

**ANNUAL REPORT 2011**

**YOI VISITING COMMITTEE  
HMP & YOI CORNTON VALE**

**CORNTON VALE YOUNG OFFENDERS INSTITUTION  
VISITING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

<b>James Scott</b>	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>Julie McEachern</b>	<b>Vice-Chairman</b>
<b>Mirren Begbie</b>	
<b>Christine Grant J.P.</b>	
<b>Penny Johnston</b>	
<b>Anne Montgomery J.P.</b>	
<b>Jan Nicholson</b>	
<b>Myra Christie</b>	<b>Clerk</b>

## Section 1

### STATUTORY ROLE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

The statutory responsibilities of Visiting Committees and of their members are set out in Part 17 of The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2006 made under Section 8(2) of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 (c.45). That states: “Rules made under section 39 of this Act shall prescribe the functions of visiting committees, and shall among other things require the members to pay frequent visits to the prison and hear any 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 they 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 31 March each year to Scottish Ministers about the state of the establishment and its administration and include any advice and suggestions they consider appropriate;

## **INTRODUCTION**

I have pleasure in submitting the Annual Report for the Visiting Committee for the Young Offenders' Institution, Cornton Vale, Stirling.

We have seven members on our Committee and it is my first duty to thank my colleagues for the dedication they have shown in carrying out their duties over the past year.

Ms Christine Grant and Ms Anne Montgomery, new members who joined our Committee last year, have settled in well and their contributions during their first year in post have proven to be enthusiastic and their selection justified.

The Committee continues to maintain a high level of attendance and if it were not for illness, would have achieved, yet again, a 100% attendance record at meetings. All Statutory Visits have been properly undertaken in accordance with our mandatory requirements. Our Clerk prepares a diary for each member and it is this document which we follow rigorously. Follow-up visits are undertaken by Members to address issues of concern between Statutory Visits. These issues are not simply noted, but are visits one-on-one to achieve a resolution to any situations and this process is not only time saving, but expeditious in nature avoiding form filling and consequently a protracted delay in achieving a solution.

I must highlight that despite being a small Committee, the time devoted by our Members relative to those larger Committees, but having the same Statutory Duties to execute, clearly illustrates the dedication and diligence of our Members and I thank them for that.

### **Meetings of the Committee**

The Committee meet on a bi-monthly basis within the establishment. Attendance statistics are attached.

A formal record and minute of our meetings is taken and submitted to SPS for onward transmission to the Scottish Government.

A formal agenda is prepared prior to all meetings and it is our policy to have the minutes of the meetings in the hands of Members within 7 days of the meeting. All meetings are conducted to comply with Good Governance and with the Ethics of Public Life documentation.

In conducting our meetings we have the presence of a Governor and in addition, we invite Staff Members to enlighten us on their duties within the Establishment. Such involvement enables us to understand properly the roles, functions and concerns of Staff. These are of great value in building relationships and trust between the Visiting Committee and Staff and we believe are essential to a good working relationship.

We continue to be a monitoring group and not an inspecting group and our thanks go to HMCIP for consulting with us in preparing his reports on the establishment.

## Section 2

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## Section 3

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

It is our view that Cornton Vale YOI establishment is overcrowded as is the Prison as a whole. There are approximately 50 Young Offenders (YOs) in custody in accommodation not designed for such numbers with much of the population being on remand. It has been concerning to note that the influx of YOs continues to increase, despite tagging.

We are concerned that both accommodation and opportunities for YOs are unsatisfactory. Work placement continues to be underfunded and this has a consequence of locking up, with the result that boredom and laziness become inherent causing problems for Staff. It has to be said that, despite best efforts of Staff, YOs simply do not wish to go to education, preferring to lie in bed and watch TV.

Access to toilets has not improved despite our concerns and those of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP). Offenders have to wait for unacceptable periods of time for toilet use due to the electronic night locking system and this cannot be tolerated any longer. This basic breach of Human Rights may well end up in a costly financial resolution and really must be addressed now.

