

**Visiting Committee**  
**Annual Report 2017**

**Cork Prison**

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## Introduction

The Cork Prison Visiting Committee met on a monthly basis during 2017. Two members also visited between meetings to follow up on prisoners' reports and to visit various areas of the prison.

In Cork Prison there is a very progressive management team led by Governor Dawson and Assistant Governor O'Brien, and a very experienced and committed staff supported by a number of professional staff and voluntary agencies. These professionals and agencies provide excellent services for prisoners within the prison and on release as can be evidenced by the various contributions in this report.

The clear message in Cork prison is safe custody, rehabilitation, support, and re-integration where possible.

From our observations there is an excellent relationship between staff and prisoners which facilitates the smooth running of the prison.

The new Cork prison is now two years in operation, so most of the teething problems are dealt with.

Unfortunately, prisoners have become more complex since the early 2000's, drug and alcohol addiction, psychiatric and psychological issues and some with intellectual disabilities, many with a combination of all or some of the above. Organised crime is more prevalent which makes the rehabilitation of offenders more difficult.

Prison is a catch all situation.

Shortage of staff is an ongoing issue, as staff have to be re-deployed from various workshops to cover escorts to courts, hospitals etc which means that no work or training on these occasions.

It is hoped that staff shortages can be resolved in the not too distant future with the number of staff recently recruited and in training.

From our regular meeting with management and various staff members, agencies within the prison and individual prisoners. The Visiting Committee are satisfied that Cork prison is exceptionally managed in the interest of prisoners.

The report will now detail areas and services of the prison the Visiting Committee wish to highlight.

## **Industrial Area**

### ***Report from Industrial Manager Francis McMahon***

#### **Kitchen**

The kitchen employs 24 prisoners per day. We have recently registered 20 of these with City and Guilds for the elementary cookery course.

The kitchen staff are happy to be working in a new state of the art kitchen.

They continue to cook for events such as the Listeners' Graduation, retirement functions, etc, to a very high standard.

A score of 85% was achieved in this year's hygiene audit.

This year, thanks to help from Colm Carey, we placed two prisoners in local employment on release.

#### **Hurley / Joinery workshop**

This has been a very disappointing year for the Hurley workshop, due to a high level of staff redeployments. The staff are very keen to teach City and Guilds, as can be seen from last year's report, and comments, but they cannot teach City and Guilds or anything else under the current circumstances, unfortunately. There has been no certified training done here this year.

Mr Nason was awarded "Best International Tutor" by City and Guilds this year, for his professionalism and dedication, this is a very prestigious award, mainly for work done in previous years. This has been presented in Downing Street on occasion, it is a huge plus for the IPS.

#### **Computer / print workshop**

All of the printing for Cork Prison is done in this workshop, class logs, p19's, reception books, health and safety books, etc.

Prisoners also make cards here for birthdays, etc.

This has been a very disappointing year for the Print / Computer workshop, due to redeployments. There has been no certified training done here this year.

#### **Fabric Workshop**

This workshop is redeployed regularly, and has done no certified training this year.

#### **Light Maintenance**

Unfortunately, this workshop is regularly redeployed, and has produced no certified training this year.

#### **Laundry**

The Laundry is working well, with usually around 10 prisoners working there daily. The Laundry had a very good year, with the Laundry being certified again in July, to carry out training under the Guild of Cleaners

and Launderers Certificate scheme. We have also had our WTO vacancy filled by Tommy Gaine, so the laundry is now fully staffed.

### **Industrial Cleaning workshop**

This post is now manned by 2 WTO's, on a back to back basis. They now have responsibility for training all of the class cleaners on the various prison landings. This has helped to improve cleanliness around the prison.

They now operate a new cleaning chemical system, which is a state of the art auto dilution system. This means that all of the cleaning chemicals used throughout the prison are diluted to exactly the right rate, saving money and helping the environment. It also prepares them for best practise in the industry on their release.

The Workshop have also purchased 3 battery operated cleaning machines. This means no cables and no tripping over them or pulling them out of the machines by force, i.e. way less breakages and repairs. They have helped with prison cleanliness and again, are the new best practise in the industry outside.

