

**ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
VISITING COMMITTEE  
FOR  
MOUNTJOY PRISON  
2014**

**The Visiting Committee for Mountjoy Prison  
Annual Report, 2014.**

**Presented to the Minister for Justice and Equality pursuant to Prisons (Visiting  
Committees) Act, 1925.**

**The Visiting Committee,  
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## Section 1 Summary

- 1.1 The Visiting Committee wish to acknowledge, and thank prisoners for their involvement and engagement with the Committee during 2014. The Visiting Committee acknowledges prison management and staff for their co-operation throughout the year. Matters of relevance were highlighted and discussed with the Campus Governor, generally leading to many conclusions.
- 1.2 The appointment of Mr. Brian Murphy as Campus Governor in the latter part of the year saw a continuation of the progressive policies set in place by his predecessor, Mr. Edward Whelan, now retired. The Visiting Committee thanks Governor Whelan for his assistance during his tenure as Governor and wish him well in his retirement.
- 1.3 Two new members joined the Visiting Committee late in the year. The Committee welcomes new appointments to the Visiting Committee.
- 1.4 Complaints and requests to meet with the Committee, which showed a slight reduction on 2013, remained steady during 2014. The complaints covered a range of issues including, contact with children and family particularly at times of bereavement and significant life events, personal security, screened visits, loss of clothing, speed of mail handling, temporary release, access to medical services, dental services and library books.
- 1.5 The transfer of protection prisoners to single cell accommodation in D West Wing has proved to be a positive development. However, the recent allocation of protection prisoners to C West Wing is viewed by the Visiting Committee as a move away from the original plan for this wing. Notwithstanding operational and security measures in place the Visiting Committee would recommend a reappraisal of the policy of allocation of protection prisoners to C Wing.
- 1.6 Given the limited access to the library during school holidays and for those prisoners not enrolled in the school the need for a liaison person on the prison staff between the library service and the prisoner library assistant is highlighted.
- 1.7 The Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) system continues to play a leading role in the development of prisoners serving longer term sentences. It is the view of the Visiting Committee that the ISM system should be reorganised as a campus-wide programme.

- 1.8 The issue of contraband items entering prison still presents a problem. In particular, considerable amounts of drugs are being made available to prisoners. Security measures to prevent the passage of contraband items into the prison are reviewed on a continuous basis. The Visiting Committee would recommend that a high priority is given to addressing externally the flow of drugs into the prison and internal measures to prevent the entry of drugs into the prison in the coming year. Measures which contribute to the rehabilitation and recovery of those with a substance abuse problem should be expanded.
- 1.9 During the year the prison experienced a number of deaths in custody. Such deaths are tragic for families. Members of the Visiting Committee wish to offer their sympathy to the families of prisoners who died in custody during the year. Mindful of the traumatic impact of tragic deaths on staff the Visiting Committee recommends oversight, support systems and staff training needs to be constantly reviewed, resourced and updated.
- 1.10 The Visiting Committee acknowledges the immense improvement in the standard of accommodation throughout Mountjoy Prison in the last three years, albeit starting in many cases from a very low base. The closure of the antiquated and dilapidated E Wing during the year is a particularly welcome development.
- 1.11 The prison building programmes continues at a steady pace and should see the refurbishment of D Wing completed in the near future. On completion, the prison will have been modernised, with single-cell accommodation provided throughout.

## Section 2

### **Accommodation**

- 2.1 As of December 2014, the bed capacity of Mountjoy Prison was 554 and this was all single-cell accommodation. On completion of rebuilding, the prison will have single-cell accommodation with in-cell sanitation throughout. The Visiting Committee notes that the refurbished accommodation is being maintained at an acceptable standard of hygiene and cleanliness.
- 2.2 The transfer of protection prisoners to single-cell accommodation in D West Wing has proved to be a very positive development. However, the recent allocation of protection prisoners to C West Wing is viewed by the Visiting Committee as a move away from the original plan for the wing. While appreciating the operational and security considerations which lead to this arrangement the Visiting Committee recommends that management re-appraise its policy in this regard.
- 2.3 The Irish Prison Service has placed a high priority in the number of hours out of cell, which can be afforded to protection prisoners. As noted in the Visiting Committee Report for 2013, considerable progress has been made to this end and the improvement continued in 2014. Those on 22 and 23 hour lock-up had reduced from 46 in July 2014 to 2 in October 2014. The norm for those on protection would now appear to be 5 out of cell hours per day. However, the number confined to their cells for 19 hours per day at the end of 2014 was in the region of 40 to 50 prisoners. Most of these are on protection at their own request. A lengthy period in isolation is not in the interests of prisoners, their welfare and rehabilitation. The Visiting Committee recommends that the duration of in-cell confinement be further reduced.
- 2.4 The Visiting Committee on the basis of concerns raised and previous recommendations note the need for drug free hostels post release. The success of treatment on the drug free Treatment Programme working with prisoners can be put at risk by the absence of support and drug free environment on release.

