



Loughan House Prison
Visiting Committee
Annual Report 2020

Introduction

- An open, low security prison for males aged 18 years and over who are regarded as requiring lower levels of security.
- Capacity of 140 Prisoners
- One of only Two open centres in Ireland
- Strong focus on re-integration back into society.

The Visiting committee for Loughan House in 2020 was as follows:

Mr. Andrew Cullen (Chairperson)

Mr. Michael Smith

Mr. Padraig Conneely

Mr. John Gibbons (Appointed April 2020)

Committee meetings and unannounced visits were curtailed at certain times throughout 2020 due to Covid. However we maintained contact with the prison throughout restrictions.

The staff and prisoners are to be commended for keeping Loughan House Covid free for the entirety of 2020. Whilst the operating model of the open centre had to be greatly changed to enhance infection control measures, as much as possible remained the same for the prisoners. The understandable restrictions on visits had a negative effect on prisoners, all work/training activity on site was able to keep operating.

We will now set out the main areas of our inspections and any comments we may have.

Prisoner Accommodation

The accommodation here in Loughan House remains of a high standard. Last year we highlighted the fact that Loughan House should be single cell occupancy only. Covid restrictions meant the practice of doubling up was stopped. We welcome this although it does mean that the occupancy level drops. Single occupancy allows for privacy for the individual and has now been proven to be effective in terms of infection control.

Family Visits

Visits were suspended and re-introduced on a phased basis in line with IPS policy. Video call facilities were introduced by the IPS in April in response to visit restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. They provided a valuable link to the outside for prisoners to their families at home.

Catering Department

The prison kitchen maintained its usual high standard throughout 2020. There were additional infection control measures introduced to limit the number of people working in the area at the one time and additional hygiene measures were also introduced to enhance hygiene of cutlery & crockery. Communal dining was effected and the numbers permitted in the dining hall was curtailed due to social distancing requirements. We were also informed that appropriate systems were in place for dining in the event of an outbreak.

Education Department

The education department here was severely impacted similar to schools in the community. The school was opened & closed in line with public health advice. The head teacher maintained contact with the students who were partaking in courses and provided remote learning material throughout the closures. When the restrictions allowed, the school implemented infection control measures. The impact of social distancing unfortunately meant that the capacity of the school suffered.

Library

As the Library is located in an accommodation block, unfortunately the library could not operate with the librarian on site. The prisoners themselves done an excellent job in running the library in the absence of the librarian.

Addiction & Counselling Services

Face to face sessions were suspended due to Covid restrictions. However the counselling staff made themselves available via a telephone based service. Coupled with the fact that prisoners here are permitted their own mobile phone, this meant that the MQI addiction team remained fully accessible throughout the year.

Healthcare

The surgery in Loughan House is staffed 7 days a week with a visiting G.P. visiting throughout the week. A dentist also visits monthly. Both these surgeries are fit for purpose. Prisoners are complimentary of the healthcare afforded to them.

There is only currently daytime medical cover here, which given the prisons remote location and distance from the nearest hospitals we again would like to raise this as a concern in the event of a night time emergency.

Probation Service

Loughan House is supported by a full time probation officer and a senior probation officer. The full time position was vacant for some time but was filled in February. Covid restrictions had an impact on face-face interactions but these were again mitigated by a telephone service.

Community Return Scheme

The Community Return Scheme continued to be a success. 90 Prisoners were released from Loughan House in 2020 under this scheme. 2 prisoners were also released under the Community Support Scheme.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Loughan House provides an ideal environment for life sentence prisoners to be re-integrated back into society. Working closely with other state agencies and NGO's 4 life sentence prisoners were successfully released back into the community in 2020.

Programmes of Temporary Release

One of the many benefits for prisoners in being in Loughan House is the option to avail of approved programmes of Temporary release if they meet the criteria. These releases range from a single day to anything up to 7 days for Christmas are a vitally important part re-socialisation back in the community. It also incentivises these

prisoners to behave responsibly and gives them something to aim for other than a release date.

Programmes of Temporary release operated until March of 2020. Unfortunately Temporary release programmes were not operationally feasible due to the restrictions in place as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However as restrictions eased later in the year, a number of prisoners (Prisoners with suitable Parole Board Recommendations) were afforded periods of temporary release.

Chaplaincy

Loughan House is served by a part time chaplain with the support of the local parish priest. They cater for all faiths and none. They also provide a support to prisoners that perhaps they might not feel comfortable discussing with other staff. A valuable asset in an environment such as this. Mass was celebrated when restrictions levels permitted. The Chaplain also operated a telephone system which again was very successful.

Prison Grounds

It is again worth noting the pleasant nature and high standard to which the grounds of Loughan House are kept. The supervising staff and prisoners who work on the grounds are to be complimented for their efforts. The high standard coupled together with the unique geographic location where Loughan House is situated makes for a relaxed environment for staff and prisoners. It's also a delight for visiting families to come to us a beautiful location as opposed to the closed prison environment.

Integrated Sentence Management

A work training officer works full time in this role. From committal to discharge, this officer works with the prisoners to address their issues and support them through their time in custody and ensure they have the best possible chance of success upon release.

Gaisce – The President’s Award

Work towards these awards continued throughout 2020. This scheme is very popular amounts the Loughan House population. 7 Prisoners were in receipt of a bronze award, 3 received a silver award. One of the silver award recipients is also now working towards a gold award.

