

Arbour Hill Prison
Visiting Committee
Annual Report 2020



A Chara,

Herewith, is the Annual Report for the Visiting Committee for Arbour Hill Prison for the year ending 31st December 2020.

The Visiting Committee

The following are existing members of the Visiting Committee for 2020.

Billy (William) Ireland
Padraig Mc Garrigle
Pat Holton
Deirdre Kenneally
Rita Hayes
Ian Marder

The visiting committee elected Mr. Billy Ireland as Chairperson.

The Visiting Committee for Arbour Hill held Committee meetings as follows during 2020. In line with Government restrictions, the Chairperson kept in regular touch with the Governor via telephone, and in turn updated the Visiting Committee members via telephone, in months when meetings did not take place.

January	08/01/2020
February	12/02/2020
March	11/03/2020
April	-
May	-
June	11/06/2020
July	08/07/2020
August	12/08/2020
September	09/09/2020
October	-
November	-
December	07/12/2020

In adherence to guidelines and restrictions at least one member of the Committee makes an unannounced visit to the prison each month in addition to the scheduled monthly meeting. In consideration of the Covid-19 restrictions in place across the Irish Prison Service the Committee visited the prison when possible outside of the monthly meetings and had access to every area of the prison. When visiting the prison the Committee has made it a priority to make themselves available to the prison population in order to address any issues arising at the earliest opportunity. Notices were previously clearly placed around the jail informing prisoners of the availability of the Committee.

Arbour Hill Prison:

Arbour Hill Prison is a closed, medium security prison for males aged 19 years and over, serving sentences of more than 2 years. Located in the historical Stoneybatter in Dublin 7 Arbour Hill opened as a civilian prison on the 4th June 1975.

Visiting Committee 'Visits':

Due to the on-going global pandemic visits to the Prison were restricted throughout the year 2020. To ensure the health and safety of Committee members, Staff and prisoners, Committee members' visits to the Prison were not possible during periods of Level 4 and 5 restrictions.

At the regular monthly meeting each 'Visiting Member' reported on their visit during the previous month where visits were possible. Reports from each visit showed satisfaction and a very high standard of care provided to those serving sentence in Arbour Hill. The standard of hygiene and the cleanliness throughout every part of the prison is exemplary shown in the exceptionally low numbers of Covid-19 cases throughout the year.

Prisoner welfare is the primary concern for the management and staff in Arbour Hill Prison and this was evident in visitor reports. The physical environment of the prison is maintained to a very high standard and the cleaning regime is at a high level. Special mention was made of the quality service provided by the prison kitchen, who in addition to serving up high quality meals all year round and also provide up to one hundred and twenty hot meals to the Criminal Court Complex on a daily basis.

Visits to Prisoners:

During 2020 visits from the public and connected bodies were restricted or closed in all establishments across the Irish Prison Service Estate in line with guidelines from IPS Infection Control, the HSE, and Government Covid-19 Restrictions.

During restrictions the 'videolink' system was expanded to include family and professional visits to ensure that Prisoners maintained regular contact with their support networks

When available visits to prisoners at Arbour Hill are facilitated by appointment as follows.

Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday and Saturday (1000 – 1200hrs /1400 - 1600hrs)

There are no visits on Thursdays or Sundays.

In the visitors waiting room there are play facilities for children.

The modern visitor facilities (renovated in 2015) are popular with staff, prisoners & visitors.

Prisoner Visits and representations to the Committee:

Should a prisoner have a complaint he can request to see the Visiting Committee via a request to the Governor.

Every effort has been made to inform the prisoners of this option.

Chaplaincy:

Sr. Mary Hanrahan who was the Chaplain in Arbour Hill Prison stepped down in early 2020. Sr. Mary was always available to prisoners and her work is deeply appreciated by those she interacted with.

Ms Monika Herok is the Chaplain in Arbour Hill Prison in a locum capacity, dividing her time between Arbour Hill and Mountjoy Prison. In the face of this, and in the climate of the pandemic, Ms Herok and the chaplaincy continue to provide invaluable assistance to the prisoners on a wide range of social & personal issues.

Befriender's volunteering to visit those who have no visits are facilitated through the Chaplaincy also when possible.

Workshops and Training

Over the course of 2020 Workshops and Training were kept open as often as possible in consideration of the positive impact these have maintaining the mental health of Prisoners. In the interest of the health and welfare of Prisoners and Staff social distancing was implemented as well as regular and stringent cleaning schedules

Woodwork:

The workshop provides furniture for a number of charities and occasionally for the prison itself. The workshop provides training and work for the prisoners who are assigned here. The standard of training and workmanship in Arbour Hill Prison, in the opinion of the committee, remains very high and reflects well on the ethos of the prison as a whole.

Some of the many projects also include the following:

- Upgrade cell furniture
- Supply furniture for Barrettstown Castle charity
- High Quality Garden Furniture.
- Dolls Houses for Charities.
- Environmental Projects involving various Councils.

The workshop also utilises, as much as possible, used materials that can be recycled.

