

MAGHABERRY PRISON

BOARD OF VISITOR'S

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

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1. Mission Statement of the Board of Visitors

A Board of Visitors is appointed for each prison in Northern Ireland by the Secretary of State under the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953. The Board is required to:

- Visit the prison regularly and report to the Secretary of State on the conditions of imprisonment and the treatment of prisoners;
- Consider requests and complaints made by prisoners to the Board;
- Report matters of concern to the Governor, or in serious cases, the Secretary of State;
- Exercise certain powers that are given to Boards under the Prison and Young Offenders' Centre Rules (Northern Ireland) 1995.

2. Chairperson's Introduction

This report covers the work, activities and observations of the Board of Visitors for HMP Maghaberry for the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005.

During this period the building work on the separated houses following the Steele Review has, in the main, been completed and the dispute with the Prison Officers' Association has been resolved. This has allowed the focus of attention to move to activities associated with the rehabilitation of prisoners.

The Board cannot emphasize too highly to the public the significance of this work. While many of our citizens, understandably caught up in their own daily concerns and cares, are content to leave all consideration of prisoners to others, they should not forget that all of the members of society are inextricably interwoven.

Today's prisoners will return to ordinary life where hopefully they can make a positive rather than a negative contribution to society. Much of the potential for successful reintegration, however, depends on the intervention and efforts of those working at all levels within the prison environment. This work is often underestimated and sometimes held in insufficient esteem and appreciation by those "outside".

The Board has seen very positive steps taken by the Northern Ireland Prison Service in regard to resettlement planning and support, child-centred visits, partner support groups, work on improving literacy and numeracy, family focused visits and the restructuring of workshops/vocational training. There is



increased collaboration between the psychology department, probation officers, NIACRO, Thru-care, and healthcare, all with the aim of moving towards the goal of reducing re-offending. All these are highly commended by the Board. However, it is clear to all that there are pressing problems in regard to the management and provision of services to prisoners with mental health problems and those exhibiting personality disorders. **The Board urges that priority consideration is given to developing strategies for managing these prisoners in a humane and supportive environment.**

In her engagements with prison personnel the Chair acknowledges the consistent courtesy and efficiency shown to her from all members of the Service. The Chair also takes this opportunity to thank the Vice Chairman, the Training Officer, members who sit on the Northern Ireland Association of Members of Boards of Visitors (NIAMBOV), the energetic Editor and all the Board members for their help in producing this annual report and all their work so generously given throughout the year. It has been a privilege to chair such a dedicated group of people, who voluntarily give so much of their time to monitor this very demanding environment on behalf of the public.

3. Aspects of the Board's Work

During the period of this report there were over 300 visits to the prison by members of the Board specifically to look into prisoner requests and concerns. Co-incidentally, there were approximately 300 requests by prisoners over the same period. Besides these visits members also went into the prison to attend monthly Board meetings where, amongst other things, members discuss and debate with the prison Governor on a range of issues and receive key briefings.

These meetings are on occasion also attended by the Director General. The former Director General attended the June meeting last year to discuss the annual report. The new Director General has already met the Board to introduce himself and to discuss matters which had been brought to his attention.

Members were involved and continue to be involved in various working sub groups within the prison. Assigned members have attended meetings within the prison of the Anti-bullying Board, the Suicide Awareness Group, the Drugs Sub-group, the Chaplaincy, and various case conferences.

The duties, responsibilities and commitments of members also saw them attending a variety of other special sessions including training, both inside and outside Maghaberry, and also visits to prison establishments in the Republic of Ireland (Midlands, Port Laoise, Mountjoy and Cloverhill) and England (Durham and Frankland). Members of the Board visited Shannon House, Northern Ireland's new psychiatric unit. Meetings were held with the Equality Commission and also with the Human Rights Commission.

The Chair and Vice Chair also attended the quarterly “Chairs” meetings which provided a forum for the Chairs and Training Officers of the three prison establishments in Northern Ireland along with Prison Service Headquarters Staff. Members attended the Annual General Meeting and the BOV Conference at an overnight venue in April 2004, when further training took place.

