

**Visiting Committee 2018 Annual
Report**

For

Wheatfield Prison

Wheatfield Place of Detention,
Cloverhill Road,
Clondalkin,
Dublin 22.
Tel 01-6209400
Fax 01-6209430

Mr. Charlie Flanagan T.D
Minister for Justice & Equality
94, St. Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2.
March, 2019.

VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT YEAR ENDING 2018.

We, the undersigned members of Wheatfield Place of Detention Visiting Committee are pleased to present the Annual Report year ending 2018.

The Visiting Committee comprises of four members at the time of writing this report. The full Committee visits the prison every month. The first meeting each month meets with the Prisoners who requested a meeting. Our Return Visit is made by two members of the Committee and they impart to the Prisoners the result of our consultation with the Governor regarding the issues raised.

The Committee met with Campus Governor Martin O'Neill who attended our December Committee meeting. Governor O'Neill gave the Committee an update on Prisoner's issues that the Committee raised during the year. Present also were a number of Assistant Governors and Senior Officers.

Governor Conal Healy who was the Governor until mid year 2018 was very accessible and supportive of the committee and immediately addressed any issues raised by the Committee. We wish to express our appreciation and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Governor Marie Connolly was appointed in November 2018 to replace Governor Healy. Governor Connolly has also been very supportive. In fact all the Staff in the Administration Office and Prison Officers who support Committee Members while visiting the Prison itself have been most helpful and courteous.

During the year 2018 the Committee has met with many Prisoners who have requested to the the Committee and have shared their difficulties with the Committee. Each month there can be any where between 6 and 4 Prisoners seeking to meet with the Committee. The Committee members give time to make the Prisoner comfortable and engage with him regarding his issue and in the conversation we can offer suggestions and support to ease the anxiety and frustration that the Prisoner maybe experiencing. We then have a meeting with the Govenor or an Assistant Govenor and relay the difficulties that we have heard and notes are taken and follow-up promised on the Committee members Return Visit. On our return visit we go into the prison and meet with the Prisoners who requested our assistance and give the Prisoner in most cases an answer that will assist them.

Prisioners difficulties range from requesting Transfers to other Prisions and to the two Open Prisons, 22hr lock ups and the difficulties around isolation, P19 punishment, Screen visits, difficulties with family visits and stress within their personal relationships due at times because partners or family members are barred because of an issue that occurred on a visit. Issues arising when a visitor is accused/suspected of bringing into the Prison an unauthorised object or substance and the Prisoner believes he is being punished with a P19 which may involve him being put back on basic status. That particular visitor being banned for 6 months and on permission to return they then are on Screen Visits for a further six months. The Prisoner requires the Committee to look at the issues that have arisen and help him to solve or get clarity for him from the Governor. We then put forward the Prisoner's issues when the Govenor or Assistant Governor joins the Committee meeting and listens to the issues raised by Prisoners that morning.

Other issues that arise for Prisoners are Personal health issues and diets. Accommodation for visiting children with health issues and those with Autisim difficulties.

Skype communication requested in situations around difficulties for family visits for the Prisoners. Or Prisoners who have no families in Ireland. Unfortunately, Skype communication at the moment is a work in progress.

On the Return Visit those Prisoners who brought their issues to the Committee are visited at their Unit and an explanation is given to them and in most cases they are satisfied that we have spoken on their behalf and while not always solve their problem, they feel represented and have more clarity on their difficulty.

Also on our Return Visit the two members will engage with Prisoners in the corridors or on landings and take their issues raised back to the Office and have a result for the Prisoner in approx 2 weeks, but should the Prison Service be able to communicate a clarification sooner to the Prisoner the Governor will arrange that.

Most issues are a result of a breakdown in communication from either side and once there is engagement by both sides issues can be clarified

On the return visit the two members also take the opportunity to visit parts of the Prison to see Workshops, The School, The Yard, the GreenHouse Project , Visiting Areas, Kitchen and speak with Prisoners and Staff.

The condition of cells can be mixed. Prisoners on the basic regime probably have not the most pristine cells. This year the completion of the contract to install new windows has made a huge difference to the Prison in general and a welcomed refurbishment of Prisoner's cells. The new windows are larger than the old ones, therefore more light in the cell. Also, the Prisoner has the ability to control the air flow into his cell. So in warmer weather fresh air and in colder weather there are no drafts and therefore the cell is not losing heat, There is also a blind within the window and the Prisoner can alter the light or close the blind whenever required. Each cell has also been painted when the window has been installed. The installation of the windows now means that Prisoners are actively engaged in keeping their own space clean and rubbish is collected each day, where previously there was a bad habit of throwing rubbish out of the old windows. These actions compounded and added to the serious rodent issue that the Prison suffered previously . Thankfully now this has been resolved.