We are also concerned that Adults and YOs continue to be locked up together due to space and overcrowding situations. We suggested in our last report that YOs as a group have different needs and should have programmes specially designed for them. Few YOs have a basic understanding of what is considered by most as normal life skills. Efforts are being made by Staff in this direction and it was rewarding to be offered a strawberry tart by a YO, proud of her baking achievement, but more must still be done to learn to cook, launder clothes and do ironing, all being basic home skills, together with an introduction to financial basics.

Despite having spent much money on Astro turf, there are still no outside Games due, we are told, to Health and Safety issues. The Offenders wish to have an opportunity to let off steam, but the only game we see is a few kicking a ball about.

In Ross House, Adult and YOs on remand mix together. There are serious mental issues with Prisoners in Ross House and it is very disturbing to the YOs to see and hear Adults who have mental problems shouting and the like, and seeing such cases being physically removed to secure accommodation. Bearing in mind the prisoners here are on remand and technically are innocent, this is disturbing.

Mental issues as a whole give us great concern with some of the YOs and we look forward to the NHS playing a more important role from now on to placate this very concerning issue.

We still have no Visitors' Centre. We re-iterate our continued dismay at no solution being found for this problem. Being a National Prison for Women in Scotland there is effectively no facility to have a refreshment or freshen up having travelled, in some cases, for over 100 miles to visit with a baby to see a mother. Our opinion on this has been clearly stated for many years and really, this must be addressed.

We have a dedicated Staff within the Establishment trying so hard with limited facilities, to improve life for YOs and we offer our thanks to them.

We await the next follow-up report from HMCIP with interest.

It would be very pleasing if a major rebuilding of the Establishment could take place, acknowledging the restricted financial climate we now live in, which would address these difficulties which Staff and Prisoner have to live in.

## Section 4

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary has been expressed by bullet points and the issues indicated are specifically addressed in the detail of the report.

- Overcrowding
- Lack of work
- Toilet accommodation not acceptable
- Home skills
- Mental Health issues
- Visitor Centre not progressed
- Lack of Capital investment in Property Development
- Back Cells in Ross not acceptable
- Lack of conclusion on Role of Visiting Committees from Government
- Improvements in Health Care
- Good movement in Catering and Food provision
- 
- No move forward in Gender Inequalities
- 
- Improvement in Education being provided but Remand prisoners not being catered for
- 
- Barnardo's appear to be producing constructive programmes
- Need for a First Night Centre
- Commend Link Centre
- Need to improve outside agencies' connection with Link Centre
- Concerns with lack of progress in Mother and Baby Unit
- Family Centre continues to do excellent work
- Lack of proper Outside Activities despite new Astro Turf

## CONCLUSION

We are proud to be part of the Cornton Vale Team.

We continue to have concerns as to the role of the Visiting Committee (VC) moving forward. The Consultation Document responses clearly indicate that the VC organisation continue in its present form with improvements in financial arrangements.

We were disappointed to note that, only one response indicated that VCs were not necessary, being that from SPS. The position of the Visiting Committee must be resolved quickly, otherwise members of Committees will become less enthusiastic and may well resign and we seek assurance from the Cabinet Minister that a decision can really be pushed forward.

We thank HMCIP for the opportunity to meet with him and express our views.

Overcrowding continues to remain critical and we are totally supportive of the Minister in his attempts to alleviate this, despite the huge financial constraints on him.

Thank you to my fellow Committee Members for their dedication and hard work and also to our Clerk for undertaking her duties in such a professional manner despite being a part-time role.

James H Scott (Chairman)  
Cornton Vale Young Offenders Institution Visiting Committee

June 2011

## Section 5

### HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

This coming year will bring major changes to the way in which healthcare is delivered in all Scottish prisons. As of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011 the NHS will take over the provision of all healthcare for prisoners. In Cornton Vale this responsibility will fall to Forth Valley NHS Board. It is hoped the transition from SPS to NHS will be seamless. Current staff will TUPE across but their posts will be subject to re-evaluation under the Agenda for Change. At present medical staff are supplied by MEDACS, a company who have a contract with SPS. Out-of- hours calls are also assessed by this company.