The Industrial Cleaning workshop was the last room given to us by the builders. It is not yet completed. This is due to commence in January 2018.

The Workshop are in the process of rolling out a new system throughout the whole prison, for infection control purposes. This involves the use of new flat mops, buckets, and a one dip only system.

Each cell is given a clean, hygienic mop head every day, and it is collected every day after use, and replaced again the next day.

### **Officers Mess (training kitchen)**

This kitchen and dining area is working very well, and has 6 prisoners employed every day. This is a new departure from the norm, and is working very well. It is a state of the art facility, and is well used by prison staff. We will have 6 prisoners trained to City and Guilds Elementary cookery level this year.

### **Integrated Sentence Management (ISM)**

The ISM. Staff are busier than ever, with the Community Returns Scheme (CRS), and the Community Support Scheme (CSS). These are both going very well, and the high success rate of both continues. Our numbers for CRS and the CSS are up on last year.

### **Waste Management**

This new workshop has been very successful in reducing our waste, and increasing the amount of recycling here in the prison. This means lower bills, and a saving to the state for waste management expenses. It also helps the environment. We are now normally over 50% recycled waste every month. This is going in the right direction, thanks to the dedication of the staff involved.

We have two new unopened workshops here in Cork Prison:

### **Industrial Skills /Craft workshop**

This is on the same floor as the other workshops, and will be a picture framing and engraving workshop. We have the machines, we're just waiting for the staff to be given to us from head office.

### **Horticulture workshop**

This is a wonderful new facility, at the back of the prison. There is a polytunnel, raised beds, a glasshouse, and a work shed / potting shed.

Again, we are waiting to have the staff assigned to this post, to use this excellent facility.

### **Something New**

With all the workshop closures, we had to take a look at "what can we do"?

As a result, and with help from Colm Carey, whose idea this was, we help to provide 4 courses to prisoners pre-release.

These are:

- Manual Handling
- Safe Pass
- Hygiene
- 'Changing' course

Sean Nason teaches Manual Handling, I teach the Hygiene, and Colm organises the other courses. It is our goal to get a WTO trained to teach the Safe Pass, so we will be able to teach it more often to more prisoners. The goal of this is to give the prisoners a better chance to find employment on release. The above Certificates help with this.

## Education Unit

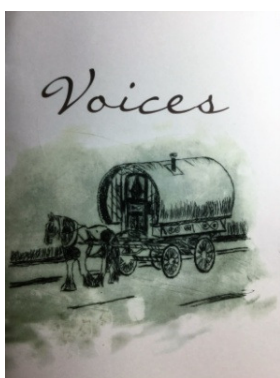
### *Report from Edel Cunningham, Head Teacher*

2017 was another good year for the Education Unit. We continued to offer a range of subjects both practical and academic and efforts have been renewed to engage with students needing help at basic education levels.

In 2017:

- Two hundred and fourteen QQI modules were completed at levels 2- 5
- One student completed Junior Cert
- Five students sat exams at Leaving Cert level
- Two students from the Education Unit, Cork Prison are currently enrolled for Open University. One of these students received a Higher Education certificate in Business and Management from the Open University in 2017
- Five students graduated with the Red Cross on the 26<sup>th</sup> May
- Twenty students completed the Safe Pass course
- The third successful art exhibition was launched on Spike Island in July. The title of this year's exhibition was 'In-house'. This exhibition showcased the work of students in all subject areas

A group of traveller students in the school took part in a Creative Writing Workshop in May organised by Mona, an MA student with UCC and Margaret K, English teacher. All the stories tell personal accounts of traveller life e.g. road bowling, sulky racing, hunting, buying and selling horses and dogs and going to horse fairs. Students later followed up with teachers Veronica H and Margaret K by producing illustrations to go with the stories and thus created individual readers.



(Illustrations taken from the Traveller book)

The Education Unit held its' first Spanish week in November.

This year saw the first collaborative project between the Education Unit, Cork Prison and the Adult Continuing Education Department (ACE) in UCC. The project was very successful with students completing courses in '**Looking at Art: Masterpieces of Irish painting**' and '**Ten great works of prison literature**'.

