

Arbour Hill Visiting Committee Annual Report For Year Ending December 2005.



**The Minister For Justice, Equality & Law Reform,
72/76 St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2.**

A Chara,

The Visiting Committee to Arbour Hill Prison have pleasure in submitting herein our Annual Report for year ending December 2005.

The Committee.

The Committee met on the second Tuesday of each month, additional to our attendance at monthly meetings two members of the Committee visited the prison every month on an unscheduled basis. The Committee began the year with six members, during the year, the term of office of four of those members expired, two were re-appointed and an additional six members were appointed to the committee. The committee currently consists of ten members. We should like to avail of this opportunity to sincerely thank the two outgoing members for their contribution to the work of this committee.

Summary.

We wish to thank the Governor and all the staff for their courtesy, co-operation, assistance and help which enabled us to fulfil our remit during the past twelve months. As in previous years we found this unit of the Irish Prison Service to have been extremely well run during the past twelve months. Whilst the fabric of the buildings are relatively old and restrictive in size, the maximum utilisation is being achieved and in conditions of cleanliness, warmth and humane ambience. Arbour Hill Prison has a surprising atmosphere of calm and productive harmony between inmates and staff. We believe it is very important to highlight this aspect as it is considerably at variance with the picture all too often painted in the media. More than 40% of the population are not sex offenders and in excess of 40% are under the age of forty years. The present misconception is deleterious in respect of employment, housing, reintegration to family and society for prisoners on release. The Visiting Committee would like to sincerely compliment the management and staff on their professionalism and compassion in creating and sustaining a caring ethos and friendly atmosphere in very challenging circumstances.

Recommendations.

- ✗ *Arbour Hill's Psychiatric Service be extended to a daily attendance on a par with GP services.*
- ✗ *Active sentence management for sex offenders combined with structured release system for offenders who have successfully completed the relevant course(s).*
- ✗ *The development of a strategic policy document on the Treatment & Management of Sex Offenders.*
- ✗ *Programme to be enlarged and fully supportive aftercare programme be established. Successful participation in this programme to be positively recognised in the course of sentence reviews and during considerations for the granting of early release or temporary release. At present participation in this programme does not give a prisoner any reduction in time to be served, consequently the uptake of places is disappointing. We are strongly of the view that this issue will need to be addressed if we are to develop and expand our treatment programmes.*
- ✗ *Sentencing policy of all courts be the subject of a major review. If Judges were to adopt a more considered and proactive approach to sentencing it would contribute enormously to the motivation and progress of persons in the care of the prison service.*
- ✗ *The development and implementation of a service wide pre-release programme for all 'life' and long term prisoners.*
- ✗ *Mandatory testing of all committals to determine the use or presence of prohibited substances.*

Concerns.

Suicide & Self Harm.

Arbour Hill has had only one incident of 'attempted suicide' in the course of the current year. This incident was however very serious and were it not for the intervention of other prisoners and staff it could have been tragic.

We are pleased to note that Prison staff successfully intervened however, we are very concerned that it took nineteen days to before a place in the Central Mental Hospital became available.

Comment.

Arbour Hill continues to operate as a model that should be carefully looked at in the context of future development of custodial facilities. The atmosphere, caring ethos, staff prisoner relationships, drug free status and capacity for sensitively handling the volatile and vulnerable leave little to be desired. All inmates at Arbour Hill have work or study and we suspect this may be a factor together with admirable man management skills in producing the tranquil atmosphere of the prison.

 **Requests/Complaints/Applications.**

☒ In the course of the year a total of four prisoners came to see the Committee.

⊛ [1]One prisoner addressed the Committee on his disagreement with the Doctor in relation to prescribed medication.

(Prisoner informed that this was outside the remit of the VC and that prescribing medication is entirely a matter for the medical professionals involved).

[2]Same prisoner to inform Committee that he was now ‘happy’ with the medication prescribed.

⊛ Prisoner sought the assistance of the Committee’s in getting a single cell.
(Situation apropos cell allocation explained to him).

“ Complained that he had not received a reply to his complaint to the Minister?
(Advised as to the procedure to be adhered to).

Facilities & Services.

Health care.

Health care is catered for by a range of services:

- ✧ 24 hour Medical Orderly/Nurse cover.
- ✧ A G.P. five days a week.
- ✧ Two resident Psychologists
- ✧ A visiting Psychiatrist.⁺
- ✧ Dental care provided by Dublin Dental Hospital.

- ✘ Visiting Psychotherapist.
- ✘ Visiting Chiropodist.
- ✘ Optician as required.

⁺ *The absence of a dedicated Psychiatrist remains a cause for concern.*

**Arbour Hill Prison has an allocation of two psychologists. At present one Psychologist is by necessity primarily occupied in the delivery and co-ordination of therapeutic courses including the 'Sex Offenders Treatment Programme'. The second Psychologist focuses on individual and other non programme work.*

Probation & Welfare.

Arbour Hill has an allocation of two full time and one part time Probation & Welfare officers. The Probation & Welfare Service provide a wide range of services including counselling, participation in the delivery of on site therapeutic courses and interaction with the families of prisoners. Arbour Hill Prison is indeed fortunate to receive an excellent service provided by a very dedicated team.

