

HM PRISON SHOTTS VISITING COMMITTEE



ANNUAL REPORT

**Year Ending
31 March 2013.**

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.

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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. Originally built in 1978 it caters for long term male prisoners who are transferred from other establishments and who require to be kept in secure conditions. The prison has capacity to hold 538 prisoners.

3.1.2 Last year's report noted the opening of Phase 1 of the new prison. This reporting year has seen the completion of Phase 2 rebuilding with the new prison fully opened in October 2012. It is credit to prison management that these major changes took place without significant difficulty.

3.1.3 The prison now has two residential units, Lamont and Allanton Halls. Both have capacity to hold 269 prisoners. There is also a segregation unit which can accommodate up to 14 prisoners.

3.1.4 Also housed at Shotts is the National Integration Centre (NIC). This is a national facility and holds up to 70 prisoners who are in the initial stages of long-term sentences with the aim of preparing 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) who have been sentenced to periods of imprisonment between 8 years and life.

3.1.5 The regime within the NIC 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, a process informed by risk and needs assessment work carried out with the prisoners' involvement during their time in the Centre.

3.1.6 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.

3.1.7 During the course of the year, the Visiting Committee (VC) has taken a more robust engagement in the induction process despite scheduling difficulties which can prove problematic for many members. Prisoner feedback from sessions provided has been very positive, particularly as a number of prisoners remain of the understanding that VCs had already been disbanded.

Section 4 Executive Summary

4.1 The completion of the new prison went ahead as scheduled. Prisoner movements were completed without incident and all staff involved in this major exercise deserve commendation in managing a smooth transition. Indications are that prisoners are particularly happy in their new surroundings and living environment.

4.2 The number of applications made to the Committee this year has reduced again. This reverses historical trends when prisoner requests increased year on year. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that the Cabinet Secretary's decision to abolish visiting committees continues to impact significantly on this area of the Committee's work.

4.3 Despite the ongoing malaise surrounding the future of visiting committees, members of the Shott's Committee have remained fully committed to their statutory duties. In addition to regular rota duties and attendance at Committee meetings, members are also required to undertake various, compulsory training events. This requires yet further time commitment and members are commended for their unwavering support in the performance of their duties at the prison.

4.4 The Committee would like to place on record its appreciation of the commitment shown by the Governor in Charge, and other senior members of staff working at the prison, in fully supporting the work of the Visiting Committee.

Section 5 Formal reporting

5.1 Healthcare:

5.1.1 NHS Lanarkshire took over responsibility for healthcare provision at the prison toward the end of 2011. Healthcare complaints always figured prominently in VC statistics, but this year has seen a reduction in applications being made to the Committee. This is most welcome. Quality assurance mechanisms have been introduced to monitor healthcare provision at the prison and the Committee hopes that the trends of the last two years continue.

5.2 Mental Health:

5.2.1 It is generally accepted that mental disorder is rife across the prison estate. Severity will, of course, vary among the prison population, but this year again saw no mental health applications being made to the Committee. Most prisoners will suffer from the complex psychological and psychiatric effects associated with coming to terms with a long period of incarceration whilst others will be afflicted by serious psychotic illness. Legislation allows for prisoners to be transferred to psychiatric hospital for treatment should this be assessed as necessary, an option that has been used by the prison in the past.

5.2.2 Shotts has 6 trained 'Listeners'. Calls made on the service show prisoners experiencing difficulties with suicidal thinking, emotional difficulties, drugs, problems with progression and 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. Services are currently provided by a consultant psychiatrist (Addictions) and three addiction nurses. Support staff are also available.

5.3.2 A number of clinical interventions are available, the most prominent being substitute prescribing. The numbers of prisoners on this particular clinical intervention has, however, been reducing over recent years. 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 by prison management who recognise that 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 satisfactory standard although quality issues can arise as a result of meals having to be transported from the kitchen to the halls.

5.4.2 There have been just five referrals made to the VC in the past year relating to food. Whilst not a particularly high number, it is the most complaints received about food by the VC for many years.

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 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 popular with prisoners.

5.4.5 The VC is particularly pleased with menu layout. By colour coding, prisoners are shown healthy eating options on a decreasing scale.

5.4.6 The kitchen staff/prisoners continue to do all baking for the prison. This evidently proves highly cost affective and affords prisoners fresh bread and rolls. We commend staff for continuing with this initiative which, we understand, is the only establish in the prison estate that employs this practice.

