

Annual Report for 2019

To the

Minister for Justice Charles Flanagan TD

From

Cloverhill Visiting Committee

Introduction

The Visiting Committee is pleased to present the Annual Report for 2019 to the Minister for Justice. The Report records our meeting with prisoners during the year, the issues raised, concerns, complaints and conditions in the prison.

The Committee respectfully acknowledges and thanks all prisoners who asked to meet us during the year. The welfare, safety and successful rehabilitation to society of each prisoner remain our prime concern. Each prisoner has his own private, individual problems and anxieties. In the experience of the Committee prisoners speak openly of their feelings and their personal history, of awareness, of regret for their lifestyle, of the crimes they have committed and have a realistic acceptance of the reality of their lives in prison. Many speak of the loss of family and family contact, especially those prisoners with very young families. During meetings with prisoners we get a unique insight into lives of trauma, social exclusion, of continual struggles with substance abuse and ill health.

The problem of drug addiction is a central feature in the lives of many prisoners. Prisoners speak freely of their drug dependency, the effects of this on their mental health and wellbeing, of their fear for the future and the effects on their families. Frequently prisoners express the desire to be clear of dependency habits and of their worry and anxiety around the drug culture in the prison.

The increase in the number of prisoners, reporting issues relating substance abuse, to stress and related mental health problem, in 2019, is a matter of serious concern to the Committee. The availability of drugs, the culture of drugs in the prison, reflects the reality of life in society and as a wider societal issue needs to be urgently addressed by a multi-agency approach at the highest governmental level.

The number of prisoners with serious mental health issues is of deep concern to the Committee. There is a constant flow of prisoners, between twenty two (22) to thirty two (32) prisoners, in area D2 urgently in need of appropriate treatment in a safe, secure community setting. It is noted that many of these prisoners are from poorer backgrounds or homeless and prison is the least suitable place for them. Care and security of these prisoners has a serious impact on staff resources in all areas of the prison. During the year the Committee saw the care and concern shown by the Governor and staff in Cloverhill at the serious, certified mental condition of a prisoner and the resources involved before his successful transfer to the Central Mental Hospital.

The Committee understand that a certain stigma around the issue of mental health remains among prisoners and in the prison. Some prisoners can be reluctant to seek specific assistance and prefer to address sensitive issues within the guise of more general subjects as in the school or Red Cross area. The Committee would like this noted.

The Committee believes that the area of mental health is a societal problem and needs to be addressed at the highest government departmental level.

An area of concern for the Committee is the amount of staff shortages experienced in the prison, the frequent rotation of staff and the effect this has on the smooth running of the prison, the services and the prisoners. Prisoners and prison staff, regularly refer to the frustration experienced at the unscheduled closure of services.

The Committee acknowledge the very good relationships we have with the Governor, Assistant Governors and prison staff and thank them for the courtesy and consideration they continue to show us. We appreciate the easy access we have to the Governor, the senior staff of Cloverhill and their availability to meet and engage with the Visiting Committee at all times. The Committee notes the good interaction that continues to exist between prisoners and staff, the good name recognition, the insight, humanity and awareness of each individual prisoner's history.

The Committee are concerned at the demands the issue of substance abuse places on the prison staff, and are conscious of the difficult incidents that occurred this year and of the possible impact of these incidents on the health and well being of staff.

The Committee would like to thank the Secretary to the Governor for the high professional standard of her work for us, for her good will and consistent helpfulness in facilitating our meetings.

Visiting Committee

The Visiting Committee currently consists of three members:

Nuala Ryan – Chairperson

Fintan Hudson

Laura Jenkins

On occasions during the year the three members were not always available to attend all meetings and visits, operating with such small numbers can be challenging. The Committee has referred to our concern regarding this matter in earlier reports and ask now that the numbers be increased. During the 2019 year the Committee met with twenty seven (27) prisoners and made thirty one (31) visits to Cloverhill Prison.

The Chairperson of Cloverhill Visiting Committee delivered a letter for Minister Charles Flanagan, TD and Minister for Justice and Equality, to his office in St. Stephen's Green. The letter outlined the alarm and concern for the welfare of a prisoner held in a Special Observation Cell (SOC) and in isolation. The Committee met and spoke with the person. The letter noted the care given to the prisoner by the Governor and management team and their concern at his continued confinement. There were no beds available in the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) at the time.

During the year the Chairperson attended the quarterly held meetings of the National Chairpersons Group held in the Brian Stack Training Centre, Portlaoise. The Director General of the Irish Prison Service, Caron McCaffrey attended two meetings of the Committee.

Reports of these meetings are circulated to Visiting Committee members by the Chairperson.

