



CORK PRISON VISITING
COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
2020



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Introduction

The pandemic of Covid 19 presented everyone with extraordinary challenges during 2020. From inside and outside the prison in almost every aspect, people's lives were changed dramatically.

Cork prison has adjusted the way of managing things due to the pandemic and prisoners have settled into their new routines well as they appreciate the necessity to do so.

The Governor made us aware of the efforts made to ensure prisoners safe care and that their rights were respected at all times. The regular circulation of information to prisoners, the facilitation of increased video and phone contacts (also in cell phones) with families, which is vital to the wellbeing and psychological health of the prisoners is particularly welcome. The ongoing availability of services including medical, psychological, chaplaincy, education along with access to the gyms/yards and extra TV services is very important during this crisis.

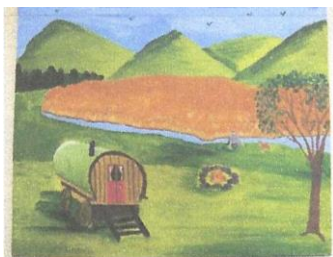
They have so far done an extraordinary job in keeping prisoners safe, the Covid 19 out of Cork Prison and providing safe care for all in Cork.

Unfortunately Covid 19 restricted our visits to the prison during 2020 but any request to meet with a prisoner was met and following discussions with the Governor all were brought to a satisfactory conclusion. During our visits members of the Visiting Committee were very impressed with the protective measures in place and also complimented on the cleanliness of the prison. During the lockdowns we were in regular contact with the Governor and assistant Governors and we were always available to meet with a prisoner if required.

Also we would like to acknowledge that Prison officers are front line workers who do an exceptional job in caring for offenders that many agencies in society have failed. Prison is a catch all situation that deal with minor recidivists to gangland leaders and all areas in between. Their work is rarely recognised as it goes on quietly behind closed walls. On our visits to Cork Prison in 2020 when Government guidelines permitted to do so, one could not but be impressed with the calmness and the positive relationship between prisoners and staff. Cork prison provide a variety of services to meet the multiple needs of offenders as we have previously outlined in the areas of Health, education, welfare, addiction counselling just to mention a few.

Nearly all activities for prisoners were curtailed by the pandemic and this meant that workshops were underused during the past year. However prisoners were employed in the Laundry, industrial Cleaning, and Waste Management and in Kitchen Work/Training. The school was also functioning and every effort was made to have as much normality as possible.

Work produced in the Education Unit in Cork Prison 2020



The year 2020 got off to great start and promised to be a productive year, offering new courses with both UCC and CIT/MTU in addition to our normal QQI, Leaving Cert and Open University.

In 2020, seventy-one QQI modules were completed between levels two and five.

Eight students took part in the Inside Out programme with UCC, studying a second/third year BA Criminology module.

The class was made up of both 'outside students' from the Department of Sociology & Criminology at University College Cork (UCC) and 'inside students' from Cork Prison, studying together in the same classroom in the Education Unit. All eight students in the Education Unit received certificates of which four were certificates of excellence.

The first Nalaxone meeting was facilitated by Frances Russell, Post Release coordinator.

Eight students began a Special purpose award in practical culinary skills module with CIT now MTU (Munster Technological University). Two received certification.

First Nalaxone training with students took place.

Five students in the prison successfully completed their peer mediation external assessment. Students and staff designed their own logo to identify those qualified as mediators.

Pieces of students artwork was displayed in Department of Justice buildings on St Stephen's Green.

Materials, including art packs and craft kits were ordered and delivered to support students during lockdown. Resources were also created in all subject areas which were printed and delivered to students.

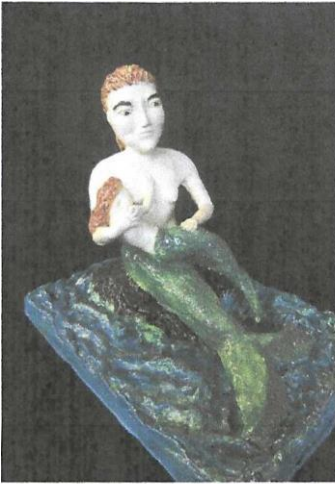
Four students completed the Leaving Cert in Math's, Physics and English,

A student from the Education Unit won second prize in both the short story and poetry intermediate competition.

Two students received certification in the Mental Health course with UCC



Work produced by students



Six students completed QQI modules as part of the Community Coaching Programme

Five students are enrolled with Open University. Students are studying courses in Science, Arts and Languages

Art and craft work from the Education Unit was used to illustrate stories in this year's Hollybough magazine, see examples left.

