service, Chaplaincy Service, Addiction Service, Work and Training, Education and Healthcare. In addition, prisoners may also assess community based in- reach services such as homeless and welfare agencies.

4. PROBATION SERVICE

The prison service and the probation service have a long history of working in partnership in managing persons convicted of offences who are committed to prison. Child and community protection continues to be to the forefront of the probation services. The visiting committee acknowledges that the probation service continues to engage with community based services both statutory and voluntary and more recently are carrying out assessments and organising placement work in conjunction with their community based colleagues and prison management for the Community Returns Programme.

4.1 Living with Life Programme

The Living with Life Programme was developed in 2012 in the Midlands Prison as a joint initiative by the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service (IPS). The programme has evolved since then, from a model where staff completed the majority of the work to develop, organise and run the programme to a model now where men,

serving life sentences, are encouraged to take the lead in overseeing the programme.

During 2015 the Living with Life Programme offered the following options for men serving long term/life sentences:

- Living with Life Seminars: Monthly information seminars in relation to issues pertaining to serving a life sentence. Such seminars included a presentation from the Irish Penal Reform Trust, Priorswood House (a probation funded transitional accommodation service for men leaving prison), a seminar on family and the life sentence and a seminar on men's health during long-term imprisonment.
- Life Forum: Monthly life forum meetings where men serving life sentences act as life representatives meeting prison management and probation staff on a monthly basis to discuss issues pertaining to life sentence.
- Toastmasters Club: Access to Toastmasters Club - this is a pro-social club that is delivered on a fortnightly basis that focuses on the development of public speaking skills as a means to enhancing communication and self esteem.

5. NEW DEVELOPMENTS

5.1 Building Better Lives (BBL) Programme

During the year 2015 the prison authorities worked on introducing the Building Better Lives (BBL) Programme to the Midlands. Since 2009 the BBL programme has operated only in Arbour Hill prison. It has been decided to commence the BBL programme in the Midlands prison from March / April 2016.

Typically, an individual participating in the BBL will undergo six to eight hours of risk assessment which identifies an individual's risks, needs and protective factors. The assessment informs treatment over three stages-

- ✓ Stage 1: 'Exploring Better Lives (EBL)' enhances motivation and further identifies treatment targets.
- ✓ Stage 2: 'Practicing Better Lives (PBL)' includes 60-70 sessions of in-depth therapeutic and risk relevant work.
- ✓ Stage 3: 'Building Better Lives Support Programme (BBL Support Group)' supports maintenance of progress, and addresses key risk and resettlement issues.

The programme will witness men undergoing the EBL (Stage 1) which will be facilitated jointly by the IPS Psychology Service and the Probation Service.

Subsequently, individuals will then transfer to Arbour Hill prison to complete the PBL (Stage 2) which is facilitated by the IPS Psychology Service. Individuals will then complete the BBL Support Group (Stage 3) in either Arbour Hill or the Midlands prison. The BBL Support Group is currently facilitated by the Probation Service in Arbour Hill. It is anticipated that treatment / intervention will thus be provided to a greater number of higher risk offenders. This proposal to extend offence focused interventions for those convicted of sexual violence across the two prisons is a collaborative initiative between the IPS and the Probation Service. The priority for

both services in the coming years is to develop a process which will maintain and increase the participation of those at higher risk of sexual violence in treatment and allied initiatives while in custody.

5.2 Work & Training Area

The Work & Training area above the New Kitchen has been further developed throughout the year and is now home to the ever expanding and highly productive and popular Print Shop. Opposite this Print Room, another highly popular and very skilfull activity has been developed in the form of Picture Framing. This activity takes an average of up to 9 prisoners daily with the Work Training Officer (WTO) in charge of operations.

Alongside this facility, an engraving/embroidery workshop has been opened with the aim of delivering a quality engraving services for the Midlands and associated stakeholders across the estate. The embroidery service is very specialised and the end users for this have to be handpicked due to the delicate nature of the work involved. To further increase numbers in this shop the Midlands is introducing associated small craft skills that include Candle Making and Sea Grass Stool making. A WTO operates the workshop and currently has six/seven prisoners on his books. It is envisaged this will increase to ten when the new activities are introduced.

One very exciting project, the brainchild of Governor O'Sullivan, is the addition of a multimedia computer facility which will see the introduction of current and relevant technological advances in this whole area, to the prison service. This workshop is situated in a very good location, beside the print shop, and it is envisaged that up to 8 prisoners should be availing of this facility when it's fully operational.

The Care and Rehabilitation Directive have to be complimented in their foresight, vision and financial support in equipping all the workshops and the updating of others, by replacing vital equipment.