Other work carried out by the Board included the giving of induction talks to newly received prisoners. Board members monitored almost 40 adjudications wherein prisoners were “tried” for alleged breaches of prison rules. The Board undertakes to interview all prisoners on Prison Rule 32 every week (Rule 32 removes prisoners from normal association to ensure the good order and discipline of the prison and the safety of the individual concerned). There has been a direct response to the occasional intervention from the Chair on behalf of those held under the Rule.

A large number of reviews covering different aspects of the work of the Northern Ireland Prison Service have taken place during the reporting year. The Board contributed to these reviews. They included a Review of Prison Rules, the Anti-Bullying Policy and the Life Sentence Review Commission. Members have also attended discussions and enquiries on deaths in custody.

Members of the Board took an intense interest in the removal of the women from Mourne House to Ash House, located at the Young Offenders’ Centre, Hydebank. Research and reports, which expressed the doubts of the members concerning the move, were submitted before the transfer suddenly took place. Members visited Ash House to submit a report highlighting areas which, resulting from their knowledge and experience of the women, it was hoped

would assist the Hydebank Visiting Committee and other interested parties.

The Board worked during the period markedly under complement, having lost four long-standing members due to retirement (under the twelve-year rule). **The Board earnestly requests that it is made up to full complement as quickly as possible.**

The Board’s title is shortly to be changed from “Board of Visitors” to “Independent Monitoring Board”. The Board agrees that this title will more accurately describe to the public the work of the Board and so welcomes the change.

4. Library

Great use is made of the library at Maghaberry by prisoners with an average of 30 visits a day. Access is limited only by the unavailability of staff escorts. The Board welcomes the access and service that is provided by staff.



5. Workshops

Vocational training is vital in any society; the same applies within the prison regime in Maghaberry. Not only does it serve to provide training for prisoners, but it also gives prisoners a purpose and helps to fill their day in a useful and practical way. There are many and varied training units within the workshops, all of them purpose-built and well-equipped with the machinery and tools necessary to train from basic skills level through to NVQ standards.

In view of the importance of employability to future resettlement, the Board would like to see a greater emphasis upon workshops which would have more direct relevance to today's markets. **The Board recommends that the prison authorities seek to identify and obtain outside contracts which would sustain productive work by prisoners.**

Moreover, the current working day lasts only between three and four hours. This does not give trainees a true sense of a working environment and the demands that will be placed on them in the "outside" world. Therefore, to more closely approximate the world of work and give experiences which will increase the likelihood of greater assimilation into the workforce, **the Board recommends that, as soon as possible, the working day is extended for trainees with lunch facilities being provided in the workshops.**

These developments are absolutely necessary to support the efforts of the dedicated team of teachers and instructors who work with trainees. It will enable them further to provide a daily routine and a proper working environment which prepares prisoners for the real world of work when they leave prison.

6. Drugs Strategy

The Drugs Strategy Group continued to meet reasonably regularly throughout the year, with some meetings being cancelled because of other pressures within the prison taking priority, or competing and conflicting demands on staff time. The meetings have been well attended and the Board commends the Governor responsible for actively promoting and encouraging dialogue and debate in a problem-solving manner between the various staff groupings.

The Board is pleased to note that prison staff are taking the lead role in endeavouring to manage creatively and facilitate a system whereby drugs counsellors can increase the numbers of prisoners they see each day - hence maximising their resources more effectively. The University of Ulster is currently undertaking a qualitative evaluation of the Dunlewey Counselling Programme and although there are positive indications about the quality of counselling provided, the Board are concerned about the small number of counsellors and the length of the waiting lists. **The Board recommends that a concerted effort is made to focus on recruitment and retention of staff in order to maintain a full complement of counsellors.**

The Board are aware that Dunlewey, in line with their service agreement, have undertaken some group work with prisoners and hope that in future this will become an integral part of the menu of services available to prisoners.

The Board welcomes the fact that the drug testing unit has been relocated to reception and that testing occurs very regularly. However, given the continued prevalence of drugs within the prison, **the Board is of the opinion that searching by passive drug dogs**

must be extended to areas other than visits. In particular attention should be given to prisoners returning from home leave and court.

As alcohol addiction features prominently in the offending history of many prisoners, **the Board would like to see additional and specific services and treatments provided.**

7. Gymnasium and Recreation

The Gymnasium in Maghaberry is well provided for with modern equipment and all residential houses have been supplied with cardio-vascular equipment. The Board, however, regrets that some outdoor activity days have been curtailed due to financial and other constraints.

