

VISITING COMMITTEE

MIDLANDS PRISON

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Medical Services
3. Education Report
4. Chief Nursing Officers Report
5. Work and Training Report
6. Psychology Report

1. INTRODUCTION

The Midlands Prison is the largest prison in the country with an operational capacity of 875, and is a closed, medium security prison for adult males. The Midlands Prison is the committal prison for all convicted male sex offenders and is also the committal prison for nine counties - being Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly, Wexford, Meath, Westmeath and Monaghan.

The purpose of The Midlands Prison Visiting Committee is to ensure that prisoners in the care of the Irish Prison Service at the Midlands Prison are treated fairly, humanely and with dignity and respect.

The Visiting Committee of the Midlands Prison in 2020 comprised the following members: John Kelly (Chair), Joe Leahy, Derek Mulcahy, Anna Tuohy-Halligan, Liam Ahearn and Patrick Buggy.

The committee visits the prison to meet with any prisoners requesting such a meeting and to provide feedback to those same prisoners following investigation of issues raised. The committee also conducts our own internal meetings in the prison. The committee further makes unannounced visits to the prison and will, if requested by prison management, visit the prison on other occasions.

During the course of 2020, the Visiting Committee was unable to visit the Prison due to Covid 19, however we did keep in touch with the Governor's secretary on a regular bases and she kept us up to date on the welfare of the prisoners during that time.

As previously stated the Midlands Prison has a capacity of 875 prisoners, however numbers fluctuate on a daily basis. Prisoners on remand awaiting sentencing as well as those sentenced are held in the Midlands. Some circumstances also result in the transfer of prisoners to the Midlands from other prisons

2. MEDICAL SERVICES

Midlands Prison Psychology Service (2020)

The Psychology Service provides an integrated, layered model of care in Irish Prisons; this means it provides both mental health as well as offence related assessment and interventions from primary through to tertiary care.

In 2020, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Midlands Prison Psychology Service provided a hybrid model of video and telephone as well as face to face intervention, with emergency Psychological First Aid available throughout.

Throughout 2020 the Service was made up of one Senior Psychologist, three Staff Grade Psychologists (two of these started in Q3 2020) and two Assistant Psychologists. The Service has approval for four Staff Grade Psychologists however there are ongoing, chronic recruitment and retention difficulties due specifically to the location of the prison.

Midlands Prison Psychology Service received 240 referrals in 2020, of which 61% were related to mental health. This is slightly higher than the national prison psychology average (58%). The remaining referrals related to sentence management and criminogenic need. Of those seen by a Psychologist in 2020, the average wait time for initial assessment was 227 days. The average wait time for intervention was 411 days.

Education Report

2020

The Education Unit provides a wide range of subjects from basic education up to third level support. There were 926 unique students undertook education classes in the year

Such subjects includes English, Maths, Business Studies, Accounting, Irish, Communications, Computers, Art and Craft, Drama, Personal Development, Education Guidance, History, Geography, Pottery, French, German, Spanish, Home Economics, Sociology, Horticulture, Metalwork, Motor Vehicle Technology, Woodwork, Pyrography, Physical Education, Stain Glass, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Music, Personal Care and Presentation, Personal Decision Making, Crime Awareness and Yoga.

The following examinations were completed by students at the Midlands Prison Education Unit.

QQI

- Level 1 76
- Level 2 90
- Level 3 47
- Level 4 19
- Level 5 7
- Leaving Cert 31
- Junior Cert 10
- Associated Board of Royal School of Music
- Open University
 - 6 (already started)
 - 7 new applications for September
 - 7 with education plans ongoing to ensure readiness.

School TV Channel: In order to facilitate student learning during Covid, a TV channel was made available to the school in a blended learning approach. Approximately 200 videos, with a wide variety of content, were created by teachers and this work is ongoing.

Gaisce: 39 students are participating in Gaisce, 3 for Gold, 5 for silver and 31 are completing Bronze Gaisce Awards.

Pre-Release: 52 students complete the Pre-release Programme pre-Covid

Anger Awareness: 44 completing the Anger Awareness Programme.

Musical Performance: There were two music performances in the education centre. One was an outside band, the other was a performance by the music class students.