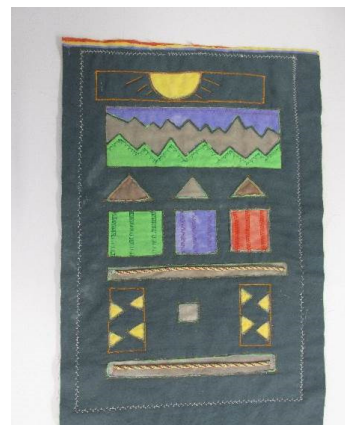


Textile piece produced by students in craft class with Artist in Prison Mary Timmons and teacher Lorraine H.

**Artists in prison** The Education Unit in Cork were very fortunate in 2017 to have received 2 Artists in Prison (AIP) and one Writer in Prison (WIP) workshop. We were delighted to host a stained-glass workshop with the well-known Debbie Dawson in addition to a workshop with Mary Timmons.

An art exhibition entitled 'Humans sharing spaces' launched in the Custom House Quay building in Dublin in March 2017. Works from Education Units throughout the country were submitted and a number of pieces from the Education Unit Cork Prison were selected including some textiles pieces from the Artist in Prison workshop mentioned earlier.

Twelve students graduated from the second Community Coaching course. Students completed an overall award in QQI L3 in addition to the coaching modules.



Textile piece produced by students in craft class

A wonderful morning of music was enjoyed in the Education Unit in November when the band 'The Claddagh Rogues' performed with our own school band. The event was very well received by both staff and students in the Education Unit. James, lead singer and songwriter with The Claddagh Rogues, spent most of his early life in prison, under psychiatric care and homeless on the streets of Cork. (The Claddagh Rogues are supported by HSE South's Cork Arts and Health Programme, Cork Mental Health Services and Music Alive and were born out of Cork's Simon Community, in 2007.)

Staff from the Education Unit continue to liaise with the Addiction, Probation, Medical and Psychology services within the prison and partake in weekly multidisciplinary meetings as well as review meetings, health and safety, senior management, Red Cross etc

I would like to conclude by thanking the Governor and his management staff for their help and support though-out the year.

I would like to especially thank the team of school officers who work with the staff in the Education Unit to enable the school to operate daily.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank all the teachers in the Education Unit for their commitment, positive attitude and continued hard work throughout the year.



# **Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders (IASIO)**

## ***Report from Colm Carey, Resettlement Coordinator, The Resettlement Service***

Our vision and mission is responding to crime through the development and delivery of services to offenders and people at risk of offending, making communities safer through excellence in practice and working towards an inclusive Ireland by developing opportunities for people referred through criminal justice agencies. Three separate programmes work to assist clients to progress their lives by providing a professional support system, the services are The Resettlement Service, The Linkage Service, both of which are in Cork Prison and The Gate Service.

### **Resettlement Service**

The Resettlement Service is a prison based service that offers one-to-one intervention whereby the Resettlement Coordinator co-develops an effective resettlement plan with the prisoner that addresses their needs and supports their reintegration back into the community. All prisoners that are referred to this service are met by the Resettlement Coordinator Colm Carey to discuss, support and encourage them during their sentence to look at future planning for their lives and to consider what is required to stabilise them on release and ultimately desistance.

This service encourages and challenges the client to look at what community supports or services they will benefit from by engaging with and supporting them after release. Support plans will include looking at welfare, medical, accommodation, family, work, training, education and alcohol and drug use. In order to do this the resettlement coordinator works closely with the other relevant organisations in the prison and the community to ensure consistency of service during and after prison. Once released, the service will make contact with the client to see how they are doing in terms of following through with their support plan.

### **Medical Card Pilot**

The Resettlement Service was involved in the very successful introduction of the pilot medical card arrangement here in Cork Prison to help eligible prisoners secure an emergency medical card on release from custody. The Resettlement Coordinator meets with the client in prison to complete an application form and submits it to National Medical Card Unit (NMCU) on their behalf. If approved the medical card will be activated on the day of release for the client ensuring continued access to medical care and necessary prescription medication if required in the community by their own GP.