## Section 3

### **Rehabilitation – Links to Training and Education**

- 3.1 Prisoner rehabilitation is a core aim of the Irish Prison Service (IPS), and is implemented in Mountjoy Prison by the Campus Governor in conjunction with his management team, staff and external services.
- 3.2 Prisoner rehabilitation involves input by a diverse range of therapists, teachers, trades supervisors and others through the ISM system to ensure co-ordination of interactions with prisoners based on agreed sentence plans.
- 3.3 It is generally recognised that education is an integral part of stable and structured programmes aimed at the rehabilitation of prisoners. As part of their introduction to life in prison each prisoner, on their arrival in Mountjoy Prison, is made aware of their entitlement to participate in education programmes. The Visiting Committee commends the professionalism and work of teaching staff and recognises the support of the Governor and management for education. The Visiting Committee recognises the difficulties of accommodation and resources and recommends that high priority be given to the development of a Central Education Unit.
- 3.4 Attendance at education programmes has increased significantly with the success of the Incentivised Regime. The completion in 2015 of the refurbishment programme will see an increased demand for participation in education programmes. Consequently the provision of extra classroom space will be a necessity
- 3.5 Future educational proposals will see the development of facilities and programmes in the Medical Unit. These proposals include the upgrading of the existing facility, establish cookery/bakery classes and, extend classes into the High Support Unit. The Visiting Committee recommends the development of occupational and activities programmes for prisoners in the High Support Unit who cannot attend other activities throughout the prison.
- 3.6 Consideration has been given by the Education Centre to the development of a more extensive Horticulture and Physical Education (PE) commitment outside the school area. This would provide opportunities for links with external work programmes in the community, in preparation for discharge. In PE there is scope to enhance training programmes, activities and opportunities for prisoners in a range of other sports such as volleyball or basketball. The Visiting Committee supports any new initiatives in this regard.

- 3.7 The Education Centre, through its Literacy and Numeracy Plan, continues to address issues of literacy through continued research and the integration of new technologies into its digital literacy provision.
- 3.8 Offering a wide range of classes and courses, the Education Centre is suited to every level of ability. Junior and Leaving Certificate courses are available, though an increasing number of prisoners do FETAC courses, which are more flexible and have multiple entry and exit points.
- 3.9 The Education Centre has 23 full-time and part-time teachers offering a wide choice of subjects. Classes are on offer in the main prison, the Medical Unit and segregated areas. The curriculum ranges from Adult Basic Education to degree-level. Many of these courses are accredited and students sit the usual State examinations.
- 3.10 A number of courses are *Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)* accredited including: ITEC Gym Instructor's Diploma, Associated Board of the Royal School of Accreditation and Environmental Health Officers Association Hygiene Certificate. In addition, some courses are accredited from within the City of Dublin Education and Training Board and The Open University
- 3.11 As highlighted in the Visiting Committee Report of 2013 there appears to be reluctance amongst some prisoners to get involved with formal learning. The prison gyms continue to be the main focus of sporting activities and continued to be well supported during the year. Sport and physical activity may provide opportunities for prisoners to motivate themselves while serving their sentences. Further education and training in the fitness industry may also provide a successful path to employment on release.