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 possible, cultural events are also arranged.

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.

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.

5.7 Residential Accommodation

5.7.1 As indicated earlier, Shotts has two main residential halls. Lamont Hall was opened in May 2011 and Allanton Hall in October 2012. All cells are for single occupancy and, only recently designed and opened, are of a good standard in terms of personal facilities. A criticism is to be made it would be the lack of storage space. This has resulted in an undesirable situation where prisoners have been producing devices to hang clothing etc.

5.7.2 Communal areas in the Halls are clean and well maintained. These areas are generally used for recreation and hold standard equipment for this purpose.

5.8 Prison Estate and Administration

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

5.9 Orderly Room/Breaches of Discipline

5.9.1 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.

5.9.2 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.

5.10 Formal prisoner complaints

5.10.1 During the reporting period 288 PCF1s, 89 PCF2s and 69 PAF1s were recorded as being made by prisoners. Outcomes of these complaints have not been scrutinised but VC members have an open invitation to attend local appeals made by prisoners.

Section 6: Work and Membership of the Visiting Committee

6.1 Membership/Attendance

	<u>Rota Visits</u>	<u>Meeting</u>
North Lanarkshire Council Appointees		
Samuel Barr	9	6
Michael Baxter (Chairman)	1	6
Rees Gallagher	11	5
Cllr John Higgins (appointed August 2012, resigned January 2013)	2	1
Charles Hebenton	11	5
Andrew Jordan (Vice Chairman)	12	5
Danny Reilly (appointed November 2012)	5	2
Anne Marie McPartland	7	3
Cllr Michael McPake (appointed January 2013)	2	1
Cllr Gordon Stewart (resigned May 2012)	2	0
South Lanarkshire Council Appointees		
Cllr Andy Carmichael	0	0
Cllr Isobel Dornan	5	3
Ian Gray (Training Co-ordinator)	9	3
Cllr James McGuigan	5	0
Cllr Monica Lennon	0	1
Patrick Ross-Taylor	8	4
Yvonne McCabe	5	0
Cllr Catherine McClymont (appointed August 2012)	0	0
Felix O'Hagan	5	1

6.1.1 In addition to attending committee meetings and performing rota duties, members will also attend local and national training events organised by the Committee's Training Co-ordinator. The post holder has additional responsibilities in organising the induction process for new members joining the Committee, ensuring that compulsory training requirements are undertaken and maintaining records in relation to these responsibilities.

The Training Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the Chairman, also arranges a programme of presentations to the Committee, which are normally conducted by various service personnel employed within the prison. The Chair meets regularly with the Governor-in charge when issues of mutual interest will be discussed.

6.1.2 During the course of the year, the Committee welcomed Michele Burman, Professor of Criminology at the University of Glasgow, and six of her students who witnessed the workings of a visiting committee in action. The Chairman wishes to thank prison management for its assistance and co-operation in arranging this event and affording those attending a tour of the prison following the Committee meeting.

6.2 Visiting Committee Statistics

Visiting Committee Statistics	
Recommended complement of VC members (Rule 155)	17
Number of VC members at start of the reporting period	14
Number of VC members at end of the reporting period	17
Number of VC members leaving within the reporting period	2
Total number of VC committee meetings during the reporting period	6
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	8
Total number of applications/complaints received	42
Total number of visits to the prison	100

6.3 Prisoner Applications by Category

Subject	2011/12	2012/13
Accommodation	1	2
Diversity related	4	0
Education/training/work	1	2
Estate issues (conditions)	0	2
Family/visits	9	1
Food	2	5
Health related	11	6
Inter-establishment transfers	4	5
Personal property	1	0
Staff/Prisoner related	5	1
Progression	8	3
Telephone access	0	1
Freedom of information/data protection	0	2
Internal complaints handling	0	6

Miscellaneous	5	6
Total	51	42

6.3.1 As indicated above a total of just forty-two requests were made to the VC by prisoners during the reporting period. This represents a fall in applications over the previous year and is the second year in a row that this has occurred. Earlier years saw consistent increases in the number of applications made to the VC. Whilst there could be a number of reasons for the decrease in applications, anecdotal evidence would suggest that the Government's review of visiting committees continues to impact significantly on this important area of visiting committee work.

Mike Baxter
Chairman