

Visiting Committee
Shelton Abbey
Open Centre
Beech Road,
Arklow,
Co. Wicklow.

Visiting Committee Annual Report 2015

The Visiting Committee has pleasure in presenting their annual report for the year ending 2015.

The Visiting Committee convened on a monthly basis throughout the year and members did on occasion present with unannounced visits. On each occasion the committee members were welcomed and facilitated with free access to all areas of the estate. No offenders requested to meet the committee but did on occasion chat informally with members as they toured the site. During the year there were occasions when formal meetings could not take place because of a shortfall in members. We are pleased to report the committee Chaired by Mr. Thomas Gregan recently welcomed two new members and has now increased to four members – Mr. Thomas Healy, Mr. Anthony Lawlor and Ms. Marie O'Rourke. Mr. Gregan has requested consideration to appoint more members to ensure the minimum quorum number is always available to conduct meetings. The committee wishes to extend their thanks and appreciation to Ms. Margaret Short who has completed her involvement with the committee.

The committee is pleased to report local management's continued commitment to deliver the highest standards in offender sentence management. With the ongoing financial limitations being imposed across the prison service it is a credit to the excellent work and leadership of Governor Conal Healy and his team that the centre continues to maintain and introduce new initiatives. This year has witnessed a very notable increase in positive interaction with the community. A higher increase in offender's positive participation with local community projects has proven to be a real success. An excellent working relationship has developed with The Wicklow Partnership which has opened doors to the wider community to what this centre has to offer. One project that has grown since its introduction two years ago is the

Tinahely Show. A total of seventeen offenders were granted day release to assist the voluntary committee deliver an excellent show this year. Where possible the wide range of expertise available is utilised in full and ensures offenders with skills can maintain and display their craft. Members of the show committee came to the centre a few weeks after the event to share a meal with the work party. It was wonderful to witness the genuine appreciation and friendly interaction between the individuals present.

A number of committee members did attend a visiting committee training day in the Irish Prison Service Training Centre. Mr. Gegan also attended the visiting committee Chairs meeting. The gatherings are an ideal occasion to net-work with other committee members.

Addiction Counsellor

This year saw the departure on transfer of Mr. Michael Woods (*Addiction Counsellor*) to the West Dublin Campus. The committee wish to convey our thanks and appreciation to Michael and wish him well in his new position. The full time position is now assigned to Ms. Camilla Walsh. Camilla is a dedicated counsellor who is respected by the offenders and noted as a trusted listener. Camilla has introduced an induction/awareness meeting with all new committals – advising of all services etc available. A number of addiction related programmes did take place during the year.

Visitors

The committee wish to extend our thanks to Ms. Janet Museveni (First Lady of Uganda) who visited the centre in May. She requested a private visit to witness the benefits of Shelton's partnership with the Bothar charity. The first lady was very impressed with Governor Healy's enthusiasm and motivation and praised the offenders for their assistance in helping those disadvantaged in foreign countries. The committee also welcomed visits from the visiting committees Cork prison, Cloverhill and Dochas Centre.

Programmes

In January Ms. Anne Twohig and Mr. John Peelo introduced an eight week mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) programme. Twenty-four students were selected from a large list of willing candidates. Twenty three offenders completed the programme and continue to use the excellent skills learnt. This was the first time the

full eight week MBSR programme was completed in an Irish prison. Dublin City University is completing research on the effectiveness of such a programme in a prison environment.

The Dogs for the Disabled is a wonderful initiative which sits well in the community of Shelton. Young dogs, some of which were born in the Dochas Centre are given to a volunteer offender. The dog is minded like any family pet, sharing the offender's room, recreation time etc. When the dog is noted as suitable for expert advanced training it is removed from the centre and eventually given to a disabled child. The dogs bring normality, friendship, joy, responsibility and unfortunately sadness when they depart. Research this year conducted by University of Huddersfield has strongly supported the initiative as a positive in offender sentence management.

Shelton Abbey and Bothar formed a successful partnership in 2007. To date two initiatives have developed to be a standard yearly event in the Centre's calendar. The arrival of donated calves with the departure of pregnant heifers to needy families and the arrival of young goats for quarantine before onward transfer to selected recipients. To date the experience has not just benefited the disadvantaged families but has generated a deep sense of pride within the Shelton community. Bothar has become a valued ambassador for the Irish Prison Service and promotes the good work being done in Shelton throughout the world. Another welcome addition to the programme is the animal welfare course. The course is delivered by VIVA (Volunteers in Irish Veterinary Assistance) and is well received by staff and offenders.

