

MAGILLIGAN PRISON

BOARD OF VISITOR'S

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

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1. Foreword

This is a report that the Board of Visitors (BOV) at Magilligan Prison produced for the Secretary of State, and for general readership.

The BOV for the prison is a statutory body appointed by the Secretary of State as an external, reviewing, scrutinising and reporting committee. Its membership (with a maximum complement of 17) is drawn from the general public (appointed through media advertising and interview), with final approval given by the Secretary of State.

Members hold office and have powers conferred on them through section 10, Prison Act (NI) 1953 (as amended).

It must be stressed that the Board of Visitors is independent of prison management.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service currently provides a secretariat, which acts for the Secretary of State in servicing and overseeing the needs of the BOVs. Each prison provides internal secretarial support.

To fulfil their role, each member of the Board has a right of access to all parts of the prison and to each prisoner, without exception, at any time. Members need to be familiar with the prison estate, personnel and procedures, and must work together (with consultation) as a team.

Their primary function must have a prisoner welfare perspective, in relation to health, welfare, food, safety and security. They also have an oversight into staffing and administrative issues, only in so far as these impact on the welfare of the prisoners.

In addition members have defined mandatory functions in relation to the oversight of restraint procedures, and the removal of prisoners from association within their blocks. This role is not as decision makers, but to monitor the application of these decisions.

The BOV should also be present as observers at all major incidents of disorder. This role is generally welcomed by prison management, as it provides an unbiased, independent view of the incident, which if necessary can be put into the public domain.

The BOV is also provided with copies of the standards manual as part of the system of standards and audits compliance for the Prison Service. Board members are provided with training, and their effectiveness in this role is assessed through annual appraisal.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the Governor and his staff for their courtesy in affording us the means and the opportunity to fulfil our function, and also personally, to thank the Board members for their hard work and diligence in supporting me this past year.

Next year will be pivotal for the BOV, insofar as we are contemplating a name change to Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) and the Prison Service will appoint a Prisoner Ombudsman. Prison Rules currently under review may also impact on the remit afforded us in performing our duties.

It's hoped the movement of the secretariat from the Prison Service to the Prisoner Ombudsman's office should enhance our public perception as independent from the Prison Service.

(Chairman, Magilligan BOV)



2.The Prison Estate

HMP Magilligan is a low-to-medium security working prison, on the banks of Lough Foyle near Magilligan Point.

An additional residential sub-unit - Foyleview - has been established within the Magilligan complex, but outside the main prison's security perimeter, that provides a semi-open regime for appropriate prisoners (inmates here are subject to risk assessment criteria).

This unit is now capable of housing up to 82 prisoners, and there are also working out places available for some inmates - six at Benburb and two at Corrymeela.

The Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Prison Estates has hopefully ensured a future for the prison.

Magilligan has three refurbished "H" blocks with special facilities for self-harming and disturbed prisoners. A gymnasium, training areas, workshops and education buildings, are all within the secure area, with the most recent addition being a purpose-built Prisoner Development Unit (officially opened by Ian Pearson in December 2004).

However, the reliance on a number of Portacabins and temporary structures, including Nissen huts, is not acceptable in the medium and longer term, and the BOV would welcome more permanent accommodation, replacing the Maze-style "H" blocks, when finance permits.

Magilligan can house approximately 350 prisoners. Inmates are controlled by the Progressive Regime and Earned Privileges Scheme (PREPS) with its attendant Personal Officer involvement. It works towards a concept of resettlement and throughcare,

which starts when the prisoner is incarcerated and continues throughout custody to the individual's release and afterwards their return to a normal life in the community.

We are mindful that this "carrot and stick" approach is in its infancy, but early indications would lead us to believe that it works. This is reinforced by structured resettlement planning, opportunities for education, gaining qualifications, work training and offending behaviour programmes. We recognise that it is a professional challenge for staff to embrace this new ethos, involving as it does more work and interaction with the prisoner, with the emphasis on rehabilitation rather than "warehousing". The BOV feel that the outcome will be beneficial to all parties and have positive benefits for the public at large.

We look forward to working with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and other external agencies, such as the Western Health and Social Services Board, who presently deliver behavioural and lifestyle programmes, and the Education Board who provide education and library services in the prison.

The BOV underline the need for guaranteed funding, necessary for the constructive use of time in prison, and attendant resettlement strategies.

3. Accommodation

The refurbished H block can accommodate 100 prisoners in single cells. There is also provision for safer cells in each block, which have no ligature points, have integral sanitation, and have provision for either one or two listeners to accompany the prisoner at risk. We cannot commend highly enough those prisoners who put themselves forward as “listeners” and undergo training with the Samaritans, prior to being accepted.

These are not ideal locations to hold prisoners, as they do not have integral sanitation. They do however have the software in place to allow for night unlock, which gives the prisoner access to the toilet singly, on request.

