



ASSOCIATION OF VISITING COMMITTEES
FOR SCOTTISH PENAL ESTABLISHMENTS

**ANNUAL REPORT
2012-2013**

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

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

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

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 wish to thank my colleagues for the dedication they have shown in carrying out their duties over the past year.

This has been a difficult year in as much that in December 2011 the Cabinet Secretary announced that he wished to abolish Visiting Committees and replace them with a new system as yet to be confirmed. Despite that announcement, my colleagues have worked in their normal enthusiastic fashion and have maintained the reputation of the YOI Visiting Committee. Visiting figures are shown later in the Report.

The Committee members continue to maintain their excellent level of attendance and if it were not for illness would have achieved yet again a 100% record for attendance at Meetings, yet still achieving a 90% Meeting presence.

All Statutory Visits were properly undertaken and completed in accordance with the mandatory requirements. Our Clerk prepared a diary for each Member's Visits and this was followed rigorously. Follow-up visits to address concerns were duly undertaken, sometimes involving colleagues visiting the establishment three times in one week to be certain that Prisoners were being reassured that their concerns were being heeded.

We have found that by follow up visits which are one-to-one, members can achieve speedy resolutions to issues which some may regard as complaints and this is not only time saving, but expeditious in nature, and such an approach is welcomed by the Residential Managers and Governor.

Despite our being a Committee of only seven, we have to undertake those same duties of larger Committees which can number twenty personnel, which clearly shows the dedication and diligence of our Members.

Meetings of Committees

The Committee meets on a bi-monthly basis within the Establishment and statistics for visits are attached.

A Formal Agenda and record of Minutes are submitted to the Government.

It is our policy that good Governance is followed at all times and minutes are circulated within a seven day cycle to members. All meetings are properly convened and conform to the Ethics in Public Life documentation.

In conducting our meetings we have the presence of the Governor or Deputy and, in addition, we invite Staff Members to brief us at our Meetings which helps greatly to understand properly the roles and functions of staff. We also invite representatives from other bodies to address us, such as The Faith Groups and CJA.

Our role is very clearly defined as monitoring and we have no authority to inspect and in this direction I thank HMCIP for inviting us to sit with him prior to his Inspection Report Preparation so that he can be aware of concerns we have had.

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Section 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

I direct this section of my Report purely to YOs.

There continues to be on average 50 offenders, many of whom are on Remand. It has been concerning to note the increase of crimes of a violent nature which, despite tagging, still retain the high numbers in custody.

We are concerned that YOs have serious literacy issues and also in conversation they find it difficult to express themselves in a coherent fashion.

The YO accommodation was moved to Younger House. The same issues still apply in that work placement is underfunded and boredom and laziness are still prevalent, despite best efforts of Staff to engender some enthusiasm. (Young Offenders have been decanted to Polmont so that general refurbishment work can be carried out - Details will appear in our next report.)

The toilet accommodation has not improved. Efforts have been made to replace some soft furnishings but the general ambience is no different.

Efforts are being made continuously by Staff to improve Life Skills and this has also assisted in some prisoners responding but the ability of YOs to 'let off steam' has still not been resolved.

In Ross House where the Adult Population and YOs mix, it gives cause for concern to see Mental Issues being played out in front of a YO. We are delighted to see that the "Back Cells" are being replaced in Ross.

The Report on Women Offenders commissioned last year and published this year replicates the majority of concerns we as a Committee have and, when coupled with the Reports of HMCIP, we can only hope that the lot of female offenders can be properly addressed.

Our concerns for Prisoners in Younger 'back cells' were heard by HMCIP and we are pleased to report that work has been completed on the new Separation and Re-integration cells.