Activities

The catering section continues to provide the highest quality of food and rewarding employment for offenders. The regular turnover of offenders ensures a continuous training schedule. Recent catering audits note high standards are being achieved.

The farm is providing a wide variety of positive activities to suitable offenders. The continuous and regular audits ensure best practice is maintained. The mix of Tillage farming and animal welfare enables offenders an experience of a wide variety of skills.

The garden and grounds team continues to deliver the outstanding features of the Shelton estate. Constant improvement and development (weather permitting) of the

areas provides a wide variety of skills and experience to interested offenders. A high proportion of offender employment revolves around the farm, grounds and garden.

Some offenders who having obtained accredited training in other institutions find the new skill stops because of restricted availability of work and training courses. The committee would request the Irish Prison Service considers introducing further work & training facilities.

Chaplaincy

Sr. Margaret O' Donovan continues to provide spiritual guidance to the offenders. Sister Margaret organises mass and other religious events and is always available to assist the offenders and staff when required.

Accommodation

The open centre is separated into two accommodation units. The Main Building and Avoca House. The main Building accommodates 56 offenders in dormitory/communal rooms. Most offenders on transfer would be accommodated in the main building and over time progress to single room accommodation in Avoca House. The committee would request that the Irish Prison Service might consider reviewing the dormitory style accommodation. The large rooms might be best served as apartment style units. Long term offenders would benefit from the accommodation in preparation for moving into their own accommodation on release. The shared toilet/shower facilities (Main House) were listed to be refurbished but unfortunately this project still awaits commencement.

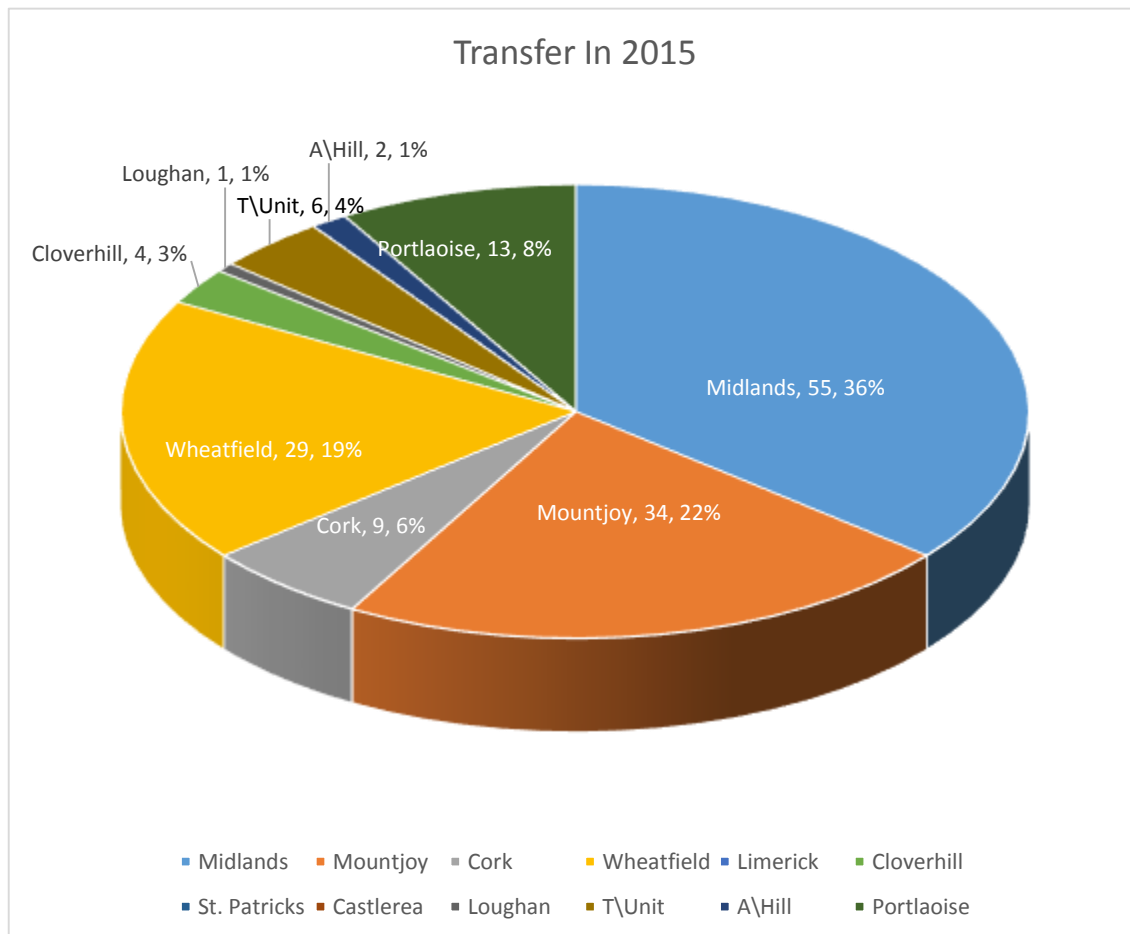
Avoca House also facilitates the Probation Service office, Chaplain & Addiction Counsellor. Psychology service and Psychiatric service is provided on request. A visiting community welfare officer (morning once a week) provides a valued service to the offenders. Offenders being released with a small allowance ensures others are not put under pressure to provide for them. The provision of temporary release programmes well in advance of an offenders release is proving to be an excellent reintegration tool. All offenders must supply an address where they are welcome during the periods of temporary release. The phased release plan allows time for relationships and trust to build. The alternative - immediate release back into the community is not as beneficial.