Members of the Visiting Committee attended three training days in the same venue. In June 2019, Inspector of Prisons, Patricia Gilheaney, delivered a talk to the group.

Visits to Prisoners.

The Visiting Committee met with twenty seven (27) prisoners. Because of the nature of Cloverhill Prison many prisoners are often released or transferred to other prisons prior to the visit or may be in court on the day.

On one occasion, in 2019, for example, there were eight prisoners listed to see the Visiting Committee, this number had reduced to three on the day of our visit.

During our walks through the prison and in the work areas the Committee find that prisoners acknowledge us, regularly chat and ask for a meeting, which is arranged. Sometimes the prisoners just want an informal exchange or have previously met with us. This is seen by the Committee as a useful and informative opportunity to exchange with prisoners.

The Committee continue to monitor the progress of some of the individual prisoners, especially those prisoners with mental health issues. In some instances, before we can make a return visit the prisoners has transferred or has been released on bail.

Concerns raised by prisoners

- Overcrowding – difficulty sleeping – disruptions from the night committals
- Health and healthcare issues – including physical pain
- Mental health issues – stress – anxiety – depression – concern for family – poor sleep – self-harm – anger and frustration – drugs
- Delay in access to Medical Doctor
- Access to prescribed drugs – drugs used prior to prison
- Access to hospital visits and further tests
- Transfers to other prisons – cell transfers – especially to single and non-smoking cells – transfers to other work areas
- P19 issues – prisoners disgruntled at punishments – considered unreasonable
- Enhanced status – desire to achieve or reinstated status
- Lack of access to facilities – closures with not prior notice
- Scuffles and tension in the yard – incidents
- Visiting rights – non screened visits for family members – especially small children – phone calls

Prisoners regularly refer to stress and request medication, especially medication used prior to their detention. Sleep deprivation, acute stress and pain are common reasons given when requesting medicines. Anger at their situation, at the prison system and often at themselves is expressed, as is utter frustration of their lives. Prisoners speak also of their vulnerability. Medical issues arise at almost every visit and we can see agitation and mental health distress in an increasing number of prisoners.

Prisoners speak of their mental anguish and express feelings that they “can’t hack” it any more.

Prisoners’ grievances during the year include sleeping arrangements, lack of smoking areas, loss of clothing and perceived wrongful blame over incidents (usually in the yard). Lack of facilities, unannounced closure of facilities and uncertainty about schedules are all regularly referred to as sources of great frustration.

Sleep deprivation, overcrowding in cells and disruption during the night when committals (usually immigrant committals) arrive in an already crowded cell are among the issues that feature regularly. Cloverhill has the highest number of committal persons in the country. These men may be in the cell overnight or for a few days awaiting deportation. This is not only highly disruptive but unfair to the prisoners and has adverse effects on his health. The Committee believes that overcrowding in the cells and tension in the prison population are closely linked.

The Committee suggest that F Block should be urgently considered as a place to house these committal persons pending the provision of a purpose built facility.

The Committee meet with each prisoner privately in a separate room generally on the landing and listen carefully and note his grievances and concerns. The issues and concerns of the prisoner are raised with the Governor or Assistant Governor. We are satisfied that the concerns of the prisoners are considered and dealt with promptly and sensitively. The Governor, Assistant Governor, or the Class Officer will give the feedback to the prisoner. In the majority of cases there is a practical solution and a fair explanation. In some cases there were issues that were not possible to resolve. These would include transfers to other prisons, unscreened visits, visits when a P19 has been issued and medicines not dispensed in the prison service.

Complaints by prisoners are lodged in the locked Complaint Box positioned on each landing. Complaint forms are visible and accessible. Details of the issues raised and prisoner detail are recorded and categorised in the Complaints Ledger and are dealt with by the appropriate staff member or by an external investigator. The Visiting Committee views the Complaints Ledger at every meeting. We observe the nature and frequency of each complaint and if there is a pattern of complaint. The Committee have received no complaints from prisoners regarding the complaints procedure and understand that the procedure is currently under review.

The Committee acknowledged and thank each prisoner for their trust and openness in sharing their most private and sensitive thought and fears with us. We listen carefully and respectfully to each prisoner. At all times we respect his dignity and are conscious of the confidentiality of each meeting and of the responsibility of our position.

Accommodation

The Visiting Committee is seriously concerned at the prisoner cell occupancy and in-cell sanitation number in Cloverhill. During the year the number of prisoners in triple cells and toileting in the presence of others has remained consistently high.

There has been an increase of the prison population in Cloverhill in 2019. The numbers can vary depending on the time of year and at the weekend when there is an increase in the number of foreign nationals arriving at the prison.