Facility corridors, wings and landings.

A new cleaning regime was introduced during 2018 and there has been a huge improvement in the cleanliness of all areas in the prison.

Prisoner Reception Area:

On arrival a Prisoner is processed through this area in accordance with prison regulations. All personal articles are recorded These articles are kept in a safe locker stored by the authorities. When a Prisoner arrives he is issued with clothing of good quality, personal hygiene products and on release the Prisoner will have his personal articles return to him. Later after the Prisoner is processed he will be brought to the committal wing where he will spend his first night. While he is in this area he will be given lots of information regarding the Prison rules and his entitlements will be explained to him. Then the Authorities decide what area is best suited to place the Prisoner.

The difficulties around placing prisoners has grown with 22hr lock ups requested because of fears that other Prisoners are a danger to the new Prisoner. For the safety of Prisoners the 22hr lock ups are vital to Manage Prisoner's who cannot mix in the general population.

There is approx 100 Prisoners at any one time on 22 hr lock up and this puts a huge pressure on staff.

The 22hr lockup Prisoners are legally entitled to 3 hrs outside their cells each day. In order to manage this 2 and maybe 3 Prison Officers are required to escort a Prisoner to the yard and back to his cell safely.

Facilities on the Prison Grounds:

There is a very high quality flower and plant nursery, It gives training to the Prisoners who have engaged with the scheme. The Prisoners involved are serving life sentences and are on an enhanced regime. The Programme operates at a very professional level and provides flowers for public areas PAGE 3

project The grounds are always well maintained.

The animals that previously lived in this open area have been removed and together with the new windows eliminated the serious rodent issue.

A substantial waste management programme also operates within the prison.

Kitchen/Catering

The kitchen operates at a very high level, The Kitchen has been inspected by outside authorities and has received the relevant accreditations. The Kitchen and the Stores operate at a professional level.

There is a 28 day menu cycle in operation. There is also arrangements for special food diets and those Prisoners who have difficulty with their diet are facilitated. On visiting the kitchen which we do regularly we note that there is a special board to facilitate those with dietary issues.

The food is of good quality and variety. The kitchen cleanliness is above reproach. The training that Prisoners receive is excellent and very important both for learning about food, cooking and on release they will have a good knowledge regarding a healthy diet and cooking for themselves and their families. The experience in the Kitchen for a Prisoner can also be an opportunity for employment on leaving the Prison.

Library/other facilities

This is a very important resource for Prisoners. There are Literacy problems that some Prisoners have which in the past created difficulties in their school days and later in life and therefore school is a very daunting place.

The introduction of an info streaming service or info loop channel could be explored which could encourage more usage of both the Library and Adult Education. Also projects and apps that assist with dyslexia could offer a Prisoner an opportunity to engage with further and second chance education. There is a touch/type read and spell app which can assist with gaining knowledge to read and write with confidence. (Maynooth College have this app available) . Each Cell has a TV and games consoles and other games i.e . chess or playing cards are also available.

Education:

There are many and varied courses and subjects that Prisoners can engage with while in Wheatfield Prison. There is a large number of subjects available :

There are 34 Teachers on staff, 9 Full time and 25 Part time. There are 53 subjects available, which include Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate subjects. There are also courses for post leaving Certificate Prisoners who wish to have a qualification in an area that they have already completed part of a course, have a flair for or would consider continuing the course on release.

—Programmes-also-include, Pre-Release8week-courserParenting-Classes._____

The Red Cross also provide a course to those Prisoners who wish to take part.

Evening classes are also available from 5.30-7pm and 10 Teachers provide this service.

There are issues of difficulty around getting to 22 hr lock up prisoners if they request to engage with the Education Department in the Prison as the amount of staff required to get one teacher to a prisoner on 22hr lock up is very demanding for the service.

Due to shortage of staff classes are cancelled and while this is understandable in the light of security and safety for both staff and Prisoners it is very disruptive to the courses provided.

Trainin Workshops

We have visited these workshops on many occasions and commend the instructors who are dedicated and proud of their work and facility. The facility offers carpentry, metalwork, construction, printing and painting workshops. Prisoners receive a high level of training and skill sets upon completion of these courses. There is a substantial supply of tools, machinery and equipment available to Prisoners to enable them to carry out their work and complete their course. The skills learned in these WorkShops are of great assistance to Prisoners on leaving Prison as they seek employment especially now in this climate Of employment .

The Prison also has links with outside agencies i.e. charities in which some of the products and services of Prisoners from these WorkShops can be utilised.

Unfortunately, due to shortage of staff these WorkShops are cancelled which is understandable regarding security and safety is paramount at all times. This is very disruptive both for the Workshop Staff and keeping the Prisoners engaged in the programmes.