8. Visits

Many initiatives have taken place during the last reporting period and more are under consideration. Plans are well advanced for the introduction of a more efficient and user-friendly visitor reception area. It is hoped that the change will speed up the throughput and remove some of the hassle for the visitor whilst still maintaining the necessary level of security. There can be little doubt that the current process can use up a disproportionate amount of time to enable the visit to occur.

The Board noted that problems occasionally occur with the booking system due mainly to staff shortages.

The Board has concerns about the need for visitors to cross open areas in bad weather to gain access to the visits suite. An improvement has been achieved by the recent erection of a shelter adjacent to the bus set down/pick up point. However this still leaves some other places open to the elements and these matters are to be addressed.

The Board welcomes the efforts being made to support child-centred and family visits and indeed all the efforts and energies which are clearly going into improving the visiting experience for prisoners, their families and friends.

9. Healthcare

Last year's annual report contained a number of significant recommendations. Members note that, for the most part, the important matters highlighted have not resulted in any significant changes to healthcare delivery.

Accordingly all of last year's recommendations are made again (see Appendix A). Members expect the Prison Service to explain its failure to act and outline clearly which of the recommendations are accepted together with a proposed implementation timetable for those that are. Members believe that such action is necessary to reassure them that their views are being taken seriously.

The care of prisoners with recurring psychiatric illnesses and mental disorders causes members particular concern. The relatively small group in this category (up to 16 at any one time) uses up a disproportionate share of scarce staffing resources. All other work is substantially



affected in a very negative way. Additionally, despite best efforts by dedicated nursing staff we are advised that they are, for the most part, not professionally qualified in psychiatric disciplines. The Board understands that this results in any therapeutic progress being of a temporary and largely palliative nature. As a consequence of the resulting very low success rate for these patients they tend to be returned to the hospital on a regular basis. A return rate of some 90% has been quoted to us. This is clearly unacceptable in efficiency terms and the heavy cost to society in general and the psychiatric patients in particular.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that a thorough review of the psychiatric nursing arrangements is carried out as a matter of urgency. There is enthusiasm and interest among the nursing staff involved in this work which the Board feels should be supported by way of additional training and even, perhaps, a dedicated wing for these prisoners. The possibility of a contracting-out arrangement with one of the Health Trusts to supply community psychiatric nursing resources has been suggested to us. **The Board believes that this suggestion should be explored without delay.**

The recent commissioning of the Shannon Clinic at Knockbracken is welcomed. This 34 bed inpatient service is for people with mental illness who require intensive treatment and rehabilitation within a structured, secure, therapeutic environment.

The Board recommends that consideration is given to the immediate transfer of those patients within the prison system who would benefit from a period of assessment in those surroundings. The clinic forms part of the regional network of Forensic Mental Health Services currently being developed.

The Board believes that review by the Mental Health Commission would assist the prison in identifying and tackling problems and so **the Board recommends that the Prison invites an inspection by the Mental Health Commission of Maghaberry on an annual basis.**

During the reporting year members responded to a high level of complaints about lack of access to a doctor. This led to repeat prescriptions and medical appointments being delayed. The subsequent solution of the expansion of nurse-led care has now been broadly accepted and members note that this development has been confirmed by a change in Prison Rules.

10. Psychology

The Psychology Department provides a range of offending behaviour programmes to prisoners as well as providing a service to the Life Sentence Review Commission (LSRC) for prisoners serving a life sentence. It also provides advice and consultancy for other initiatives such as resettlement planning and the anti-bullying project.

Work connected to the LSRC has increased steadily and is likely to continue to do so with the introduction of three-year pre-tariff reviews by the Commissioners. Despite the growth in workload with life-sentenced prisoners, there is no administrative support for this area.

The department is currently involved in the delivery of Enhanced Thinking Skills and Sex Offender Treatment Programme groups. During 2004 all psychology staff were trained in the delivery of the Cognitive Self Change Programme which specifically targets violent



offending and they are currently providing this programme as a pilot project. The department has provided treatment markers for these groups as well as facilitators. Other facilitators have been drawn from Resettlement, Education and Probation. A recent trawl for Enhanced Thinking Skills facilitators should increase the size of the facilitator pool for this particular programme.