### **DEASP**

Since January The Resettlement Service in Cork Prison has been involved in the piloting of an arrangement between The Irish Prison Service (IPS) and The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) where that any sentenced prisoner from the Cork City area North/South Lee and eligible for a welfare payment would be offered a scheduled appointment on the day of release to attend their local INTREO Centre in Cork City to open a social welfare claim. This arrangement has benefited many of our clients and feedback has been extremely positive from all.

## Changing Course Programme

This programme is facilitated by the Resettlement and Linkage personnel in Cork prison, Colm Carey and Maria Walsh and is run over ten two hour sessions and involves a total of twenty hours of learning in total. It is a strengths-based programme and encourages participants to explore their positive qualities, which in turn inspires hope for the future.

The needs being met by this programme are: to address the thinking patterns around personal change; to address feelings of hopelessness, especially around disclosure; to develop participants soft skills; to encourage returning to education, especially during their sentence; to provide information on what is available to clients to progress with their lives post release.

This year saw IASIO facilitate a total of three Changing Course programmes in Cork prison and had a total of 46 successful graduates that completed the course and the feedback from all the participants was extremely positive. The current uptake of the programme is excellent and the retention and completion rates for participants is currently over 97% with again a lengthy waiting list for the next programme that will commence in March 2018.

## Kids Summer Camp

August of this year saw the piloting of the first ever kids summer camp in the community in partnership with the Irish Prison Service, Cork Sports Partnership, The Dillons Cross Project and St. Nicholas Trust. The camp ran from 10:00am to 2:00pm each day with the FAI, GAA, Athletics Ireland and Munster Rugby all involved and included healthy snacks and drinks for the children and concluded on the Friday with a family fun day. The week of physical sporting activities was a huge success and involved a total of forty eight children in attendance for the week. Volunteers included Cork Prison staff and different community organisations throughout the week and the event was attended by Director General of the IPS Michael Donnellan, Governors Pat Dawson and Peter O' Brien and Paddy Richardson CEO of IASIO and preparations are already underway for another kid's summer camp in August 2018.



## Community Coaching Programme

This year saw the second running of the Community Coaching Programme in conjunction with the IPS, Education Unit and The Cork Sports Partnership (CSP) and supported by the FAI, Basketball Ireland, Cork GAA and Munster Rugby. This innovative programme runs over twelve weeks and aims to assist and support all the participants to achieve certified coaching and educational qualifications whilst in prison that will benefit them post release in the community in areas such as personal training, coaching, volunteering, employment and further progression to continuing education.

As part of the course all twelve participants attended the prison sports hall for one full day a week (Thursdays) for the coaching element and also the education unit for the remainder of the week in order to complete the QQI Level 3 award in general learning. All the coaching and educational modules were certified by the various organisations upon completion of the course and an awards ceremony took place in the sports hall on Tuesday December 12 for the participants and their family members.

This year's graduation event included non-other than our very special guest Roy Keane from the FAI who was hugely impressed and supportive in what the participants and programme has achieved to date. Feedback from all the participants, prison staff and tutors was extremely positive and we expect to run another programme in September 2018 with interest growing all the time. A special word of thanks to ISM and the Education Unit for their continued support with this programme.



Roy Keane & Programme Coordinators

IASIO and The Resettlement Service in Cork Prison continues to explore new options and programmes for the benefit of clients both during their sentence and post release in the community and would like to thank the Governor of Cork Prison, ISM, Education Unit and all the staff of Cork Prison for their continued support shown throughout the year and look forward to working in partnership with them all again in 2018.

## **Post Release Project 2017**

*Report from Frances Russell, Post-release Co-ordinator*

The project continues to deliver a comprehensive and integrated approach to meet the needs of prisoners on release from Cork Prison. It maintains secure links between the Post Release Service and the Housing Depts to ensure that no prisoners fall off the housing list due to their committal to prison. It also ensures the co-ordination of services with statutory and voluntary providers i.e. Homeless Persons Unit, Homeless Officers in all local authorities, Cork City Council housing, Focus Ireland, Cork Simon Community and St Vincent's Hostel to ensure a realistic & achievable plan was put in place prior to a prisoner's release.