Table 1. Form1 overview on 15th October 2019 show again the high numbers of prisoners sharing triple cells, with a smaller number of prisoners in 4+ cells.

Prison	Number in custody 15th October 2019	No of Prisoners in single Cell	No of Prisoners in Double Cell	No of Prisoners in a Triple Cell.	No of Prisoners in a 4+ Cell	Toilet in presence of others	24 access to toilet facilities in private.
Cloverhill	439	55	40	300	44	384	55

Extracted from Irish Prison Service - Census Prison Population October 2019 - Cell occupancy - In Cell Sanitation

The Committee repeat that we consider this situation a transgression of the dignity of the human person and contrary to the respect and human rights that all prisoners are entitled to. The Committee recommend urgent consideration to be given to the discontinuation of this practice.

The Committee note that during the year there has been an increase in the number of sentenced prisoners sent by the District Court to Cloverhill. Many of these prisoners when they are returned to Cloverhill ask to go on protection. As other prisons can decline to accept a prisoner on protection the prisoner thus remains in Cloverhill prison. The limited facilities and lack of work-shops in Cloverhill, the Committee believe, make it a wholly inappropriate prison for the welfare of sentenced prisoners and their preparation for release back into the community.

The Committee note that remand and sentenced prisoner mix together on the same landings and while we acknowledge that this practice has not been raised as a concern by prisoners we recommend an end to this practice.

The overcrowding in cells continues with prisoners regularly sleeping on mattresses on the floor. The regular but unpredictable numbers of persons sent by Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) to Cloverhill arriving at all hours is a cause of disruption in the prison. The Committee believe that immigration detainees should not be housed in prisons and as already referred to, suggest F Block should be explored as a potentially suitable interim solution for immigration detainees.

Deaths in Custody

The Committee regret to report that three prisoners died during the year 2019. Two of the prisoners had been ill for some time and died in hospital. The third prisoner died under very tragic circumstances in the prison. His death is under investigation by the Inspector of Prisons and An Garda Siochana. The Visiting Committee expresses our sincere condolences to the families and friends of the deceased.

Both prisoners during their time in hospital were visited regularly by the Chaplaincy staff of Cloverhill and support at different stages was given to the families

The death of the prisoner in Cloverhill was particularly tragic. The Committee want to record the caring and compassionate response of the prison staff at the time of the tragedy.

A short time later the Governor of Cloverhill Prison convened and chaired a Critical Incident Review meeting that included persons from each area of the prison. The three members of the Visiting Committee attended. The death was especially traumatic for both prisoners and prison staff. The Visiting Committee wants to note the humanity, compassion and the sadness clearly felt by all involved in the tragedy.

The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) protocol was invoked in the immediate aftermath of the death of the prisoner. The full support of Psychology Service in Cloverhill was made available to prisoners and prison staff at the time of the death of the prisoner.

Medical Centre

The Visiting Committee welcomes the renovations to the medical centre. On our visits to the centre we can see that the centre is a fully functioning and fully equipped surgery. It is now a bright and pleasant environment for both the prisoners and for the staff to work in.

Adequate staffing levels remain the major requirement at present and the position is as follows:

- One nurse on certified long term sick leave
- One nurse on long term leave – injury on duty
- Two half job sharing nursing posts vacant
- One retirement post from January 2020 vacant
- One retirement post from March 2020 vacant

The volume of committals from the courts and from Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) has increased over the year. Daily committals figures are now twenty (20) to twenty five (25) persons. Most committals come to the medical centre in the evening or during the night and come from varying sources. Many are in poor health, some are homeless, with differing health issues, and some are immigrants with little English. Most committals have complicated health and personal problems.

Each person is individually assessed and checked on arrival in the prison. This places considerable strain on the single night nurse on duty. Given the status of Cloverhill as remand prison and the high and varying number of committals who present during night time, the Committee once again identify the need for a second night nurse as a serious issue to be urgently addressed.

The number of prisoners using methadone continues to be high and continues to increase each year. The numbers can vary depending on the type of committals and the drug addiction issues involved. In general the number of prisoners using this medication can range from one hundred and fifty (150) to one hundred and ninety (190) daily. On a randomly selected day in December 2019 there were one hundred and eighty seven (187) persons attending the centre for treatment.

The medical centre is a busy place and operates to a high standard. The increase in the numbers of prisoners attending the medical centre both at day and night time make the provision of full staffing levels a matter of urgency.

Psychology Services

The Cloverhill Psychology Services expanded in 2019 and now includes a Senior Psychologist, Staff Grade Psychologist and an Assistant Psychologist. Two (2) new Psychology Service offices were also added to the service.

Clients' reported experiencing mental health difficulties such as depression, anxiety complex trauma, suicidal tendencies including self-harm, complex bereavement and emotional difficulties.