## Section 4

### Library Services

- 4.1 The prison library service helps prisoners to keep in touch with modern life and wider society.
- 4.2 The Visiting Committee notes that the recorded demand for library services continues to be high and the service is valued by prisoners. The library service makes every effort to provide a full and efficient service, however, logistical difficulties and lack of resources can present its own drawbacks. Funding for the library service in the prison should allow for increased demand.
- 4.3 Prisoners access to library services in the prison varies. Employment schedules, security and operational reasons can all lead to opening hours being curtailed. Providing library services to segregated prisoners remains a challenge in itself. Access to and the distribution of books and library services were addressed in our 2013 Annual Report and remain an outstanding issue.
- 4.4 The Visiting Committee share the view of Mr. Justice Collins in the High Court in the UK on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2014 that for prisoners: *‘A book may be very useful or indeed necessary as part of the rehabilitation process.’* He went on to add that *‘to refer to them as a privilege is strange’*. Given the complexity of prisoners obtaining books if not enrolled in school classes or during school holidays or bank holidays, as well as the number of prisoners dispersed across a variety of regimes at any time, the Committee recommends that a dedicated Library Liaison Person might be considered at this time to assist in the co-ordination of access to books.
- 4.5 The planning, implementation and evaluation of the library services are regularly reviewed throughout the year. Regular meeting between the library service and prison management are held to discuss all relevant matters. The benefits of such meetings have already shown results and are underlined by the library in the West Wing becoming fully operational and the introduction of the Library Management System to manage all transactions in the prison libraries.
- 4.6 It has been shown during the year that the library in the main prison has been used to facilitate meetings relevant to prisoners’ welfare. This development has created a hindrance to the provision of a full library service at certain times. Having discussed this matter with prison management the Visiting Committee is satisfied that a solution to this difficulty can be found, which would both enable the meetings to proceed and reduce the hindrance to the library service.

- 4.7 The Visiting Committee recommend that the opening hours for the library be extended. This view is supported by feedback from prisoners who have been employed in the library service. Access to books is valued by prisoners.

## Section 5

### **Illicit Drugs**

- 5.1 The Irish Prison Service (IPS) has identified a number of routes of entry of drugs to Mountjoy prison. The Visiting Committee supports the IPS in its efforts to deal with this considerable problem and recommends high priority be given to reducing the supply of drugs into the prison.
- 5.2 An important proportion of prisoners in Mountjoy Prison have been convicted of offences related to their use or consumption or financing or trafficking of illegal substances. This is a large and permanent security issue with complex logistical implications. From a health perspective, the transmission of blood borne infections among prisoners is problematic<sup>1</sup> for prisoners and staff. The Visiting Committee intends to continue to develop an appreciation of the issue and, in particular, the precarious balance between security and health.

1. Needle Exchange Provision in Ireland. The Context, Current Levels of Service Provision and Recommendations – A Joint Report by the National Drugs Strategy Team and National Advisory Committee on Drugs for the Inter-Departmental Group on Drugs.

### **Medical Services**

- 6.1 The prison healthcare service is responsible for the primary medical care of all prisoners including: (a) the health and safety of all new prisoners on committal; (b) the ongoing medical care of prisoners; (c) prescribing appropriate courses of treatment and, where appropriate, referral for specialist opinion; (d) liaison with professionals involved in the overall care and well-being of prisoners.
- 6.2 The prison officer on each landing plays a vital role in the day to day life of the prisoner and generally initial communication regarding all issues is between prisoner and prison officer. Concerns raised regarding health and welfare by prisoners are generally referred to doctors and nurses in the Medical Unit where primary assessment and treatment is provided similar to those available in a GP practice in the community. Prisoners can request to see the doctor or nurses at any time. Dental services are provided in line with the General Medical Services (GMS) and Medical Card schemes. The Visiting Committee notes the WHO recommendation that ‘all staff working in prison should have further training in health issues so that they can have a better understanding of what the health team is doing and can support those efforts through their duties concerning the prison environment and regime.’
- 6.3 The Visiting Committee welcomes the invitation from the Campus Governor for a member to participate on the multidisciplinary Steering Group on Prevention of Self Harm and Death in Custody. The Visiting Committee stresses the importance of implementing lessons learned from reviews of incidents of harm to self or others. In the interests of the health and safety of prisoners the need for assessment, analysis review and monitoring is emphasised. The assessment and monitoring of vulnerable prisoners and the referral to and availability of appropriate services needs ongoing evaluation and resourcing. Additional nursing staff resources are recommended.
- 6.4 All prisoners are medically assessed on committal to prison. Where clinically indicated, a prisoner can be referred for specialist treatment. Mental health services are provided by consultant-led in-reach sessions in conjunction with the Central Mental Hospital (CMH).
- 6.5 Multidimensional drug rehabilitation programmes are available for prisoners. Prisoners have access to a range of medical and rehabilitative services, including ‘work and training’ options which assist in addressing their substance abuse about which prisoners speak positively