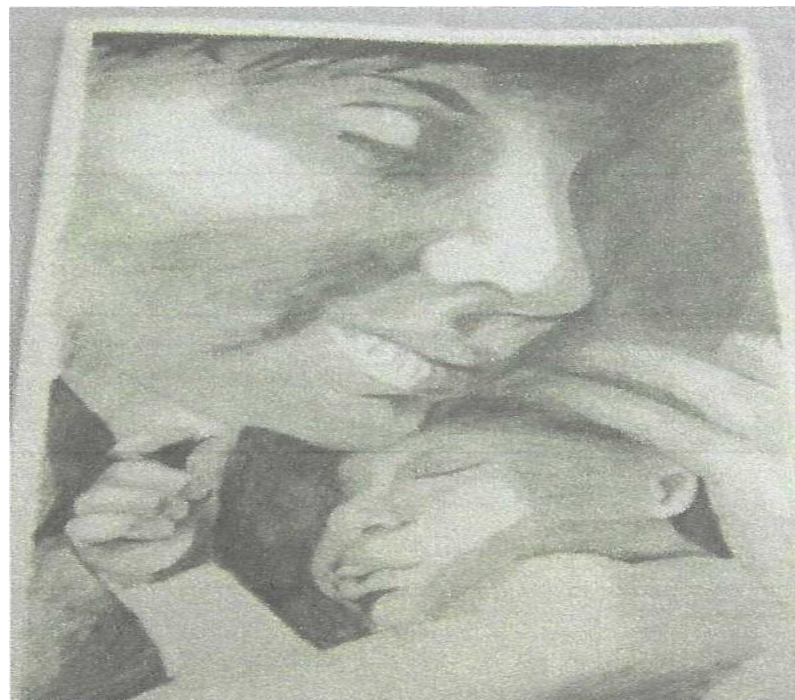
Dillon's Cross Project



The Dillon's Cross Project won a National Aontas Star Award in the Social Inclusion category.

Students in the Dillon's Cross Project continued to complete work during the different lockdowns using a blended learning approach.

Cork Citizen's Information Centre and Cork Sexual Health Centre continued to offer information and support to the project.



Industrial Area 2020

Report from Sean Nason Chief Officer (Work and Training) Cork Prison Kitchen/Training.

The kitchen/Training Kitchen employs up to 20 prisoners per day. In 2020 as a result of Covid19, City and Guilds accreditation training which had been started in February had to be postponed. A plan is in place to start this training as soon as Covid-19 restrictions are lowered. In January a third level Cookery accreditation through a partnership with Cork Institute of Technology and education department began in the prison. Seven of the students involved were workers from the kitchen and Training Kitchen whom completed some of these specific modules. As part of the course the students were to cook and run a pop up restaurant in the prison. This evening was planned to give the students the opportunity to present their skills to restaurant owners in the Cork, Waterford and Kerry areas. However due to the current pandemic this had to be cancelled.

One kitchen worker who completed this course has now gone onto the next level with Munster Technical University and has attained placement in a Michelin star restaurant in West Cork.

Hurley / Joinery workshop

This has been a very disappointing year for the Hurley workshop, due to covid-19 restrictions throughout the year and the high level of staff redeployments during lesser restriction periods. The Hurley shop has through the dedication of the W.T.O. and the prisoners continued to provide a valuable service to the G.A.A. Club's in the community when opened for a short period during the summer. Covid-19 and Redeployments have had huge impact in this shop in 2020. Notwithstanding closures there has been a number of projects carried out this year again for local charities such as Summer Garden Benches with wheelchair access for Cope and a lot of credit is due to Mr. Dineen and his team of workers. The WTO has been redeployed currently to Covid cleaning role.

Computer / print workshop

This has been a very disappointing year for the Computer print workshop, due to covid-19 restrictions throughout the year and the high level of staff redeployments during lesser restriction periods. This workshop has been closed over 90% of the time and the WTO has been redeployed to a Covid cleaning role.

Fabric Workshop

This has been a very disappointing year for the Fabric workshop, due to covid-19 restrictions throughout the year and the high level of staff redeployments during lesser restriction periods. This workshop has been closed over 90% of the time and the staff member has been redeployed to another role at present.

Light Maintenance

This has been a very disappointing year for the Light maintenance workshop due to covid-19 restrictions throughout the year and the high level of staff redeployments during lesser restriction periods. A new WTO has been assigned to this post but is currently redeployed to a Covid cleaning role.