Physical Activities

The Gym is a very popular pastime. The Gyms have a very good selection of equipment. It is important that the equipment is well maintained. Prisoners on Basic Enhansment get a minimum of one hour per week and those on Enhansment get a minimum of 2 hours per week. There is also a Sports Hall where indoor Soccer can be played. And other indoor sports if requested. The

Committee believes that Sport facilities are very important to aid the physical and mental health and fitness of Prisoners.

Yard Facility

Wheatfields Yards are large spaces. They are covered with netting in order to prevent drugs and objects being thrown over the perimeter wall. This wall is a hugh difficulty for the Athorities in Wheatfield Prison. More netting and a solution to the security of the perimeter wall is essential.The Soccer Pitch is used in all weathers and is a great facility for Prisoners to release energy and play a team games no doubt in a competitive way.

understands that further finances are required to rectify this issue.

Laundry

Wheatfield has its own Laundry Services, which services both Cloverhill and Wheatfield. This facility also offers Prisoners training opportunities . The laundry is a very busy area and is conducted in a professional way. We have never received any complaints regarding this service from Prisoners.

Prisoner Mail

Prisoner's mail service is generally handled with efficiency. incoming and Outgoing Prisoner mail is censored for inappropriate remarks, comments and material. Prisoner's can receive private mail from Legal Personal if it is in a separate envelope within the original envelope. There is an option for the Prisoner to have personal and sensitive mail directed to the Visiting Committee. Generally the inmates are satisfied with the system as it is. Should there be complaints the Committee will follow up on those issues raised.

Other Services/Facilities

Wheatfield has links with external groups such as the Red Cross (mentioned previously), The Samaritans and Merchants Quay Drug Services. These Groups provide excellent services and support for Prisoners who engage with them. The Samaritans have trained inmates to become listeners. This is a very valuable resource as inmates have someone to talk with who have similar experiences and circumstances. There is a Chaplain services also available for Prisoners.

22 Hour Lockup:

This is a very tough and isolating situation that a Prisoner finds himself in. It can arise either by The Prison Authority's decision regarding risk to the Prisoner himself* other Prisoners or by the choice

Of the Prisoner himself due his fear of violence that he may experience by other Prisoners in Wheatfield whom he has had interaction with before entering Prison. The Prison Service tries as much as is possible to prevent a Prisoner making the decision to seek 22hr lockup explaining the mental health issues that can arise through this isolation. These situation cause great suffering in Mental Health and a considerable stress on staffing. Each of these Prisoners required to have 3 hours out of their cell. Consequently a tremendous amount of staff is required which depletes staff in other areas, such as WorkShops and School.

Drugs

This is a serious and ongoing difficulty both for the Prison Authorities Country wide and also for Prisoner's and their families. Despite the best efforts of the Authorities in Wheatfield Prison, scanners, sniffer dogs, Xray and bags searches and the Perimeter wall being monitored daily,

constantly drugs enter the Prison. The stress both on Prisoners and Families to facilitate drugs being brought into the Prison is enormous.

~~receive a P19 and his visitor will be banned from visiting him for 6~~

months and then 6 month cn screens. This can be devastating for the Prisoner and his family. The Prisoner may also loose any enhanced position he had earned and be back down to a basic situation.

Prisoners can avail of drug rehabilitation programmes within the prison and the authorities encourage prisoners to use this service.

Discipline Regimes

The Institution operates three levels of incentivised regimes, basic, standard and enhanced standard. Depending on their engagement within the system they can be downgraded to basic.

All new committals are on standard. Within the basic programme there is a loss of certain privileges, such as no access to the gym, games consoles, premium employment, and accommodation. The committee believe this loss of privilege is fair. That is that these losses are administered to a Prisoner in a fair and equitable way. Clear rules are given to Prisoners on entry to the Prison. This loss of privilages should never be used on Prisoners without giving the Prisoner a clear indication of his infringement.

Although we see Prisoners who complain about their P19 and loss of privilage on understanding the situation that happened we can bring clarity to this difficult situation that the Prisoner finds himself in and encourage him not to loose faith and try to regain the privilages he lost.

For this system to work well there must be communication and clarity with the Authorities regarding the issue that brought the Prisoner to the position that he is loosing his privilages. The ramification of infringing the rules has to be clear at all times.

The enhanced regime has clear advantages, such as 7 hours out of their cell. Engaged in School, Workshops, Working in the Kitchen, Laundry etc. These activities are not only worth while, but can help and assist with the difficulty of being in Prison and the loss of freedom.

