

HM PRISON SHOTTS VISITING COMMITTEE



ANNUAL REPORT

Year Ending

31 March 2012.

1. Statutory Role of the Visiting Committee

1.1 The statutory responsibilities of Visiting Committees and their members are set out in Part 17 of The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011 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”.

1.2 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 the 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.

1.3 In common with other visiting committees, this has been a difficult year for the Shotts VC. In December 2011 the Cabinet Secretary announced his intention to abolish visiting committees and replace them with an advocacy service. Immediately following that announcement, the SPS issued notices to all prisons of the decision which was posted throughout the establishment. It seems no coincidence that following this action by SPS, there was a significant drop in the number of applications made to the Committee. There appears to have been a similar affect across the prison estate. Despite this, members of the Committee have continued to show commitment to their statutory duties. One member, however, did feel it necessary to resign his position in protest at the Cabinet Secretary's decision.

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Section 3. Description of H.M. Prison Shotts

3.1 HM Prison Shotts

3.1.1 HM Prison Shotts is a maximum-security prison for long term adult male prisoners. The prison is situated in countryside south of the M8 motorway near the Lanarkshire village of Shotts. Purpose built in 1978 it caters for long term male prisoners (sentences of 4 years and over) who are transferred from other establishments and who require to be kept in secure conditions.

3.1.2 The year has seen major changes taking place at Shotts with the opening of Phase 1 of the new prison. It is credit to prison management that the change took place without difficulty. Those prisoners who moved to Lamont Hall in the new building and who were spoken with by members of the VC, all expressed satisfaction with the new accommodation. The prison included two national facilities within its establishment: the National Induction Centre (NIC) and Kerr House. The latter, together with the Independent Living Unit, were closed under Phase One with prisoners being transferred to Barlinnie.

3.1.3 The NIC apart, now sees accommodation at Shotts consisting of C and D Halls in the old building (each holding just under 120 prisoners in each hall) and Lamont Hall in the new build (holding some 269 prisoners).

3.2 National Induction Centre (NIC)

3.2.1 The NIC, is a national facility and holds approximately 115 adult male prisoners who are in the initial stages of sentences of 10 years or over and prepares them for eventual movement to mainstream establishments. During the first 3 - 6 months of their sentences the Centre provides a supportive regime for all prisoners (excluding sex offenders) sentenced to life or 8 years or over. Other prisoners may be taken into the NIC should this be considered beneficial.

3.2.2 The regime is intended to assist prisoners cope with the personal consequences of their offending behaviour and the impact of their sentence. It seeks to prepare them for transfer to mainstream within the context of the Sentence Management model. That process is informed by risk and needs assessment work carried out, with the prisoners' involvement during their time in the NIC.

3.2.3 Information on topics such as stress management, inter-personal and social skills and the prison system are delivered by way of group work. Emphasis is placed on building the prisoner's relationship with his Personal Officer to help him adjust to and plan out his sentence. While industry forms an integral part of the regime, it is orientated towards craftwork type activities and is supported by personal fitness programmes.

Section 4 Executive Summary

4.1 The Cabinet Secretary's decision to abolish visiting committees has inevitably had a deleterious affect on membership morale. The haste in, and manner with which, the SPS issued notice of the decision appears to have had influence on the number of referrals made to the Committee. Despite this, members are commended for their continuing commitment to the welfare of prisoners at Shotts.

4.2 During the reporting period members of the Committee have responded to 51 prisoner requests; the figure represents a significant decrease over the previous reporting year. Health related concerns remained the chief reason for prisoner requests, with complaints associated with visits and progression following closely behind.

4.3 Recorded breaches of discipline occurring in the prison for the calendar year 2011 have shown a decrease over the previous year's figures. This reduction is to be welcomed.

4.4 The Committee has again benefited over the year by having a senior manager acting as VC Liaison Officer. The initiative continues to benefit the work of the VC, and human resource management at the prison.

4.5 Prisoner transfer to the new prison under Phase One was completed smoothly with prisoners indicating satisfaction with the new facilities. Prison management is commended by the ease of transition under this major exercise.

Section 5 Formal reporting

5.1 Healthcare:

5.1.1 Healthcare has again been the most prominent reason for applications to the visiting committee during the reporting period. This mirrors previous years although referrals for this reporting period are far lower than in previous years.

