

## St. Patrick's Institution Annual Report 2010

We the members of the visiting Committee of St. Patrick's institution are pleased to submit our annual report for 2010 to Mr Dermot Ahern Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The Visiting Committee met monthly in St. Patrick's and also carried out some 48 random unannounced visits during the year. According to submitted written reports the Visiting Committee are satisfied that they found the prison was being run in an efficient, fair, safe, and a humanitarian way. The Committee are satisfied that this is always the case.

As in previous years, we wish to place on record that from our observations in this institution the welfare of the inmates is of primary concern to all staff. We wish to record our thanks and appreciation to the Governor and his staff for the excellent management and running of the Institution.

During 2010 a number of positive developments took place, among the most important being the upgrading of the CCTV observation system. The NIAT, a voluntary Group have set up a self development for sex offenders and are working with inmates in the unit. There has been an encouraging increase in the number of family visits.

A highlight for the Visiting Committee during 2010 was a very enlightening visit to Dochas Prison in the Mountjoy Complex. There are always things to learn on these visits and it is obvious that where there is no protection policy the atmosphere is always more relaxed.

### **Accommodation**

The logistics of managing accommodation in St. Patrick's gets more complicated each year. This is caused by the increased numbers being remanded to the prison and the increased threats of violence from the different factions in the prison. This situation is regularly discussed with the Governor at monthly meetings and the Committee have been assured that the staffs are managing this difficult situation with the safety of all inmates as a priority.

## **Kitchen**

The kitchen in St. Patrick's is operated to the highest standards in hygiene and service. Food continues to be prepared in an efficient manner by a very professional staff and members of the prison population are also employed in the kitchen. Congratulations are due to all concerned on achieving a Q Mark for 2010.

## **Gym**

There are four Gymnasias in St Patrick's. They are well attended by the inmates and are supervised by Prison staff who are NCEF qualified. The Committee continue to ensure the equipment is kept up to date and properly serviced.

## **Staffing**

The committee have a major concern about the level of staffing particularly in the Workshops and Gyms. We are aware that there are competitions for filling these positions taking place at present and hope that all workshops will be back in full operation in the shortest possible time.

## **Education**

The school in St. Patrick's Institution provides a high standard of education and a broad range of services for the inmates. All inmates are afforded opportunities to participate in the educational programme in St. Patrick's Institution. A total of 20 inmates sat the Junior Certificates Examinations in June 2010 while 3 inmates sat the Leaving Certificate Exam. 5 FETAC Modules to Level 4 are offered to the inmates in St. Patrick's.

While the committee report that classes are offered to inmates on Protection, more classes are requested for these inmates. Carpentry, Woodwork, Technology and Technical Graphics classes continue to be offered in the new school. Maths, Literacy, CSPE, Art and History classes are offered to inmates in the Special Unit. The Linkage Soft Skills Modules (covering Preparation for Work, Communication Skills etc.) is up and running successfully. The Visiting Committee in St.

Patrick's Institution continues to encourage and applaud the high standards in education in St. Patrick's.

## **Library**

The Library is made available to inmates at the times the other facilities i.e. workshops and schools are available. The stocking of the Library is of books of interest to the inmates with newspapers and some magazines available. There are also computers available for inmates to work with. The management regularly bring in outside people to demonstrate different unusual topics. This is to create interest in activities that may be of interest to them in the future.

## **Workshops**

See earlier comments on staffing

The following Courses offer qualifications in City and Guilds.

Kitchen – City and Guilds Award Level 1

Painting and Decorating – City and Guilds Award Level 1

Metal Workshop – City and Guilds Award Level 1

Woodwork Shop – City and Guilds Award Level 1

Computer Workshop – Equal skills and E.C.D.L. through the Irish

Computer Society, and City and Guilds Award Level 1 with SQA courses in

- 1) Digital Computing
- 2) Digital Numeracy
- 3) Digital Communications Methods.

The inmates take on many projects. They supply finished products to Make a Wish Foundation, Temple St. Children's Hospital, Scouts, and a number of football teams of inner city children. Some of these workshops would have an average of 10 people participating each day.

There are some issues of staffing due to the financial restrictions at present in place. One workshop had to close temporarily because the Officer in charge had to do prison escort duties. The Committee understands that the Institution is awaiting outcome from a competition for supervisors and hope all vacancies will be filled during 2011. The workshops are very successful and there is a great sense of camaraderie amongst the participants who seem very motivated to succeed in any projects they take on.

## **Visiting Facilities and Screens**

### **Visiting Areas:**

This has long been a contentious issue among inmates. It is two years since the poor installation of the sound system and the security screens. We are happy to report this has finally been rectified. Visitors and inmates can now have a conversation at a normal sound level.