Throughout 2019, eight hundred and four (804) individual intervention sessions were offered by the Psychology Service with an 83% attendance rate. A number of factors that included Officer Shortages, court appearances, prison transfers, featured as reasons for the non-attendance of the remaining 17% of individual interventions.

The Visiting Committee understands that staff shortages accounted for 9% of individual intervention sessions offered by the service that did not go ahead and that an additional in-reach Officer to support the running of services on E2 corridor, including the Psychology Service is necessary for the full functioning of the service.

Service provision for group interventions was greatly impacted due to the remand nature of Cloverhill with a high proportion of persons being transferred or released mid intervention or unable to attend scheduled sessions due to court appearances.

There have been improvements in the waiting time for Psychology Services between referral into the service and the intake assessment. The Committee understand that the delay is a number of weeks. Because of the nature of Cloverhill, we would like to see the earliest possible access to the service for individuals as soon as they are referred.

Throughout the year the Cloverhill Psychology Service was involved in planning, developing and delivering monthly training and support to officers working on the D2 landing. This area primarily accommodates people who have a diagnosed and active psychosis many of whom are on the waiting list for the Central Mental Hospital. The Committee have already referred to this waiting list earlier in this report

It is clear to the Visiting Committee from our meetings and visits that a harmonious co-operation and support works system exist between the different services in Cloverhill and in particular between the Psychology Service, the Education Centre and the Red Cross and the Prison Officers who manage the services on the E2 corridor. This contributes hugely to the mental health and well-being of the prisoner in prison and later on his release. In 2019 the Psychology Service worked alongside the Red Cross volunteers and the Education Centre to carry out a Red Cross mental health project. As part of this initiative a mental health survey was distributed to all prisoners in Cloverhill of which ninety three (93) were completed. The three most prevalent mental health issues reported by the prisoners were depression (73%), stress/anxiety (68%) and anger (55%) – issues raised by a significant number of prisoners seen by the Visiting Committee and reported in an earlier section of this report.

Addiction Counselling Service

High numbers of persons arriving in Cloverhill Prison suffer with addiction and mental health issues. Referrals are received from the Probation service, the Psychiatry service and the Psychology service. Referrals are often on receipt of a court order. These men are at their most vulnerable and are most in need of professional care and addiction counselling. For some it is their first time in prison. The Visiting Committee is aware of the high level of work done by the addiction counsellors and note that resources are limited. At present there are only two addiction counsellors and each work three days and two days during the week.

The numbers on the waiting list can vary; the average waiting time is seven (7) weeks.

Clients are prioritised in the following manner:

High Risk: If deemed to be in a chaotic state using drugs, alcohol or it is their first time in prison.

Medium Risk: Methadone users either needing support or detox, if they are less than twenty one (21) years or nearing their release date from prison.

The approach to each client is one to one counselling and there are usually eight (8) to ten (10) counselling sessions.

The service helps clients to learn and develop skills to overcome his addiction struggle. In addition the service provides a wide range of supports and information to the client prior to his release. These include practical measures to help him recognise what might trigger a response and to help develop a step by step alternative coping strategies for a sober lifestyle.

When a client is transferred to another prison a referral for continuity of care goes to the addiction team in that prison to support his care.

Cloverhill has a large number of prisoners with drug related conditions and the numbers of prisoners attending the methadone clinic continues to be high. While figures can vary the Medical Centre report that attendance numbers can range from one hundred and fifty (150) to one hundred and ninety (190). Because of the vital role of addiction counselling in the recovery and future rehabilitation of the prisoner the Visiting Committee recommend as a priority that the number of counselling staff be increased to allow the prisoner avail of the service at the earliest possible stage of his remand period.

Integrated Service Management

Cloverhill is a remand prison and the responsibilities of the Integrated Service Management (ISM) office are slightly more diverse than in a sentenced prison. The number of sentenced prisoners can vary and are generally no higher than 10% of the prison population.

The central role of the ISM officer is to help prisoners to manage their sentence. The needs of the prisoner are accessed at the initial interview and then referred to the appropriate service providers. The personal progress of the prisoner is monitored and reviewed regularly by a multi-disciplinary team. Prisoners engaged in this process may be accessed for open prison or Community Return Scheme (CRS).

The Visiting Committee notes that prisoners who are deemed to be vulnerable or a possible risk to the community on release are the subject of a case conference prior to their release and various internal and external agencies may be included to determine the best course for the future welfare of the prisoner and the community. The prisoner is usually present at this conference except in exceptional circumstances.

The Integrated Service (ISM) team in Cloverhill prison remains at two ISM officers and one In-Reach officer.