Laundry

The Laundry is working well, with usually around 12 prisoners working there daily. The Laundry had a very busy year, with the Laundry has being certified again to carry out training under the Guild of Cleaners and Launderers Certificate scheme. The two W.T.O's have provided Certified accredited Laundry Guild Training to prisoners in their shop. This year has seen 25 module Certs attained in the shop, this certification provides opportunities for the prisoners on release in the hospitality and health sectors where laundry services are required. The increased cleaning within the prison and contaminated laundry associated with Covid isolation prisoners has brought many challenges which has been faced head on by the 2 WTO's and their team of workers.

Industrial Cleaning workshop

This post is manned by 2 WTO's, on a back to back basis. They provide training, work and support for up to 18 prisoners 7 days a week.

The cleaners continue to train in the use of the auto dilution system. The cleaners have learned so much from the use of this dilution system, regarding dilution rates, chemical hazards and the environmental, physical and biological factors impacting chemical use. The continued use of the one dip mopping system which helps minimise people's exposure to infection and disease, this has not only assisted a vital infectious control policy but helped provide awareness around the value and importance of good hygiene in the prison community.

Industrial cleaning has become one of the most active work areas in the Prison with up the two additional WTO's from other Work and Training streams attached most days. These WTO'S direct cleaning parties throughout the prison ensuring that all areas are cleaned daily. They also provide guidance and assistance under the guidance of the WTO industrial cleaning to Covid cleaners who clean all common touch items such as door flaps, door handles and railings which are cleaned and sanitised continuously.

There has been a huge buy in from prisoners working in industrial cleaning and the general prisoner population in keeping the prison community environment clean and safe which has up to now, helped keep Cork Prison Covid free.

Horticulture workshop

This is a wonderful new facility, at the back of the prison. There is a poly-tunnel, raised beds, a glasshouse, and a work shed / potting shed. We are hopeful that this may be opened in 2021. We are waiting to have the staff assigned to this post, to use this excellent facility.

Integrated Sentence Management (ISM)

The two ISM. Staff moved onto different roles within the organisation in 2020. One new ISM officer has been now taken up one vacancy. The Community Returns Scheme (CRS), and the Community Support Scheme (CSS) are both going very well, both schemes have been very busy this year. This has been exacerbated as a result of high turnover in the prison and reduced capacity as a result of Covid restrictions and isolations. The ISM has also played a big part in the community coaching course and with the C.I.T. third level cooking course. The ISM has been very much involved as a liaison coordinator as part of the ISM role for the students involved. The heavy workload has been very challenging for the ISM and this has been recognised by the IPS and they hope to have a new structure in place in quarter one in 2021.

Waste Management

This workshop has again been very successful in reducing our waste in 2020, and we have again incrementally increased the amount of recycling here in the prison. This means lower bills, and a saving to the state for waste management expenses. This also has a positive impact on the environment. We are continuously over 65% recycled waste each month. This is a consistent high rate, thanks to the dedication of the WTO and prisoners involved. Due to Covid-19 there has been a huge increase in clinical waste in the prison which has been a big challenge for waste management but the Work Training Officer and his team have rose to this challenge. Waste Management prisoner accreditation training packages are now in the process of tender with IPS and we are hoping this can be put in place in 2021.

Industrial Skills /Craft workshop

This is on the same floor as the other workshops, it consists of a picture framing and engraving workshop. The new W.T.O. who operates this shop has just returned from long term leave and the shop as a result of Covid restrictions remains closed at present.

Other Training

Covid-19 restrictions and tight resources have resulted in workshop closures but we are still committed to equipping as many prisoners as possible leaving prison with some essential courses.

These are:

Manual Handling

Primary Food Hygiene

Community coaching

CIT catering course

WTO Gaine delivers Manual Handling training, to all work and training areas and 30 prisoners completed this training in 2020. A.C.O. Karen Whelan is now a trained food hygiene instructor and has been providing accredited training to prisoners and staff working in the catering areas. Colm Carey organises the other courses and this process is liaised with the I.S.M. Officers as part of the prisoner's sentence management plan. The goal of this is to give the prisoners a better chance to find employment on release, the above named Certificates assist with this process.

2020 has been a challenging year for the work and training areas with Covid-19 restrictions and redeployments as mentioned. Huge credit is due to the staff working in these areas for their continued dedication and resource management to provide quality training and vital constructive activities under challenging circumstances where possible.