A major consultation on a national strategy for health improvement outcomes for prisoners is currently underway.

This project is a collaboration between the SPS, the Scottish Public Health network and the Scottish Health Promotion Managers Group. We eagerly await its conclusions.

In Cornton Vale in the last 12 months:

- Prisoner focus groups (including YOs) have been re-started.
- A project looking at oral health in prisoners has started (SOHIP) – this is a Scottish government priority.
- Staffing levels have improved and cover is usually available for staff absences.
- Dental appointment waiting times have come down to 3 weeks.
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is being delivered 18 hours/week by a trained nurse and it is hoped this will increase again soon.
- Unfortunately the numbers receiving Methadone continue to rise (now standing at 142 / week but very few of these are YOs). To ease the load on the Health Centre the inmates at Wallace receive their Methadone in their Hall.
- There is still no progress on the move to set up a separate care facility for seriously disturbed prisoners
- A new bid has been made to increase the capacity of the Health Centre by adding 2 new clinical rooms and a waiting room.

The Acting Director of Care is very keen to be pro-active in promoting positive life-style messages and takes every opportunity to get these across. She hopes to supplement the current induction leaflet with a video (to be shown throughout the prison) to emphasise the help available.

## **ADDICTION**

All convicted prisoners now go through a generic needs assessment in order to identify which of the many programmes available they would get most benefit by attending. This assessment takes all day to complete. For most YO's this involves addressing their drinking habits as well as low self esteem, relationships and female offending behaviour.

For those at risk of drug overdosing Naloxone training is given prior to release and/or court attendance. This training is provided by Phoenix Futures alongside CPR by an addiction nurse. Once trained, Naloxone is put into the prisoners "valuable property" bag for their personal use if required.

## **FOOD**

All food for the blocks is produced in the Cookhouse. I spoke to Anne McGregor one of the managers in the Cookhouse and she advised me there are currently 22 women working there. Until recently there were 2 YO's but they have now been released. There are no YO's names on the 'jobs board'. The food budget in Cornton Vale is the same as last year, £2 per woman per day. The supplier remains the same as last year, the savings have been maintained and the products used are not the best.

Catering Staff continue to have access to the services of a part time dietician via the local Health Authority. Pregnant women continue to be entitled to a pint of milk a day, their pregnancy status has to be confirmed by the Health Centre and the Cookhouse must be informed. They are also entitled to extra fruit. Currently no ethnic meals are being prepared.

The Cookhouse Managers produce imaginative and healthy meals within the constraints of their budget. Transportation of food in heated trolleys affects quality. Good value fruit bags continue to be available at subsidised rates thanks to ongoing funding from the Robertson Trust.

The Catering Committee continue to meet quarterly to discuss menus, problems and complaints. The Committee is made up of representatives from the blocks. VC members are welcome to attend. Anne has invited a member from the YO VC to come along one day at 4pm when she is on duty and she will display a typical day's menu.

The girls still complain from time to time about the food, however on regular inspection by the VC, and notwithstanding the issues above, we continue to be impressed by what the Catering Staff can produce on such budgetary constraints. The new menus introduced over the past year are proving more popular than previous menus. Complaints are more or less the same as in previous year.

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The YOs have had no issues regarding Diversity over the last year however the **gender inequalities** with regard to the care of and conditions for female YOs within the Scottish Prison Service is very apparent in several areas.