5.3 New Polytunnel & Greenhouse

A polytunnel and a green house have been erected on the site that may eventually become the F Block, at some time in the future. The initial ground work for the service area was excavated by prisoners and the hard core was spread and whacked into place. Through negotiations with Governor Clarke in Stack House two porta-cabins were acquired for the area and they were turned into office space and toilet facilities. The bulk of this work carried out by prisoners on site.

The large polytunnel measuring 17m x 8m and the green house measuring 6m x 3m were then erected in the designated areas of the site on ground work that had been prepared specially for this purpose.

Though not completed, there are prisoners actively working there every day and while the existing tunnel and greenhouse is still a work in progress, a second poly tunnel and ground work is now completed on the site.

5.4 Charity Fundraising

Midlands Work & Training met with the Building Services Division IPS and a fundraiser from Temple Street Children's Hospital. They had acquired a caravan, by kind donation from a local family, and asked if it would be possible for the workshop staff and prisoners to carry out some repairs and modifications to this caravan within a specified deadline so it could be used as a fundraiser. The timeline for the work was governed by two major events that were to take place in September: the "Electric Picnic" and the "National Ploughing Championships".

It was decided that the carpentry and metal workshops would be best placed to carry out the substantial body of this work and a plan of action was formulated as to how this could be best achieved. For the duration of this work the caravan was housed in the Carpentry workshop and from the initial first inspection it became apparent that there was a substantial amount of work to be achieved within the given deadline. Expert advice was sought from a caravan repair firm in Wexford and the skill set of the staff and prisoners was then put into action and the whole caravan was literally stripped back to a bare shell as rotten timber and metal were removed and replaced with acute precision and fine attention to detail.

In tandem with the caravan refurbishment there was a need identified for some kissing booths as a fundraising medium. Two of the prisoners in the Carpentry Workshop took on this part of the project and made the most fantastic and colourful structures with many personal and original touches to achieve this wonderful effect. Another fundraising idea that emerged, originating from past childhood memory, was the production of a "Ring Toss" game. This proved hugely popular during production and was skilfully created with the joint cooperation of staff and prisoners in the carpentry shop.

Over the next few weeks this once beautiful but now clapped out caravan was transformed from a tatty mobile living unit to a very functional fundraising unit. This transformation was achieved by a core group of prisoners who worked tirelessly under the careful supervision of equally enthusiastic staff members for the duration of the project. The generosity of local business in the supply of paint, tyres, timber, logos, metal etc. has also to be acknowledged and without this help and support the project would not have reached fruition either.

Temple Street thanked each and every person that worked on the project and certificates of appreciation and tokens of appreciation were presented, by their representative, on the day to all concerned. The deadline was achieved and the caravan was brought directly from the Midlands to the Electric Picnic venue in Stradbally, and then to the National Ploughing Championships two weeks later.

Over the course of the two events there was a staggering €11,000 raised for Temple Street and the bulk of this was through the popularity of the ring toss game. At the Ploughing Championships, the Midlands Work & Training also presented a wooden rocking horse to Down Syndrome Ireland and this alone made €11,000 for this worthwhile charity also. Our visit to the workshops confirmed for us the great sense of accomplishment and pride in this wonderful project.

5.5 Lifers' Garden

One of the key achievements of the Building Skills Workshop is the continuing development of the Lifers' Garden. Although this is still a work in progress there has been a huge amount of work carried out in bringing the project this far. The wonderful brickwork skills on display there were carried out by two prisoners who achieved City & Guilds Diploma Level in Construction Skills, which in itself was a fantastic achievement. We are delighted to note that one of those prisoners is now doing exceptionally well on community return in Limerick City.

5.6 Time Server Magazine

The Computer Workshops continued the great work on the Time Server Magazine in 2015 and this is an outstanding piece of work which is now being sent to Castlerea Prison and linkage has been made with the Dochas Centre with the aim of sending the publication there in 2016.

6. MEDICAL SERVICES

The Midlands Prison Medical Services comprises just one full time doctor. While a second doctor was available for some time that doctor left the service during the year. The doctor outlined his very serious concerns, including concerns for the human rights of prisoners, to the committee. Prisoners in the Midlands present with many complex issues. He explained that he does not have dedicated administrative/nursing support. He asked the committee to bring his concerns to the IPS. The committee chairperson brought the doctor's concerns to the attention of the IPS at a Chairpersons' Meeting.

The committee, highly commending the doctor's work in the prison, wishes to support his appeal for additional staffing & support.

A staffing of 17 qualified nurses care for the diverse needs of the prisoners. This comprises 1 Nurse Manager, 1 Chief Nurse Officer and 15 nurses.