### **The Visiting Centre:**

Visitor Reception: The committee would like to see positive use of this facility to encourage good communication between staff and families of inmates. The first impression for parents' friends and extended family is this visiting centre and the committee are anxious the centre functions in a manner which shows respect for all visitors. It is also important that the visiting centre is kept clean and tidy at all times. With the number of visitors going through the centre there may be problems with some facilities. A system should be devised that allows the visitors to tend to babies so that a safe system is in place for disposal of nappies and other materials.

### **C3:**

This wing continues to cause concern to the committee. It is wrong that prisoners who are put on protection are cell by cell with prisoners who are in that wing as punishment. With the ever increasing number of gangs, the situation is becoming unmanageable. We realise this situation prevails in other prisons also. We urge the IPS to form a manageable, coherent strategy.

## **Special Cells and Sex Offenders**

Due to the nature of their crimes and the constant threat that exists from other inmates it is necessary to keep a small number of inmates separate from the general population of prisoners at all times. Whilst the Committee fully understand the need for prison management to take every precaution in protecting these individuals at all times, each and every prisoner in their care is entitled to the supports available in the

prison. We are concerned about the level of restriction this protection imposes on this small group of prisoners.

We continuously discuss this with the Governor and are aware of the efforts made to ensure these prisoners have similar education and skills development opportunities to all other prisoners. We call on the Department to ensure that management are provided with sufficient resources to meet the rehabilitation needs (education and skills development) of these prisoners.

### **Inmates meeting with the Committee**

The number of prisoners who came to see the Committee this year was 9. At all times the Committee try to make the visitor welcome and at ease, this can be difficult as the Committee usually numbers 9 persons. It can be intimidating for the young inmates but as Committee members visit on their routine visits they meet the inmates in a more informal environment. All discussions during these visits are absolutely confidential and where possible feed back is given to the individual through a Governor as soon as possible certainly within 24 hours.

### **Complaint Forms**

The Complaint forms register is inspected routinely during the year, and relevant notice is taken. There were 44 Complaint forms requested and 19 submitted. The committee will investigate if all complainants are able to complete the form.

### **Special Observation Cells**

The log book which is maintained for the special observation cells was inspected. It is noted that there were 257 entries during the year and that it is a lot of the same people ending up in these cells. The monitoring of the inmates in these cells is of vital importance and the need for proper medical and psychological management is a must. This is a priority for the Committee members as some of the inmates are very vulnerable. We have confidence that the staff share our concerns in this regard.

### **Cleanliness throughout the Prison**

In general the prison is presented in a clean and tidy state. There are however concerns about the state of some of the toilet facilities used by the prisoners. This can be very frustrating for staff as it should be up to the inmates to maintain the toilet areas in a hygienic state. There was a Cleaning Workshop which because of lack of a qualified instructor had ceased functioning. This has now been rectified and the workshop is back in operation with one of its target areas the upkeep of the public toilet

areas. In general though, the Committee are satisfied with the overall standard of cleanliness throughout the prison.

### **Death and Injury**

While there were a few outbreaks of violence during the year when Prison Officers were injured all injured officers returned to work after appropriate care. The Committee are satisfied that all incidents are properly investigated and there has been an increase in the use of closed circuit monitoring units.

### **Challenges for the Committee**

On several occasions during the year the Committee felt that the press coverage of conditions in the prison was unfair. St Patrick's is an old prison and because of this requires more maintenance than a more modern building. In these times of tight monetary controls it can be difficult to manage a budget to meet all the requirements of the prison. The Committee would point out that these prisoners are short term and young and need to be in a facility that encourages rehabilitation and self-respect. The staff endeavours to manage the facility with the resources available.

### **Meetings of Chairpersons of Prison Visiting Committees**

On behalf of the Visiting Committee of St Patrick's, the Chairperson attended a number of meetings of Chairpersons of all the prisons. These meetings are useful as they offer the opportunity to the Chairpersons to compare notes on the activities of the committees as well as discuss policy and responsibilities of committees. One of major developments during 2009 which is ongoing was the development of a manual for Visiting Committees as well as a document setting out a training schedule for new committee members. This has long been requested by new members and we look forward to the completion of this project in 2011.

### **Conclusion**

We were pleased to submit this report and we are confident that St Patrick's continues to be very well managed by a Professional Governor and staff.

We wish to express our thanks for their co-operation to Governor Hughes and Deputy Governor Woods. We give very special thank you to Simon

Walsh our Clerk to the Visiting Committee. His excellent support of the Committee during the year is much appreciated.

The Visiting Committee members are committed to fulfilling our function in full. We believe there is always room for improvement. We are looking in the future to working in close co-operation with the Prison Staff, the inmates, the Irish Prison Service and the Minister for Justice, Equality, and Law Reform

Denis Murphy    Chairperson 2010