One of the responsibilities of the ISM in Cloverhill is the management of E-division, which provides access to the various service providers to meet their clients. These services include: addiction, psychology, chaplaincy, probation, Prison in Reach Court Liaison Service (PICLS), resettlement services and other external agencies. Interaction mainly takes place on E-corridor, in the three interview suites. All services must pre-book the rooms and appointments are electronically logged.

Prisoners are escorted from various locations in the prison to the services. At any one time there can be three or four services seeing prisoners. These meetings are supervised at all times and once completed the prisoner is returned to his appropriate area. There is one In-reach Officer assigned to the corridor, who regularly assists with the collection and return of prisoners. Because of staff shortages the second ISM Officer is regularly re-deployed to other duties.

This puts enormous strain on resources and means that some appointments are cancelled. As all appointments are pre booked by the services cancellation of the appointment leads to great frustration for the prisoner and also to the services and prison staff. Services have reported to the Committee that any break in continuity of service, particularly if it reoccurs, can mean that the prisoners who do decide to partake can lose interest and be less inclined to engage with services that deal with offending behaviour. Continued absence from his service programme can have an immediate and crucial effect on the progress of the prisoner.

The Committee firmly believe that it is vital that the staffing numbers for this area are maintained to ensure the continued efficient service is maintained. Any re-deployment of staff impacts directly on the service and on the sentence management of the prisoner. The Committee has observed the busy corridor and the well organised and efficient running of this service. In the best interest of the prisoners, for continuity and reliability of service the Committee believe that there is a need for a second In-Reach Officer. This additional officer has already been requested by the Psychology Service.

As a remand prison, initially set up to cater for short term remand people with no workshop activities, the services, the school and the gym are therefore especially important for the well-being and future rehabilitation of the individual.

The Committee remain deeply concerned at the loss of the Community Welfare Officer from prisons, withdrawn by the Department of Social Protection. This service was vitally important for the prisoner in many practical ways at a time when the individual is particularly vulnerable. The ISM, conscious of the needs of the prisoner at this time, supply a release pack, process the medical card and undertake other practical measures depending on the type of release involved. Every effort is made to ensure that the needs of individual in so far as possible are attended to and reflects the concern of the staff of ISM for the well-being of the prisoners.

The Kitchen

The kitchen continues to operate efficiently providing a high standard of food. The Visiting Committee observes the clean orderly manner, the efficient preparation of the food and service and the good working relationship between staff and prisoners.

Previous reports have referred to areas that were of concern to the Committee. These include the equipment, the floor area and the toilet facilities. We understand that faulty kitchen equipment has been replaced. There are two new ovens which are in good repair. The floor needs urgent attention.

The Committee has seen the condition of the floor and note some loose tiles. The Committee consider these to be hazardous and recommend that the area is in need of immediate attention.

The report by the Committee 2019 noted that with the exception of some remedial work the kitchen remains in its original format and design and in general remains in need of modernisation. The walls need to be re-surfaced: a substance like white rock has been suggested.

The Committee is concerned at the lack of proper toilet facilities for the men working in the kitchen. There is one cubicle, one hand wash sink and two showers provided for the men. There were sixteen (16) workers on the day of our last visit. The Committee does not consider this to be hygienic and would like to see these facilities attended to as a matter of some urgency. The locker room and locker space is small and cramped for this number of workers.

The training for prisoners is minimal, a basic indoctrination course with no follow up. Because of the nature of a remand prison we understand why it is not possible for prisoner to obtain a certificate or diploma. The Committee would suggest that a record of the work done by the prisoners in the kitchen be included in his release file and believes this would be an encouragement for those men who might be inclined to further their training after release to develop skills that can be used in a productive and practical way within their community.

The Committee regularly visit the kitchen area and is aware of the congenial working environment and the efficient manner of its operation. To maintain these high standards the Committee emphasise the necessity for these areas of concern to be addressed and is pleased to record that no prisoner complaints regarding the food produced in the kitchen have ever been reported to the Committee.

The Laundry

The laundry in Cloverhill continues to be a busy efficient unit providing an excellent service to the prison. The Visiting Committee has called into the centre several times during the year, most times on random visits. We again observe a positive working environment and an excellent relationship between the Manager and the men who work there.

In previous reports the Committee have commented on the underutilisation of the laundry, the roster arrangements and on the state of the laundry equipment.

The Committee is pleased to report the recent addition of four new dryers to replace the unreliable and broken dryers. In addition to the three existing machines, there is a new washing machine and this will shortly be in operation. Although the three existing washing machines are old and regularly break down we understand that they are efficient when working and have no problem reaching the disinfection temperature. The centre has reported that there has been a vast improvement in the turnover of the laundry.