We are pleased to report that a new Visitors' Centre, "The Hub" is up and running and this will make a real difference to relatives travelling from some distances to visit the prison.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

- Violent nature and crimes of prisoners now more concerning
- Toilet accommodation still not acceptable
- Home skills showing positive results
- Mental Health issues and lack of self esteem
- New Visitor Centre official opening end August
- Lack of major Capital Investment
- “Back Cells” in Younger now replaced with new Separation and Integration Unit
- Smooth transition between NHS and SPS in Health Care
- Good management in Catering and food quality
- Inequalities between Male and Female establishments
- Improvement in Education provided but Remand Prisoners issues not being addressed
- Barnardo's Plan B now in effect and more purposeful activity now available
- First Night Centre working well
- Commend work in Link Centre but concerned that First Aid Programme and Food Handling not continuing
- Need to improve on outside agencies links with Link Centre
- Concern with lack of Housing Support
- Family Centre does excellent work
- No real outside activities and Beechgrove Garden rarely used

CONCLUSION

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

We continue to have concerns as to the Government intentions on Visiting Committees. It is not good for morale of the volunteers although we continue to perform our role with diligence but how long this can be upheld remains to be seen.

We appreciate the efforts of HMCIP to improve matters at the Prison and thank him for meeting with us.

The Cabinet Secretary has a difficult job in allocating monies to Establishments but it would be only reasonable to expect that Funds be allocated to a short term strategy to improve conditions of the property.

I thank my colleagues for their efforts and also our Clerk for her professionalism in a part-time role.

Jim Scott, Chair
Cornton Vale Young Offenders Institution Visiting Committee

July 2013

HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The most significant change in the last 12 months has, of course, been the temporary transfer of all the Young Offenders from Younger at Cornton Vale to Blair at Polmont. To reduce the impact of this change of scene 5 members of the nursing staff who cared for the girls at CV transferred too. Their skills cover the areas of Learning Disability, Mental Health and Addiction. The physical environment at Polmont has done much to improve the well-being of the YOs who now benefit from in-cell sanitation and showering facilities. The ready availability of fresh fruit is also to be commended. A decrease in the number of prisoners means that there is no need for cells to be shared.

There still seem to be delays in the transfer of information between different parts of the NHS and the girls often complain about having to wait to receive prescription drugs which they had been on prior to coming into custody.

Dentistry continues to cause concern – most YOs are on short sentences or on remand and therefore are unable to benefit from long-term dental treatment plans. They do receive emergency dentistry as and when required.

Naloxone training is offered but there are few girls eligible to receive it.

Addictions

Since the transfer to Polmont the skills of the Addictions nurses have been called upon. For some years, alcohol has been the form of addiction most prevalent among the Young Offenders at Cornton Vale but, over recent months, issues with drugs have emerged, to the extent that due to the behaviour of some girls who have gained access to drugs, the smooth running of the regime has been made more difficult. It is to be hoped that the return to Cornton Vale and the inevitably changing population of Young Offenders will make this only a temporary problem

FOOD

Kitchen

The kitchen at Polmont YOI was visited as the under 21s are there until August. The kitchen is spacious. None of the females work in there, probably due to the fact that they are not going to be in Polmont long enough to be in a work party, although they do go along to collect the food trolleys at meal times.

The food budget – no-one available to ask. The skills and imagination of Kitchen Managers are challenged to provide a high level of tasty and nourishing meals with strict portion control. The Cornton Vale YOs reckon the food is not as good as Cornton Vale, describing it as tasteless and not looking appetising at all. There are more snacks available in Blair House and plenty of fruit which is always available.

Pregnant women continue to be entitled to a pint of milk a day, their pregnancy status having to be confirmed by the Health Centre and the Kitchen informed. They are also entitled to extra fruit. At the moment no special diets are provided as there is no demand.

The Catering Committee continues to meet quarterly to discuss menus, problems and complaints and included representatives from the residential houses. Members of the Visiting Committee have been pleased to see Catering Committee reports displayed in the dining room and are impressed by the quality of the comments. We receive few complaints about the food, the most common being the length of time it spends in the heated trolleys and the early hour at which supper is served, leaving a very long gap between the evening meal and breakfast the next morning.