- As reported in some detail in last year's Annual Report, the female YOs continue to be treated less favourably than their male counterparts in YOI Polmont with regards to in-cell sanitation. The female YOs do not have ready access to toilets during daytime lockups and throughout the night. On many occasions YOs have complained about the unfairness, discomfort and indignity suffered through delays in getting to toilets as they are locked in until they are electronically released. The time delay from first requesting access to the toilet can be several hours. This is a serious health issue as well as being degrading treatment. This situation is unacceptable and can be solved by the Scottish Prison Service as it has been possible to fit in-cell sanitation into much older prisons for males in recent years.
- The lack of purposeful activities - daytime and evening activities - for female YOs (both on remand and convicted) is another inequality which needs to be attended to urgently by the Scottish Prison Service. Their male counterparts have wider access to a range of activities. The female prisoners complain frequently to VC members about boredom and their leisure time could be more productive if the YOs were involved in planned physical and mental pursuits i.e. activities in each block led by officers or youth workers. Chatting and watching television are currently their only pastimes.
- The poor conditions within the cells for female YOs is apparent when compared with the standard of accommodation which male YOs have at Polmont. The lack of storage facilities is shocking. One remand prisoner was storing her clothes in a cardboard KP Crisp Box as there was nowhere else to store her clothes. She also had no wardrobe to hang clothes. She only had the share of a cupboard which had no shelf in it so her items were mixed up with those of her cell-mate. The run-down appearance of the décor and furnishings make it a dismal environment for the female YOs which contrast with the excellent, modern facilities which the male YOs live in.

**Summary: (i) The Committee continues to have serious concerns about the gender inequalities experienced by female YOs within YOI Cornton Vale.**

**(ii) The Committee recommends that the Scottish Prison Service corrects these inequalities which demonstrate poor care and support for female YOs in comparison to the current experience of male YOs.**

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK

### *Education*

Changes have taken place in the provision of Education over the last year which have benefited Young Offenders (YOs). Statistics are now kept which record their participation in Education, something the Committee has requested for some years. Prison management and Learning Centre staff have always maintained that it works better if YOs are integrated with adults in education classes, so the Committee is delighted that classes have now been provided specifically for them. These classes in Life Skills (cookery) and Card making have been fully and enthusiastically supported and productive. In the Life Skills class, high standards are expected – work is monitored and geared towards an SQV certificate. Life Skills is a valuable element in preparation for release – some form of Life Skills classes should be accessible to all YOs. The success of these classes has led to more young women being drawn in to participate in a wider range of subjects such as Literacy, Maths, Communications and IT. One-off initiatives have been a series of Author Visits, where 4/5 YOs attended each session, and “Beyond the Vale”, a BBC-led 25 minute filmed drama about life in prison in which a Young Offender took the leading part. There is an ongoing drama group. Altogether 15 YOs took part in some form of Education in April 2011, about half the convicted group in Bruce House – this number reflects the level of interest throughout the year.

Sadly the Learning Pathways scheme which links education courses in prison with those outside has ceased because funding ceased. It was difficult to co-ordinate courses inside and outside prison because this meant dealing with Education Departments all over Scotland and there was not enough consistency. However, the Barnardo’s Youth Worker who took up her post recently, dealing so far mainly with Throughcare issues, sees Education as an important part of her remit.

In recent years those on remand have had no access to education. Since they are not eligible for work it is to be hoped that the contract about to be drawn up with Motherwell College will include them in some way.

**Summary: (i) The Committee commends increased participation through the introduction of separate classes for Young Offenders, particularly the Life Skills class, and feels that some form of Life Skills should be accessible to a much greater number than at present.**

**(ii) The Committee hopes that some form of learning will be made available to those on remand.**

## ***Training and Work***

It is encouraging that efforts have continued this year to create more work places so that everyone eligible has a job, but high numbers of prisoners and limitations in space and budget for staffing can prevent good initiatives from being implemented. The number of spaces available never quite catches up with demand.

All the work opportunities in place last year remain: industrial cleaning, laundry, kitchen, craft workshop, hairdressing, gardens, and the bike shop. YO's are integrated with adults in all these work areas. Block housekeeping and pantry jobs are filled by those on short sentences. There is now a cosmetics shop within the craft workshop and those who work there can qualify for an SVQ in retailing. As from spring 2011, the Gardens work party offers the greatest increase in jobs. After a long wait to allow for training there are now 2 Gardens Officers who are providing 26 places for enthusiastic employees. In addition to the routine maintenance of the prison grounds, there is now a polytunnel for growing vegetables which it is hoped will supply the Kitchen. This is an excellent initiative.