However, it is difficult to maintain 6 nurses on each side of the daily roster, with nurses job-sharing and on various forms of approved leave.

Dental Care, Chiropody, Drug Counsellors, Psychiatric Care and Optical Clinics are provided on an on-going basis.

7. EDUCATION

7.1 Curriculum

The Midlands Prison Education Unit offers a wide curriculum covering such areas as English, Mathematics, the Humanities, Computer Studies, Material Technology, Home Economics, Physical Education, ESOL, Languages Arts, Crafts, Music, Multimedia, Ceramics, Drama, Educational Guidance, Accounting, Computerised Accounts and Horticulture.

7.2 Participation

There are currently 525 students registered with the Midlands Education Service with participation ranging from one class per week up to full time participation. Education is offered in the main school area, on E and G Division, the Horticulture Workshop and on C1 landing.

7.3 Accreditation

Accreditation is offered for Junior and Leaving Certificates, FETAC Levels 1 to 5, Royal Irish Academy (Music) and the Open University.

There were 202 FETAC folders submitted for external assessment in 2015 as follows:

Level 1: 30	Level 2: 2	Level 3: 108
Level 4: 40	Level 5: 22	Leaving Certificate: 19

7.4 Red Cross Community Based Health & First Aid Programme

There is also a significant educational input into the Red Cross Community Based Health & First Aid (CBHFA) Programme, running in the prison since January 2014. The programme is a partnership between the Irish Red Cross, Irish Prison Service and Education & Training Boards. It is delivered by teachers and nurses employed in the Midlands Prison. Groups of 12-24 volunteer inmates attend CBHFA meetings over a period of 4-6 months.

Evaluation of the programme highlights that all prisoner volunteers expressed views of being personally empowered and as having recognised changes in themselves directly as a result of the programme.

7.5 GAISCE Award

Gaisce - the President's Award, is Ireland's National Challenge Award for young people.

It is the country's most prestigious and respected award from the President of Ireland to those outside the Defence Forces or An Garda Síochána. Members of the visiting committee were invited to and were delighted to attend the award's ceremony.

The programme has been running in the Midlands Prison since 2008. A total of 29 prisoners have completed their Bronze Medal Award to date, with 9 individuals being awarded Bronze Medals in 2015 and 3 taking the silver award, bringing the total for silver to 13. To date, a total of 4 have completed gold.

The Bronze Award consisted of four challenge areas: Personal Skill; Community Involvement; Physical Recreation; and Group Activity. The first three challenges were successfully completed over a thirteen-week period with the Group Activity was completed over a two-day event where they completed a challenge together. The Silver Award was achieved over a 26-week period for Personal, Community and Physical challenges together with a Group Activity over 2 days. Students can choose new skills in each area or continue from bronze. The main charity was Temple Street Children's Hospital through a 10 km event and calendar sale.

We wish to congratulate the 9 recipients of the Bronze Gaisce Award and the 3 who received the Silver Award in 2015. We also want to acknowledge and highly commend the principal and staff of the school along with the prison officers who organized the excellent and very enjoyable award ceremony.

7.6 Other Areas

Education, in the Midlands Prison, also offers Pre-Release and Anger Management. Other programmes offered include Toe by Toe and Touch Type Read & Spell. There are award ceremonies, drama productions, music concerts and other activities taking place from time to time.

8. LIBRARY

There is a very well laid out library that appears to be well stocked. The Library opening hours are as follows: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings for the men on A B D divisions. Sunday afternoon and evening is for the men on E, G and C divisions.

The Library is also used for drugs awareness groups, first aid group and the toastmasters during the week.

The committee is concerned that staff shortages might impact on library operating hours and recommends that the prison authorities again examine the possibility of training a prisoner in operating the library.

9. PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

The Psychology team in the Midlands Prison aim to respond to the mental health and offence related needs of those detained in the Prison. A defining characteristic of the population is the number of men serving long or indeterminate sentences. The service finds that this presents both challenges and opportunities to the team in meeting the services dual mandate of mental health and offence work.

The Visiting Committee would like to commend the Psychology team for their on-going commitment in working with the ever increasing numbers in the Midlands Prison.

10. CHAPLAINCY

The Committee again found in 2015 that the chaplaincy formed a vital part of the prison communities every day lives. They offer weekly masses, confessions and pastoral care to all divisions of the prison. Choirs and Readers are trained and prepared for the liturgies. Chaplains visit the landings on a daily basis and are available to all prisoners who wish to speak to them privately or in a group. Chaplains maintain contact with family members especially during times of bereavement or serious sickness. Officers frequently direct chaplains to prisoners who are vulnerable or who are in particularly difficult circumstances. The chaplaincy also facilitates Bereavement Groups for those who experience bereavement while in prison.