The loss of some key members of staff has reduced the number of trained SOTP facilitators available. **Therefore the Board believes that identifying and training facilitators for this programme is a priority at present and recommends that this is done as soon as possible.**

11. Kitchen

This reporting year has seen staff strive to provide a choice of menu to an average of 660 prisoners daily in a kitchen which was designed to cater for 400 prisoners. Inevitably, daily working conditions continue to deteriorate.

The Board reiterates its recommendations made annually in each of the last three years that extremely urgent steps must be taken to replace the main production kitchen due to the pressure of over capacity, lack of designated workspace and the generally poor condition of the unit.

In addition **the Board reiterates its recommendations of the last two years that the timing of meals should be reviewed to ensure they are reasonably spaced and served at times that reflect a normal working day.**

12. Life Sentenced Prisoners

Out of Northern Ireland's 127 life sentenced prisoners, 118 are the responsibility of Maghaberry Prison and are housed in various locations throughout the prison. Erne House however continues to be the dedicated accommodation with 94 lifers resident there.

Accommodation continues to be very restricted with the only progression for a life sentenced prisoner being a move from one landing to another and, if deemed suitable, a move to the working out unit in Crumlin Road. There is no prisoner input into the day-to-day running of the house and thus limited resettlement opportunity.

The Board recommends that serious consideration should be given to a progressive regime for life sentenced prisoners with suitable accommodation.

The regime should be more relaxed as prisoners come closer to their tariff date and they should be given more meaningful engagement in the day to day running of the unit.

Education should be given a priority with full time courses and evening classes made available.



13. Progressive Regime and Earned Privileges Scheme (PREPS)

The Progressive Regime continues to be operated for both sentenced and remand prisoners in Maghaberry. Separated prisoners have a regime which is similar to the standard regime in the rest of the prison.

The figures taken on a date in March give the following figures, which appear to be fairly consistent with previous years:

Basic:	9.76%
Standard:	55.7%
Enhanced:	34.5%

An extensive review of PREPS is currently taking place and the Board at this point does not know what changes, if any, will be proposed. **The Board is particularly concerned to learn that the Personal Officer system has virtually broken down in Maghaberry.**

The Board also hopes that the review will recommend placing an increased emphasis on "incentives" for good behaviour rather than using the scheme to "punish" bad behaviour. **The Board recommends that where a prisoner is "punished through the adjudication system" he should not then be punished again by being "demoted" between standards.**

The Board believes that there is a need to introduce more incentives to encourage movement from standard to enhanced.

The Board recommends that all prisoners should have access to a television set - some prisoners on basic do not have the skills to read or ability to concentrate on the radio and

some form of occupation when they are "locked" is important. The Board believes that something as simple as the provision of a television is beneficial to the prisoner in countering the potential for depression which is particularly likely to occur to those just received into the prison or otherwise suffering from mental health issues or personality disorders. **The Board also recommends that these prisoners should be allowed the use of the telephone once each week in accordance with the policy of maintaining family ties.**

14. Special Supervision Unit (SSU)

Members have made a special point during every weekly rota visit of visiting the SSU where possible. This involves not only calling on prisoners who have specifically asked to meet members but alerting those held in the unit to the Board's presence and asking them if they have any issues to raise.

The Board believes that this level of monitoring is important as it no longer interviews prisoners in consideration of signing a Rule 32; with this in mind **the Board recommends that a copy of all Rule 32 paper work is forwarded to the Board along with HQ comments shortly after signing of the Rule.**

The Board in addition, makes the following recommendations in respect of the operation of the unit and Rule 32 in general:

While the Board has expressed concerns in the course of the year to Prison HQ that the recommendations of the Rule 32 working group had not been followed up, **it now recommends that this is carried out with expediency.**

That while recognising that certain individuals can at times present specific challenges to the prison authorities **in all cases where prisoners are held for long periods of time on Rule 32 that prison personnel should work to develop an exit strategy.**

The Board recommends, once again, that as prisoners with personality disorders are at times necessarily (but regrettably) confined within the SSU, staff should receive more specialised training in coping with and understanding these individuals.

15. Suicide and Self-Harm

In last year's report, the Board stated that it was encouraged by the introduction of a new suicide awareness procedure, the Prisoner At Risk Initiative (PARI) and expressed a view that despite the efforts of the governor in charge, these matters had not been resolved as quickly as we had hoped. The Board is pleased to learn that progress in staff training at all grades is currently being energetically addressed. The Board is assured that the Safer Cell Initiative will occur this financial year.