Work and training leading to employment outside prison is not a priority for most YO's who have no previous experience of work. They go to work while they are in prison because it gets them out of the block, relieves boredom and provides an opportunity to meet others. Peer issues or relationships within a work party may affect how well a young person is able to sustain employment, but for those who are interested, work provides an opportunity for self-discipline, training and teamwork. However, the Committee is concerned about how often YO's who attend for a work party are sent back to their block, usually because staff training, holidays or sickness mean there are not enough Workshop officers available. This sets an unfortunate precedent, since learning the routines and responsibilities of work is part of Young Offenders' rehabilitation.

It is hoped that when the Barnardo's Plan B project is fully established it will involve a greater number of the YO's earlier in their sentence so that they can be helped to recognise the value to their life outside of education and learning to work. The real support for transition to the community which the scheme provides, focused on a wide range of individual needs, gives cause for optimism that something practical and effective is being done towards reducing re-offending among these 17-20 year olds.

**Summary: (i) The Committee commends continuing efforts to provide more work opportunities within the prison.**

**(ii) It commends the work of the Barnardo's Youth Worker in preparing Young Offenders for release, but hopes that her range of activity can be expanded to include a greater number at an earlier stage in their sentence.**

## RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

The young women continue to be held in different parts of the prison – Ross, Younger (mainly on remand) and Bruce Houses in the main. Very occasionally they go to Wallace, Skye or the ILUs but these are exceptions. The “numbers game” and moves between houses continue to cause problems with settling, consistent staffing and available programmes etc.

The residences (particularly Younger and Bruce) are in very poor condition having no major investment or redesign in years. This is depressing for both the under-21 girls who can take no interest in their living quarters and for staff who have expected change, only to see none. Minimum maintenance keeps the property going, but no more.

In very short supply still are useable outdoor areas for games/exercise. A project was started with all-weather covering to some areas but this has not been finished with fencing etc. and therefore has not been in use.

The cells are overcrowded, still have no in-cell sanitation and are generally in need of modernisation or replacement.

There has been no noticeable change to the residential accommodation since our last report.

The Visiting Committee awaits a separate block for the YOs with the opportunity to place them in single cell accommodation. Space could also allow for purposeful activities alongside more structured work. A consistent house regime for the YOs is badly needed.

## **PRISON ESTATE AND ADMINISTRATION**

Very little has happened in terms of estate since the writing of our last report. Prison numbers (and to an extent the type of prisoners) have continued to place pressure on the existing estate. Whilst there has been some additional equipment, (kitchen, laundry), no building projects have been carried out to either the general estate or residential accommodation.

As Cornton Vale is a Scottish National Prison for women offenders, it is surprising that year after year, nothing is reviewed in terms of estate and staff are relied on to make the best of what is available.

### *Outdoor Areas*

Several areas were started and not completed. Even though “Astro-turf” was laid in places there is still no designated outdoor exercise area for games etc. (compared with male establishments). The indoor gym has to be used for any such activities. The “Beechgrove Garden” remains attractive but seldom used.

### *Indoor Areas*

The Learning Kitchen has proved a very worthwhile area and the Visiting Committee would like to see additional provision made so that more and more young offenders (YOs) can use this area. The Card-making Workshop and the Hairdressing areas, along with the Kitchen and Laundry continue to be the busiest areas. There are areas for education and the library, but no activities can take place within the house blocks (day or evening) with the young offenders and work areas are limited.

There is still no First Night Centre for young (vulnerable) women, limited waiting space in the reception area and visits room, no in-cell sanitation for young women and no space to segregate those needing such treatment. There is still no separate residential block for YOs within the estate.

The buildings have been minimally maintained to keep them going, with no programme of improvement or replacement put in place. Deterioration of the fabric is further evident from loose and missing render. The buildings are outdated and no longer “fit for purpose”. Staff are still being asked to adjust within the existing walls that were designed for a different regime.

