

BARLINNIE PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2012

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Section 1

STATUTORY ROLE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE (V.C.)

The statutory responsibilities of V.C's and of their members are set out in Part 17 of The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions(Scotland) Rules 2006 made under Section8(2) of the Prisons(Scotland)Act 1989(c45).That states:"Rules made under section 39 of this Act shall prescribe the functions of visiting committees,and shall among other things require members to pay frequent visits to the prison and hear complaints which may be made by the prisoners and report to (Scottish Ministers) any matter which they consider it expedient to report; any member of a visiting committee may at any time enter the prison and shall have free access to every part thereof and to every prisoner"

A Visiting Committee is specifically charged to

- Co-operate with Scottish Ministers and the Governor in promoting the efficiency of the prison;
- Inquire into and report to Scottish Ministers upon any matter into which they may ask them to inquire;
- Immediately bring to the attention of the Governor any circumstances pertaining to the administration of the prison or the condition of a prisoner when they consider this necessary;if the Governor has not remedied matters within a reasonable period of time,they shall bring the matter to the notice of Scottish Ministers;
- From time to time,inquire into the state of the prison premises and inspect the food and drink provided to the prisoners and if at any time find these unsatisfactory,record any deficiencies in their minute book and send a copy to Scottish Ministers and the Governor;
- Hear and investigate any applications or complaints which prisoners may make to them and report their findings to the Governor and Scottish Ministers;
- Visit the prison fortnightly by not fewer than two of its members;
- At its discretion inspect prison records other than personal records,prisoners' records and security manuals or other papers which have implications for security and make a note of their inspection in their minutes;

Make an annual report for the period of 12 months ending on 31st March each year to Scottish Ministers about the state of the establishment and its administration and include any advice and suggestions they consider appropriate.

Section 2

HMP BARLINNIE

HMP Barlinnie is the largest prison in Scotland opened in 1882. It has a contract capacity of 1104 although in practice overcrowding means that this figure is greatly exceeded

It receives prisoners from West of Scotland courts serving sentences of less than 4 years. Prisoners are housed in 6 residential halls with one of these being exclusively for remand prisoners. All the cellular accommodation has internal sanitation.

Prisoners have access to industries and training on a daily basis..

The Social Work service is provided by Glasgow City Council and Education by Motherwell College. Industries, employment and training are all in house provision.

Other external agencies are involved in delivering various prisoner programmes.

Extensive modernisation works have been undertaken over the past few years.

Section 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.This is the annual report of the Barlinnie Visiting Committee(VC) for the year ended 31st March 2012.

During the year the VC has held quarterly meetings and carried out rota visits in accordance with our statutory requirements.

HMP Barlinnie continues to be chronically overcrowded.The average monthly population was 1511 and peaked at 1650.In March the new Low Moss prison opened and around 260 prisoners were transferred out of Barlinnie and this was a welcome relief.Hopefully this downward trend continues.The VC noted that despite the large population,housekeeping and catering standards remain high and staff continue to work on quality programmes and regimes.The additional evening out of cell time and enhanced visitor time is especially welcome.

In May HMCIP inspected Barlinnie and myself and the secretary met with Brigadier Monro and discussed areas of mutual interest.We are pleased at the overall positive outcome of the inspection.

The VC would like to thank Governor Derek McGill and his staff for their help,assistance and co-operation which makes our work easier.

The result of the consultation by the Scottish Government on ‘The Independent Monitoring of Prisons’ was announced in December and shocked everyone by recommending that VCs are to be abolished and replaced by an Independent Advocacy Service for prisoners.However a further consultation opens in May and this opportunity will be taken to further oppose the recommendation.We are concerned that should this proposal go ahead,Scotland alone in the UK and Ireland will be without a lay monitoring body within our prison service.

I would like to thank our VC members for continuing their work against this morale sapping and uncertain background.

