



Annual Report 2010.

A Chara

Herewith is the Annual Report for the Visiting Committee for Arbour Hill Prison for the year ending December 2010.

The Visiting Committee

The Visiting Committee for Arbour Hill Prison consists of nine members. The members of the Visiting Committee are; Ms Martina Coombes: Chairperson, Ms Angela O'Connor : Vice Chairperson, Mr Philip Cantwell, Ms Wilhelmina Daly, Mr Cathal Finucane, Ms Ita Green, Ms Rita Hayes, Ms Eithne Killeen & Mr Charles O'Connor. The Committee has met every month with at least two members of the Visiting Committee making unannounced visits to the prison monthly. The Visiting Committee also visited the prison before the monthly meetings and has had access to every section to the prison. The Committee has made it a priority to make themselves visible and accessible to the prison population to deal with any issues of concerns of each and every prisoner.

During the course of the monthly meetings the committee met with Governor Dowling who kept them informed of the day to day issues pertaining to the operation of the prison and the welfare of the prisoners contained within Arbour Hill. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governor and staff of Arbour Hill prison for making themselves available to the Committee whenever it was required.

The Visiting Committee has felt it is very important to be aware of other services and prison facilities and has made the effort to visit and develop their knowledge of external agencies who are involved in the provision of services to those who have been in prison . The committee has also visited Limerick Prison and found it very beneficial to compare service provision within the different prisons.

The Director General Mr Brian Purcell met with the Committee during the year and engaged on a number of issues including the contentious issue of staffing and retirements of prison officers, the tagging of prisoners, the building of Thornton Hall, training for the Visiting Committees, and Integrated Sentence Management.

As promised the Prison Service has provided a training manual to all members of the Visiting Committee. This document contains useful points of reference and is in a folder format which we feel can be added to as the need arises.

Findings of Visits

The members of the Visiting Committee visited the prison before the monthly meeting and at least two members of the Committee also visited monthly on unannounced visits. Overall the reports from the visits were complementary about the very high standard of hygiene and the cleanliness throughout every part of the prison. Indeed the kitchen is in receipt of the EMERALD AWARD again this year; this is the highest award available (nationally) in the E.I.Q.A. The welfare of the prisoners is a primary concern of the management and staff in Arbour Hill prison and this was evident in every monthly visit report.

The physical environment of the prison is to a very high standard overall however it was noted by Visiting Committee member's reports that the visiting area would benefit from some minor decorative work. This issue has been raised with local management and will be addressed as a '*project*' during 2011.

Visits

The visiting policy has recently changed in Arbour Hill and visits are facilitated by appointment only : (10-00 Am to 12 Noon + 2-00 PM to 4-00 Pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturdays. There are no visits on Thursdays or Sundays.) . There is a visitor's waiting room where limited play facilities have been provided for children who are awaiting a visit. There is tea/ coffee available here also.

Food

The quality of the food provided to the prisoners is excellent with a number of different needs being met in relation to diet, culture and religion. A twenty eight day menu plan is in operation and the preparation of the food is to the highest standard as is evident by the awards achieved by the catering department:- 2008 EIQA Sapphire award - national winner.

2009 EIQA Emerald award - national winner.

2010 EIQA Emerald award -

national winner.

Prisoner Visits and representations to the Committee

There were a number of prisoners who made representations to the Visiting Committee during the year, each of which were followed through and dealt with accordingly. This is an important function of the Committee and the members of the Committee have made themselves accessible both formally at the monthly meeting and informally during prison visits to deal with any issue presented to them by the prison population.

Workshops and Training

At every visit it was evident that despite the pressure on reducing staff numbers and the increase in the prison population that the work and rehabilitation ethos of the prison prevailed. The emphasis of this prison on productivity, training, rehabilitation and the participation in work or education of every prisoner was apparent. The prison workshops and school were always open and productive at every visit. There are six separate work areas: -

Print. There is a printing facility which prints material for a number of government departments at cost.

Fabric. The fabric workshop produces the bed linen required within the prison service.

Braille. The Braille room transfers books and periodicals into Braille for people who are visually impaired.

Woodwork. The wood workshop makes furniture for a number of charities and for the prison service. The wood workshop facilities were upgraded and provide training and work for the prisoners who are assigned here. Projects this year included:-

- Upgrade cell furniture.
- Refit the prisons surgery area.
- Furniture for Barretstown Castle.
- Furniture for Durrow Castle.
- Furniture for elsewhere in the prisons campus..

Waste management. The Waste Management area is a large area which recycles prison waste (*including electrical waste from other areas in the prisons estate*) and provides valuable training and work for a number of prisoners. The Waste Management facility is one that makes a financial gain and this is fed back to the exchequer.

Kitchen. The Catering Department is managed by prison staff, assisted by a number of prisoners, some of whom are undergoing certified training. It provides valuable training opportunities for the participants. The Industrial Manager in conjunction with the educational department co-ordinates and implements professional qualifications and training accredited by FETAC for successful participants.

Education

The provision of education is one of the rehabilitation tools available within the prison service and provides an important mechanism for reintegration back into society. The Education Department is managed by Dublin City VEC. It provides learning opportunities from Literacy to Degree level and beyond.. The courses available are accredited by the Department of Education and Skills such as the Junior and Leaving Certificate. There are also FETAC and HETAC accredited courses available. A large percentage (86%) of prisoners participates in courses in the Education Department. There is also a well stocked library available for prisoners to study and read for leisure. It should be noted though that despite the prison management's best efforts the library opening times does suffer due to staffing constraint.