11. MIDLANDS VISITOR CENTRE

The Midlands Prison Visitor Centre offers a wide range of services for prisoners' families and friends. The visitor centre had identified them as a group who have not committed any crime, yet must cope with great difficulties in the outside world. In 2015, there were 24,041 visits to the prison by 41,053 adults and 11,915 children.

In addition to reception, there is general information, tea bar facilities, childcare play area, support for families and children, train & bus timetables, information on prison visitation, a taxi free-phone service, information for children on first visits, on-going activities and projects for families, community employment places, volunteer places, experience for students on work placement from colleges, staff and volunteer training & development, and a warm and welcoming environment for all.

The committee commends all involved in the visitor centre for their professional and caring approach to supporting those who visited friends or family, in the prison, during the year.

12. DEATH IN CUSTODY

We were very sad to note that there were 6 deaths in the Midlands Prison in 2015 and we extend our deepest sympathy to the bereaved families.

13. KITCHEN/CATERING

The Committee commends the catering staff in the prison on the quality of food and hygiene standards maintained on an on-going basis providing a 28-day varied menu, catering for the diversity of the prison population, under the guidelines of HACCP. Since the opening of the new kitchen in 2012 it has afforded the opportunity for

employment of higher numbers of prisoners. A new menu was launched this year and local adjustments took place following consultation with prisoners and is working well.

We congratulate the team on their exceptionally high scores on their annual food audits as more demands are made on the delivery of high quality service, due to the increasing prisoner population.

14. INDUSTRIAL AREA/WORKSHOPS

The Midlands Prison provides a number of workshops that provide meaningful employment and training for a number of prisoners, during their time in prison. The various work and training units employ a number of prisoners on a daily basis. The committee commends Midlands Work & Training on retaining its ISO 18001 status, especially in an era of very scarce resources.

14.1 Certification

Area	Accreditation	Comment
Welding Unit	City & Guilds	31 Certificates completed with many more at various stages of engagement
Laundry	SQA	10 prisoners registered and at various stages of engagement
Industrial Cleaning	City & Guilds	Over 100 prisoners engaged at various stages of engagement
Building Skills	City & Guilds	20 prisoners at various stages of completion including 3 having passed the diploma stage
Horticulture	QQI	24 prisoners have engaged at level 3 and 4

15. HORTICULTURE

The Committee commends the horticulture staff and prisoners for keeping the complex beautifully maintained during all seasons. On all of our visits to the prison, the gardens, flower beds, hanging baskets both externally and internally were immaculate and all areas are well kept.

The horticultural section works very closely with the Portlaoise Tidy Towns Committee and supplies hanging baskets and floral displays, where possible. This year, the Midlands Prison won the award for the best road frontage of State buildings in Portlaoise. Indeed, it is intended for horticulture to further engage with the Portlaoise Tidy Towns Committee, in the year ahead, to commemorate the centenary of 1916.

The committee's visits to the horticultural areas provided insights into the difficulties and challenges experienced in managing provision in this area. Staff can often be withdrawn from horticulture to provide cover in other areas of the prison. The committee acknowledges and highly commends the commitment and dedication of the officers in charge of horticulture.

The committee was particularly impressed with the on-going work in the expanding horticultural/polytunnel area. The creative and inventive use of recycled materials is remarkable.

16. CONCLUSION

The Midlands Visiting Committee would like to thank all the governors, and in particular Governor Moran, who addressed us at our monthly meetings and kept us up to date and informed during the year, facilitating us at all times.

The committee wish to thank Collette Fennelly who left the committee, having completed her term, in 2015 for her tireless work as a member and Chairperson of the Midlands Visiting Committee, over the years. We also wish to welcome both John Kelly and Joe Leahy who joined the committee in 2015.

We thank all the management and staff whom we met with during 2015 and who made themselves available dealing with any issues we presented throughout the year.

We wish to sincerely thank all the staff who greatly assisted the committee in compiling the annual report for 2015. We would like to express particular thanks to Governor's Secretary Caroline Allen [PASO] who was of great assistance to the committee throughout 2015.

Finally, the committee wish to highly commend all the staff and services attached to the Midlands Prison for their continued work, commitment, dedication and professional approach, despite the ever increasing strain on resources, in the current economic climate.

Effective teamwork helps to enhance the image of the IPS as a whole and greatly contributes to a healthy environment and good general atmosphere throughout the prison.

All are a credit to the Midlands Prison.

We look forward to again working alongside all in 2016.

Ted Laffey (Chairperson)

Margaret O'Dwyer

John Kelly

Joe Leahy

10 / 03 / 2016