A building (formerly known as “Ann’s Place”) sits within the Prison Estate but outwith the Prison itself. It appears grossly underused and would make an ideal Visitor Centre for families coming to Cornton Vale. Not only could it offer a (civilised) place to freshen up, have a cup of tea etc. on arriving at the jail (some families have to travel a long way from public transport), it could be used by women leaving the jail instead of the bus stop across the road. The Centre could act as an interface with the Community, forming further links with Community organisations and be an information hub. The Visitors’ Centre still has to happen at the only National female prison and Young Offenders Institute in Scotland and the Committee asks why?

## LINK CENTRE AND INDUCTION

**These headings have been taken together as, at Cornton Vale, they are run in the same place, by the same staff.**

Two principal activities take place in the Link Centre: (i) Induction provides information about life in the prison and support available on arriving at Cornton Vale and (ii) Pre-release is delivered by prison staff and also through outside agencies.

### (i) Induction

Module 1, a one-day course, takes place three times per week so that prisoners can attend as soon as possible after reception and includes essential information about Housing Benefits as well as the Core Screen Interview. Housing and Benefits are important issues both on arrival and release, so it is unfortunate that the Benefits service providers do not always attend when expected and help with Housing is covered much more effectively in some areas of Scotland than others. The Core Screen interview identifies a prisoner's needs and has to be handled sensitively to draw out issues which can be addressed during the sentence. The Alerting Tool is found to be ineffective in discovering those who have literacy or numeracy problems.

Module 2, also a one-day course, introduces prisoners to Programmes available to help address their offending and also to outside organisations who work 1-to-1 on personal issues and can provide continuing contact in transition to the community.

Module 3, a four-day course running over the second week, prepares prisoners for work and other activities.

The content of the Modules can be modified when necessary to take account of changing needs or the availability of service providers.

### (ii) Pre-release

A weekly half-day Pre-release course is run by Link Centre staff with input from housing, benefits, social work, chaplains, Job Centre Plus, Education and Addictions. Prisoners can also write a letter to the Samaritans and everyone is seen by Phoenix about harm-reduction within 3 days of liberation. The Pre-release session takes place 4-6 weeks before release, so that there is still time to sort out any problems. A wide range of services is also provided by outside agencies who work 1-to-1 with prisoners covering issues such as childhood abuse, relationships and sexual health.

“Time for Change”, a programme started last year specifically tailored to the needs of 16 and 17 year-olds with the admirable aim of providing intensive support to enable them to move on following release, is proving helpful. The girls enjoy the sessions and like the team delivering them.

The Link Centre continues to be a good space for the purpose for which it was designed although the number of agencies now working there shows up a need for more interview rooms. Staff have a busy job co-ordinating appointments for all the varied activities and ensuring that prisoners are brought from residential blocks or workplaces. They cope with the constant coming and going with efficiency and good humour so it is unfortunate when either prisoners cannot be bothered to attend an appointment or staff cannot be found to escort them since there are no longer resources for peripatetic officers.

**Summary: (i) The Committee commends the Link Centre as an area which is well-run and plays an important part in the life of the prison and is delighted at the success of the “Time to Change” programme.**

**(ii) Efforts should be made to ensure the consistency of outside service providers – and also to improve prisoner attendance.**

## **Section 6**

### **OTHER AREAS OF THE PRISON REGIME ON WHICH THE VISITING COMMITTEE HAS ISSUES TO REPORT**

**Induction - See above – we have included this in the Link Centre heading**

#### **STAFFING**

Problems with staffing at Cornton Vale have been highlighted historically. As the numbers of prisoners change (and the rise in sentence lengths), this has had a knock-on effect on staffing, who in the main try very hard to maintain standards with inappropriate facilities and restraints on budgets.