Offenders Statistics

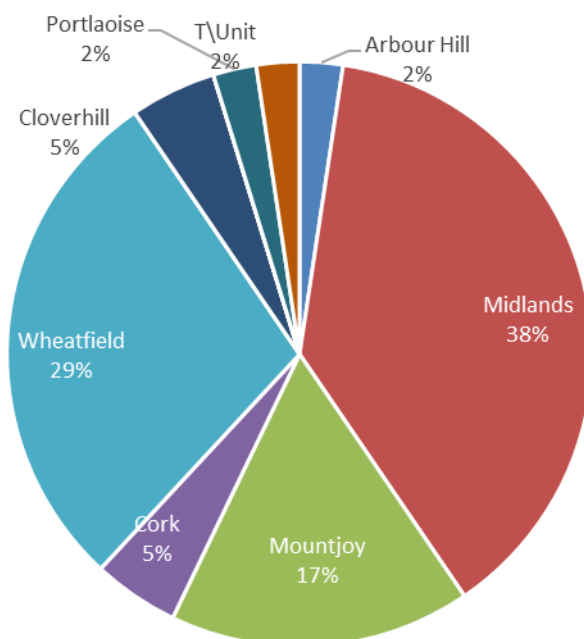
153 offenders transferred

42 offenders transferred out

10 offenders absconded

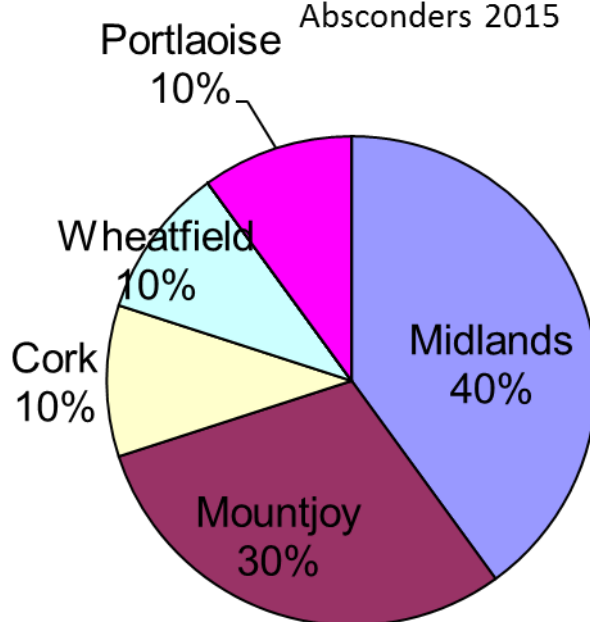


Transfer out 2016

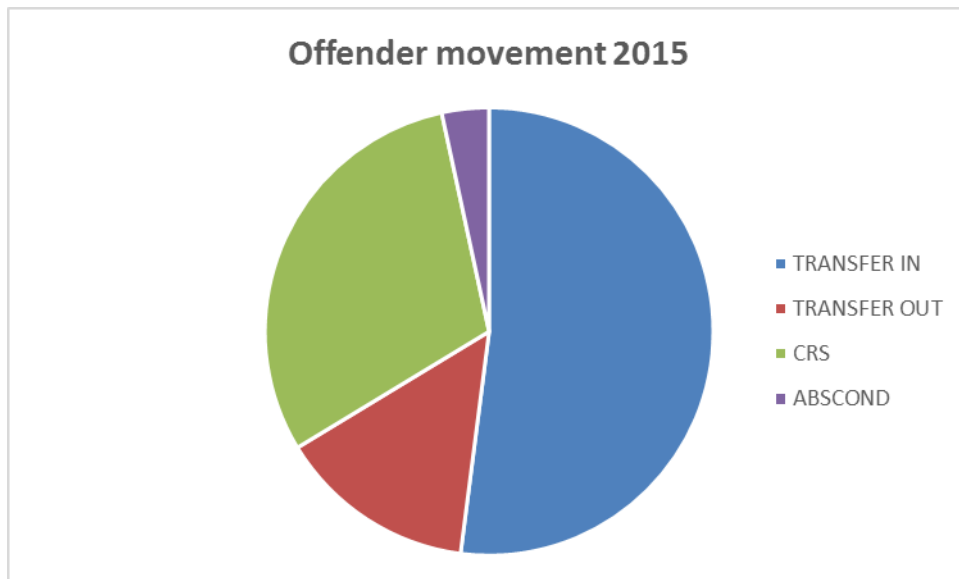


■ Arbour Hill ■ Midlands ■ Mountjoy ■ Cork ■ Wheatfield ■ Limerick
 ■ Cloverhill ■ St. Patricks ■ Castlereagh ■ Loughan ■ Portlaoise ■ T\Unit

Absconders 2015



■ Midlands ■ Mountjoy ■ Cork ■ Wheatfield ■ Limerick ■ Cloverhill ■ St. Patricks ■ Castlereagh ■ Loughan ■ Portlaoise ■ T\Unit



Education

The Education Centre continues to provide students with the opportunity to engage with a quality education service. Courses both locally and nationally which lead to certification are offered. QQI certified courses are delivered at Levels 3,4 & 5. Having obtained one of the qualifications the student is able to establish himself on the National Framework of Qualifications. The QQI is regarded as a valuable qualification which is nationally recognized and vocationally orientated. A variety of other courses are offered to provide students with an opportunity to develop new skills and to explore areas of study which are of interest to them.

All levels of educational backgrounds are catered for from Basic Ed. to Open University level. This presents challenges to accommodate a broad range of abilities and ensure that each student benefits from their time in the centre. To achieve this, teachers are flexible and creative in catering for the individual needs of each student. Personal achievement is our core value, irrespective of what level it occurs at.

Education Services are provided by the equivalent of 7.4 fulltime teachers. Classes operated as in line with the standard academic calendar. Classes were timetabled from 9.30 - 12.30, 2.15 - 4.15, and in addition, evening classes were conducted from 4.30 - 6.30/7.30, Monday to Thursday. One hundred and twenty six offenders enrolled for education courses in 2015. A planned programme of events/activities was delivered for students during the summer months of June and July when the classes were closed.