Summary: meals are an important event in the day of a prisoner – the Kitchen staff are to be congratulated on providing such good dishes day after day on time and for so many.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The YO's have had no issues regarding Diversity over the last year, however, the **gender inequalities** with regard to the care of and conditions for female YO's within the Scottish Prison Service are very apparent in several areas and continue to cause concern.

- As reported in some detail in last year's Annual Report and the two previous years' Annual Reports, the female YO's in Cornton Vale continue to be treated less favourably than their male counterparts in the YOI Polmont with regards to in-cell sanitation. The female YO's do not have ready access to toilets during daytime lockups and through the night. On many occasions, YO's 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.

It must be noted that the temporary re-housing of female YO's since February 2013 in YOI Polmont while major renovation work is carried out in Cornton Vale, has greatly improved this situation for female YO's. They have been able to get access to showers and toilet facilities day and night.

However when the female YO's return to Cornton Vale in summer 2013, they will return to improved accommodation but they will still have lack of access to toilets and showers during lock up times including night time.

The female YO's will therefore be returning to an unequal situation where all male YO's have ready access to showers and toilets whereas the female YO's will not.

- The lack of purposeful employment and activities - daytime and evening activities - for female YO's (both on remand and convicted) is another inequality which needs to be attended to by the Scottish Prison Service. Their male counterparts have wider access to a range of both employment and leisure activities.
- The refurbishment of Skye House in Cornton Vale will be a great improvement in the conditions and facilities for female YO's.

Summary: (i) the Committee continues to have serious concerns about the gender inequalities experienced by female YO's within YOI Cornton Vale.

(ii) the Committee recommends that the Scottish Prison Service corrects these inequalities which demonstrate poorer care and support for female YO's in comparison to the current experience of male YO's.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK

Education

The number of Young Offenders participating in education has remained almost the same as last year, even though Motherwell College staff have given much thought to offering classes which will both help and appeal to young people. In November the entire timetable was opened up to both Young Offenders and remand prisoners to include literacy and numeracy, communication and IT skills, creative writing, history, book group, citizenship, film group, cookery and baking, art and money matters. At the weekly “welcome session” every effort is made to identify needs and get across what learning opportunities are available. This appears to be successful because the pattern was for the girls to sign up for a lot of classes but subsequently not attend them. Their motivation levels are low except in the case of subjects like Art or Life Skills (cookery). These two classes are provided specifically for Young Offenders and continued to be very popular, averaging 5 girls per session. It is worth noting that both these have a creative element, in that at the end of a session the students have something to show for what they have done.

Literacy and numeracy levels are assessed in the welcome session. Motherwell College is also working closely with the Shannon Trust to identify peer tutors and learners for the Toe by Toe programme which addresses literacy needs. There has been an increase overall in the number of those taking part in literacy and numeracy classes due largely to the appointment of two new members of staff for these subjects. Prison offers a good opportunity to do something about these problems, but some Young Offenders still do not want to admit to inadequacy in reading or number skills.

In addition to the regular timetable, the College staff have arranged a varied and interesting programme. An impressive menu was laid on by bakery students for a Jubilee Tea in the Beechgrove Garden. Last summer there was a drama project in partnership with the Arches and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Live Literature author visits have continued and poet Gerry Fellows gave a workshop as part of Book Week Scotland, responses from which will feed into STIR, a new prison magazine for the arts. Glasgow Women’s Library has been facilitating a monthly Reading Circle. Prisoners’ Week was marked by the citizenship class, which has continued to work to raise money for Chichiri Women’s Prison in Malawi. Artlink Central will bring in cross-artform projects over the next three years and Glasgow School of Art is also to be working with prisoners. Music was represented by a choir project and guitar lessons.

