

A chara,

This is the Annual Report of the Visiting Committee for St Patrick's Institution. As has been the case since my appointment to this position, there has only been one person (myself) involved with this facility.

I have assumed the position as Chairperson and attended the Chairpersons meetings in Brian Stack House.

As I stated in my last report, this is probably not an ideal situation as I am visiting young offenders on my own.

I hasten to add that this has not presented

a problem for me and the visits have gone very well from my perspective.

Other Chairpersons from various other facilities however have cautioned me about the possible dangers with these visits.

I have been in touch with Prison Policies and they have asked me to proceed on my own for now.

I am very willing to do so as I find the work very engaging and I hope, useful to the young people I visit.

I wish at this stage to pay tribute to the staff in Mountjoy where I am now known and welcomed at every visit.

I have found nothing but friendliness and courtesy from Governor Walsh to the Chief and also the staff on the door and the landings.

They not only treat me with respect but I have seen the same respect shown to prisoners which can only be beneficial to all concerned.

My usual point of contact in St Pats had heretofore been Simon Walsh.

However, he retired in November 2016 and since then I have been contacting Irene in the office.

Simon was a phenomenal asset to the Prison Service and we became very good friends.

His knowledge and patience were hugely helpful to me in my early days as a visitor.

I wish him well in his retirement.

The visits as previously stated have gone very well.

I am usually accompanied by a member of staff who stands outside the cell, but out of earshot, as I engage with the prisoner.

The concerns of the young people are usually around being moved to Wheatfield or other prisons.

They are, usually quite happy with the regime in St Pats.

I would suggest that when they are being moved to another facility, they be informed that a Visiting Committee exists there also that they can contact.

I try to phone prior to calling to the prison to see if there are people to see.

As a lot of the inmates are on remand and usually moved on to another facility this is a useful way to proceed.

After the visits I try to meet up with prison staff to bring whatever issues have arisen to their notice.

As previously stated, I have been totally satisfied with the response I have received from them.

All in all I believe this work is very valuable.

I would like to see the various visiting committees around the country brought up to full strength.

St Patricks Institution, however, at this time does not require extra visiting staff as the number of inmates rarely exceeds two or three.

I am very happy to proceed as before if The Minister and yourselves are satisfied with my work.

I believe strongly that Visiting Committees are a very useful tool in the welfare of prisoners.

Is mise,

Pat Burke Walsh
Chairperson
Visiting Committee
St Patrick's Institution