Allan Devlin

Chairman

For further information contact the secretary Gerard McElroy

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Section 4

PRISON OPERATION

During our visits we see all aspects of activity within the prison and would comment on the following.

2. Healthcare and Mental Health

The Healthcare centre is an extremely busy part of Barlinnie and there are always high demands made on all healthcare staff. During the year throughout the Scottish Prison Service healthcare staff and responsibility for all health in the prisons transferred to the NHS. The VC was given an excellent training talk on the transfer which proved to be smooth and without major problems. Emphasis on focus groups for prisoners with mental health issues continues. Waiting times for dental health issues continue to be high, perhaps related to the large numbers of prisoners on the methadone programme which continues to take up an excessive amount of staff time. Now that the NHS transfer has had time to settle in, the VC looks forward to hearing reports from the Health Centre Manager at our meetings.

3. Food

The size of the establishment and numbers involved present huge challenges for the catering department. All diets are catered for and in line with Scottish Prison service policy, healthy eating is the target.

Summer and winter menus are prepared and issued to the Halls. A very successful food focus group operates and there is always positive feedback. Catering staff help prisoners from different ethnic backgrounds to celebrate various festivals.

No complaints about the food were raised by prisoners to the VC

4. Equality and Diversity

The SPS is committed to equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights. This is evident in the treatment and provision for prisoners at Barlinnie. Given the ever increasing numbers adherence to this policy is all the more important.

5. Education/Training/Employment

Education, training and work opportunities are offered on a daily basis. During the year new opportunities continued to be developed, covering production, vocational training and service and this has been very welcome.

Training continues in catering and forklift operation. Recycling is improving and there has been a large increase in certificated training. The prison is now seeing the benefit of the poly tunnels which were introduced two years ago and Barlinnie continues to 'be in bloom'.

Education is provided by Motherwell College and a full range of educational opportunities are offered.

6. Residential Accommodation

The large population is stretching the available accommodation to the limit. However out of cell time is maximised with prisoners going to work, training, education, recreation and visits. In the evening recreation has been extended to 8-45 and all prisoners now receive a 45 minute visit and convicted prisoners now receive 4 visits per month. With such a large population, housekeeping issues become important. However the V.C. has not noticed a decline in standards in the Halls. During the year there was a sports panel, comedy workshop and prison band performance.

7. Prison Estates and Management

The Estates Management unit worked in maintaining and upgrading internal and external facilities throughout the year and had a full programme of work. The work in the Health centre was finally completed and this certainly means a better working environment for staff and patients.

Towards the end of the year as a result of transfers and internal and external promotion, thirty new staff started in Barlinnie and the emphasis seemed to be on youth! These were a very welcome addition to the staff complement at Barlinnie.

8. Link Centre

Increased admissions had a significant effect on the centre and over 700 prisoners per month pass through for screening and induction

9. Family Contact Centre

We reported extensively on this aspect of the service last year and the excellent work continues. Given a restricted budget and only three staff all the previously reported programmes in family induction, positive parenting and positive relationships are still organised. The family contact officers held a poetry programme during visits and other family orientated events. Toybox childrens' crèche secured new funding from 'Children in Need' and this enabled it to expand and offer a first class service. Kaye Adams from BBC Scotland opened the new crèche at a very happy and relaxed ceremony with prisoners and their families in attendance.

10. Employment Services.

The Changing Lane Programme to support prisoners into work is still a success along with Local Regeneration Agencies, Routes out of Prison and Job Centre Plus.

Section 5.

The Work of the V.C.