The Barnardo’s Charity Mingle in December was an outstanding success. This event was arranged by the Learning Centre in partnership with Barnardo’s and SPS staff from Younger House to raise funds for Yorkhill Hospital. Young offenders planned, promoted and facilitated the day as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award. They worked with the Cookery Lecturer to produce 500 cakes and also with the art and citizenship classes. Beauty treatments were offered by students brought in by Motherwell College, and enthusiastically taken up. Half the population of Cornton Vale came and made donations. This was an excellent example of partnership working across the prison.

Continuing the theme of working with other groups in the prison, the Learning Centre is in discussions with staff from the Work Parties to identify opportunities for prisoners to learn and gain qualifications while working. Another excellent initiative is the forthcoming Universal Credit pre-release course in partnership with the Job Centre, when students will learn about Universal Credit and Welfare Reform as well as improving their IT skills. Motherwell College staff feel that being able to use the internet would definitely be helpful here because students will have to apply for benefits online when they are released. We hope that the Young Offenders will take advantage of this course on their return from Polmont.

The range of education available to them at Polmont is inevitably narrower than at Cornton Vale but more accessible and the girls have made good use of the Library. There are classes in literacy and numeracy, communications and IT, creative writing and two full days of art. Even so, few have taken advantage of the opportunity.

There are two reasons apart from an unhappy association with school for Young Offenders' lack of enthusiasm for education. It has to compete during the day with work and with Barnardo's group sessions, both of which are important for rehabilitation, but probably the more crucial reason is that prisoners are paid less for attending education than work. This disparity in pay is bound to be a disincentive and so makes little sense. For some prisoners education may turn out to be as important a purposeful activity as work. It should be possible for them to take part in both activities on the same footing.

Summary: **1. The Committee commend Motherwell College for working with staff outside their department to provide meaningful courses and to improve the variety and relevance of learning for Young Offenders.**

2. The Committee would urge that pay for attending education be brought in line with that for work.

Training and Work

This has been another year of full employment at Cornton Vale to the extent that it has been difficult to keep work parties fully manned. Plans made even a week ahead have sometimes had to be changed when prisoners are transferred at short notice. The continuing allocation of prisoners to Edinburgh and since February also to Polmont reduces the numbers available for work at Cornton Vale. As well as adequate numbers, continuity is also important. In addition, even though on paper there may be enough workers to fill the workplaces necessary to run the prison, there are many reasons why workers may be taken out of work: medical or dental appointments, education, Barnardo's rehabilitation classes in the case of Young Offenders, special projects in PE, or education and agency visits such as Time for Change. Those in Ross House continue to be ineligible for work. It has been necessary recently to employ unconvicted prisoners if they are prepared to work – they cannot be compelled to do so. Last summer an Activities Review Meeting was set up to look at the overall programme for the year and to make agreements so that activities did not clash.

Unfortunately the frequent movements of prisoners and daily interruptions of work schedules made it impossible to introduce the hoped-for structured time-table. This is a pity because it would be good for the Young Offenders to get used to the discipline of a regular working day.

Most of the work parties at Cornton Vale are those which are essential to the running of the prison – the Kitchen, Laundry, Industrial Cleaning, Gardens – and all provide good training for possible future employment. Others such as Hairdressing, the Bike Repair shop and the Cosmetics shop also offer worthwhile training. While those in the Gardens party can work in the open air, all the jobs in the four main areas involve a healthy degree of physical exertion.

Before they moved to Polmont in February Young Offenders were successfully integrated with Adults in all work areas. Due to the logistical problems involved in providing work for the women without coming into contact with male Young Offenders some have not been able to continue training they started at Cornton Vale and only one work option has been open to them at Polmont, that of Painting and Decorating. However this has proved very popular with the girls. They like the idea of learning these skills, which they can use after release either in paid work or in their own homes. Unfortunately staff sickness has meant that the workshop has had to be closed recently, we hope only temporarily. However, it is very pleasing to hear that Painting and Decorating is to be introduced at Cornton Vale in the autumn, with the dual purpose of maintaining the prison as well as providing a useful training – just the kind of activity (along with Life Skills and Gardening) which the Under 21 Visiting Committee has been suggesting for some years.