It also ensures that the barriers of literacy and poor social or coping skills do not impede on prisoners claiming their social welfare payments. The project maintains strong links with residential/community day addiction and mental health services to ensure access for prisoners to addiction assessment and counselling in/day patient care.

The project continues to work with GP's and the Medical Card Unit to ensure prisoners have to access medical cards for prisoners on their release dates. All efforts continue to ensure that prisoners are not homeless on release from prison. As part of the Case Management Protocols for the Cork & Kerry Homeless Services, Initial and Housing Needs Assessments are carried out or updated on homeless prisoners serving over a 12- week sentence. Access to an emergency beds were also secured for prisoners serving less than 12 weeks. The project also sits on monthly meetings with the Homeless Action Team to refer and discuss specific supports for prisoners leaving prison with complex needs. Assistance and support was also given to prisoners who were released to an address which breaks down within the first few days of release. The Post Release Project hosts and contributed to Case Management Meetings within the prison for prisoners due for release with complex needs i.e. mental health issues, addiction and homelessness.

Referrals to the Community Welfare Officer, Dept of Social Protection continue to ensure prisoners who are serving a sentence not more than 12 weeks do not lose their rent supplement thus ensuring that they do not become homeless on release.

With the assistance of Sophia Housing, City Council and Dept of Social Protection, 3 short term accommodation units were provided for prisoners, where they are given the skills to live independently thus breaking their cycle of prison sentences and homelessness. The Post Release Project continues to provide assistance with bedding and basic provisions to these prisoners. When the prisoners are ready, move on accommodation is identified. They continue to access ongoing supports once they move through the transitional flat on to long term accommodation.

The Post Release Service continues to work closely with an in-reach service provided by Focus Ireland, who offere support to prisoners accessing private rented accommodation and ongoing tenancy support. This work complements and solidifies the work of Sophia Housing and the City Council.

The provision of the Safe Pass Qualification continued to be delivered to enable prisoner's access employment on release. It meets their educational needs by referring them to programmes been offered in the Education Unit in Cork Prison and by offering practical & financial assistance in enabling them access community education courses and post leaving cert colleges.

## Dillon's Cross Project

*Report from Edel Cunningham, Head Teacher, Education Unit*

Prisoners' family members end up living a 'parallel sentence' beyond prison walls" (Granja, 2016: 289)

The Dillon's Cross Project was set up in 1995, to provide support and education for the female relatives of prisoners and ex-prisoners. This group are often neglected and forgotten while a family member is in prison. On many occasions they have sole responsibility for balancing household budgets, struggle to cover school costs, raise children, maintain the family home and visit loved ones in prison while at the same dealing with their own addictions and mental health issues.



Artwork produced by students in the Dillon's Cross Project to describe their appreciation of the project.

There is a stigma attached to having a loved one in prison and very few places where women and prisoner families can go to get support. The Dillon's Cross Project provides this support. The project provides counselling as well as much needed structure and routine to this group who often lead very chaotic and dysfunctional lives, many of whom are suffering with addictions, mental health issues and the stigma of prison association. Participants receive help if necessary with basic numeracy and literacy and will achieve an overall award at QQI level 3. Those that are interested and able will then have the option of completing additional modules at QQI level 4.

"Children and families coping with imprisonment are often described as the 'hidden' victims of the penal system because they must endure their own sentence, despite not having perpetrated any crime."

"Picking up the Pieces": The Rights and Needs of Children and Families Affected by Imprisonment (IPRT, 2012)

The children of prisoners are themselves, at great risk of offending. The Dillon's Cross project seeks to encourage a positive family attitude to education, encouraging the next generation to see education and training as a viable, long term option. The Dillon's Cross Project recognizes the importance of maintaining family ties while a loved one is in prison. This increases the chances of prisoners staying out of prison after release.



Artwork produced by students in the Dillon's Cross Project to describe their appreciation of the project

Each year 14 participants take part in the Dillon's Cross Project. Many of these participants leave the project with the academic skills, the confidence and self-belief to continue to further education and employment, thereby avoiding a lifetime of dependence on social welfare. All girls on the course complete modules in



childcare and learn about nutrition as well as how to cook healthy meals for their families. The structure and routine of the course offers an alternative to often chaotic and dysfunctional lives and provides a real hope that there is another option if availed of.