Options for accredited and non-accredited programmes were offered to all offenders. The primary emphasis is on those with basic educational needs i.e literacy, numeracy, social skills and occupational skills development.

Locally Accredited Programmes

Title of programme	Throughput in 2014	Comments
Adult Guidance & Counselling	136	Education Course
ESOL Programme	12	English classes for non-Irish students
ABE	27	Basic education (Literacy 1-1, small groups)
General English	17	Education Course
Sculpture in Wood	34	Skills Course
Mosaic Programme	23	Skills Course
Art Workshops	27	Skills Course
General Art	21	Skills Course
Geography/Environmental Studies	6	Education Course
Cookery	12	Skills Course
History	16	Education Course
Healthy Lifestyles	10	Education Course

QQI Entries 2015

Course title	Ref	Level	June	Dec
CAD	A20012		8	4
Drawing	3N0581	3	5	0
Woodwork	3N0589	3	9	0
Spanish	3N0868	3	1	0
Communications	3N0880	3	2	0
Word Processing	3N0588	3	7	5
Word Processing	5N1358	5	10	3
Maths	4N1987	4	0	5
Maths	3N0929	3	3	0
Planting & Potting by hand	3N0891	3	5	0
Outdoor Veg Crop Production	3N0890	3	0	4
		Total	50	21

IT access

Internet access continues to be a valued facility with individual user accounts set up by IPS HQ and the local management. Internet access was provided to the Librarian and is noted as a great addition to the service. The main purpose is to assist and further enhance the quality of the education experience. It is hoped to continue to develop this valuable facility in 2016.

Adult Basic Education Developments

The Storybook Dads programme is continuing to be offered to students. The service offers real support and comfort with family literacy and positive contact with their children. To complement this, we offered children's books sessions during the pre-Christmas season to facilitate inmates to book-browse and take time in making choices for their children. Some of the dads had ideas to develop this theme next Christmas. The Library also plays a supportive role in ensuring the dads produce a professional product. The library is open 10 hours per week.