Integrated sentence Management

The number of prisoners taking part in the ISM programme has expanded to 130 (approx) This programme is an important one as it is a mechanism for managing a prisoner's sentence and time spent in prison. It assesses prisoners risk and needs and assists in the development of a management programme and goals for the prisoner to utilise best their time in prison and to assist in the reintegration of the prisoner upon release into society. The personnel involved in this process are from departments such as psychology, education, prison management and probation. ISM is particularly important in Arbour Hill Prison as it links with the Building Better Lives Programme. The Committee would like to express its concerns that despite the importance of this programme there is no specific staff or resources allocated to same!

Building Better Lives

The Building Better Lives Programme was launched in 2009. It replaces the Sex Offender Treatment Programme previously available in the prison. The programme is based on a Canadian Model and is empirically proven to be an effective intervention for the profile of the sex offender prisoner. Arbour Hill Prison is currently the centre of excellence for the treatment and rehabilitation of sex offenders. The programme is delivered by the psychology department. There are currently six psychologists involved in the implementation of this therapeutic programme. The number of participants in the BBL is significantly higher than its predecessor with eighty eight (88) prisoners now participating!.

Treatment Programmes and Services Provided

In addition to the BBL programme Arbour Hill provides other treatment modules to assist in developing important life and social skills such as Anger Management, Successful Living, Preparation for Independent Living, Group skills, Thinking Skills and Alternatives to Violence Programmes. The Vincent De Paul, Legion of Mary, A.A., GROW & The Samaritans also provide services.

Reintegration into the Community

It is a concern of the Committee that there is a certain profile of high risk prisoner who upon release into the community does not have a specific dedicated residential facility that they can be referred to. The *Media Circus* around recent high profile releases serves to highlight the urgency for the provision of such a facility, so that reintegration and risk management can be a feasible part of post release support and supervision.

Listeners Programme

There is an important service provided by willing and trained prisoners to their peers. The listeners are trained to listen to concerns, issues, and fears in a confidential setting. They are trained by the Samaritans and provide an important emotional support for fellow prisoners.

Medical & Services

Medical services including a 24 hour medical orderly/ nursing cover, dental care, visiting Psychiatrist/ Psychiatric Nurse, Psychotherapist, Psychologists, Chiropodist, and optical services as required. The Committee note with concern that there are a number of very elderly and feeble prisoners who require constant medical attention and very high medical support.

Special Observation Room

Part of the function of the Visiting Committee is to monitor the use of the Special Observation Room.

It was used on ten occasions during the year.

- 4 For medical observation.
- 3 At own request.
- 2 Suicidal (Self declared).
- 1 For own safety.

One prisoner availed of the *Special Observation Area* on three occasions, seven others for one occasion only. This area is never used in a punitive context.

Deaths whilst in Custody

It is with regret that the Committee notes the death of one prisoner. While the Coroner's inquest is pending all indications are that death was by natural causes.

Suicide

The Committee is pleased to note that there were no suicide attempts this year!

Self injury was confined to just one prisoner (*one incident*) and was of a minor nature.

Complaints Procedure.

Any prisoner can request a complaint form from any member of staff at any time. All complaint forms are numbered and recorded; consequently once a form has been drawn down the '*complaint*' has to be pursued to a conclusion and retained for inspection by the Inspector Of Prisons or other prison authority who might seek to have sight of same.

Probation service

There is a proactive probation service evident in Arbour Hill Prison. They work with prisoners both individually and collectively in the delivery of programmes to challenge their offending behaviour. They assist the prisoners in managing their time in custody encouraging them to participate in education and rehabilitation programmes and in reintegration back into the community. They are involved in family liaison and in the preparation of reports for the Courts, and the Parole Board. They assess the potential risk that individual prisoners may pose to society.

Drug Free prison

The profile of prisoner and the vigilance of management and staff in Arbour Hill prison provides for a drug free prison. Visits are strictly monitored and prisoners are also monitored closely to ensure that there is no drug misuse in prison. Random drug tests are carried out regularly.

Staffing.

Total staff now down to 97 from 114: is a cause for concern; particularly when viewed in context of population increase from 139 to 155! We acknowledge that this scenario has produced sustained and ongoing difficulties for the remaining staff and management.

Chairperson's Address

I would first of all like to acknowledge the work and support of the previous Chairperson Ms Rita Hayes whom I replaced in March 2010. I would also like to thank each and every member of the Visiting Committee for their input, care, visits and participation in the work of the Visiting Committee.

This prison is in our opinion run very effectively. It promotes an important work ethos which is evident in all aspects of the prison environment and population. It is apparent that the relationship

between staff and prisoners although professional is also a caring one. The humane and productive manner of all the management and staff of Arbour Hill has been evident in all the monthly reports delivered by members to the Visiting Committee. The physical environment is maintained to a very high standard and this is evident by the many National awards received by the prison.

The development of the Building Better Lives Programme and the Integrated Sentencing Management Programme are important initiatives not just in Arbour Hill but in the Irish Prison Service and for the community at large. These programmes have been piloted and developed in Arbour Hill and are being expanded to other prisons with the Irish Criminal Justice System. It is no coincidence that these successful and important models are being broadened due to their successful implementation in Arbour Hill

I would like to thank Governor Dowling and his staff who have at all times made themselves available to facilitate us in conducting our visits and duties as outlined by legislation. I would like to particularly thank and acknowledge the contribution of Mr P.J. Mc Andrew who has proven invaluable to our Committee.

This concludes the Arbour Hill Visiting Committee Annual Report for 2011.

Ms Martina Coombes. _____ [Chairman] .

Ms Angela O'Connor. _____ [V/Chair] .

Ms Ita Greene. _____

Ms Eithne Killeen. _____

Ms Rita Hayes _____

Ms Wilhelmena Daly. _____

Mr Philip Cantwell. _____

Mr Cathal Finucane. _____

Mr Charles O'Connor. _____
