

Loughan House

Visiting Committee

Annual Report 2006

(01.12.05 - 30.11.06)

Loughan House Visiting Committee Annual Report 2006

We, the undersigned members of the Loughan House Visiting Committee, have pleasure in presenting this our Annual Report for 2006

The committee held a total of 12 meetings during the year all of which were well attended.

During the year Mr Clifford Kelly , Mr Eddie Feeley , Mrs Rita Delahunty, Mr Eugene Delaney, Mrs Kathleen Richey , Mr Naul Mc Cole , Mr Declan Connolly, Ms Sirena Campbell, Mr Brendan Hughes , Mr Phil Cantwell and Mr Martin Doonan served on the Committee.

One new members Mr Turlough Smith was appointed to the Board in February 2006 and served on the Committee during the remainder of the year.

Mr Phil Cantwell resigned from the Committee during the year for personal reasons as did Ms Sirena Campbell

Mr Clifford Kelly served as Chairperson of the Visiting Committee and Mrs Kathleen Richey as Vice Chairperson.

We had a total of 522 committals from other institutions during the year to the end of November 2006. The Temporary Release programme continues to work well with only a very small percentage of inmates failing to comply with their conditions of release.

44 inmates absconded from Loughan House during the year with most inmates being returned to custody shortly afterwards.

Ms Catherine Comerford served as Governor in Loughan House and Mr James Reilly as Assistant Governor.

Visits.

During the year the committee members visited the house on their unscheduled visits and found all inmates in a good and contented manner. The house and grounds were always in a neat and tidy condition and likewise the kitchen area which received excellent reports when audited, being in pristine condition on each of our inspections.

No annual visit was carried out to any other institution during the year on the instruction of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Education

A new building is under construction to accommodate the education unit and is projected to be completed early in 2007. This new building should facilitate the broadening of services already offered in the education area and provide a more comfortable learning and ergonomically adaptable environment to facilitate the ongoing upgrading of the services and courses on offer .

In the meantime the education unit continues to offer an excellent range of subjects to the inmates from basic literacy skills up to comprehensive third level courses. Such diverse subjects and topics as cookery skills , woodwork and parenting skills are on offer. Inmates continue to attend this unit on an enthusiastic and totally voluntary basis.

In addition inmates attend various courses outside Loughan House whenever the opportunity and demand arises .Such courses as Cookery, ECDL, Computing ,Transportation Management, Sage Accounting , Sculpturing and Organic food production are attended. A mobile cinema has attended Loughan House in addition to post release advisory services from the Dept of Health and the Department of Social Welfare which were well availed of by the inmates and continue to offer a valuable service in providing vital information to inmates to assist them on their release.

The CAIT initiative

This continues to be in use seven days of the week and has a high level of participation from the inmates. Inmates have benefited greatly from this facility and it compliments the activities ongoing in the education area.

Probation and Welfare Service.

During the year this service was curtailed due to the absence of a full time Probation and Welfare Officer for a short period . This was overcome very quickly and there is now a full time Probation and Welfare Officer attached to Loughan House Mr Colin Halligan. A good service is provided with inmates making good use of the service. A pre- release substance abuse programme is run in the institution by this service in conjunction with the Education unit and the Health Service Executive with inmates very willing to participate.

Other programmes run under this service include the Linkage Programme which was in part funded by the Department of Social and Family affairs providing a link between pre release inmates and the various training and employment services in the broader community.

Pre-release Programme

A formal pre-release programme called “New Horizons” is running in Loughan House and this should greatly assist inmates when they are released as it covers all practical aspects of living in the community following release. The topics and skills learned include Safe Pass Certification , Forklift training , Driver Theory Tests , Personal Finance Management and Men's Health . Training under this initiative is delivered in Loughan House where practical and is enthusiastically attended by inmates who find it of great practical relevance and assistance in obtaining a job on their release

External Agencies

The needs of the inmates continues to be attended to by members of Alcoholics Anonymous when they have volunteers available. The Samaritans continue to promote their service within the institution through the provision of informative documentation and the help of the various bodies within the institution itself.