5.1.2 NHS Lanarkshire took over responsibility for healthcare provision at the prison toward the end of 2011. In the Committee's view it is too soon to judge if this significant change has been responsible for the reduction in healthcare referrals, or if this presents as part of the overall trend in a drop in applications since the issuing of its notice by the SPS. (See 1.3)

5.2 Mental Health:

5.2.1 This year again saw no mental health applications being made to the Committee. The consultant psychiatrist who provides a service to the prison, advises that approximately 100 prisoners are seen in relation to mental disorder; approximately 20% of these present with a form of psychosis. 5 prisoners were been dealt with under relevant mental health/criminal procedures legislation, but the majority of prisoners suffer from

the complex psychological and psychiatric effects associated with coming to terms with a long period of incarceration.

5.2.2 Shotts has 9 trained 'Listeners'. Between February 2011 and January 2012, approximately 30 calls had been made on the service. The list of calls show reasons being; suicidal thinking, emotional difficulties, drugs, prisoner progression difficulties, family and bereavement issues.

5.3 Addictions

5.3.1 The range of services available in the prison is wide and includes advice on harm reduction, individual counselling, alcohol awareness groups, HIV/Hepatitis C awareness, smoking cessation and relapse prevention.

5.3.2 A number of clinical interventions are available, but by far the most prominent in use is a methadone programme, however the numbers of prisoners on this clinical intervention has reduced by 20% on last year's figures. Unless a prisoner arrives at Shotts already prescribed methadone, entry to the programme is by way of assessment. The main objective of the programme is to encourage prisoners into treatment, stabilise the habit, and aim towards reduction and/or drug free status. The importance of bringing stability to a prisoner's addiction problem is not underestimated, for only through settlement can a prisoner be fully enabled to participate constructively in prison activities.

5.4 Food

5.4.1 Members of the Committee make regular checks on food provided to prisoners. These checks have found the quality of meals to be of a good standard. There have been just two referrals in the past year relating to food. Prisoner satisfaction has been found to be generally good. Prisoners pre-order their meals from a menu which includes options for special dietary needs and healthy eating.

5.4.2 A number of problems arose at the opening of the new kitchen facility which were largely a result of different equipment in place. These difficulties have now been resolved.

5.4.3 Arrangements for the dietary requirements of ethnic minority prisoners, or those who have particular needs because of a medical condition, appear to work well.

5.4.4 HMP Shotts makes its own bread and rolls which is a good cost saving exercise and affords an additional learning experience for prisoners employed in the kitchen. The system also affords an opportunity for kitchen managers to add variety to the menu through the transfer of resources which the practice allows. Prisoners speak highly about the quality of the bread produced. Concern expressed in our annual report last year, that facilities for bread making would not be made available in the new prison, has been subject of further consideration and the Committee is pleased to report that these arrangements continue to be available following the move to the new prison.

5.4.5 A Food Focus Group meets quarterly where prisoners can raise and discuss any catering issues and influence future menu choices. Theme nights are held on a regular basis throughout year which are very popular with prisoners.

5.5 Equality and Diversity

5.5.1 All new admissions are provided with an explanation on the routines and regime within the prison. Information specifically for ethnic minority prisoners is available and translation services can be accessed should this be necessary. A race relations policy is in place and focus groups are held in which the views of ethnic minority prisoners are sought. A member of the VC attends these groups whenever possible. Where feasible, cultural events are also arranged. By way of example, the Imam of the Glasgow Central mosque invited staff to the place of worship and learning last year.

5.6 Education, Training and Work

5.6.1 There is both a breadth and depth to the courses offered ranging from basic literacy and numeracy skills to university degrees. The standard of work produced in the art classes is of a high standard while those participating in the information technology classes gain a great deal from the experience. The Committee is pleased to note that prisoners attending education classes are generally not disadvantaged financially because of not being at work, although some 'bonus' pay may be lost by those prisoners who work under these incentive arrangements. Other prisoners, however, can benefit from attending classes as a result of the status/banding system operated at Shotts.

5.6.2 There is also a variety of employment available in the prison. These range from kitchen and laundry work to bicycle repair, and wood and metal workshops. While prisoners are kept busy in most work locations times arise when there seems little activity in some work areas. This usually relates to slack times in work orders. Unfortunately, a small number of prisoners are reluctant to avail themselves of work opportunities.

5.6.3 In addition to the above possibilities, there are a number of courses which seek to address offending behaviour. Included in these are the Constructs programme which looks to assist participants becoming better problem solvers in areas that might typically have resulted in their offending behaviour, the CARE programme (Controlling Anger, Regulating Emotions), which focuses through various modules, on the dynamics associated with anger control, and the Substance Related Offending Behaviour Programme that is designed for medium and high-risk offenders who have significant problems with alcohol and illicit drugs. This year the prison will quadruple the number of Violence Prevention Programmes that it delivers.