Drug free wing H1 A/B - A stepping stone.

For the past three months H1 A/B, which houses 50 prisoners has been drug free. Prisoners had been asked to put their names forward for this location, knowing that it involved a more rigorous drug testing and searching regime. The list had then been risk assessed and the prisoners chosen.

From the staff perspective the prisoners were not abusing the system and the morale was good. There had been one incident of a needle found on the wing. This was quickly resolved when the user presented himself to the SO and confessed. Peer pressure to keep the wing drug free is working well.

Presently there are no basic prisoners on the wing, only standard and enhanced. The enhanced prisoners are entitled to “extras”, one of which is increased telephone contact. On a Saturday evening this can result in congestion of the existing telephones,

resulting in time constraints being imposed by the staff. It should be noted however that the telephones are free for long periods throughout the day.

The ratio of 1:25 telephones per prisoner, bears favourable comparison with most other institutions. However it must be stressed that the two telephones on each wing are maintained to a high standard, and that repairs are quickly expedited.

The increase in drug testing and the random searching of two cells every day, together with a high input from the drug dog, will hopefully keep the facility drug free.

It is our hope, that following the successful introduction of this wing that the governor will progressively increase this provision throughout the prison.

Except for the one “blip” the regime is working well. There is a definite buoyant mood among the prisoners and less tension between inmates and staff.

Sperrin House which is an even more relaxed regime, consisting of dormitory facilities, longer association, improved laundry and recreational provision should be opened in the not too distant future.

Prisoners can then “work” their way towards admission to Foyleview, the semi-open part of the prison.

The dormitory facilities available in Sperrin may not be to the liking of some longer term prisoners, where shared accommodation and issues to do with music and lights predominate.

The prospect of single room accommodation in Foyleview and attendant contact with outside may well make them “grin and bear it”.



Reports initially on the drugs free wing are very positive. We shall monitor the situation and trust that more prisoners will endeavour to secure a place in a more pleasant and relaxed environment for all concerned.

4. Education and Library

During the year the Education provision has been ongoing with the number of inmates increasing. Essential skills are an issue that is being addressed but some inmates, like the general population, are reluctant to admit and address their weaknesses. A variety of other courses are available and these are outlined during induction.

The Education Department is proactive in their awareness of the needs of the prison population, and on occasion visit the inmates in their cells with appropriate reading materials etc.

Accommodation is still an issue, but the interagency approach to the needs of the inmates has to be amended. An inspection report highlighted a number of issues, which have been or are being addressed.

Course provision is constantly under review. The Department of Education and Learning Publication "Skills Strategy for N.I. November 2004" has been examined and provision will be reviewed in the light of this.

Results for those participants taking external examinations have been very pleasing with a near 100% success rate. This year an awards ceremony was introduced and will be a regular feature in the coming years.

With the majority of our population on short-term sentences, it is difficult to complete courses and workshops, and we feel that the issue needs to be addressed elsewhere.

The writer in residence has proved to be a tremendous success and a book has been published.

Library provision needs to be reassessed with better premises and book choice. It is heartening to note that a proposal has been made to the Paul Hamlyn Trust in the hope that it could provide finance to furnish a mobile library to service the blocks.

Tribute must be paid to the staff in the Education Department in addition to the external tutors from various colleges who assist in the delivery of programme and courses. New approaches and courses are constantly being researched, and this is to be commended.

5. Prisoner Development Unit (PDU)

Programme facilitators, Psychology, Probation, Resettlement and Northlands have been accommodated in a purpose- built unit, erected in May 2004 and officially opened in December 2004 by Ian Pearson, Minister for Prisons.

This is a major step forward facilitating greater coordination and efficiency in the delivery of programmes.

Induction has been transferred from PDU (Programmes Development Unit) to H3 and is run by residential staff, thus enabling PDU to plan a pre-release programme, commencing on or about the beginning of July 2005.

Currently 150 prisoners are benefiting from a one to one counselling, with 25 others on a four to six week waiting list.

Research has shown that if the inmates motivation is enhanced, prior to the commencement of behavioural programmes, there is a higher success rate.

PDU currently delivers a range of 13 programmes.

Despite PDU's achievements and progress over this past 5 years, it is vital that staffing levels within PDU be increased to provide continuity and consistency of delivery. It should be remembered that the rolling sex offenders programme is very time consuming and can only cater for 15 prisoners every year. This, against a background of 30% of prisoners in Magilligan being in this category.

The recent industrial action by the Prison Officers' Association has impacted on the scheduling and delivery of programmes. The removal of some PDU staff members to other duties within the prison, being one of the causes.



6. Security and the Special Supervision Unit (SSU)

Security within the prison is good, and has been further enhanced by additional night custody officers, recently introduced.