- 6.6 The Medical Unit in Mountjoy Prison has nine places specifically allocated for a drug free programme. This programme is eight weeks in duration and is provided by prison staff and the community/voluntary sector. The aim of the programme is to assist participants in achieving a drug free status. The Visiting Committee recommends that consideration be given to providing further occupational therapy and activity programmes to prisoners in the medical unit who are unable to avail of other -programmes throughout the prison.

## Section 7

### **Integrated Sentence Management**

- 7.1 The Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) programme continues to play a leading role in the development of prisoners serving longer sentences. It remains the view of the Visiting Committee that the ISM system should be organised as a campus-wide programme, as highlighted in the Report for 2013.
- 7.2 A primary function of the ISM is to help facilitate the prisoner's return to the community. The extent to which the prisoner is prepared for release and is supported subsequent to release is crucial in avoiding a return to prison.

## Section 8

### **Community Return Programme**

- 8.1 The Irish Prison Service has actively developed community return schemes in recent years, notably in conjunction with the Irish Association for the Social Integration of the Offender (IASIO). In May 2013 a separate pilot ‘Community Support Scheme’ (CSS) was launched in Mountjoy and the Dóchas Centre in conjunction with the ‘Care after Prison’ (CAP) organisation. The CSS is directed specifically at those serving sentences of less than one year and takes the form of a structured temporary release. The support for prisoners in transition and on release is critical to their wellbeing. The assessment and selection of prisoners for these programmes, along with liaison with the outside agencies concerned is a significant component of the Integrated Sentence Management overall task
- 8.2 The aim is increased support for prisoners prior to their release from prison, upon release and then for a period after release in order to break the cycle of re-offending. Prisoners have the option of being considered for temporary release conditional on them engaging with this scheme.
- 8.3 The Visiting Committee notes the research report published by the Irish Prison Service and Probation Service in 2014 concerning the programme of unpaid work in communities as an incentivised temporary release which appears to have been substantially successful in involving over 700 participants in its programme.
- 8.4 Further it is of note that not all applicants are successful in seeking to enter the programme nor are all offers of places taken up. The Visiting Committee support the programme’s goals in reducing time spent in custody, facilitating reparation to communities and supporting resettlement.
- 8.5 The largest cohort of participants in this research report had been convicted of drugs related offences. This provides context to those participants who told the study authors that they welcomed the structure and routine the programme provided.
- 8.6 The Visiting Committee support the recommendations of the report that the Department of Social Protection make greater efforts to support temporary release prisoners’ applications at local offices for welfare payments and that the need for speedy approval of Medical Cards is essential. Programme participants can thus visit a GP when ill and avoid a breach of their release conditions by being absent from the Programme without a sickness certificate.

- 8.7 The Visiting Committee welcome the study authors' suggestion that a greater proportion of temporary release prisoners be transferred, if they so wish, to this structured Programme of Community Return.
- 8.8 The Visiting Committee favours a co-ordinated and resourced Community Return Programme.

## Section 9

### **Kitchen/Bakery**

- 9.1 It is the function of the Visiting Committee to visit and inspect the kitchen and other food areas in the prison. The kitchen area in Mountjoy Prison was observed on visits to be operated to a high standard in hygiene and service.<sup>2</sup>
- 9.2 The prison kitchen operates a 28-day menu, which is reviewed annually. Kitchen staff are tasked with supplying a balanced diet. A dietician is employed to update menus, and prisoners with health issues are encouraged to choose healthy options from the menu. Prisoner concerns regarding food brought to the attention of the Committee have generally been resolved in a timely manner by the Campus Governor.
- 9.3 The bakery in Mountjoy Prison is operational seven days per week and provides bread and other baked items to all of the prisons in the Dublin area. This facility provides employment opportunities for prisoners to learn baking skills under the supervision of skilled prison staff.
- 9.4 Having been noted for its high standards over the years, the Visiting Committee notes that the bakery in Mountjoy Prison has been acknowledged as a role model for the new bakery recently established at Hyde Park Wood Prison in Northern Ireland.
- 9.5 Opportunities for prisoners to learn good catering skills in food preparation, food hygiene, segregated food storage and assisting in kitchen management are important for the employability of ex-prisoners. The Visiting Committee confirms the view that a regular flow of qualified catering staff from among prison officers exiting accredited courses supported by the IPS is essential to achieve this goal. Catering skills are one of the areas where prisoners can be prepared for real jobs on completion of sentence. Working under accredited catering staff enhances employability for prisoners who have incomplete formal education.