The Board was informed that the Listener Scheme did not get off the ground because the prisoner volunteers were not appropriate for this task. Assurances have been made that an increasingly proactive effort to collect new recruits is under way. The holding of regular case conferences and a change in the approach to suicide and self-harm management has led to a greater emphasis upon individual prisoner issues and therefore satisfies a recommendation from last year's report. The Board was involved with internal enquiries into deaths in custody. The Board facilitated meetings with the Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission to consider the implications of the move of the female prison population to Ash House located at the site of Hydebank Wood Young Offenders' Centre. The Board anticipates the realisation of plans to implement the Safer Cell Initiative this financial year.

The Board recommends that the efficacy of the PARI system should be under continuous review.

The Board seeks an assurance from prison management that a Samaritan-guided Listener Scheme and listener suites in each house will definitely be established. The



Board seeks an assurance that the suicide and Self-harm Awareness Committee will, in the hopefully temporary absence of its Chair (at present seconded to Hydebank Wood, YOC) continue with the vigour and commitment which it achieved during the past year.

16. Resettlement Planning

In this reporting year numerous initiatives have been established by the Resettlement Team. A Family Support Officer has been appointed. A throughcare centre has been established which helps prisoners in the last three months of sentence with jobs and housing benefit. This service complements some of the work of the Probation Service.

A Resettlement, Assessment and Support Unit (RASU) has been established to help and encourage prisoners who have special difficulties in integrating with the prison environment. Child-centred visits and family-focused weeks have been established and are proving most valuable to prisoners and families.

The Board recommends that prison management should consider extending resettlement initiatives to the remand population.

The Board stresses that prisoners should not be given unrealistic expectations of training programmes that cannot be delivered due to operational difficulties within the prison.

17. Video Link Suite

The Board commends the commitment and efficiency of the staff in the suite and would recommend that the number of links currently available be increased. This facility is especially appreciated by many remand prisoners as it avoids their having to undertake weekly journeys to courts located throughout Northern Ireland.

18. Education

The Education Department had a demanding time during this reporting period. The year started with prison staff shortages and department closures on both male and female sides which had an adverse effect on the regime. This reduced considerably the number of qualifications being gained by the students. On the female side this was compounded by the move to Hydebank Wood.

On the male side, daytime education was also severely hampered by prison staff shortages from April until September. Night classes have not been on offer since 2003.

There are still difficulties in obtaining part-time staff through the further education colleges. A solid commitment from the Prison Service to facilitate recruitment and to vet teachers quickly when they are eventually appointed, would contribute towards improving the current situation.

The numbers of prisoners obtaining essential skills qualifications are also declining. There are many reasons for this but the main one is that students must do a full course lasting a year before accreditation can be sought and many of them move on to Magilligan during

their study period. Resettlement statistics are also adversely affected by the movement of prisoners under these circumstances. Time is also a limiting factor in the education of remand prisoners. **The Board has concerns about the range of classes on offer to the separated prisoners and recommends that this is reviewed.**

There is inadequate space provided for the number of teachers now at Maghaberry.

19. First Days in Prison

The Reception Unit is a bright and clean environment where the aim is to process prisoners as quickly as possible but with regard for any special problems they may present. The unit is staffed by officers who are experienced and who understand that some new prisoners may be in a state of shock at having been given a custodial sentence. From what the Board has both observed for itself and has been told by prisoners, prisoners are treated with care. The Board has expressed concern in the past that interviews are conducted at the desk and are therefore not entirely private, although the wooden dividers do help and the Board has been assured that any prisoner who desires an interview in private will be facilitated.

Prisoners are handed information sheets explaining what to expect in Reception. The Board believes that some of this information is rather densely written and might present problems to prisoners with poor literacy skills. **The Board therefore recommends that this material be reviewed.**

From Reception, the prisoner is escorted to the Committal Unit in Roe House where he will spend his first night after being

interviewed by a healthcare worker who ascertains his immediate medical needs. He will then be given some information by staff about what to expect in the next day or two. Although there is no formal procedure for assessing the compatibility of cellmates, the Board has been assured that care is taken with this procedure and that prisoners who may be vulnerable are carefully watched. Once again, the Board found that prisoners are treated with courtesy and care.