The laundry operates from Monday to Friday, with limited opening hours. The current roster arrangement means there is approximately twenty three (23) hours and twenty (20) minutes per week allocated to wash the clothing and bedding for three hundred and sixty (360) to four hundred and forty (440) prisoners. Given that Cloverhill is a remand prison with prisoners moving in and out of the prison it is likely that these figures will at times be in excess of the figures quoted here.

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Wheatfield Prison means that Wheatfield launders some of the bedding requirements of Cloverhill. At times this has been problematic as any disruption at Wheatfield, staff shortages, machinery problems has a serious adverse effect on the laundry service in Cloverhill.

At present the laundry is operating a temporary twelve (12 hour) seven (7) day work week. Previous Annual Reports have outlined the belief that a permanent roster arrangement would allow Cloverhill to act independently of Wheatfield and be totally self-sufficient and see an end to the SLA and its associated problems. This will benefit not only the workers in the laundry with more work and training, but the wider population of prisoners with clean bedding and clothing.

There is one Work Training Officer (WTO). The number of prisoners working in the prison laundry can vary between two (2) to six (6), six being the maximum number. Due to the nature of Cloverhill as a remand prison there is a consistent turnover of workers in the laundry and prisoners frequently have to attend court. Arrangements made by the WTO and the Education Unit allow prisoners attend classes in the school. The shortage of working hours means that prisoners only receive practical training, as under these circumstances it is not possible to provide any formal Guild training to prisoners working there. A greater number of long term prisoners, either on remand or sentenced working in the laundry would enable prisoners to progress to this formal Guild training and also greatly benefit the efficient running of the centre.

The Visiting Committee is pleased at the recent investment in laundry equipment. Previous Annual Reports have outlined our belief that certain measures, outlined above, that include an increase in the number of prisoners, with more long term prisoners working in the laundry and a back-to-back roster need to be addressed now. These provisions would allow for training and skills relevant and necessary for the labour market. The certificate of Guild of Launderers and Cleaners would be a huge boost in confidence and greatly improve the men's prospects for employment and rehabilitation when released.

The Committee has observed the very good atmosphere in the laundry on all our visits and are impressed with the industry, work ethic and general satisfaction and the very good relationship between all those working in the laundry. It is a good place to work in.

The Gym

In previous Annual Reports the Visiting Committee have highlighted the dilapidated conditions of the equipment in the gym, the lack of maintenance and replacements for gym equipment and the shortage of sportswear, of towels and the random closing of the gym.

Some of the equipment used in the gym, in particular the weight lifting equipment is now more than twenty (20) years old and needs to be replaced. On visits to the gym the Committee has seen the need for repair and the Chord/rope holding parts of equipment and while there has been an improvement in the maintenance of the equipment clearly new equipment is now needed.

Random closure of the gym and is regularly raised by prisoners and is a source of frustration. Prisoners raise the lack of access, of waiting at the gates for entry to the gym and their frustration when told that the gym has closed.

There have been ongoing issues regarding the shortage of gym wear during the first month of a newly remanded prisoner. The addition of a new domestic sized washer and drier has eased pressure on the towels problem but continuous issues regarding the supply of towels and washing facilities, however, remain a problem. There are no specific gym towels and it has been suggested that gym towels be of a different colour to towels used on the landing would greatly benefit the hygiene of all users of the gym.

The Committee understand that there are insufficient wipes and hand sprays.

The practice of administering methadone to users prior to their gym time is seen as a barrier to attendance.

The Committee visit and keep in regular contact with the staff in the gym. It is a well-run unit. We observe the good spirit and camaraderie present in that space. We especially recognise the importance of an orderly, structured, regular gym regime to the health and well-being of the prison and so t the wellness of the prison. The Committee believe the practice of engagement, the discipline, is a positive foundation for the future life of the prisoner in his life after sentence. It is a priority for the Visiting Committee that the gym be maintained to the highest standards and be accessible to prisoners.

School – Education Centre

On visits to the Education Centre the Visiting Committee are always greatly impressed with the bright colourful aspect of the school with a variety of classes taking place, the energy and concentration of the students and the calm environment in the school space.

The Committee is happy to note that the school has experienced few closures this year and the improvement in opening hours referred to in last years' Annual Report has continued. Of concern to the Committee are the numerous closures of the gym which serves A and B wing, and the impact this has on the teachers who work directly in the gym. Because the gym is one of the main areas of recruitment of prisoners for classes in the school the closures of the facility challenges the establishment and maintenance of a successful link between the prisoner and teacher. The Committee is concerned that such closures will lead to a decrease in the number of people availing of school based Health and Fitness classes.

The average school weekly attendance was eighty five (85) and includes students from the gym.