Fabric:

The fabric workshop produces the bed linen required for all establishments across the Irish Prison Service Estate. Training is provided to prisoners to assist in developing after prison employment opportunities.

Braille:

The Braille room teaches Braille and manufactures books and periodicals into Braille. This is the only workshop of its type in the country and is also the only place in Ireland that repairs Braille Machines. The visiting committee note the expertise and dedication evident here.

Waste Management:

This facility continues to grow and develop and is a highly organised and structured recycling centre that caters for all Dublin Prisons - in addition it takes in electrical waste from many Government Departments. The inmates are trained to a very high standard in conjunction with Health & Safety Laws (WEEE). The facility was a National award winners in waste management. The invaluable experience and training provided has enabled several prisoners to gain employment post release.

Print:

This busy workshop caters to the IPS (Irish Prison Service) in its requests for printed paper and documents. Training is also provided for up to nine prisoners. Training is on modern printing machines which assist in securing post release employment opportunities for prisoners.

Kitchen:

The Catering Department is managed by the prison staff, assisted by a number of prisoners, some of whom are undergoing certified training. The kitchen provides in excess of 450 meals daily and has attained the 'Q' mark. The kitchen provides intensive prisoner training accredited in FETAC.

The performance of the catering area has been recognised by EIQA awards and the visiting committee note that the variety, quality and wholesomeness of the food provided continues to improve and note that satisfaction levels among prisoners remains very high. The catering department is to be commended for its work throughout the pandemic in providing a consistent high level of service throughout the pandemic. Arbour Hill kitchen received a Certificate of Excellence in Food Safety Award 2019 by Cater Care Ltd.

Laundry:

This facility provides laundry of personal and bed clothing of inmates and the handling of inmates' property.

Capital Works:

The visiting committee acknowledge the high standards achieved through continuing improvements to a wide range of facilities within the limitations of Covid-19 regulations and guidelines as well as plans for new outdoor spaces for staff.

Education:

The Education Department is managed by City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb). It provides learning opportunities from Basic Literacy to Degree level and beyond. The courses available are QQI accredited and include both Junior and Leaving Certificates.

The provision of education is one of the rehabilitation tools available within Arbour Hill Prison. As mandated by Government the Education Centre was closed on 12/03/2020. Throughout this difficult period the aim was to maintain contact with students, to provide and maintain education standards which are quality assured, student centred and facilitate lifelong learning.

Distanced learning remained on-going with the delivery of materials facilitated by the Prison. Teachers remained in contact with students and provided for educational needs as much as possible. The Head Teacher was on site as often as possible managing the delivery of services and ensuring that Leaving Certificate and Open University students received supports prior to their assessments as well as organising the Calculated Grades process for our 2020 Leaving Certificate students.

To continue teaching and learning, teachers devised relevant workbooks, exercises, and materials for their students, emailed these resources to the Head Teacher for printing, collation, and distribution by Prison Management in Arbour Hill. The school also organised art supplies, crossword books, jigsaws, quiz books, adult colouring books etc. to be distributed throughout the prison.

The Visiting Committee were impressed with the focus on Arts & Crafts as part of a holistic approach to personal development within the QQI education framework. Painting, Pottery & Stained Glass are just some of the options for the prisoners to engage in.

Several of the art and craft students had their work selected to be shown at a Prison Art Exhibition entitled 'Unlock' in Kilmainham Gaol as part of the EPEA conference in June 2019. This exhibition was on show in the Dunamais Arts Centre in Portlaoise from 10th January until 28th February 2020.

Following completion of Covid 19 risk assessments the Education Centre was allowed to re-open in late August 2020 for the new academic year 2020/2021 with new guidelines in place to safeguard against Covid 19. The regular Christmas events: Bingo, Quiz, Charity walk, Drama, Concert and Presentation of Certificates took place in the PE hall with all the covid protocols in place.

Library:

The library is available for prisoners to study and read for leisure. The library is operated by the prisoners and offers a wide range of reading & study materials.

The visiting committee note the pride that the prisoners have in maintaining this facility to the highest standards possible.

Building Better Lives:

The Build Better Lives programme, launched in 2009, replaced the original 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 and continues to operate via video call.

The BBL programme comprises three components:

- Exploring Better Lives (EBL)
- Practising Better Lives (PBL)
- Maintaining Better Lives (MBL)

There continues to be an ongoing waiting list for prisoners to engage in the Psychology services, the visiting committee would like to see every effort made to reduce this waiting list and all prisoners would have access to vital services.

Other Treatment Programmes and Services Provided:

In addition to the BBL programme, Arbour Hill prison has provided other treatment modules throughout 2020 to assist prisoners in developing important life and social skills.

- Pre-Release programme
- Anger Management programme
- One of One anger management
- Psychology Service
- Probation Service
- Psychiatric Service
- Alcoholics Anon.
- Gambler Anon.
- G.R.O.W.
- Listeners Programme
- Pre Release Case Conference

External in-reach Services Arbour Hill Prison 2020

External in-reach services were limited in 2020. The Committee is pleased to acknowledge the plans to extend videocall facilities within the Prison for greater access to external in-reach Services.

