

Loughan House
Visiting Committee
Annual Report 2008
(01.12.07 - 30.11.08)

Loughan House Visiting Committee Annual Report 2008

We, the undersigned members of the Loughan House Visiting Committee, have pleasure in presenting this our Annual Report for 2008

The committee held a total of 12 meetings during the year all of which were well attended. During the year Mr Clifford Kelly, Mr Eddie Feeley, Mrs Rita Delahunty, Mr Eugene Delaney, Mrs Kathleen Richey, Mr Naul Mc Cole, Mr Declan Connolly, Mr Brendan Hughes, Mr Martin Doonan, Mr Turlough Smith, Mr Pdraig O Biadha, Mr Charles Fleming, Mr Eamonn Kinch and Mr Thomas Reilly served on the Committee. Five members came to the end of their term on the Committee, Ms Rita Delahunty, Mr Eugene Delaney, Mr Declan Connolly, Mr Martin Doonan and Mr Eddie Feeley. The Committee would like to express their gratitude to these departing members for their valuable work and contributions as members of the Visiting Committee. Two members were newly appointed to the Board in 2008, Mr Eamonn Kinch and Mr Thomas Reilly. Mr Clifford Kelly served as Chairperson of the Visiting Committee and Mrs Kathleen Richey as Vice Chairperson.

We had a total of six hundred and ninety four committals from other institutions during the year to the end of November 2008. The Temporary Release programme continues to work well with most inmates returning to custody in compliance with their conditions of release. Forty four inmates absconded from Loughan House during the year with most inmates being returned to custody shortly afterwards. Ms Catherine Comerford served as Governor in Loughan House until she retired and was replaced by Governor Mr Martin Reilly. Mr James Reilly served as Assistant Governor

Visits.

During the year the committee members visited the house on their unscheduled visits and found all inmates in a good and contented manner. The house and grounds were always in a neat and tidy condition and likewise the kitchen area that received excellent reports when audited, being in pristine condition on each of our inspections. No annual visit was carried out during 2008 but a visit to another Institution would take place in the early part of 2009. The Inspector of Prisons Judge Michael Reilly visited the prison many times over the year in his capacity as Inspector and has reported on his observations in his reports to the Minister. The Director General Mr Brian Purcell visited the Prison and had a meeting with the Visiting Committee. This meeting was well attended and provided the Committee with a good understanding of what the Irish Prison Service hopes to achieve in the future.

Ministers Visit

The Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform Mr Brian Lenehan visited Loughan House on 7th March 2008 to view the new education and accommodation facilities in Loughan House which will allow Loughan House to reach a population of one hundred and thirty inmates in the current year.

Education

The education unit continues to offer an excellent range of subjects to the inmates from basic literacy skills to City and Guilds courses, Fetac Courses and courses up to comprehensive third level degree courses. Such diverse subjects and topics as cookery skills, manual handling and abrasive wheel training courses, woodwork and parenting skills are on offer. Inmates continue to attend this unit on an enthusiastic and totally voluntary basis.

In addition, inmates attend various courses outside Loughan House whenever the opportunity and demand arise. Such courses as ECDL, Computing, Sculpturing, Organic food production and Personal development are attended. Support for the delivery of certified courses is provided when required by Fas. Post release advisory services from the Dept of Health and the Department of Social Welfare are provided and well availed of by the inmates. This continues to offer a valuable service in providing vital information to inmates to assist them on their release. A cross border initiative called the "Eighteen to Twenty five" project operated during the year offering young people self development training. Loughan House inmates participated in this initiative and hopefully the project will receive more funding to allow it continue with this type of training. The Loughan House Management team will continue to promote it among the inmates. PE classes are now run in the evenings for the first time and have proved very popular.

In view of the increasing numbers of non nationals in custody the education centre now provides a ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) course.

The CAIT initiative

This continues to be in use seven days of the week and has a high level of participation from the inmates. Inmates have benefited greatly from this facility and it compliments the activities ongoing in the education area by providing out of school hours computer access.

Addiction counsellor

Alan Higgings of the Merchants Quay Ireland project provides addiction counselling to the inmates in Loughan House. This counselling is designed to assist in drug, alcohol and gambling addiction and assists inmates in overcoming the addiction along with referral to outside agencies to assist them on their release from prison. The focus of the counselling is to help prevent any relapse into addiction and recommitment to prison.

Probation and Welfare Service.

The service has a full time Probation and Welfare Officer Mr Oliver Fallon. A good service is provided with inmates making good use of the service. A pre-release substance abuse programme is run in the institution by this service in conjunction with the Education unit and the Health Service Executive with inmates very willing to participate.