There are also two units that Enhanced Prisoners have the opportunity to mix with similar Enhanced Prisoners, they have facilities to wash and look after their own clothing, access to cooking facilities. Make their breakfast and tea breaks in an atmosphere of co-operation with one another. There is a community seating area and a TV which can be enjoyed in a communal atmosphere.

There is one incentive that appeals to Prisoners and that is the Open Prison. As there are only so many places and a Prisoner more or less needs to be near ending his prison sentence, and it is not always a suitable fit for a lot of Prisoners. So there can be an amount of disappointment and anger when a Prisoner sees another Prisoner getting an Open Prison place and he is

refused or does not get an offer. There can be many reason that the Authorities not only in the Prison but in the broader Justice System who can point to difficulties that they see in offering a Place to a particular Prisoner.

Wheatfield operates an integrated sentence management programme- There is a dialogue between the institution and the inmates on how to get the best out of their time in Prison. This gives the inmates a clear understanding of their future within the prison. The Authorities have a positive approach regarding sentencing. The committee feel that Wheatfield's Authorities work hard to ensure that prisoners on enhances regimes get an opportunity to apply for T.R or open facilities. There is a humane approach to prisoner sentences by the Authorities in Wheatfield. The Committee believes that when the Govenor receives a request for information or transfer to another Prison by the Prisoner the Govenor follows through and brings the request to a conclusion. The lines of communication must be open and clear at all times.

Open Prisons:

Transfers back to Wheatfield from Shelton Abbey for 2018 for operational reasons — 8 Prisoners.

Transfers back to Wheatfield from Loghan House for 2018 for operational reasons - 1 Prisoner.

Vsiyör information.

The booking line has improved over the last few years. The use of an online form to book family visits is now available via the IPS website. (Irish Prison Services) If a visitor is barred, clear and fair time frames are now implemented. The paperwork for future visits should be issued at least a week before the expiration of the previous paperwork. Visitor review results should be communicated to the inmate in question.

Institution Visits.

Depending on the regime that the Prisoner is on each inmate is entitled to a least one and a maximum of three visits per week. St. Vincen de Paul are now operating a visitor centre in Wheatfield and it has been well received by families and Prisoners, For visitors there are security measures before entering the visiting area. There are Lockers where cloths and goods can be stored while the person is visiting there family member. Should a visitor be caught with a substance or object that is prohibited in the Prison they can be arrested and charged and also the Prisoner they are visiting can also be served with a P19 and loose his privilages. There has been an introduction to a visiting room, which iS set out for a more relaxed family visit. There are tables and chairs and the Prisoner has a more relaxed visit with his family. Should anyone breech the rules, the visitor will be barred for 6 months (if not arrested) and on screen for the follow 6 months. The Prisoner will receive a P19 and loose privilages.

Prison Car Parkine.

More Notices to avoid litter being left in the Public Parking Area should be erected. Mostly now the entrance to the Prison is tidy and clean. There are occasions when people entering this area discard cups and papers as they walk along. And the appearance of the entrance can look neglected.

Health

Inmates have access to doctors, nurses, dentists and opticians. Should emergency treatment be required it is provided. Inmates receive fair treatment and follow ups as required in accordance with best practice. The Committe believe that all prisoners who avail of medical care receive good care* While the Prisoners medical care is confidential it is essential that clarity of communication between the Prisoner and Medical staff and the Athorities in the Prison are kept open and clear. There is a strict oversight of inmates trying to or storing medication.

While there is a need for more psychologists, there has been movement in progressing this shortage.

Wheatfield run a programme for Prisoners called "Building Better Life Programme" for selected inmates. This course has been very successful for Prisoners who engage and is a considerable help with Mental Health Issue resolution. The Committee believes that this programme should be available to all Prisoners. We understand the monetary contraits and staff contraits. This programme offered to first offenders and very young offenders could clarify for the Prisoners the choices and consequence of his actions.

Prisoner death in Wheatfield in 2018.

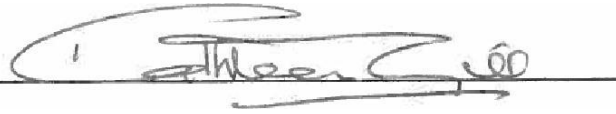
It is a matter of record that one Prisoner passed away.

Chaplaincy

This is a very important and intergal part of inmates welfare. The spiritual needs , care and trusting service is essential. Wheatfield has also made provision for inmates of different faiths. There seems to be no complaint that Prisoners are not being provided with this essential support.

Brenda Co e | Chai erson | Brenda Coe
[Signature]
t wart Ste hens

Kathleen Gill

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathleen Gill', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'K' and a cursive 'Gill'.

Joe Fitzsimons

A solid horizontal black line extending to the right from the text 'Joe Fitzsimons'.