In fact the Criminal Justice Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Prisons felt the level of security, for the type of prisoner currently in Magilligan, was excessive.

They also commented that electric locking should be reduced, and pass keys introduced, to allow staff and managers access to all parts of the prison at any time. A new hand reading system, to enhance security and better account for the movement of staff and some inmates is currently under construction and should be operational in April 2005.

The introduction of laboratory based testing will help control the drug problem.

The BOV have been impressed by the passive drug dogs, and would wish for an increase in number to four.

The SSU has a poor ventilation system within the cells. It is hoped that some improvement might be made without affecting the security of the unit. This would be a boon both to staff and detainees. Some proposals have been made in this respect.

7. Visits and NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Prisoners)

Visits are one of the most important interfaces between the prisoners and the outside world. It must also be noted that it can be one method of introducing illegal drugs into the prison. The introduction of the passive drug dogs, search procedures, and scrutiny by CCTV, reduce the possibility of drugs being passed.

Visits are open on Wednesday through Sunday, morning and afternoon.

The prisoners' families are looked after in the NIACRO Portacabin outside the main gate, where refreshment is offered and transport can be arranged if necessary.

The two concerns that the BOV have in relation to the visits area, are the relative comfort of the seats, and the fact that "closed" visits are routed through the main hall.

The BOV look on visits, child centred visits, and all types of family contact as very important in prisoner rehabilitation, and reduced recidivism.

8. Healthcare Centre

The Healthcare Centre in Magilligan provides a first class, full range of healthcare services to all prisoners, including general practitioner's services, dental care consultants, and opticians.

It has initiated many clinics to support health and well being including a well-man clinic, smoking cessation and asthma clinics and an essence of care protocol recently introduced.

It is also equipped with the necessary equipment to provide emergency care and life saving treatment. The hospital is kept in immaculate condition and is always clean and tidy.

There have been two new observation wards built recently, designed to be safer cells with no ligature points, each has CCTV and call buttons linked to both the Samaritans and attendant staff. Both are equipped with toilet and wash hand basin facilities and are spacious, comfortable and brightly painted. They also have TV and video access through a plexi-glass screen, a disabled wheelchair access shower has also been provided. One recently introduced policy is the dispatch of prisoners' treatment and medication detail to prisoners' GPs on release to ensure continuity of care.

Concerns about the level of staff cover have been raised, but the Associate Director of Health and Healthcare for the Prison Service has stated that adequate cover already exists based on the assessed clinical need, and that a report on staffing levels has been initiated.

It would be our contention that, on the occasions when cover is not provided to cover staff absence or leave, that to sustain the level of primary care, clinics often have to be cancelled.

We look forward to the Healthcare Review, in the hope that staffing levels are addressed urgently.

The building is temporary, dated and in need of refurbishment. The rooms can be warm and stuffy with poor ventilation especially on warm and sunny days.

The level of care is never compromised, despite difficulties. This is due to the dedication and hard work of the staff concerned, and must be commended.



9. Training and Workshops

There are 10 workshops providing a wide range of training opportunities including painting and decorating, bricklaying and use of computers.

These workshops provide work and training for almost 100 prisoners at any one time (currently 96). These workshops are a popular choice with inmates, with long waiting lists for vacancies.

The workshops are vitally important for prisoners' resettlement plans, giving individual inmates the necessary skills and experience that help them get a job on the outside.

The workshop manager and staff have established good links with local further and higher education colleges, and the workshops provide accredited training and qualifications such as NVQs and City and Guilds.

Relatively new to Magilligan is the option of awarding accredited Performance Manufacturing and Performance Engineering Certificates to successful candidates. The prisoners successfully completing these in the months ahead will have recognised skills for securing work on their release.

In addition, Magilligan can award a Comp TIA certificate, an accredited computer repair programme, which is a qualification much in demand in today's workplace.

The products manufactured in Magilligan workshops are used in furnishing all three prisons in Northern Ireland. Their skills have also been used in the community, such as the making of gates for cemeteries etc.

However, the BOV notes that:

- there are insufficient job opportunities for all prisoners requesting them;
- extensive refurbishment is required in all workshops to meet the required standard;
- increased staffing levels are needed. At present, there is only one manager, with no replacement to cover for illness or holidays. It should be noted that most workshops manage with only one instructor;
- workshop hours are often lost and workshops forced to close when an instructor is unavailable;
- the work to rule and industrial action, including the overtime ban has seriously affected the training hours with the resulting closure of some workshops.

10. Gymnasium and Recreation

This is a well used and valued activity, and with attendance on a voluntary basis of approximately 340 per week. This results in approximately 800 inmate hours per week.

It provides participation in weight training, badminton, table tennis, indoor soccer, outdoor football and athletics. We would commend the Department for their Outdoor Activities Programme where enhanced prisoners can avail of such activities as climbing, canoeing, and kayaking.