Summary: the Committee is pleased that training offered has a good practical purpose, but disappointed that the working week seems to remain so unstructured.

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

There have been, once again, few real changes to the residential accommodation since the last report. The majority of the Young Offenders have been held in Younger House, until they were decanted to Polmont for more major refurbishment to be carried out in Cornton Vale.

The first night in custody suite has been maintained in Ross House. Occasionally young women have to be kept in Ross for particular care (mental health issues, bullying etc.) but as a rule Young Offenders stay or go back to Younger Houses.

The Separation and Re-integration Unit is now functioning (The Dumyat Centre) as a separate house attached to Ross. This gives an alternative place for staff to house vulnerable and troublesome people without having to disrupt the rest of the people in the unit.

Younger House has never been a good base for Young Offenders. It is a depressing unit, has little identity of its own, has no in-cell sanitation (in this, the 21st Century) and is hard to manage. Limiting numbers so that there is one prisoner to a cell has at least meant that young women have their own space. Doubling up is still available if additional support is necessary. It is noted that this report is made at a time of refurbishment of Cornton Vale which has for a long time been under invested in.

The residential accommodation relies very heavily on the staffing, their attitudes and how they use the space. Cleanliness is of utmost importance and Blair House at Polmont seems easier to clean. The layout at Blair is also easier to manage, but it is very open and has led to some bullying issues. The Young Offenders quickly got used to having a shower/wc attached to their cells.

Our next report will tell how successful the move back to refurbished residential accommodation without in-cell facilities will be.

PRISON ESTATE

This report straddles the decanting of the Young Offenders to Polmont in order for Cornton Vale to be upgraded.

Since the last report the Separation and Re-integration Unit that is attached to Ross House for both Under and Over 21 prisoners has been opened, closed for repair work soon after it opened and re-opened again, with greater success. The staff seem to have settled into the block and it has offered a facility that was lacking at Cornton Vale. The “exercise” yard is depressing and has nowhere for anyone to sit in the fresh air. We presume that this is to limit height (security issue possibly) but should have been designed into the scheme.

Staff are still relied upon to make the best use of space available. The estate only allows for limited modernisation rather than the re-building of areas. The gym has had some refurbishment work but the outdoor spaces remain woefully under used. The garden area is being better used but could be used further, especially for the Under 21s.

There remains a limitation on available space. This applies to both the prisoners and the staff. The problems with the built form will not be solved until new facilities are created. With upgrading, the jail will still have no central dining facilities (so food will still have to travel on trolleys,) no in-cell sanitation to some blocks, poor teaching spaces, no custom built art department etc. Likewise the facilities for staff are very limited.

The plan is that Young Offenders will return to their own, more easily identified, house block. It is envisaged that more activities and programmes will take place within the block. Together with a lowering of overall numbers this should give the Under 21s a much needed sense of identity and therefore ownership. It is important that regimes are created to re-enforce the identity as well as making the house livelier in the evening which was a criticism in our last report.

The transfer to Polmont was handled very well. Despite a few teething problems everyone has settled down. The issues were in part helped by staff/prisoner groups and it is hoped that these will continue to look at the Prison Estate as part of their remit. Care of the built environment is important to everyone and should save money in the long run. Spaces within Polmont Blair House have been available and put to good use for education and activity without having the problems that come with moving small groups of people around the estate.

At the time of this report a Hub (visitor centre) is under construction (using an existing building) at Cornton Vale. The committee awaits its completion. This is already improving the interface with the community and will hopefully offer services that are presently not on offer,

The Visiting Committee was pleased to be asked by the Governor to attend a two day session looking at how the needs of women can be addressed in the Scottish Prison Estate. Some of the many topics covered were: the differences between the male and female estate; the use of security and how much is needed; how space should be planned for residence, work, education and leisure; the outside and inside and other related built environment requirements.