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2. Irish Prison Service – Independent External Audit of Prison Catering, Year 2001 (May, 2002)

## Section10

### Other Issues Arising

- 10.1 The Visiting Committee wishes to acknowledge the assistance and guidance given generally to prisoners by the support services, many of which are voluntary.
- 10.2 **Training of staff:** The Visiting Committee notes and commends the 2015 Training Plan for staff in the Mountjoy complex. In the interests of care, safety of prisoners and staff and in order to ensure that staff receive the planned training the need for 'protected time' for training might be considered and ring fenced. The complexity of needs of vulnerable prisoners' particularly those at risk of self harm or with a history of ill health or substance abuse increasingly requires skilled assessment and intervention. The Visiting Committee recommends staff support, oversight and training be further resourced and prioritised.
- 10.3 **Prisoners sentenced for non payment of fines:** The Visiting Committee recommends a review of use of scarce staff resources dealing with administration processes for prisoners who are committed for a brief sentence (for example non payment of a small fine). The resource and cost implications of this practice along with benefits for prisoner needs to be reconsidered.
- 10.4 **Chaplains:** The Chaplains are responsible for the pastoral and spiritual care of the prison population. On a day-to-day basis Chaplains visit prisoners in all parts of the prison and speak privately with prisoners on any issue that may be of concern to them. This is valued by prisoners.
- 10.5 **Outside Agencies:** The Visiting Committee wishes to acknowledge the number of agencies who provide a range of services to meet multiple needs of persons about to be released from prison. The services provided or facilitate access to a number of post-prison options including accommodation, education, guidance, health and social support. The Visiting Committee recommends the further coordination of these services in the interests of prisoners.
- 10.6 **Laundry:** The Visiting Committee consider that given the number of persons in custody on the Mountjoy campus, the provision of a purpose built industrial laundry should be considered. This could potentially resolve hygiene issues, security issues and provide much needed employment for prisoners, who could then be eligible to enter the industrial cleaning sector on release.

## Section 11

### **Recommendations**

- Notwithstanding operational and security measures in place the Visiting Committee recommends that prison management re-appraise its policy in regard to the transfer of 'protection' prisoners to C West Wing.
- Mindful of the traumatic impact of tragic deaths on staff the Visiting Committee recommends oversight, support systems and staff training needs to be constantly reviewed and updated.
- The need for a liaison person on the prison staff between the library service and the prisoner library is highlighted.
- The Visiting Committee recommends that the opening hours for the library be extended.
- The ISM should be re-organised as a campus-wide programme.
- The Visiting Committee recommend that a high priority is given to addressing, externally and internally, the flow of drugs into the prison in the coming year, as well as measures which contribute to the recovery of those with a substance abuse problem.
- The Visiting Committee considers that all prison staff should have further training in health issues.
- The Visiting Committee recommends the further development of occupational and recreational activities for prisoners in the High Support Unit who cannot attend other activities throughout the prison.
- In the interests of prisoners, their welfare and rehabilitation, the duration of in-cell confinement in isolation needs to be further reduced.
- Further education and training for prisoners in the fitness industry should be explored.
- The Visiting Committee recommends staff support, oversight and training be further resourced and prioritised.
- The Visiting Committee recommends that following a review of incidents of harm to self or others, lessons learned are implemented and monitored.

- The need for ‘protected time’ for training with staff might be considered.
- The Visiting Committee considers that a greater proportion of temporary release prisoners be transferred, if they so wish, to a structured Programme of Community Return.
- The Visiting Committee favours a further co-ordinated and resourced Community Return Programme.
- The Visiting Committee on the basis of concerns raised and previous recommendations note the need for drug free hostels post release.