The number of long-term prisoners in Cloverhill continues to increase. The Committee is concerned that the hours of work in the prison by long term prisoners, enhanced prisoners, greatly limit their access to suitable courses in day time education and feel that short-term module courses should be prioritised.

The Committee understand that requests from the school for the results of assessment by the Psychiatry Service relating to the suitability of prisoners on D landing for attendance to the school have not been communicated to the school. It would be beneficial if there was a system in place to enable these prisoners to attend classes.

The Visiting Committee is happy that the school is adequately resourced in terms of Officers, teachers' staff and general materials. Again there were healthy levels of educational standards reached. Certification was achieved in a range of subjects ranging from Junior Certificate maths to General Learning Certificate – QQ1 – Level 2. Accreditation is provided by a number of awarding bodies. The Committee recognise the high level of commitment of the staff and the good relations that appear to exist between students and staff and congratulate both students and staff on these achievements.

During the year there was a broadening of the curriculum when some craft based subjects were introduced. This area is to be explored later in terms of accreditation of student learning.

There is an ongoing problem with the ventilation levels in the school. On visits to the school we can say that the problem was noticeable and was more acute in the class rooms on the left of the school corridor. The rooms are stuffy and teachers complained of headaches and a general sense of fatigue. This is particularly noticeable in the music room, which is soundproofed. Ventilation levels in spring and Summer time in the centre is extremely difficult for both students and staff and the Committee consider this to be a health and safety issue.

In the Annual Report of last year the Committee noted that space is limited and the school thus restrained. There are seven classrooms. Significant capital and investment would be needed to extend the size of the school. The benefit of an enlarged school for the increased number of prisoners who could avail of the classes would be of enormous value to students during their time in Cloverhill and later on release to the community as well as the well-being of the prison.

Prisoners and the centre would benefit from the provision of more activity-based subjects.

Prisoners speak of the positive effects of courses taken in the education centre – Mindfulness, Meditation, Sleep Management, Anxiety and Addiction Counselling. These courses are facilitated by the Psychology Section and Addiction Counselling Service. In the time a prisoner is detained we believe that every positive effort should be made and to encourage and support him at every level to avail of the services in the prison. Education and the additional courses the Committee have referred to are invaluable practical assets to the prisoner, to his general well-being and following his release, to his community.

The Red Cross

The Irish Red Cross in Cloverhill is an education programme that works in collaboration with Education Centre in Cloverhill and the Irish Prison Service. The programme initiative is a people centred service, the emphasis is on personal development and taking personal responsibility for behaviour. Prisoners who volunteer for the programme can become fledged Irish Red Cross Volunteers for the duration of their sentence in Cloverhill.

Twenty (20) volunteer students began the course on 7th November 2018, thirteen (13) volunteer students graduated, 12th May 2019. On completion of their training volunteers continue in their daily role to make every effort to improve the community by assisting in other projects and responding to health issues. Volunteer prisoners have an opportunity to train as facilitators for programmes that include Overdose Prevention and Culture on Non-Violence and Peace.

Volunteers have six (6) months training in a range of skills that includes communications, teamwork, and effectiveness. Volunteers initiated and completed a number of wide ranging, innovative and informative projects during the year. Prisons are involved in the selection of projects. Some of these projects are set out below:

1. Hygiene Campaign.
2. Ethnic Census.
3. Mental Health Survey and a separate Mental Health Workshops and activities.
4. New Committal Leaflet.
5. Oberstown Project.

The projects are a collaborative experience that involves the full assistance of the prison community, The Governor, Chief Officer and Medical staff. There is a huge degree of trust on all sides involved in creating these imaginative and practical projects.

The Committee understand that during the year lack of a nurse facilitator prevented the completion of some modules that included 'The Culture of Non-Violence and Peace'. Wheatfield Prison provided a facilitator to enable some volunteers to complete the section on 'Overdose Prevention'. No nurse was available for continuous health topics during the year.

The Committee is impressed with every aspect of the team and their achievements, in particular the emphasis on the expansion of the character of the prisoner and the development of practical skills in the programme. The Committee consider the interaction between the staff and the prisoners together with the involvement of other prisoners in deciding on the project to be undertaken to be a vital part of the success of this programme.

The Committee underline the importance of continuity and certainty in the programmes for those prisoners that have volunteered. Staff shortages account for some of the shortfalls. The Committee recommends that a dedicated nurse be available for Red Cross programmes every Wednesday afternoon and believe that there should be three dedicated officers, usually for three times a week, to enable both the Education Centre and Red Cross to reach full potential and provide services to the prisoners in the limited time they are in Cloverhill.

