

TRAINING UNIT.

Annual Report of the Visiting Committee to the Training Unit, Glengarriff Parade, North Circular Road, Dublin 7, for year ended 31 December 2003.

In 2003, a formal meeting was held every calendar month and was very well attended. In conjunction with these meetings, two members visited unannounced each month and inspected the various parts of the building. Reports on these visits were made at the following monthly meeting, and favourable comments were made as to the cleanliness and good order of the Institution.

Throughout 2003, only one offender asked to see the Committee. This was a matter that did not involve the Committee itself as the offender had already made a complaint to the Gardai who thoroughly investigated the matter finding no foundation in fact to it.

A total of 216 offenders were transferred from various Prisons and Institutions to the Training Unit. Overall, they appreciated the trust placed in them making full use of all the facilities available here with reduced supervision from staff compared from other custodial places.

The various training centres, e. g the industrial training workshop, computer and electronic shops were well attended in 2003. Members were impressed with the quality of the workmanship of items fabricated in the metal shop.

The Connect project continued to impact very positively on the offenders here. It has just completed its 5th year here and the Individual Vocational Programme Planning assisted a large number of offenders manage their sentences through setting and achieving vocational goals. 25 participants left the Training Unit to full-time employment or further Vocational Training and Education. This was greatly assisted by agencies such as Fas, Trasnan, Northside Partnership, PACE and other agencies with whom links are maintained. This allowed some of them to commence employment for the first time, and the others to re-commence same and to get used to the work ethic again. It also provided their families with much-needed financial support.

2003 also saw the introduction of the Driver Theory Test to the Connect Project in conjunction with the M. C. S. Workshop. Ten participants were granted temporary release to attend the driver theory test

and all passed the test at the first attempt. This was due to the facility provided by Connect in the computer workshop.

The Industrial Cleaning Course run by two Officers proved to be very popular and successful. An Industrial Cleaning Company interviewed candidates whose was imminent and employed them as members of their workforce.

Trasnan linked up with the Introduction to the Training Unit Programme and offenders benefited from external training courses (i.e. Forklift driving) organised with Connect.

Temporary release to offenders for compassionate leave was granted to most offenders here during 2003. The Committee are pleased to report that such leave was much appreciated by those who received same and was extremely useful in helping them to maintain personal relationships and prepare them for eventual release.

The Training Unit continues to be well maintained. The Committee welcomed the commencement of a water sprinkler system in the event of a fire in every offender' room. This is a valuable contribution to the health and safety of all who serve their sentences here. It is hoped to have the system completed early in 2004. In conjunction with this initiative, all rooms and units will be completely revamped as each area is completed.

Routine maintenance continued as normal with a new Chaplains 'office built at the entrance to the gymnasium. This allowed an offenders' room formally occupied by the Chaplain to be returned to its formal proper use, increasing the capacity here of those in custody.

As the only drug free Prison Institution in the country, the Committee noted that there was always a continuous list of offenders applying to come here, particularly those with a history of drug abuse. This is regarded as a sign that offenders themselves saw the Training Unit as an area that could provide a positive contribution for those who actively seek assistance for personal reformation. The continuous urine analysis testing and the contract signed by all offenders to remain drug free when transferred to the Training Unit gave them the encouragement to maintain their resolve for physical and mental well-being. Members of A. A, N. A., Coolmine Therapeutic Centre, A. V. P., Bond Project, and Cabra Aftercare visited here on a regular basis to give advice, encouragement and support to the offenders.

The medical facilities available are considered to be very satisfactory. Dublin Dental Hospital staff visit twice weekly and a psychiatrist as requested.

The Committee welcome the opening of the new library. This was a facility within the Institution which was badly needed. It is very well stocked and is open nightly for two hours.

The Education Centre again provided a wide range of certification opportunities available for students. The latter sat a total of 161 exams in subjects from both Leaving and Junior Certificates, Open University, Fetac, ECDL and Microsoft office users. These figures show a high level of interest in examination courses which are modular based and which, unlike annual public examinations (Leaving and Junior Certificates) are better suited to the normal pattern of committal and release. In particular, teachers have been developed the range of Fetac courses available. In 2003 a Health and Fitness course at Level 1 was introduced and in 2004 it is envisaged that Foundation courses in Cultural Studies and Public Speaking will be available. During the year a number of educational events were held. Arts Week was again a great success with a full programme which included, a visual arts exhibition which showed the work of our photography and art students , a comprehensive lecture/workshop programme and musical performances by guest performers.

The Public Speaking Finals is an event which in recent years has become a permanent fixture on the school calendar and has gone from strength to strength. Various Dublin City Colleges provide the Education Centre here with an opportunity to link our work with that of the community and remind ourselves and our students that offenders are very much part of that wider community. In 2004 it is planned to hold the CDVEC Sports and Cultural Council Public Speaking Final in the Training Unit.

Two Health and Fitness Weeks were held and proved to be very popular demonstrating the interest among offenders in their physical health and levels of fitness.

The Committee wish to thank Ms. Evelyn White who finished her term early in the year as a member of the Committee and welcome Ms. Geraldine Foster, Ms. Patsy Geraghty and Ms. Mary Kelly as members for the coming years.

Assistant Governor John Sugrue was promoted to Deputy Governor in Wheatfield. The Committee thank him for all his assistance over the past years and wish him well for the future. We also welcome Assistant Governor Eileen Greally to the Training Unit and look forward to working with her in the coming years

In conclusion, the Committee takes this opportunity to extend their appreciation to the Governor, staff and all the Agencies who assist in any way in the smooth running of the Training Unit.

Members of the Training Unit Visiting Committee.

Noel Coade Mr. Noel Coade.

Kathleen Diamond Ms Kathleen Diamond.

Denis Falvey Mr. Denis Falvey.

Geraldine Foster Ms Geraldine Foster.

Patsy Geraghty Ms Patsy Geraghty.

Tras Honan Ms Tras Honan.

Deirdre Keaneally Ms Deirdre Keaneally.

Mary Kelly Ms Mary Kelly.

Aidan Mullally Mr. Aidan Mullally.

Matt Ryan Mr. Matt Ryan.