LINK CENTRE AND INDUCTION

The Link Centre provides induction programmes over the first few weeks for all convicted women and girls. Given the relatively low numbers involved it is not practical to provide separate modules for the Young Offenders so programmes are attended jointly by adult women and girls.

The programmes provide essential information on life in Cornton Vale. This continues to be delivered in two modules which provide core screening on matters such as social security benefits; housing; health & safety; visits; bullying; race relations and complaints. Support is offered for those who have experienced sexual abuse and drug issues. There are also sessions on family contact and Home Detention Curfew (HDC).

First aid and food handling is also covered, however, following the loss of Module 3 last year, these are still **not certificated** and only basic coverage is provided. Sessions are also provided on education and a health assessment and induction for use of the gymnasium. Girls will also be allocated a job placement, which may be on a shared basis if there are not enough full placements available.

The Link Centre also co-ordinates sentence management and provides a central location for support services which include addiction support, housing and social workers to help women to return to and successfully reintegrate into their communities. The Centre provides pre-release sessions undertaking housing* and benefit assessments and liaises with the partner organisations who work with Cornton Vale to manage the through-care for all girls on release. Partners include SACRO and Cornerstone.

The 'Time for Change' programme is still being specifically tailored to the needs of 16 and 17 year olds is now coordinated with 'Plan B' and continues to provide intensive support to enable girls to move on following release from Cornton Vale. Sadly, the 'Routes out of Prison' programmes offered by the Wise group to support and help girls back into work, is no longer available, however other agencies continuing to provide support include: Open Secret; Circle; Job Centre; 218 and Caledonian Youth.

*Housing continues to be a huge issue for the girls and is **one of the 9 offender outcomes**. The Link Centre provides support on this key issue, particularly pre-release. Two housing officers are currently available to deal with housing and the staff are currently proactive in sourcing other means of housing support, more recently the introduction of Cornerstone and the possible addition of 'Facing Change' based in Perth.

During the refurbishment programme at Cornton Vale, while some induction is still undertaken at Cornton Vale, Link Centre staff are now based at Polmont in order to maintain (as far as practicable) the procedures and support outlined above. This seems to be working reasonably well and there have been no particular issues raised with us by the any of the girls.

The Visiting Committee commends:

- **The work of staff in the Link Centre for the efficient and smooth running of the Induction programmes and the ease with which these have been maintained despite the upheaval of the refurbishment programme.**

Areas of concern:

- **The continued loss of certified programmes in first aid and food handling**

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

STAFFING

We have historically highlighted problems with staffing at Cornton Vale (shortages, long term sickness etc). We do however acknowledge that many staff continue to endeavour to maintain standards with ever ageing buildings, facilities and budget restraints. We are concerned that as time goes on the wealth of experience may be diminished and that operational staff will be employed without having the necessary skills that come with length of service.

We have always considered that consistent staffing is crucial to improving the regime (including cleanliness both inside and out) but that the **constant** change of staffing leaves uncertainty and unfinished projects. No-one ever seems to stay long enough at Cornton Vale for real change to happen, and to be seen by others to be happening. Sentence types and lengths also play a part in the lack of ownership which staff, and some women prisoners, have to battle with constantly.

Having managers within the house blocks, who are willing to support the development of activities, has made a real difference. Ideas, such as, books within the block, indoor games and especially programmes, should be developed further. A more efficient **time-table** should be created between work, houses, regimes and leisure activities as well as the programmes that are now being more successfully provided by outside organisations such as Barnardo's/Plan B. This would make best use of staff time which is still limited. It is a real shame that young women have to make choices in the morning only to find that nothing else happens that day. Boredom only ever leads to problems. It is also unfortunate that the need to earn money can put women off participating in other group work or activities and that much still relies on the staff available. It is seen as a very positive step by the Committee that dedicated Youth Workers are organising events and programmes for the young women. A dedicated space for creative arts would be welcomed.