Health Care.

The provision of health care continues to be provided by our two visiting doctors and dental surgeon to a very high standard. Psychiatric and Psychology services are provided whenever the need arises .There is a dentistry on site and this helps greatly with the provision of the dental services

Kitchen

A wide and varied menu is provided on a daily basis to inmates.

During the year an ongoing tutorial is offered to inmates who work in the kitchen area to complete a Primary Course in Food Hygiene. Staff, who work in the kitchen area, have successfully completed a Train the Trainer course to provide training to inmates working in the kitchen on best practices in catering skills.

The kitchen area was renovated during the year to improve on the already high standard achieved in this area , a standard certified by audit from the Food and Safety Authority which awarded the kitchen area a merit in recognition of the standards set and maintained .

Inmates Requests.

During the year four inmates requested to meet with the Committee. All inmates are given the opportunity to speak to the Committee in an unhindered manner. Inmates requests to the committee are dealt with promptly but none complained about their treatment in Loughan House. Inmates expressed a high level of satisfaction with the staff and the facilities provided.

Chaplaincy

The spiritual needs of the inmates are attended to by a visiting chaplain from the local parish. Mass is celebrated on a weekly basis and on all the various feast days during the year.

The chaplain is available to attend to any inmate whenever called upon to do so and is greatly assisted by Sister Ellen Wallace who attends on a regular basis.

The requirements of all inmates of whatever religious persuasion are attended to as required.

An inquest was held into the death of a prisoner who died in Loughan House in 2005. This inquest apportioned no blame to Loughan House for his death which was recorded as being due to pneumonia complicated by other medical conditions existing at the time of death.

A religious service was held in remembrance of inmate and former inmate who died during the year while unlawfully at large from Loughan House.

Maintenance & New Developments.

The members would like to thank the Governor and all her staff for the way they have maintained the buildings and grounds. The general environment of Loughan House was consistent with good residential care and would have greatly contributed to the comfort of its inmates. Construction has begun on a new building offering 61 rooms for accommodation purposes along with a number of communal areas. These rooms will offer single occupant accommodation in line with the policy of the Irish Prison Service.

A new football pitch is under construction and should provide an all weather surface on which inmates can partake in outdoor physical activity on a more frequent basis.

The new building, to accommodate Administration, Visiting Area, and Workshop completed last year has contributed greatly to the comfort of inmates and visitors in addition to the ongoing management of Loughan House.

Environmental Management System

Loughan House's Environmental Management System continues to work well and is contributing greatly to the local environment and raising awareness of environmental matters.

The 'Poly Tunnels' completed and handed over in December 2004 clearing the way for contaminated earth to be recycled in an environmentally efficient manner have now come to the end of this function and are to be used in conjunction with the training services and recycling facility currently under ongoing development in Loughan House. This project, with the involvement of inmates, has educated those involved in the finer aspects of recycling procedures and is running well.

Library

The library service continues to be provided by Cavan County Library. It is a valuable and well run service open three times a week under the care of a dedicated part time Librarian. Inmates make great use of this service.

When the current phase of construction is complete there are plans to move the library to a more spacious environment that would be more centrally located thus affording the library greater prominence and accessibility.

In conclusion, we the Members of the Loughan House Visiting Committee would agree that Loughan House provided a good cost effective service to its residents and continues to review and upgrade the services it provides.. We would like to compliment the Governor and Staff for the commitment and dedication they give to the well being of the inmates in their care. Finally we would like to thank the Governor and all her Staff for the courtesy and co-operation extended to us on all our visits throughout the year.

_____ **Chairperson** _____ Member

_____ **Vice Chairperson** _____ Member

_____ Member _____ Member

.

_____ Member. _____ Member

_____ Member. _____ Member