C.O. Sean Nason

Report from the Chaplin of Cork Prison- Rev Fr. Ray Riordan

As Chaplain of Cork Prison, I Father Ray wish to acknowledge the work the visiting committee do for the inmates of Cork Prison. The visiting committee would normally visit the prison every couple of weeks. They would meet the inmates and listen to them with honesty, compassion and empathy and refer any issues encountered to Prison management.

As for myself, the inmates would tell me how good the visiting committee are to them, and the committee take everything on Board - looking at the prisoners' problems both inside and outside the prison.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Visiting Committee have been restricted as to what they can do, however they made it known to the prisoners that they were still available to speak over video call etc. and made themselves available at all times.

As Chaplin I think the Visiting Committee are a great benefit to the Prison service, they are a very balanced group of men who make no judgment of inmates, but always stand up for them and defend their rights.

I also wish to acknowledge the relationship that they have with the Governor, Chief and staff. The relationship that has been built up over the years has a pure professional work ethic. It is a blessing for Cork prison to have visiting committee within the prison and I hope this will never be lost. All I can say is to keep up the good work in Cork prison.

Fr Ray Riordan

The Cork Alliance Centre was established in 2003 with the support of the Probation Service. The Centre works with both men and women on release from prison. It seeks to facilitate the process of personal recovery and empowerment with the overarching view of desistance from crime. As people seek to become better equipped to manage their lives more positively. The service is based in the community with in-reach work in the prisons. The Centre's core funding is from the Department of Justice through the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service.

The work of the Cork Alliance Centre is directed towards facilitating service users to become generally better equipped to manage their lives positively. 'To desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves', therein the importance of self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-respect and self-determination cannot be underestimated. Facilitating service users as they restore their positive 'connections' with their family, friends, community, society and most importantly with themselves is fundamental to the work of the Cork Alliance Centre.

Those who access the service of the Cork Alliance Centre choose to do so voluntarily. The work of the Cork Alliance Centre is grounded in a shared-caring approach, where with the agreement of the service users, support and assistance is garnered from state, semi-state and voluntary organisations and their representatives. The Cork Alliance Centre manages two programmes with both the Probation Service and the Prison Service (<http://www.corkalliancecentre.com/programmes>).

The significant challenges to the work of the Cork Alliance Centre relate specifically to the high proportion of people in custody who are homeless, together with the challenges of working with people in addiction and with poor mental health when there are insufficient residential resources in the community to support them.

2020 presented the additional challenges related to COVID-19 which included not having access into the prisons for over three-quarters of the year and having to work remotely from March to June, when our model is one-to-one direct in-person support. Within the confines of this, the programmes were creatively adapted by the staff to continue the ongoing support for people released from prison,

offering a more intensive phone/online support to address and respond to each of the presenting needs of the people using our service. The strength of the Cork Alliance Centre is in its staff, and their commitment and dedication to the work was proven again in 2020. Their responsiveness to the needs of people accessing our services was demonstrated by the ongoing work throughout the year, in the contact and supports maintained and in the consistency of support offered and availed of. In addition, all psychotherapy support were maintained by phone/online throughout 2020 too, with a 93% attendance rate. All health and safety protocols were adapted and operated in the ever-changing work environment and our team was back in the office and in direct in-person contact in June 2020. All IPS health and safety standards were met, in preparation for a return to the in-prison, in-person, and components of the project.

The Desistance and Integration Support Programme is open to all people from Cork who have been in prison. Together with supporting people to address their offending behaviour, the team work to support people as they seek to build constructive and connected lives. The support is on a one-to-one basis, as personal plans are developed, realised and built upon. As the Centre works with a service user on all aspects of their life, a better 'wrap around' service is provided, linking in where appropriate with other agencies and departments in a more joined up service.

Referrals are taken from all prisons in Ireland and overseas, together with community and self-referrals.

The services offered include:

Support and motivation work where among other areas offending behaviours, thinking skills, coping mechanisms, socialisation skills etc. can be addressed Supporting access to voluntary and state organisation to source and secure accommodation,

- Supporting access to secure financial supports,
- Supporting access to source, secure and sustain trainings, education and literacy supports,
- Supporting access to source, secure and sustain employment schemes and employers,
- Supporting access to addiction treatment programmes and services,
- Supporting access to professional counselling and acupuncture,
- Supporting access to parenting and family programmes,
- Highlighting emerging trends and developments among our service users and wider community.