Of the fourteen participants who enrolled in the 2016/17 academic year, 11 were early school leavers, 3 were ex-offenders, 8 were lone parents and 1 was a member of the travelling community. Eight of these participants received an overall award at QQI level 3, as well as individual modules at level 4. One participant in her fifties received a certificate for the first time in her life. Other highlights of the year included a past participant completing her Level 6 exams in Hairdressing in a Further Education college in Cork and another student qualified from Cork College of Commerce and is now employed as a Nurses Aid. This student was the first in her family to ever attend Further Education. The Dillon's Cross Project was also delighted to have been involved in the hugely successful Kids Sports Camp run over the Summer in conjunction with the Irish Prison Service and Corks Sports Partnership.



Graduation ceremony, November 2017

The Dillon's Cross Project has been providing support and education since 1995 and hopes to continue doing so. However, security of funding continues to be an ongoing cause of serious concern for the advisory committee.

The Dillon's Cross advisory committee would like to express sincere appreciation to the Governors of Cork Prison and the Irish Prison Service for their support. They would also like to acknowledge Cork ETB and the HSE for their continued help and support.

## **Cork Prison Information Channel**

### ***Report from Caroline O'Connor, Prison Higher Executive Officer***

Cork Prison now has two Information Channels running for the information of Prisoners and staff alike. The original channel, is now called "INFO4U" and can be seen on Channel No. 17 of the Prisoner's Cell TVs. This channel is a source of information to help Prisoners adjust to life in Cork Prison. Here one will learn about the routine of Cork Prison, the Meal times, facilities and opportunities available, details of visits and telephone call entitlements, the different regimes available and how much gratuity Prisoners are entitled to, tuck shop opening hours plus much more...

A second channel called "Next Step Channel" was launched in Cork prison on Monday, the 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2017. This channel can be seen on Channel No: 18 of the Prisoner's Cell TVs. This channel features articles on certain activities and achievements of Prisoners during their stay eg: The Sharing Human Spaces Exhibition, Dublin or the Spike Island Exhibition, Roy Keane's recent visit etc. Photos of Prisoners, their Tutors and their works can be presented on this channel (with their approval). It also displays ways of coping with certain difficulties such as ways of managing Guilt, Anxiety, Stress etc. A Notice Board also advertises upcoming courses/opportunities of interest.

Thank you also to the Prisoners who submitted their entries to the competition "Name that channel". The response was very positive and generated great enthusiasm and interest in these channels resulting in excellent winning name choices.

## **St. Nicholas Trust**

### ***Report from Mairead Carmody, St. Nicholas Trust***

The volunteers from St. Nicholas Trust continue to link with families of prisoners and provide refreshments in the prison waiting room. Through the presence of volunteers many visitors are able to get queries answered and relevant information which reduces their stress. This service also helps to relieve the pressure on the prison officers at reception. We also operate two telephone support lines. Increasingly we are receiving calls from all over Ireland seeking information about support groups in their own prison areas. Additionally, SNT has the use of a small private room in the visiting area where they regularly meet individuals who are distressed or need a private space to talk. Support groups are available in this room on a regular basis where people can share their concerns and receive the support of others in the same situation.

## **Churchfield Community Trust**

*Report from Paul O'Donnell, Project Manager*

Churchfield Trust is a community organisation based in the Northside of Cork city.

The main target group are people aged between 18 to 35 years old.

- Ex-offenders
- Ex-prisoners
- All having substance misuse and / alcohol dependency / addictions.
- All effected by trans generational issues of:

Accommodation, addiction, Mental Health, Methadone involvement, relationships, anger management, finance and debt, literacy, low self-esteem, difficult early life experiences, unemployment, educational deficits.

Churchfield Trust respond to a very specific group of young people who need intensive support, therapeutic interventions, stability and acceptance in order to achieve sustainable change at a crucial time in their lives. Churchfield trust bridge the gap in formal education through, computer skills, literacy, cooking skills, woodwork and horticulture.