Numerous inmates have taken advantage of four different accreditation courses advantageous to their rehabilitation. With 56 inmates receiving certificates from 10 courses completed.

First aid was also popular as part of their education award.

The gym has some original equipment purchased in 1989. The BOV would strongly recommend that the existing weights equipment and additional modern cardio-vascular machines be placed in both prisoner and staff gyms. There would also be a case for upgrading the audio equipment with Sky, similar to Maghaberry.

We would also support the reinstatement and repair of the all weather pitch, the extension of the current accreditation programmes, and the participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

The Sport and Recreation Service within Magilligan has made a valuable contribution to the welfare of the inmates. This would not have been possible without the full

support and co-operation of the Governor, and the hands on expertise and dedication of the Principal Officer PEI and his team.

11. Kitchen and Tuck Shop

Magilligan Prison is in need of a new purpose- built kitchen. The building is below standard and requires constant maintenance to function.

A further problem is the distance from the main prison. Meals are provided on a three week menu basis. Given the problems, the staff provide an acceptable standard of food.

Two prisoners are currently doing NVQ level 2 courses in catering, one has almost completed, the other has just started. The staff do a good job tutoring these prisoners.

The kitchen has recently retained its ISO accreditation.

The tuck shop is working well and staff make every effort to fill prisoners orders.

Complaints are made on the cost of some items, but as contracts are sourced centrally, it is outside the control of local staff.



12. Notable events of year

- Director of Healthcare to Board meeting January 2004
- NIAMBOV conference Belfast Hilton 7/8 May 2004
- Honorary Freedom of Borough of Castlereagh conferred on the Prison Service 15th May 2004
- Director General Peter Russell attended March 2004 and June 2004
- Criminal Justice Inspection 20-24 September 2004
- Maghaberry BOV visit 29 September 2004
- Hydebank YOC and Prison BOV/VC visit 12 October 2004
- Edinburgh Conference 15/16 October 2004
- Official opening Programmes Village by Ian Pearson Prisons Minister 7 December 2004
- Director General Robin Masfield attended Board meeting 12 January 2005
- Inter-institutional visit to Doncaster Prison 14/15 March 2005

13. The Work of the BOV

This year the monthly meetings were well attended with an average of 75% of members being present, and 100% of the rota visits carried out weekly, to ensure that prisoner complaints (applications) are dealt with in a timely manner.

The BOV members attended on 450 occasions, including monthly training seminars, rota visits, board meetings, case conferences, drug strategy, suicide-awareness, anti-bullying and other associated meetings (NIAMBOV, Chairman's meetings etc).

We attempt where possible to observe Governor's adjudications (with the necessary prisoner consent), and in any case monitor the awards on a monthly basis, and report back to the Board meeting.

We have dealt with 105 applications in the course of the year and are currently considering a further method to access prisoner complaints.

Members have particular areas of responsibility within the prison, which they regularly monitor and report on. However, all members have the obligation to comment on any area of the prison estate, which they consider to fall below the guidelines outlined in the Expectations document released by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

The Board was pleased with the response of the Governor in dealing with many of our concerns throughout the year. These included:

- the provision of hand washing facilities (antiseptic wipes and soap dispensers) during lock-down;

- the provision of a nappy-changing facility, plus an area for older children in the visits area;
- the introduction of laboratory drug-testing procedures;
- the provision of a drug-free wing;
- the reduction in use of the four-man cell;
- the provision of an extended Foyleview, which in the view of the BOV is a welcome addition to the estate. The recidivism rate of Foyleview “graduates” is very impressive, currently less than four per cent. Though it should be noted that we are not working from the same baseline as the total prisoner population, it does give the indication that involvement in outside work prior to release, does have a positive effect. The gate from Foyleview onto the Point Road has now been activated, making the facility responsible for counting the prisoners. It is now in effect a prison on its own!
- increase in the frequency of laboratory-based drug testing;
- maximising training of personal officers in the PREPS regime;
- establishing within the three prisons a commonality of forms;
- maintaining the “visits” even under staffing difficulties;
- extending inter-jurisdictional visits, which are a valuable learning opportunity;
- assess and upgrade all temporary buildings to an acceptable standard, or new build as finance permits;
- look at staffing levels in the Healthcare Unit and PDU;
- improve the library and education provision;
- upgrade the ventilation within the SSU and Healthcare Unit;

14. The Board Recommends:

- constructive activity provision for all prisoners;
- consolidation and expansion of the “drugs-free” regimen in H1;
- increase in purposeful activity hours;
- increase in the use of drug dogs to combat drug abuse;
- reassess the seating within the visits area;
- a method for closed visits, which precludes going through the main hall;
- continue to upgrade gymnasium equipment, including the audio system;
- consider the location and fabric of the kitchen.