Irish Prison Service – Innovation & Excellence Awards

We were delighted with the continuing efforts made by staff & prisoners in Loughan House. A number of staff will receive local awards from the Governor for their efforts in 2020. The community outreach scheme proved to be a tremendous success. Attached to the rear of this report, you will find a PowerPoint presentation, detailing some of the efforts made by the staff which had a regional impact during the pandemic. They have been put forward by the IPS for a National Civil Service Award.

Conclusion

In summary we would like the minister to note just two issues we wish to highlight as mentioned above & previously;

- All rooms should be single rooms, in keeping with the IPS policy of single cell occupancy.
- Night time medical cover should be considered given this prisons remote location.

Much to the credit of the staff & prisoners here, they managed to keep Loughan House Covid free for the whole of 2020. As opposed to elsewhere, the regime in Loughan House continued to operate as close to normal as possible. Unfortunately an impact of Covid-19 was that the public no longer had access to the facilities' such as, Garden Centre, Car Wash & Coffee shop. These activities continued to operate but were restricted to local use only. However, in the case of the garden centre it provided a valuable support to those vulnerable and cocooning in this region (see attached PowerPoint).

The prisoners enjoyed the same levels of out of room time and freedom to move around the grounds and access to services as was the case pre Covid (Some of this was conducted virtually/telephone service). Some of the negatives were family visits and Temporary release programmes were impacted, but the effects of this was mitigated by prisoners having access to their own phones and the introduction of virtual visits.

We would like to commend all involved in Loughan House on how they have responded and adapted to the challenges imposed by the pandemic.

Signed:

Andrew Cullen _____ 27/09/21

(Chairperson)

Michael Smith _____ 27/09/21

Padraig Connelly _____ 27/09/21

John Gibbons _____ 27/09/21



**Seirbhís Phríosúin
na hÉireann**
Irish Prison Service

Loughan House

Community Outreach Team



Project Objective;

To overcome the challenge of maintaining the prisons horticulture project for the benefit of prisoners and capitalizing on this for the benefit of the wider community during the Covid Pandemic, whilst maintaining the highest levels of infection control.



Impact of the Community Outreach Team;

- Provided an outlet for stock already purchased.
- Provided structured activities for Loughan House during a restrictive regime.
- Provided prisoners and staff with a sense of achievement and raised moral as they felt they were making a worthy contribution to the national effort.
- It enhanced our connections with national & local agencies and groups which we hope to build on in the future.
- We maintained our good standing and positive reputation in the community
- Along with the additional challenges posed by Covid, the initiative and commitment of the staff at Loughan House ensured that this project was a success while maintaining the highest possible effort and standards to ensure our compliance with national policy regarding infection control and the fight against the Covid Pandemic.

Social Media Impact



 **Irish Prison Servi...** · 11 Jun ▾
Our Open Centre **Loughan House**, are continuing to show support to local communities by donating over 200 plants from its horticultural facility. Well done to everyone involved 🌻🌻🌻

[@DeptJusticeIRL](#)
[@LeitrimLive](#)
[@CivilDefenceIRL](#)
[@theanglocelt](#)

 Loughan House donates plants t...
leitrimobserver.ie

12 48

 **Cavan County Co...** · 18 Jun ▾
As part of an ongoing partnership during the Covid-19 pandemic, Cavan Civil Defence volunteers yesterday collected summer flowers from [@IrishPrisons](#) **Loughan House** Open Centre, Blacklion and delivered them to Alzheimer's Society Cavan at John Sullivan Day Centre. [#InThisTogether](#)



1 2 5

 **Leitrim County Co...** · 01 Jul ▾
Leitrim Civil Defence volunteers Rick Tutass and John O Dowd distributing donation from The **Loughan House** Open Centre in Blacklion to older people, tidy towns groups, Meals on Wheels services and communities across Leitrim [#YourCouncilDay](#) [#CivilDefence](#) [#InThisTogether](#) [#Leitrim](#)



1 1

 **Irish Penal Reform Trust**
[@IPRT](#)

An uplifting example of prisons being a part of the community, not apart from it. 👍

Some gorgeous flowers and hanging baskets have made their way to people cocooning across Cavan, courtesy of the residents and staff of Loughan House! 🌻🌻

[@CivilDefenceIRL](#)
[@cavancoco](#) [@activeirl](#)

Social Media Impact



Cavan Monaghan Garda Division
★ Favorites · 7 May · 🌐

Earlier today Garda Seamus Herron and Garda Karen English, Cavan Community Engagement Unit, visited Francie Magarahan in Killeshandra to wish him a Happy 100th Birthday. They were delighted to present him with two hanging flower baskets that were kindly donated by the horticulture section in Loughan House. We hope Francie had a great day and once again HAPPY BIRTHDAY from all in the Cavan Garda District. 🎉🎂🎈



319 21 Comments · 21 Shares

Irish Prison Servi... · 25 May

Governor Lydon has praised the residents and Staff of **Loughan House** and says they are proud to be able to support an initiative such as this in our locality". 🌞👏

#community #InItTogether #COVID-19 #SocialDistanacing @DeptJusticeIRL @IPRT @probation_irl



9 26

Cavan Monaghan Garda Division
★ Favorites · 14 May · 🌐

Gardaí in Cavan were delighted to receive the generous donation of sunflower plants from Loughan House. These were presented by Governor Mark Lydon to Superintendent Padraic Jones. The Cavan Garda Community Engagement Unit will link in with residents associations and organisations in Cavan town to enhance their environment with some 🌻's

#CommunityEngagement





Cavan Alzheimer's Day Care Centre