The staff who work with the young offenders are in the main very good and this should be valued, developed and further encouraged. Often staff have very valid points to make and their on-going training, their opinions and most importantly communication with them is as essential as ever.

At the time of this report the Young Offenders have been decanted to Polmont. This has proved successful for the staff who are both willing volunteers for the temporary move and take an interest in the welfare of the young offenders. The staff seem much happier with the regime at Polmont. It is noticeable that they have more activities concentrated within the block. This means less movement of people, staff being away from their posts and generally less complications. The YO's are also in an identifiable location which gives them ownership of their own wing.

The facilities provided for the staff have also been appreciated, including the gym. A separate, more convivial place to eat and rest is very much welcomed in the workplace.

SPECIALIST AREAS

Barnardo's and Plan B

Barnardo's Plan B Youth Workers have been working with Young Offenders in Cornton Vale for more than two years. They provide an excellent structured and co-ordinated framework of support in preparation for release through engaging a wide range of partners who deliver services to young people. The scheme is well-established and very valuable, although there have been periods when staff sickness meant that the cover had to be reduced. Another regret is that since Cornton Vale is a national resource, the Plan B workers find that not all parts of the country can offer the hoped-for services for the young people. However, the Plan does offer the girls the best chance of leaving prison with some aspects of their lives organised.

In addition, since last autumn, Barnardo's have been working with the Young Offenders in groups, getting to know them and building up their trust. They first of all helped the girls to redecorate their activities rooms, which resulted in some spectacular effects, and from there moved on to more serious group teaching and discussion. The sessions were drop-in and very well attended. Subjects have included "Sexual Health" and a visit from the Fire Service with a burns victim to tell them of her experience. This is a carefully thought-out contribution towards rehabilitation. The Barnardo's Youth Workers have continued to work with the Young Offenders in Polmont and have added craft sessions and guitar lessons.

Summary: the Committee commends the initiative in bringing in Barnardo's and the work they do with the Young Offenders.

Family Contact Development Office (FCDO)

The staffing in this office has returned to three from two, which enables them to cover their full range of services helping prisoners to maintain links with family. The office is manned seven days per week from unlock in the morning until lockup at night. They see all women soon after arrival to help with contacting families and to provide information for families, who are invited to attend a family induction session. They operate an "e-mail a prisoner" service by which families can send a message to their family member in custody. FCOs also offer an enhanced visit facility known as "Little Cherubs" which provides unsupervised quality time for mothers and children or for a special circumstances family visit where there is a bereavement. They contribute to the ICM process. They are welcoming, whatever the pressure on their time and provide a listening ear in situations such as bereavement. The FCDO joined up with Barnardo's Plan B to organise a Family Day for Young Offenders in December when the girls did a presentation on what it is like to live in their house block – the event was enjoyed and appreciated by all who attended.

The FCDO are also closely involved with the running of the Mother and Baby Unit. Recently it has been rarely used, often by only one mother and her baby. In these cases it is the custom to bring another prisoner into the Unit for company, but it can be difficult to find the right person.

Summary: the Committee continues to commend all aspects of FCDO work.

Visits

Over the last year thought has been given to the best way of using this area to make a visit as good as possible. The size of the room has been found to be adequate now that overcrowding is no longer a problem. It has been redecorated and the lay-out altered to give a greater feeling of space. A brightly equipped children's play area is now in the centre corner of the L-shaped room and a hot drinks dispenser has been restored. Visitors coming upstairs straight into the room will find it more inviting than before.

The Committee is delighted that after several years of discussion, a Visitors' Centre is at last to be provided at Cornton Vale. It is due to open later this summer in a building outside the prison and will be run and funded by charity. It is to be hoped that when there are better facilities more families will feel able to make the journey and bring children, particularly important in a women's prison, and that being able to use the centre before and after a visit will make the experience less stressful.