Other programmes run under this service include the Linkage Programme that was in part funded by the Department of Social and Family affairs providing a link between pre release inmates and the various training and employment services in the broader community. This program further attempts to address offender behaviour to prevent any reoccurrence and works towards resettlement and rehabilitation particularly with long term prisoners

Pre-release Programme

A formal pre-release programme is run in Loughan House by an Adult Guidance Teacher and this should greatly assist inmates when they are released as it covers all practical aspects of living and working in the community following release. The topics and skills learned include Safe Pass Certification, Forklift training, Driver Theory Tests, Personal Finance Management and Men's Health . Training under this initiative is delivered in Loughan House where practical and is enthusiastically attended by inmates who find it of great practical relevance and assistance in obtaining a job on their release. Again Fas offer great support in this programme whenever feasible

Deaths in custody

Sadly on the 8th of August 2008 Joseph Rooney died in custody of natural causes and Dermot Wilson was found dead by staff in the Laundry area . These sad occasions were managed in a dignified and sensitive manner and the Committee would like to extend their sympathy to the family and friends of the late Joseph Rooney and Dermot Wilson.

External Agencies

The needs of the inmates continue to be attended to by members of Alcoholics Anonymous when they have volunteers available. The Samaritians continue to promote their service within the institution through the provision of informative documentation and the help of the various bodies within the institution itself.

Services to outside agencies

Loughan House facilitates local schools in incorporating a visit to Loughan House in their CPSE course . These visits from the schools are seen as very worthwhile and have generated a better understanding of prisons and the prisoners detained therein.

Schools are very positive about the experience the visit provides to their students .

Health Care.

The provision of health care continues to be provided by a Nurse Officer who was appointed to Loughan House in March and now works with our two visiting doctors and dental surgeon to a very high standard. Psychiatric and Psychology services are provided whenever the need arises. There is a dentistry on site and this helps greatly with the provision of the dental services

Kitchen

The kitchen area is regularly audited during the year to confirm the already high standard achieved in this area .Audits are carried out by the Food and Safety Authority and CERT with the Kitchen in Loughan House being awarded the Emerald Standard by the EIQA for excellence in hygiene and food safety this year.

A wide and varied menu is provided on a daily basis to inmates with consideration for all nationalities and religious beliefs.

During the year an ongoing tutorial is offered to inmates who work in the kitchen area to complete a Primary Course in Food Hygiene. Staff, who work in the kitchen area, have successfully completed a Train the Trainer course to provide training to inmates working in the kitchen on best practices in catering skills.

Inmates Requests.

During the year two inmates requested to meet with the Committee. All inmates are given the opportunity to speak to the Committee in an unhindered manner. Inmate's requests to the committee are dealt with promptly but none complained about their treatment in Loughan House. Inmates expressed a high level of satisfaction with the staff and the facilities provided.

Chaplaincy

The spiritual needs of the inmates are attended to by a visiting chaplain from the local parish. Mass is celebrated on a weekly basis and on all the various feast days during the year. The chaplain is available to attend to any inmate whenever called upon to do so. The requirements of all inmates of whatever religious persuasions are attended to as required. Bishop Reilly attended Loughan House on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of Sr Ellen Wallace who had contributed so much to Loughan House her role as assistant Chaplain over the years.

Maintenance & New Developments.

The members would like to thank the Governor and all the staff for the way they have maintained the buildings and grounds. The general environment of Loughan House was consistent with good residential care and would have greatly contributed to the comfort of its inmates. The new building offering 60 rooms for accommodation purposes along with a number of communal areas is fully operational and working well. These new rooms will offer single occupant accommodation in line with the policy of the Irish Prison Service. A new all-weather football pitch was completed and opened this year. The new building, to accommodate Administration, Visiting Area, and Workshop continues to contribute greatly to the comfort of inmates and visitors in addition to the ongoing management of Loughan House.

Environmental Management System

Loughan House's Environmental Management System continues to develop with the objective of improving the local environment and raising awareness of environmental matters. This project also wishes to operate with the objective of educating inmates on the need to be environmentally aware and train them for potential employment in this area. The shortage of long term inmates and the building program in Loughan House have made it difficult for this area to achieve all its objectives but a good effort is being made under difficult circumstances.

Library

The library service continues to be provided by Cavan County Library. It is a valuable and well run service open three times a week under the care of a dedicated part time Librarian. Inmates make great use of this service. Plans are in place to move the library to a more spacious environment as soon as possible that would be more centrally located thus affording the library greater prominence and accessibility.

In conclusion, we the Members of the Loughan House Visiting Committee would agree that Loughan House provided a good cost effective service to its residents and continues to review and upgrade the services it provides. We would like to complement the Governor and Staff for the commitment and dedication they give to the well being of the inmates in their care. Finally we would like to thank the Governor and all the Staff for the courtesy and co-operation extended to us on all our visits throughout the year.

Gifford Kelly Chairperson

Naul McCole Member

Eddie Feely Vice Chairperson

Jim R Member

E. Kim Member

Charles G. G. Member

Tommy Reilly Member.

Patrick B. Member

Brendan Hughes Member.

K. G. Richey Member