Next morning, the prisoner will be interviewed by a governor and a probation officer after which he moves to the Induction landing where he spends about three days, or, at most, a week. The induction process is now simpler than it used to be, consisting only of the compulsory elements of fire safety training, gym safety training and a presentation on life in prison by a member of staff. **The Board believes that there should be a short simple information booklet for prisoners encompassing these areas as a reminder and reinforcer.**

The current staff in the induction unit are experienced and obviously committed to their work. It is therefore a matter of some concern that all of them, as well as several from Reception, will be moved on to new locations within the next few months. In view of the crucial importance of the first days in prison, **the Board would recommend a greater continuity of staff in these areas.**

When sentenced prisoners move on to more permanent locations, they come under the remit of Resettlement activities. By contrast, the Board feels that there does not appear to be a great deal of constructive planning or thought given to the resettlement needs of remand prisoners.

The Board recommends a more thorough induction process for both sentenced and remand prisoners.



20. Anti-Bullying Strategy

The prison's response to combating bullying in prison has been the establishment of an anti-bullying team which is led by a governor and which includes a member of the Board. The Board is of the opinion that in instances of bullying, the "bully" needs to be removed from the environment where their bullying has taken place, while allowing any victim to remain.

This strategy and policy need to be supported fully, implemented throughout the prison and all staff appropriately trained in the monitoring requirements.

Continuity of staff is maintained as far as possible and this leads to stability in relationships.

Although housed in a restricted area, the regime has improved. The majority of prisoners are involved in education. Maths, english, art and computer classes are available on request and there are three computers available for use by prisoners. The gym is available twice a week and prisoners have access to the yard for exercise every day at lunch time and to the gym equipment in the house recreation room. The Board is aware that unfortunately few prisoners avail of the yard facility as they are subject to verbal abuse from prisoners in surrounding cells.

21. Separated Prisoners

The Board has monitored the treatment of both Republican and Loyalist prisoners located in the separate houses of Bush and Roe, both in direct response to issues raised by prisoners and by random visiting. The Board will continue to respond when requested and will maintain an active watching brief throughout the forthcoming year.

22. Vulnerable Prisoner Unit

The Unit, which is housed in Lagan House, can accommodate up to 18 prisoners who come from a variety of backgrounds and are housed in the Unit for their own safety, for reasons usually connected to the nature of their offence.

23. Working-Out Unit and Detainees' Unit

The Working-Out Unit is situated within the complex of the now unoccupied Crumlin Road prison and is also visited by Board members. The regime there is more relaxed than at the main prison although prison rules apply. Staff work well with both prisoners and detainees.

A continuing problem in this area concerns the provision of food. While the pre-packed meals supplied may be suitable for generally inactive hospital patients (as intended) they are insufficient in quantity for working men and so two portions per prisoner have to be supplied. This is costly. Although Muslims may be present in the units at any time, Halal meat is only supplied during Ramadan.

Healthcare is only provided for these inmates at Maghaberry. Immigration detainees who need to see a doctor are therefore transported to the prison. If a doctor is not

then present in the prison, the patient will be required to stay until such time as a doctor arrives and is able to see them. The Board feels that this system results in a wholly unnecessary waste of time and manpower when a local doctor could be engaged.

The spiritual needs of immigration detainees have not been properly addressed. Although the numbers detained are small, there should still be provision made for those detained to meet with a spiritual teacher of their choosing. Since the working out centre is located close to the Mater Hospital, it would be useful if chaplains appointed to the hospital could extend their services to the unit.

In the light of the above **the Board recommends that the provision of food to those held in Crumlin Road should be reviewed** taking into account the meal requirements for prisoners working out and immigration detainees who come from other cultures with markedly differing diets.

The Board recommends further that the provision of healthcare should be reviewed. The Board urges the prison authorities to consider the provision of alternate healthcare arrangements more sympathetic and responsive to the needs of this group. It may be possible for example, to use the Police Forensic Medical Officer who visits the Belfast custody suites.

The Board recommends that the spiritual support currently available to detainees and those in the working out unit is reviewed.

The Board recommends that prisoners should have greater access to phones than is currently provided.