5.7 Residential Accommodation

5.7.1 C and D Halls are almost identical in size and design. The standard of decoration and cleanliness has been found to be acceptable when members visit the accommodation. Lamont Hall in the new build is bright and spacious and has far more recreational space

available. As indicated elsewhere in this report, prisoners have expressed satisfaction with the new facility.

5.8 Prison Estate and Administration

5.8.1 Members generally view the prison estate, and its administration, as being well run and organised.

Section 6 Other reporting

6.1 Induction:

6.1.1 All prisoners transferring to HMP Shotts are assessed for the level of induction required. The induction process is carried out within the prison as soon as possible after the prisoner arrives at Shotts.

6.1.2 Induction for NIC prisoners lasts for approximately six months. Prisoners accommodated in other halls are offered a limited programme of approximately two days each month which is available on a voluntary basis. An average of eight prisoners each month avail themselves of the programme.

6.1.3 Post induction, the Integrated Case Management (ICM) Co-ordinator organises all scheduled ICM case conferences. Programmes such as START, Sycamore, food handling, Heartstart, smoking cessation, etc. take place within the OOU. Pre-release meetings with Job Centre Plus are scheduled on a monthly basis. The Samaritan 'Listeners' attend the Unit twice each month to meet with the prisoner 'Listeners', and an Alcoholics Anonymous group meet there weekly with any prisoners wishing to attend.

6.2 Staffing

6.2.1 The Committee is happy to report that following its concerns in the number of senior management changes noted in last year's report, the position for the reporting period has been stable.

6.3 Orderly Room/Breaches of Discipline

6.3.1 Shotts operate a two tier disciplinary system with unit managers in the halls dealing with minor reports. More serious reports are adjudicated on by a senior manager in the Orderly Room which is located in the Segregation Unit.

6.3.2 For the 2011 calendar year, a total of 1193 breaches of discipline were recorded. The figure represents a significant drop over the previous year and follows a continuing pattern of reduction. Managers, in dealing with disciplinary matters, also make use of suspended punishments which is, in the view of the VC, a practical and sensible use of available powers.

6.3.3 Members of the Committee regularly attend orderly room adjudications. No concerns have been raised on the conduct of these hearings. Members are also able to attend appeals made by prisoners against orderly room judgements.

Section 7 Work and Membership of the Visiting Committee

7.1 Membership during the reporting period with individual attendances:

Visiting Committee Membership and Statistics		
	Prison Visits	VC Meetings
<u>North Lanarkshire Council Appointees</u>		
Samuel Barr	7	7
Michael Baxter (Chairman)	4	4
Rees Gallagher	10	3
William Golligher (Resigned January 2011)	5	3
Charles Hebenton	16	7
Andrew Jordan (Vice Chairman)	15	7
William Kane (App Rescinded July 2011)	-	-
Ann Marie McPartland	2	3
Cllr Gordon Stewart	5	1
<u>South Lanarkshire Council Appointees</u>		
Cllr Andy Carmichael	4	2
Angela Connor (Resigned November 2011)	1	0
Cllr Ian Gray (Training Officer)	4	6
Cllr James McGuigan	6	4
Cllr David McLachlan	4	2
Cllr Patrick Ross-Taylor	4	6
Yvonne McCabe	11	2
Felix O'Hagan	4	2

7.2 Visiting Committee Statistics

Visiting Committee Statistics		
	2010/11	2011/12
Recommended complement of VC members (Rule 155)	17	17

Number of VC members at start of the reporting period	16	17
Number of VC members at end of the reporting period	17	14
Number of new VC members joining within the reporting period	4	0
Number of VC members leaving within the reporting period	3	3
Total number of VC committee meetings during the reporting period	6	7
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	10	8
Total number of applications/complaints received	76	51
Total number of visits to the prison	157	102

7.3 Prisoner Applications by Category

Applications/Complaints Statistics		
Subject	2010/11	2011/12
Accommodation	0	1
Diversity related	1	4
Education/training/work	5	1
Estate issues (conditions)	0	0
Family/visits	8	9
Food	2	2
Health related	20	11
Inter-establishment transfers	8	4
Personal property	5	1
Staff/Prisoner related	4	5
Progression	17	8
Miscellaneous	6	5
Total	76	51

7.3.1 As indicated above a total of fifty-one requests were made to the VC by prisoners during the reporting period which represents a fall in applications over the previous year.

7.3.2 The figures show the highest category of referral as being health related. This position has been consistent over recent years. Of some reassurance to the Committee, is that this year's figure represents a reduction in prisoner complaints about health issues from the previous year. As mentioned earlier there could be a number of reasons for this fall in referrals and the VC reserves judgment on this matter.

Mike Baxter
Chairman