Physical Education & Fitness Training

Two swimming courses were held during the year catering for up to 13 participants per course. Spinning classes were held in a local leisure centre on Thurs. mornings. Participants were granted temporary release to attend the programmes. Weekly Pilates and Abs training sessions were held in the visiting hall. Personalised programmes and supervised gym sessions were held on Mon. And Fri. afternoons. Two regular soccer sessions were timetabled per week off-site. Fitness classes and a weight management programme, including nutrition, healthy eating were held weekly throughout the year.

Horticulture

As part of the Horticulture programme a vegetable garden was developed in early 2015. This allowed the Outdoor Vegetable Crop Production component (QQI L3) to proceed. A very impressive crop of vegetables was produced with those involved able to pick their own produce and use it or give it to family on visits.

A trip to Colclough Walled Garden in Wexford took place in June and this was once again very interesting and informative. A group of 9 prisoners were taken for the day trip.

Guidance Counselling

To prepare for post-release life many choose to link with the Guidance Counselling Service offered by the Education Centre. This service prepares a plan for each individual based on what is best suited to them. The service has at its core the interest of the individual and to guide them on whatever path they choose. College applications were processed for 21 offenders with some released on CRS to attend colleges.

Achievements/ Events in 2015

Red Cross;

The Red Cross is noted as a valued initiative and generates great support from offenders and staff. The group continued to be very active throughout the year.

Activities included;

- Adapting to a new environment
- Induction packs for new committals
- Violence reduction workshops
- Aware life skills programme
- Local community interaction

A very successful Christmas party for a local Active Retirement group was organised by the Red Cross group in mid-December. This well attended annual event is proven to be the “place to be” by the invited guests. Great credit is due to all concerned.

Summer Activities/Projects

Physical Education and Exercise;

Once again fitness is regarded as high on the activities of most offenders. With this in mind weekly Pilates, Spinning and Abs-classes as well as two extra gym sessions was available. Hillwalking groups went on day walks in the surrounding mountains, which proved to be very popular.

A history project ran for two weeks in June.

English classes continued for two weeks in June and July.

Wood Sculpture classes continued June and July.

Irish Red Cross programme successfully continued with project work and presentation preparation for a national meeting in Wheatfield.

The Artist James Horan visited Shelton Abbey Prison for a two week period under the Arts Council Artist in Prison Scheme to supervise a stone carving workshop.

Health Care

Two incidents of note that required expert intervention of the medical team this year. One incident involved a suspected overdose and the other an attempted suicide. Both offenders received immediate medical attention and have since recovered. Special praise to Nurse Officer's Dillon and Mulready for their expertise in dealing with the incidents. The Doctors parade continues Monday – Friday mornings and all medical requirements are facilitated through their office. Most offenders are considered suitable to have "In procession medication". The initiative allows suitable offenders (under contract) to retain medication and self-medicate. There is no healthcare staff available during the hours of 8pm – 8am. There is no dedicated Psychologist or Psychiatrist assigned to the centre. A review of the Psychology service did take place during the year which will see an improvement of the current service provision.

Probation Service

The Probation Service continued to deliver a wonderful service to the offenders. The Community Return Scheme (CRS) has been one of the most positive/progressive initiatives witnessed by the committee. The centre is one of the highest providers of candidates for CRS and this is in no part due to the dedicated work of the Probation team. The probation officer is still expected to deliver other services to offenders and is in constant demand.

The committee once again wish to convey their appreciation to Governor Conal Healy and his staff for the professional and dedicated service provided to offenders during their stay in this centre. There has been a remarkable improvement to this facility in the last couple of years and we feel this should be developed further. Other visiting committees have visited the centre during the year and have noted and praised the work being done. With the recent capital investment to enhance the prison estate i.e Mountjoy, Cork and Limerick we feel consideration should now be

given to remove the use of dormitory style accommodation in this centre. We feel single room accommodation best prepares offenders for release. The centre lacks other facilities that might be considered in future capital investment plans i.e Training workshops, Gym hall, Church, enhanced visitor's area.

May I take this opportunity to thank the in-reach services, families, friends and offenders who we have found to be respectful and courteous during our visits. This centre offers a positive environment and a progressive location to best prepare offenders to successfully reintegrate back into society .

Signatures:

Mr Thomas Gregan (Chairperson) _____

Mr Richard Codd. _____

Mr Thomas Healy _____

Mr Anthony Lawlor _____

Ms Marie O' Rourke _____