24. Adjudications

The Board is pleased to report that great efforts have been made to reduce the backlog of adjudications which accumulated during 2003-2004 and that, in achieving this, minor offences committed more than six months previously have been dropped.

The Board has examined the extensive paperwork used in the administration of adjudications and, on view of the sample selected, it appears that many prisoners are given sufficient notice and that care is taken to make sure that they understand the charges they face. However, this is not true in all cases and there is a need for staff to put resources and effort into ensuring that prisoners are given adequate notice and fully understand the nature of the charges against them. Given the level of learning difficulties in the general prison population, and in the absence of legal support and advice, it is not unusual for many prisoners to be confused and ignorant of the proceedings in which they find themselves.

Board members found that in those adjudications which they attended, proceedings appeared to be conducted fairly and prisoners were encouraged to participate in the process.



25. Chaplaincy

Chaplains at Maghaberry are appointed by the appropriate churches and at present the following denominations are represented: Church of Ireland, Free Presbyterian, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic.

The work of the chaplains is seen as an essential part of the support system needed for prisoners in times of stress and depression when separated from their families. The Board is keenly aware of the critical nature of this service.

Chaplains have been under pressure due to staff shortages and they feel that they are not able to provide the standard of service to which the prisoners are entitled. This is accentuated as the need for clerical support, which was reported on by the Board last year, has still not been addressed. **The Board recommends that clerical support for the Chaplains is considered with some immediacy.** The importance of this support is that it will release chaplains from routine administration work and so enable them to spend more time ministering to their people.

26. Probation Board

The Board commends the work of the Probation Service within the prison and particularly the willingness of the staff to engage with members of the Board in helping to resolve problems that arise.

27. Premises and Health and Safety

A major focus has been ongoing assessment to meet the requirements of the new disability legislation, the costing of "listener cells" in each house and a review undertaken of "safer cell" requirements. The Board welcomes the energy being channeled into these important and pressing areas.

The Board commends the pilot waste disposal and recycling scheme now in operation in Bann House for waste paper, aluminium cans and plastic. Prisoners are actively engaged in most aspects of this laudable work. The success in Bann has had a very positive effect on the tidiness and cleanliness of the area and the planned extension of the scheme is to be welcomed. The Health and Safety Unit are to be commended for their efficiency and commitment to the success of this scheme.

APPENDIX A

HEALTHCARE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ANNUAL REPORT 2003-04 WHICH REMAIN OUTSTANDING

The Board recommended in its report last year (2002-03) that a formal arrangement be made with a secure psychiatric hospital in order to streamline the process for assessing and assisting the needs of these particular prisoners. We continue to press for this arrangement to be put in place.

Another practice, caused by the shortage of beds, has been to move male prisoners to the Special Supervision Unit (SSU), even though they are medically or psychiatrically ill enough to be in the hospital. The Board requests these practices to cease with immediate effect.

The Board has again, year after year, highlighted the need for a complete refurbishment of the hospital, in particular the wards and ablutions area. This has still not been carried out and the result is a depressing and dreary environment for all who work and are cared for there. Bearing in mind that amongst the prisoners held in these wards are those who display suicidal manifestations and who self harm, the need becomes even greater. The Board would request that refurbishment of the hospital is undertaken as a matter of urgency.

In addition to this, taking into consideration

the needs of prisoners throughout the prison, but with specific care issues or with special needs, the Board would wish to raise its concern about the lack of suitable and adequate disabled provision in place and the need for residential officers to be trained in skills necessary, for example the use of a wheel chair. The Board would also recommend the implementation of 'safe' cells, and a listener scheme in place for the prisoners who would greatly benefit from these.

The Board is disappointed to note that a year on from highlighting the fact that there are no community psychiatric nurses available to prisoners, this is still the case. The Board would wish to see the appointment of a nurse to this specific role as a matter of urgency.

In our report last year (2002-03) the Board highlighted the operational system for healthcare staff as being the same shift patterns as other prison officers. It is acknowledged that these patterns are far from ideal for the delivery of many aspects of healthcare, including the provision of clinics which would be of particular advantage to prisoners. The ability to deliver this range of clinics aimed at improving prisoner well being has also been undermined by a high level of staff shortages. The Board has also been disturbed to note that the provision of dedicated prisoner escorts to ensure medical appointments for necessary treatments are kept is still not in place.