Space and time are now at a premium and it is very disappointing to see that staff have no real chance at improving damaged lives by talking one-to-one, circle time etc. or by offering in-house activities/programmes etc. (anti-bullying etc.). The over-stretched built environment is also to blame for how young offenders (YOs) are treated (e.g. exercise, segregation of people on Rules etc.).

More consistent staffing is crucial to improving house regimes etc. Stricter time-tabling is also needed to allow staff time to carry out ever increasing paperwork and then free them up for other duties.

The staff working with the YOs are in the main good and wanting to work with the age group. This should be encouraged and developed and made a priority, rather than life being a “holding exercise” within the prison.

On-going training and, just as importantly, “follow-up” information is essential for staff as is an improvement on STAFF COMMUNICATION and the more ready transfer of information.

## **SPECIALIST AREAS**

### **Social Work**

Staffing problems continue to reduce the effectiveness of the department, which remains one and a half down, with one off sick and one on maternity leave, for neither of whom cover is provided. The increasing workload of individual cases due to higher numbers means that a Social Worker can no longer participate in programmes addressing offending such as Constraints and Substance Related Offending Behaviour. The Department regrets losing the opportunity to work in this way with prisoners.

A further consequence of high numbers is that there is no time to address prisoners' individual needs adequately and no allowance made for the more time-consuming requirements of women. The Committee is aware of particularly demanding cases among the Young Offenders (YOs).

The recent greater emphasis on Throughcare, in particular Plan B for YOs, is a most welcome development to the work of reducing re-offending but involves more work for the Social Work department with no extra resources allocated to it.

**Summary: The resources available to the Department are too limited to be fully effective for the present size of Cornton Vale.**

### **Chaplaincy**

The Chaplaincy team has changed since last year, the Rev. Colin Shreenan no longer visiting Cornton Vale. Church of Scotland services are now shared between the Rev. Wark and the Rev. Bill Taylor, who will be spending more time in the prison in the future. The contract provides 36 hours of Chaplaincy in the prison each week, which covers 2 services (1 Church of Scotland and 1 Catholic), a prayer group, 2 singing classes, representation on the Mental Health Team and the Equality and Diversity Committee and taking ICM referrals. First offenders are seen within a week of arrival. Prisoners can apply to see a Chaplain through getting their name put in a book at the Gate.

Arrangements for those of faiths and other than Church of Scotland or Roman Catholic are made on request. The Governor responsible for the Chaplaincy has had no such request in the past year.

### **Mother and Baby Unit**

The Mother and Baby Policy document, two years in preparation, is to be available in time for the changeover to the NHS. Conditions in the Unit have not changed over the last year. Mothers with babies or those who are heavily pregnant still feel isolated as their numbers do not justify the presence of a member of staff, although they have supervised exercise every day, but they have good Health Centre support and weekly visits from a midwife. The area is still occasionally used as overspill when numbers are especially high.

A volunteer from the Aberlour Trust takes mothers with babies and pregnant women for parenting classes and also runs a group for mothers located anywhere in the prison who have children under two years old on “Children’s Futures”. Some Young Offenders have been able to take advantage of this excellent and constructive initiative.

**Summary: (i) The Committee commends the work of the Aberlour Trust. (ii) It is concerned at the delay in preparing the Mother and Baby Policy.**

### **Family Centre**

The Family Centre continues to do the same wide range of work with the same number of 3 officers in spite of continually high numbers in the prison. The team’s contribution to the wellbeing of prisoners through their combination of caring and efficiency is of great value throughout the prison, not just to prisoners and their families. They remain welcoming whatever the pressure on their time and energy and provide a listening ear in situations such as bereavement when a chaplain may not be available or prisoners do not want to see a religious person.

**Summary: The Committee commends all aspects of the Centre’s work.**

### **Visits**

The Visits room is light with new soft chairs, boxes of children’s toys and drink and snack vending machines, but it is too small for its purpose. The chairs have to be so close together that it is impossible for a family group to have a private conversation and the supervising officers have to sit closer than necessary for security – not a stress-reducing situation. The visitors’ waiting area downstairs is a cheerless room, even though the chairs are in new bright blue plastic and a curtain has been hung at the window. Again, it is too small and very cramped if most of the seats are occupied. The drinks machine upstairs and a toilet downstairs are the only facilities for visitors to the only women’s prison in Scotland, who may have to come a great distance in bad weather with several changes of public transport.