Treatment Programmes.

Arbour Hill currently offers the following therapy based programmes:

- ◆ *Thinking Skills Programme.*
- ◆ *Group Skills Programme.*
- ◆ *Sex Offenders Therapy Programme.*
- ◆ *'Lifers' Programme.*
- ◆ *Alternatives To Violence Programme.*

Programmes are varied, in general well received and enthusiastically delivered. They are subject to constant revision and evaluation. All treatment programmes including the *Sex Offenders Treatment Programme* are delivered by multidisciplinary teams consisting of Teachers and Probation & Welfare Officers under the supervision of the Psychology Service. The *Sex Offenders Treatment Programme* is delivered by a dedicated Psychologist assisted by Probation & Welfare staff. The Committee wish to record their admiration and support for the above programmes and urge that these initiatives be broadened and extended when resources permit.

Notwithstanding the above we are perturbed at the disappointing uptake of the *Sex Offenders Treatment Programme* by inmate at Arbour Hill. There is little doubt that that participation in this and other courses is both beneficial and rehabilitatory but as we pointed out in our report of last year, the absence of an incentive driven *criteria* continues to contribute to a disappointing uptake in programme places. The Committee appreciates that this is a difficult situation to address and we would like to

commend the Minister For Justice, Equality & Law Reform for his efforts to find a solution to this situation.

Workshops, Training and the Industrial Area.

The industrial area consists of Printing, Braille, Fabrics, Woodwork and Catering. These areas are a quite remarkable example of commitment, enthusiasm and dedication. The work output is most impressive. The industrial staff and the prisoners in their charge are to be complimented and we particularly welcome recent developments in getting certification for some of the prisoners in the various genres. The woodwork shop continues to provide the furnishing for Barrettstown Gang Camp. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to record their sincere appreciation to the prisoners and staff who gave so willingly of their talent, time and energy. FETAC.

We are pleased with the continuation of these courses within the various categories of woodwork, printing and the continuing training in catering.

During the past year seven FETAC approved courses got underway involving a total of sixteen persons.

Educational Facilities/Services.

The Education Unit in the prison continues to provide an excellent service to offenders. A wide range of subject/courses were available at various levels from basic literacy to degree level through the Open University. Educational activities at Arbour Hill Prison involves approx. 87% of the prison population throughout the school year. The education staff are also to be commended for their work in developing Pre-release and Post release Coping Skills courses to facilitate the post release integration of 'life' and other 'long term' prisoners.

The high level of interest and attendance by offenders is indicative of the commitment and enthusiasm of the prison's teaching staff. Additionally the teaching staff continue to participate in the delivery of the therapeutic courses and other extra curricular activities. Arbour Hill Prison is indeed indebted to the VEC for their contribution to the care and well being of those in their charge.

The Kitchen:

As in the previous year the kitchen continues to provide a twenty eight day menu rotation. The dietary needs of oriental and other non national prisoners continues to be catered for. Rice is provided as an alternative to potatoes, additionally special provisions are made to cater for 'religious' requirements for the Muslim inmates. The operating standards in the care and presentation of food continues to be more than compatible to any modern canteen or hotel kitchen. We continue to be impressed by the standard, variety and quality of food prepared and served within the prison.

Spiritual Care.

The prison is served by a full time Catholic Chaplain and a number of visiting Chaplains of other denominations. Interaction with the other support services plays a large part in what could be described as a high profile approach to the spiritual care and well being of the prison population.

Cladded Cell. (Replaced by *Special Observation Suite*).

The cladded cell was used on only four occasions during the year, one ‘*at own*’ request and three for *medical* reasons. We are particularly pleased to record that this facility was replaced by a **Special Observation Suite** in early December: {this facility has been used on one occasion [medical] to date}.

The Committee notes the continued misrepresentation of such facilities in the media and the likely **public confusion** consequent **to such misrepresentation.**

Waste Management.

Prison management view further progress on this issue as a priority in the immediate future. Previous years reductions of approximately 50% of land fill output has been maintained and additional systems to recycle all paper waste, separate glass, separate plastics are now in place. The previously used waste skips have been replaced by a state of the art compacting unit.

Implementation of the Prison Service's *Waste Management Strategy* continues at an admirable pace.

We would also like to record our appreciation to the many individuals and voluntary organisations who, in the course of the year provided support and assistance to prisoners and management alike. Organisations such as AA, NA and the Guild Of St. Philip Neri do tremendous work in custodial settings and their efforts and generosity are to be applauded.

The retirement of The Industrial Manager and the Industrial Supervisor in charge of the Braille Unit are a considerable loss to the prison and prisoners alike: the commitment, industry and expertise they brought to their work will not be easy to

replace. Finally a special expression of thanks to our Secretary for his dedicated efficiency and knowledge which aided our task immensely.

James O'Haurahan. (Chairman).

Ita Greene.

Rita Hayes.

Eithne Killeen.

Mr Eamon Walsh.

Mr Patrick Culloty.

Ms Wilhelmena Daly

Ms Angela O'Connor.

Mr Brian O'Reilly.

Ms Mairin Hyland.