Creative Writing: A number of students participated in creative writing. The school facilitated a number of writing competitions internally. In addition, there were 7 entries into the Listowel Writers Section with 2 prize winners.

Mental Health Awareness: There was a continuing emphasis on Mental Health programmes with outside speakers from various bodies including HSE, Mental Health Ireland, along with programmes run by the Red Cross in the school.

Other Initiatives 2020 - 2021

- Drama Workshops
- Community Links with Laois Downs Syndrome/National Learning Network/Laois County Council through the Gaisce Programme.
- Artist in Residence
- Writer in Residence
- FAI Coaching Skills Initiative
- Visiting Poets
- Parole Board Interview Training
- Mediation Skills Programme (available to all students but delivered by the Traveller Mediation Service)
- Specific classes for Lifers in Coping Skills and Cookery for self care.
- Polish Phrase Booklet. A simple booklet was developed to help students from Poland who have limited English. This is currently being extended to other languages for students who do not have English as their first language.
- Advanced preparations are in place for a programme which caters directly for the older age cohort students such as Horticulture, Physical Education, Art and Crafts.
- Current plans for a programme for prisoners who have mobility issues and cannot access the main education areas.
- Planning a programme a programme to address the needs of those who cannot access education facilities. (Age Action Programme).

We have also been informed that a GP Addiction Specialist holds a weekly session as part of the drug treatment service within the prison.

We would however question the adequacy of this given the issue of drug addiction amongst the prison population.

Furthermore, although the Midlands offers a addiction counselling service which is supported by the MQI and includes one-to-one counselling and assessments, the fact remains that there are only two addiction counsellors available in the Midlands Prison – the largest prison in the country. We the Visiting Committee feel this is totally inadequate and will inevitably lead to delays and support in the treatment of some very vulnerable prisoners.

Chief Nursing Officer Report.

We have an allocation of 22 WTE posts but have 3.5 vacancies currently. We have one nurse seconded to Infection Control, one nurse on Carers leave and a recent retirement. These

vacancies are presently filled by agency nurses however a recruitment drive is underway at present.

We have an allocation of 2.5 GPs. We have a full time medical administration post (PCO) and one full time Chief Nurse Officer.

We also have an allocation of 2 WTE CPNs and a Consultant Psychiatrist 3 days a week from the CMH. Dental cover is provided on a sessional basis three times a week and we have Optician and Chiropody services on a sessional basis also, usually once a month.

Our drug treatment service is provided by a GP Addiction Specialist 1 session a week and we have 1.8 WTE Addiction Counsellors from MQI. One nurse is assigned to Addiction on a 8am – 5pm Monday to Friday basis.

The past year has been our most challenging with the emergence of Covid 19 and we have amended our day to day delivery of healthcare to facilitate the ever evolving management of the pandemic. These challenges have brought more collaborative working within our own discipline and the wider multi-disciplinary team. We have also enhanced our joint operational/healthcare procedures and protocols which has resulted in improved communication overall.

The Visiting Committee feels that there should be a lot more resources available to the prison to ensure that the mental and emotional health of prisoners should be priority due to the ongoing effects of the Covid 19 and the restrictions the staff and prisoners had to endure over the last eighteen months. The fact remains that this is the largest prison in the country and resources does not reflect the demands.

Midlands Prison Work & Training

The Regime Management Plan (RMP), facilitates keeping the workshops operational in the Midlands Prison. In April 2020 we used the RMP to implement safe Covid 19 procedures within the workshops. All work training areas operate with reduced numbers and zone landings/divisions.

Industrial Skill Workshops

The Industrial Skills area is hugely popular with the Picture Framing workshop contributing to several high end requests for quality presentation pieces.

The Furniture Restoration workshops was not in a position to facilitate external trainer Kevin Mullally (a furniture restoration expert) due to Covid 19. This year we sought Kevin's expertise using emails and phone calls. The WTO in this workshop continued restoring antique pieces of furniture for Office of Public Works.

The Engraving workshop designed and produced a Christmas Decorations made from polished brass. This workshop donated these decorations to the Cuisle Centre. This workshop also Covid signage for the prisons.

The print facilitate continues to successfully operate daily and printed all Covid19 leaflets for the prison estate.