Personal development is a key component in the programme as many of the clients need significant changes in:

1. Attitude
2. Beliefs
3. Behaviours

Churchfield Community trust works using a mythology of building relationships and implementing a therapeutic model, foster open, honest direct communication.

Churchfield Trust currently has one Addiction Counsellor based in Cork prison two days a week.

Churchfield Trust Outreach worker also attends Cork prison each Thursday.

Both the Outreach worker and Addiction Counsellor are available to meet with persons in a pre and post release context. Alcohol and offending behaviour groups/addiction support groups, substance misuse are all part of the ongoing programmes in the Probation Service offices based in Cove Street, Cork facilitated by Addiction Counsellors, Cal McCarthy and Graham Cambridge, twice weekly. There was a specific focus on harm reduction re alcohol and substance misuse, while also exploring the relationship between drugs and alcohol and offending behaviour. Several persons engaged in this experiment with a specific focus on Probation Services referrals in an Outreach context.

The group had a specific focus on engaging with the most vulnerable clients that have engaged with Churchfield Trust who were unable to continue in previous groups earlier in the year.

Several initiatives have been piloted by Churchfield Trust which included the completion of a women's group. The focus on this experimental process was a blend of the following programmes:

1. Alcohol and offending behaviour
2. Choice and Challenge
3. Experiential learning



Following a successful pilot several outreach participants have engaged with a specific literacy and numeracy support and skills programme, a second ITABE (Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education) tutor was added to facilitate an emerging need about specific literacy and numeracy support.

Churchfield Trust provide a variety of work, training, research, addiction, counselling, education and pioneering projects in offending behaviour at their project bases at their headquarters in Knockfree Avenue, and in their Compass Craft Centre in Ballyvolane, and in the Garden Café in Blackpool.

A successful merger between Churchfield Trust and Grattan Project was finalised in 2015/2016. Churchfield Trust Addiction Counsellors continued to engage with respective caseloads in the Community / Probations services and Inreach in Cork prison.

Both Addiction Counsellors, Cal McCarthy and Siobhain Murphy co-facilitated group work in various formats weekly.

Their specialised skills are proving to be invaluable assets to the Community Trust staff team.

Churchfield Community Trust provides exceptional pioneering work and initiatives.

**Educational Organisational Structure contains the following programs:**

- Outreach Support
- Horticulture
- Compass Crafts
- Garden Café

## **Cork Alliance Centre**

*Report from Sheila Connolly, Manager*

**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. Our service is based in the community with in-reach work in the prisons. The Centre's core funding is from the Department of Justice and Equality through the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service.

The work of the Cork Alliance Centre relates to activities 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.

The foundations of the Cork Alliance Centre are based 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>).

1. 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 a constructive and connected life. The support is offered 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. 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

2. 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 individual's chances of sustaining life outside of prison. The Cork Alliance Centre operates the programme in Cork, Portlaoise and the Midlands prison.

Since 2003, in excess of 2,000 people have chosen to seek support from the Cork Alliance Centre on their release from prison. On average 100 service users at any time access the supports of the service. Some service users have been to university, and more are at, or have been to college. Many have found recovery from addictions, and while others are struggling with their recovery, they are seeking support to change. Those who access the service of the Cork Alliance Centre choose to do so voluntarily.

## Conclusion and Acknowledgements

Clearly the operation of Cork Prison is very much a team effort, led by senior management and supported by a very experienced and committed prison staff, along with a number of Professionals, Individuals, Voluntary, and Community organisations who contribute to the wellbeing and Rehabilitation of prisoners.

The overall focus in Cork Prison is on the life management of Prisoners with mentors available to support Prisoners in the areas of accommodation, training. Social Welfare, medical cards, education, employment, substance abuse programmes, physical and mental health, helping prisoners to address the root cause of their criminal behaviour etc.

With the various professionals both statutory and voluntary etc as outlined in this report available within the prison and in the community, managed by the prison from custody into the community should help prisoners to sort out their lives, particularly those who may be interested in changing their lifestyle

Sincere thanks to Governors Dawson and O'Brien and prison staff for all their help and support in 2017.

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.

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Dermot O'Connell

**Chairman Cork Visiting Committee 2017**