Samaritans	Toe to Toe
AA	Relate
HSE CWO	GROW
Trail Housing Services	Psychotherapist
Chiropodist	Bereavement Support Group
Church of Ireland Ministry	Dentist
Crosscare (Housing)	Vision Express
Gambling Anonymous	HSE Comm. Occupational Therapist
Prayer Group	HSE Comm. Speech Therapist
St. Vincent de Paul	CMH in Reach
Linkage (Production Services)	FCPN / CMH
Agency Nurses	

Listeners Programme

The popular programme provides a valuable service, where trained prisoners (listeners) listen to concerns, issues and fears in a confidential setting. Training is provided by the Samaritans. The service provides an important emotional support for fellow prisoners. The committee feel this service is a contributory factor in the low level of self-injury at the prison. The programme is of excellent benefit to those in receipt of the service.

Medical & Services:

Arbour Hill currently has seven nurses (including Chief Nurse Officer) and also a locum Doctor who attends the prison three days per week. It remains a concern to the visiting committee that if a prisoner requires medical attention at the weekend, they have to be brought to the local hospital Accident & Emergency department.

The committee notes that the age profile of a quantity of the inmates requires that they require a high level of medical supervision and support. Several persons of age availed of cocooning over the course of the pandemic but due to the continuous low numbers this was not totally restricting on their day to day routines. The prison population falls within the vulnerable category and as such the IPS has begun a programme to ensure its population is/has access to vaccination.

Arbour Hill prison implements the legislation with regard to the smoking policy. Where it is only permitted in either the prisoner's own cell or the external recreation area. Smoking is not permitted in common areas; every effort is made to assist those offenders who wish to give up smoking.

Complaints Procedure:

Any prisoner can request a complaint form from any staff member 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 access. The complaints procedure and forms introduced in 2014 that introduced categories A – F appear to continue to work well.

Drug Free Prison:

Arbour Hill prison remains fully committed to ensuring that the prison remains 'drug free'. All prisoners are fully aware that they are expected to be 100% drug free and access to the prisons facilities and services are dependent on this. Random drug testing is part of the day to day routine at the prison.

Probation Services:

All new committals are interviewed within 3 working days of arrival to Arbour Hill Prison. The Probation Service facilities group work, anger management and group thinking services. The service complete Parole Board, Repatriation, Court and prisoner reports.

The prison is very fortunate to have the service of a very active and dedicated probation team consisting of two equivalent full time Probation Officers and one Senior Probation Officer. They work with the prisoners both individually and collectively in addressing a broad range of issues.

The Probation services actively encourage prisoners to participate in education and rehabilitation programmes and provides support in reintegrating them back into the community. They also assess the potential risk that individual prisoners may pose to society and are also involved in court imposed supervision, sometimes for many years post release.

Integrated Sentence Management (ISM):

It is unfortunate that following a case of Covid-19 the Arbour Hill ISM has remained absent. The ISM is an invaluable resource to the prisoners in residence at all stages of their sentence. Majority of the duties of the ISM have been taken up by internal supports such as the Probation Unit and the General Office. This has ensured that there is the least disruption possible to services.

SUMMARY:

Throughout 2020 Arbour Hill prison has remained fully committed to promoting an ethos of constructive support. The relationship between staff and prisoners is at a very professional but humane level.

The ongoing implementation of the full range of programmes like ‘Building Better Lives’ and ‘Sentencing Management’ provide important initiatives not just within Arbour Hill Prison but the Irish Prison Service generally and for the wider community at large, as they positively contribute to reintegration and risk management in the post release scenario.

The challenges brought about by this once in a century global health crisis have been faced with courage and kindness. The unmitigated professionalism with a focus on maintaining the culture of support and care demonstrated by staff across the Prison is commendable. Arbour Hill had no recorded cases of Covid-19 in 2020, this demonstrates the seriousness in which management treated the pandemic and how widely guidelines were accepted and implemented.

Appreciation:

We wish to thank the Governor Desmond O Shea who has taken position in Arbour Hill Prison and look forward to working together in the coming year. We would like to acknowledge and thank Governor Raphael O Keeffe for his work during his time in Arbour Hill. We would also wish to thank the Assistant Governor Joseph Hernon, the Secretary to the committee and all the staff for their co-operation and assistance and for their willingness and commitment to create and sustain a humane and caring regime within the prison.

A special note must be made to the full cohort of Arbour Hill Staff, in what was a most difficult year the staff have upheld the high standard of care we have known them for. We wish the best of health to all those who have been affected by Covid-19.

This concludes the Arbour Hill Visiting Committee Annual Report for 2020

Signed: Billy Ireland Billy (William) Ireland
Chairperson

Signed: Padraig Mc Garrigle Padraig Mc Garrigle

Signed: Pat Holton Pat Holton

Signed: Deirdre Kenneally Deirdre Kenneally

Signed: _____ Ian Marder

Signed: Rita Hayes Rita Hayes