A Barber's workshop named **ConHair** was introduced in 2019. This workshop is managed by an offender with the support from the Chief Officer Work & Training and the staff on G 2. Offenders are donating €2 to the Cuisle Centre for getting their hair cut. A donation of approx. €800 was raised for this charity. Due to Covid19 this workshop was closed during the year while in lockdowns.

Horticulture Area

Halloween Project MONASTEREVIN ghoulish trail

The Horticulture workshop designed and produced Halloween silhouettes for the ghoulish trail for Monasterevin Tidy Town Committee. This project was a major success and we received kind words of 'thank you' from the local community for helping to bring a nice atmosphere to Halloween during Covid.

Christmas Project

The Horticulture workshop designed and produced Christmas figures that were on display for Kildare Town Project and Monasterevin Tidy Town Committee. The figures consisted of a Crib, Carol Singers, Christmas Tree, and Santa. These were displayed around the local towns.

Time Server Magazine

This publication has continued during 2020 with printed copies for Midlands Prison only.

Construction Workshops

The Building Skills, Carpentry and Metal workshops continues to successfully operate daily with reduced attendance.

GYM's

In September we enrolled 4 offenders on NCEF Foundation course delivered by our WTO GYM's in conjunction with University of Limerick. This programme provides students with a sufficient background knowledge and skills in both theoretical and practical areas relating to the CEHF in order to upon successful completion of assessments, they will be eligible to apply through RPL for a place

on the CEHF Programme. The Foundation programme will provide sufficient knowledge and practical skills specifically relevant to the CEHF to students which will support and benefit their learning on the CEHF programme, thus providing them with a greater probability of a successful outcome on that programme.

Service Areas

The Service areas (Catering, Laundry, Waste Management and Industrial Cleaning) continues to successfully operate daily. The WTO Industrial Cleaning are the leaders in rolling out the infectious control policy and maintaining a cleaning schedule during Covid.

Charity Work 2020

The Workshops engaged in the following community / social projects during 2020

Cuisle Cancer Care Centre

In 2020 we continued our ongoing charity work for the Cuisle Centre.

Scoil Eimhin Naofa, Monasterevin Co Kildare

A parent from Scoil Eimhin Naofa approached Work Training to provide some outdoor garden furniture and bicycle stands for the children. The Workshops provided 3 buddy bench and 2 bicycle stands.

Clonaslee GAA

Clonaslee GAA contacted us to assist the clubs with juvenile players. The Workshops made some garden furniture for their online Auction.

Christmas Cards and Book markers

The print workshop printed a small quantity of Christmas cards and book markers for residence in a local nursing homes.

Dried Kindling Wood

This year the Horticulture and Carpentry Workshops decided to provide the dried kindling wood collect in these workshops to some local senior citizens groups in November. This little project proved to be an enormous success with the senior citizens groups in Monasterevin.

Work Training Certification 2020

Area	Accreditation	Comment
Laundry	Guild of Launderers	8 Offenders completed the Guild of Launderers Certificate programme.
Building Skills	City & Guilds	10 offenders at various stages of Basic Construction Skills.
Carpentry	City & Guilds	5 offenders at various stages of Basic Carpentry Skills.
Horticulture	QQI	14 offenders have engaged at level 3 and 4
Furniture Restoration	In house training course	5 offenders engaging in an in-house training course delivered to the QQI level 5 Furniture Restoration Course
Industrial cleaning	In house training course	22 offenders have completed a basic cleaning course.
Computers	ICS Skills	6 offenders completed equal skills.
Chemical training		13 offenders completed training on chemical awareness
Catering	City & Guilds	12 offenders completed City & Guilds Catering Foundation Course
Basic Manual Handling	In house training course	72 offenders completed a basic manual handling course.
NCEF Foundation course	NCEF in conjunction with University of Limerick	2 offenders completed and received certification in this programme.

The Visiting Committee would like to thank the Governors, Staff and Secretary for their help, support and courtesy during the past year. We wish you the best and hope to continue good relations in the future.

Signed on behalf of the Visiting Committee of the Midlands Prison.

Anna Tuohy Halligan Secretary.

Members of the Visiting Committee.

Chair John Kelly

Joe Leahy.

Anna Tuohy Halligan.

Derek Mulcahy.

Liam Aherne.

Paddy Buggy.