It is evident to the Committee that the spirit of co-operation and good relationship that exist between the prison staff, Governor, Chief Officer, Assistant Chief Officers (ACO) and services has contributed greatly to the success of the programme.

The Committee believe that an extension of hours for certain activities, School, Gym and Red Cross, would greatly benefit the prisoner during his stay in prison and assist his successful rehabilitation in society.

Chaplaincy 2019

Since late year the number of Chaplains has increased to 2.5 but this falls short of the three (3) full time permanent posts that Cloverhill Prison had until 2011

The Chaplaincy service provides a non-judgemental supportive out-reach service to those in custody, their families and prison staff. This service is available seven (7) days per week with twenty four (24) hour availability. Prisoners are regularly referred to the Committee by the Chaplains and we know first-hand the level and commitment provided to the prison community. The extensive service includes ongoing contact and support for the families of deceased prisoners and includes visits to hospitals. Chaplains have a unique role to play in support and prisoner care and are present in times of crises, illness and bereavement.

Three prisoners of Cloverhill died in 2019. The level of support and comfort given to the families and to those in custody at these distressing times is immeasurable.

The Committee know of the high level of trust and confidence that already exists between those in custody, their families and the Chaplaincy. The Visiting Committee has good and regular contact with the Chaplaincy, and believes that it is now increasingly difficult for the Chaplaincy to maintain this level of service and support. We believe that providing three (3) fulltime permanent posts will have an increased positive impact on a service that provides such significant value to the prison population and staff in the prison.

Conclusion

The Visiting Committee is pleased to report the improvements that have taken place in Cloverhill in the last year. The Committee is particularly happy with the updating of the Medical Centre and is aware of the enormous benefit the facilities have for all those who use the centre. The investment in the laundry and kitchen equipment is welcomed. We regret the gym equipment remains dilapidated and underline the need for more resources there.

The prison and the prison environment are well maintained, clean, bright and with good appearance. The Committee have visited all areas of the prison and freely inspected the working areas, talked to prison staff and to prisoners on the landing. On our monthly visits and on our announced visits we walk through the communal areas and on the landing and observe the food and the prisoners being served their meals.

The Committee maintain a visible presence in Cloverhill and welcome this informal interaction with prisoners and class officers on the landings and at their work. We have met professional and non-professional prison service staff and in-house staff who work in specific areas of the prison to learn and get a better understanding of sub-culture issues in the prison.

The Committee remain impressed with the well maintained standards in Cloverhill and observe the high quality of the work of the enhanced prisoners, the concentration and willingness they bring to their areas of work. Prisoners regularly speak of their desire to attain enhanced status. The painting programme has been continued, the corridors are fresh, the Chapel area remains exemplary and the general appearance is excellent.

The Committee commends the quality of the maintenance work of the prisoners in the reflective garden of remembrance for deceased staff and the high quality of garden work around the grounds.

The Committee wish to thank the Governor, the Assistant Governors and prison staff for their courtesy and consideration in facilitating our meetings and wish to acknowledge the prompt and professional manner of their response to issues raised by prisoners at meetings with us.

The members of the Visiting Committee look forward to the continuation of this positive and productive working relationship.

Recommendations

The Visiting Committee recommends that the provision of single cell accommodation, the consideration of the dignity of the human person, be addressed as a matter of urgency

The issue of overcrowding cell conditions, cell occupancy and the lack of total toilet privacy needs urgent consideration

The Committee proposes that F Block to be used as a temporary measure for immigrant persons.

Concerns have been raised by prisoners of the probability homelessness following release. The Committee recommends that increased funding and resources be made available to practically address these fears.

The Committee remain deeply concerned at the lack of a Community Welfare Officer, withdrawn by the Department of Social Protection, and would welcome reinstatement of this position

The Addition of a second night nurse – is now urgent because of the nature of Cloverhill Prison

Staff shortages need review, particularly in relation to classes and treatment services, to ensure reliability of services

Of serious concern to the Committee is the level of drugs in the prison and the access to drugs from one particular source, the wall in the exercise yard of the prison, The Committee propose that additional serious and concentrated resources be made available to deter these attempts to supply illegal substances to inmates.

Mental health issues to be prioritised. The Visiting Committee continues to have concerns about the mental health of prisoners in Cloverhill requiring safe and secure treatment in an appropriate community setting.

The Committee recommends Formal Guild training to be available to prisoners working in areas outlined – Kitchen, Laundry.

Gym equipment to be updated as a priority

The Committee recommend an increase in the number of Chaplains.

The Kitchen area needs to be up-dated and the provision of additional toilet facilities in kitchen need to be addressed

The Committee recommend that the poor ventilation levels in the School area, particularly in Spring and Summer time, be treated as a priority.