In view of the current encouraging emphasis on throughcare and recognition of the value of good family relationships for return to the community, consideration of the wellbeing of families visiting Cornton Vale is long overdue. Making visits less stressful in difficult circumstances benefits both prisoners and families. After a long journey, it would make a great difference to be able to prepare for a visit with a cup of tea, comfortable toilet facilities and a confidential listening ear with the same afterwards before the trip home. A Visitors’ Centre should be considered an essential adjunct to preparation for release and reduction of offending. In order that families can feel that the Centre is working on behalf of visitors rather than for the prison, it should be in an independently-run environment outwith the prison.

**Summary/**

**Summary: Facilities for visitors are inadequate for a national establishment. They should be provided with the facilities they need and offered information, support and the opportunity to discuss in confidence the difficulties they may face. A Visitors' Centre can be set up outside Cornton Vale with little expense to the SPS – this can and should be done as soon as possible.**

## **Physical Education**

Young Offenders' participation in physical activity has been encouraging this year. Zumba dancing has been very popular. "Girls on the Move", a 13-week programme developed by Youth Scotland and SPS PE instructors, used street dance to promote a healthier lifestyle. Even though attendance dropped during the course, those taking part benefited by improving their physical and psychological health and thereby gaining confidence. This was followed up with a 5-day Dance Leaders course for which successful participants gained certificates.

SPS recognises in the Action Plan for Cornton Vale of March 2010 that "access to exercise and the open air is important for the health and wellbeing of women in custody". Teenagers in particular benefit in health and behaviour from being able to use up physical energy in the open air, especially when their living accommodation is so cramped.

Space in the gym area is limited but there is plenty of space in the grounds so it seems extraordinary that there are still no opportunities for exercise in the open air, let alone sport. The Astro turf surfaces laid at considerable expense last year have never been used. We understand that a risk assessment is taking place after which it is hoped that these areas can be used for non-contact sports.

**Summary: (i) The Committee commends the provision of physical activity specifically for Young Offenders.**

**(ii) They regret that over yet another year there has been no provision for outdoor exercise at Cornton Vale.**

## Section 7

### THE WORK OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

<b>Visiting Committee Statistics</b>		
	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>
Recommended complement of VC members (per Rule 155)	7	7
Number of VC members at start of the reporting period	7	7
Number of VC members at end of the reporting period	7	7
Number of new VC members joining within the reporting period	nil	nil
Number of VC members leaving within the reporting period	nil	nil
Total number of VC committee meetings during reporting period	9	
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	7	
Total number of applications/complaints received  ( <b>Note:</b> any issues are dealt with on the spot with Officers or, if necessary with the Governor and answer transmitted to the Prisoner immediately. There is no requirement for voluminous paper work and this works well. Approx 200 such concerns pa are dealt with in this sensible manner.)		
Total number of visits to the prison*	See table below	

#### **Total number of visits to the establishment or meetings connected therewith 2010/11**

Jim Scott	34
Mirren Begbie	28
Penny Johnston	30
Julie McEachern	31
Jan Nicholson	28
Christine Grant	28
Ann Montgomery	26

**Note:** any issues are dealt with on the spot with Officers or, if necessary with the Governor and answer transmitted to the Prisoner immediately. There is no requirement for voluminous paper work and this works well. Approx 200 such concerns pa are dealt with in this sensible manner.)

<b>Applications/Complaints Statistics</b>		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>
Accommodation		
Diversity related		
Education/training/work		
Estate issues (conditions)		
Family/visits		
Food		
Health related		
Inter-establishment transfers		
Personal property		
Staff/Prisoner related		
Miscellaneous		
<b>Total</b>		