Desistance and Integration Support Programme Annual Statistics

Status	Total		Gender	
Active	77	44%	male	92%
Successful Completion	30	18%	female	8%
Discontinued	68	38%	Total	
	<u>175</u>			

Referral Agency	Total		Primary Needs	
Probation Service	37	21%	addiction	64%
IPS (incl. CSS)	62	35%	addiction & mental health	16%
IASIO	7	4%	mental health	5%
LDTF/Homeless Services	10	6%	reintegration	15%
Self	59	34%		
	<u>175</u>			

The Community Support Scheme is run in conjunction with the Irish Prison Service, and offers prisoners serving sentences between 3-12 months the opportunity to serve part of their sentence in the community rather than in the prison. This constructive community based alternative to imprisonment is a means of positive sentence management offering a chance for change for the prisoner in an effort to break the cycle of repeated short-term imprisonments. The opportunity to serve a sentence in the community rather than in prison is a short-term practical intervention linking those availing of this early (temporary) release programme to services and service providers within their home locality, as a means to improve the person's chances of sustaining life outside of prison. The Cork Alliance Centre operates the programme in Cork, Portlaoise and the Midlands prison.

Community Support Scheme Annual Statistics

Referring Prison	2020	Status	2020	
Cork	225	On Temporary Release	24	8%
Midlands	68	Completed	142	76%
Portlaoise	16	TR Non-Completion	20	11%
Limerick	7	Released under CSS	186	
Wheatfield	1	Referred to other CSS	9	
	<hr/>	Not Suitable/transferred	101	
Gender	<hr/> <hr/>	Ongoing	21	
Men	312		<hr/> 317	
Women	5		<hr/> <hr/>	
	<hr/>			
	317			
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Maruna S (2001) *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*, American Psychological Association Books: Washington DC, p7

General Comments

We met with Fr Ray the prison Chaplin during the year and he continues to provide support and counselling to prisoners along with pastoral and spiritual care.

A number of prisoners took part in the Listeners Programme which 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 and is of tremendous benefit to those in receipt of the service.

Indeed we were delighted to be represented by Dermot at the presentation of certificates to those that had completed the course.

A number of issues that did arise during the early part of the year was that of overcrowding whereby some prisoners had to sleep on cell floors. Also serious concern was expressed about the lack of facilities for prisoners with severe mental illness that would require treatment in a secure setting.

While the role of Prison is to provide a safe and, secure and humane environment and help for offenders to work towards a law-abiding lives and refer them on release where appropriate to employment, training or education or to the relevant professionals or to the many ancillary agencies working within and outside the Prison. While all the necessary support services are put in place for prisoners on release from Cork Prison.

Prisoners on release can be dealing with several agencies at the same time. It is our view that there should be a Network where those agencies meet on a regular basis and share appropriate information in the interest of the offender. Prisoners may not have the skills or patience to work through a quagmire of bureaucracy on release and may return to their old ways. Our view is that some Prison releases can happen at short notice, and it is our view that that the rehabilitation agencies should be in a position to respond to this and work together in a seamless continuum of care. These agencies should develop a relationship with the Prisoner while in Prison and his family in the Community in preparation for release.

Past research has shown that over 70% of offenders in custody have a history of drug and alcohol addiction, many more with mental health, literacy issues along with homeless, along with personal and domestic issues. Clearly these people will need a lot of support on release

All the excellent work done with offenders in Prison will count for little or reach its full potential if there is not a policy driven aftercare plan in place run by people who have the authority to implement it.

Some excellent work and initiatives have been developed by Governor O'Brien, The Education Unit, and other groups within the Prison, but we believe that this can be enhanced further and developed with the appropriate structures in place.

Conclusion

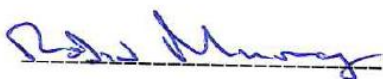
We also welcomed two new members to the Cork Visiting Committee in 2020 Patricia Sheehan and Michael O Mahony and we are delighted to have them on board.

Our thanks to Governors O'Brien, Spacey and Dawson who along with the three Chiefs Manley, Woods and Curtis, ACO's and all the prison staff for their help and support during what has been a very challenging year for all in 2020.

Thanks to all those individuals and agencies who contributed to this report, which shows the wide range of services available to prisoners in Cork Prison and in the Community.

Once again thanks very much to our Visiting Committee secretary Pauline Mulholland for her help and ongoing support during the year.

To my fellow Committee members Dermot O'Connell Vice-Chairman, Anthony Donnelly, Jerry O'Sullivan, Patricia Sheehan, Tomas Ryan and Michael O Mahony thank you very much for your dedication and commitment during the year.



Robin Murray

Chairperson.