11. Statistics

Recommended complement of VC members	25
Number of members at start of year	22
Number of members at end of year	22
New members joining	1
Members leaving	1
Number of VC meetings during year	4
Average attendance at meetings	10
Total number of prisoner requests	32
Total number of VC rota visits to prison	62

The visiting committee has a membership of 25 drawn from eight local authorities nominating a mixture of councillors and lay members. Current membership is as follows:

Name	Nominating Authority
Richard W. Bett	South Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Ruth Black	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Andy Carmichael	South Lanarkshire Council
Stewart Collins	West Dunbartonshire Council
Maria Corr	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Rose-Ann Cunninghame	East Ayrshire Council
Anne Desport	South Lanarkshire Council
Allan Devlin	North Lanarkshire Council
Jason Ditton	Glasgow City Council
Catherine Fallon	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Bobby Lawson	South Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Celia Lawson	Renfrewshire Council
Anne Mills	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Gerard McElroy	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Patrick McGlinchey	West Dunbartonshire Council
Frances McGrade	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Innes Nelson	Inverclyde Council
Marion Owens	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Mary Paris	Glasgow City Council
Tom Swinney	North Ayrshire Council
Councillor Gordon Stewart	North Lanarkshire Council
Ann Wilkieson	Glasgow City Council

Meetings are held quarterly in the prison. The secretary prepares a rota which ensures two members are in the prison every fortnight. Generally we give notice of our visit so that an escort is provided and we are handed on from one part of the prison to another. However some of our members are key trained and do not require an escort.

The following is a summary of members' attendance:

Name	Rota visits	Meetings	Comments
Richard W.Bett	0	0	
Ruth Black	3	2	
Andy Carmichael	3	0	
Stewart Collins	2	3	
Maria Corr	2	1	
Rose-Anne Cuninghame	2	2	
Anne Desport	1	0	
Allan Devlin	8	3	Chairman
Jason Ditton	2	2	
Emma Christie	0	1	Resigned September 2011
Catherine Fallon	1	0	Leave of Absence
Bobby Lawson	3	2	
Celia Lawson	0	0	
Anne Mills	2	3	
Gerard McElroy	10	4	Secretary
Patrick McGlinchey	0	0	
Frances McGrade	1	1	
Innes Nelson	1	0	
Marion Owens	0	0	
Mary Paris	2	3	
Tom Swinney	15	4	Vice-Chairman
Gordon Stewart	3	2	
Ann Wilkieson	1	3	

A system is in operation within the prison for prisoner requests to be dealt with by the VC . Members interview prisoners,log the details of the request and refer to the appropriate prison management.The outcome is noted on the request form and the prisoner is notified.

The following is a summary of the requests received:

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Accomodation	0	0
Education/training/work	0	0
Estates issues/conditions	0	4
Family/visits	5	6
Food	0	0
Health	6	7
Transfers	1	8
Staff/prisoners issues	0	1
Housing	0	0
Sentence Issues	2	2
Canteen Prices	1	2
HDC Issues	0	2

The issues about visits were mostly about prisoners being placed on closed visits.

12. Association of Visiting Committees

This is our national association and the Chairman and Secretary attend the business meetings.All AVC communications are circulated to our committee members.

13.Training.

The committee has a local training co-ordinator to assist with local and national training.Members attended the national conference and visits to other establishment arranged by the AVC.At our meetings we have a training input on some aspect of prison operation.

This is a record of members attendance at training events :

MEMBER'S NAME	SPS TRAINING DELIVERED LOCALLY			
	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)
	Toybox childrens' creche. Kate Philbrick	Transfer of Prison Healthcare to NHS Dep.Gov.Martin McDonald	Problems associated with autism within prisons.- Councillor Dr. Chris Mason	Increase in Remand Prisoners. Discussion with Governor D.McGill
Andy Carmichael				
Stewart Collins		X	X	X
Rose-Ann Cunninghame			X	X
Allan Devlin	X		X	X
Jason Ditton	X			X
Maria Corr	X			
Bobby Lawson		X		X
Gerard McElroy	X	X	X	X
Ruth Black	X	X		
Tom Swinney	X	X	X	X
Anne Mills		X	X	X
Mary Paris	X	X		X
Gordon Stewart	X			X
Ann Wilkieson	X	X		X
Frances McGrade	X			
Emma Christie	X			