Summary: the Committee commends the improvements to the Visits Room, but most particularly the arrival of a Visitors' Centre.

Reception

The practice introduced last year when women allocated to serve their sentence at Edinburgh were received first at Cornton Vale has been extended to cover those prisoners, both Adult and Young Offenders, who are at present located in Polmont YOI. If they have to go to Court while they are there they do not have to return to Cornton Vale first. Reception staff are happy that the system is working well.

The full-time Administrator appointed last year is still in place and relieving Reception officers of much paperwork and freeing them to look after movements in and out of the prison. Their only recent concern is that with lower numbers in the prison available for work it is difficult to get and hold onto passwomen of the right calibre for the responsible job they do there – in a sensitive area such as Reception, it is necessary to have someone trustworthy and good with prisoners.

Physical Education

While they are in Polmont the Young Offenders have better opportunities for exercise than in Cornton Vale. There is a designated room on their landing where there are four pieces of gym equipment. They can use the main prison gym at certain periods as at Cornton Vale, but best of all they can use a five-a-side football pitch so that they can exercise outside.

Section 7

THE WORK OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Visiting Committee Statistics		
	2011/12	2012/13
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	6	6
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	7	7
Total number of applications/complaints received		
<p>(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.)</p>		
Total number of visits to the prison* incl stat, events, meetings see table below (81+37)	118	

**Total number of visits to the establishment or meetings connected therewith 2012/2013
(This is for period at CV and does not include Polmont.)**

VC member	Stat Visits & Prison Events	VC Meetings	Visits to Other Jails	AVC Business	Conferences	Training	Summary
Jim Scott Chair	20	6	3	15	7	3	54
Julie McEachern Vice Chair	14	6		4	1	3	28
Mirren Begbie	13	5			1	3	22
Penny Johnston	15	5			1	3	24
Jan Nicholson	7	5	1		1	3	17
Christine Grant	6	4	1		3	3	17
Anne Montgomery	6	6			1	3	16
Total for group	81	37	5	19	15	21	178

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.)

This table not applicable, see statement above

Applications/Complaints Statistics		
Subject	2011/12	2012/13
Accommodation		
Diversity related		
Education/training/work		
Estate issues (conditions)		
Family/visits		
Food		
Health related		
Inter-establishment transfers		
Personal property		
Staff/Prisoner related		
Miscellaneous		
Total		

**VISITING COMMITTEE TRAINING RECORD
HMP & YOI INSTITUTION CORNTON VALE (Annex A)**

MEMBER'S NAME	VC TRAINING DELIVERED LOCALLY							NATIONAL TRAINING (AVC)				
	Induction (date)	Tour (date)	Expenses	Rotas	Interviews	Requests/ Complaints	Minute Book	Other (State)	FC/1	CD/1	Chair/ Vice Ch.	Annual Conference
J Scott, J McEachern, M Begbie, C Grant, P Johnston, A Montgomery, J Nicholson												Conf 2012 7 of 7 members
Jim Scott										Tutor		
									Training Foundation Course for Visiting Committees			
									National Training AVC			
									Experienced Members Training			
** Members with 3 years' service or more are not required to do VC Induction training though they should still do SPS Induction**												

MEMBER'S NAME	SPS TRAINING DELIVERED LOCALLY					
	Course Date	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)
J Scott, J McEachern, M Begbie, C Grant, P Johnston, A Montgomery, J Nicholson	June 2012	ACT				
J Scott, J McEachern, J Nicholson, M Begbie, P Johnston, C Grant, A Montgomery	Dec 2012 Jan 2013	PPT PPT				
J Scott, J McEachern, M Begbie, C Grant, P Johnston, A Montgomery, J Nicholson	Dec 2012	Key Training at Polmont				