

BARLINNIE PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2014

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Section 1

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

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

A Visiting Committee is specifically charged to

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

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

Section 2

HMP BARLINNIE

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

It receives prisoners from West of Scotland courts serving sentences of less than 4 years. In July 2012, Letham Hall became a National Top End (NTE) facility providing accommodation for 50 Life or long term convicted prisoners nearing the end of their sentence. The purpose of the NTE is to monitor, assess and prepare individuals for progression to the Open Estate. In Barlinnie, prisoners are housed in 6 residential halls with one of these being exclusively for remand prisoners. All the cellular accommodation has internal sanitation.

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

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

Other external agencies are involved in delivering various prisoner programmes.

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

Section 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.This is the annual report of the Barlinnie Visiting Committee (VC) for the year ended 31st March 2014.

During the year the V.C. has held quarterly meetings and carried out visits in accordance with our statutory requirements. All areas of the prison have been visited and prisoner requests dealt with. Details are contained in the report.

In addition VC members were happy to attend prisoner events which included the premiere of 'Bar-L's got Talent', certificate presentations, a seminar on offender outcomes organised by the Chaplaincy and the inaugural Barlinnie Arts Festival.

Following the welcome reduction in numbers last year as a result of the opening of HMP Low Moss, numbers have begun to rise again and the average daily population was around 1300 although this rose to over 1400 during the reorganisation resulting from the opening of HMP Grampian and transfers in from the private estate.

Despite this ongoing pressure the VC has observed that management continue to maximise out of cell activity at every opportunity and increase recreational opportunities. The input of external organisations such as Theatre Nemo, Citizens Theatre and Writer in Residence has been very positive and resulted in events such as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

The association with the Croft visitor centre is excellent. This is a family visitor centre based in a local church hall and organised by local churches and provides a very welcome resource for prisoner families and indicates just how valuable visitor centres are.

The Governor, Senior Management and staff remain proactive and implement policies aimed at benefiting prisoner welfare. All areas of the prison function well and a positive response was made to the Chief Inspector's recommendations. Barlinnie provides a safe and secure environment for prisoners.

As this report is prepared the legislation outlining our future is still at the draft stage and we continue to work against an uncertain background. All but four of the membership were active in some way during the year and I would like to thank the committee for their support and hard work in contributing to the smooth running of the prison and maintaining business as usual.

The support of Governor Derek McGill and all his staff has been invaluable and I would like to thank them. The governor's report is always circulated to members before our meeting and the governor or his representative is at the meeting to answer questions or join in any discussion. This is a real opportunity for members to be fully updated on all aspects of the prison operation.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of staff members who give up their time to have a regular input to the training talks which we have at our meetings.

As we continue our work in these uncertain times we are encouraged with the support we receive from Barlinnie.

Allan Devlin

Chairman

For further information contact the secretary Gerard McElroy MBE
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Section 4

PRISON OPERATION

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

2. Healthcare and Mental Health

The Healthcare centre is an extremely busy part of Barlinnie and there are always high demands made on all healthcare staff. The NHS is the health provider and appears to be operating well. The VC did receive prisoner complaints regarding health issues including medication and dental treatment. These were resolved using the usual channels of the Health service Manager and patient confidentiality wasn't compromised.

The range of programmes being offered in the Health Day Centre by prison staff and outside agencies such as Theatre Nemo is proving very popular and valuable and is generally oversubscribed.

3. Food

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

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

4. Equality and Diversity

The SPS is committed to equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights. This is evident in the treatment and provision for prisoners at Barlinnie. Given the ever increasing numbers adherence to this policy is all the more important. Induction for new prisoners outlines the routine and regimes of the prison and information for ethnic minority prisoners is available as is a translation service.

5. Education/Training/Employment

Education, training and work opportunities are offered on a daily basis. It is clear that a large programme of activities is offered encompassing education training and employment. New ventures are being constantly sought out. The bicycle repair project continues to be popular.

The Visioncall project in partnership with Glasgow opticians is very innovative and worthwhile.

The poly tunnels continue to be a success resulting in Barlinnie always 'being in bloom'. Education is provided by Motherwell College and a full range of educational opportunities is offered. The VC has commented on improving literacy levels among prisoners and commented recently about the demise of the 'wee test'. However literacy courses are available to tackle this and staff encourage prisoners to participate. Library provision is now linked to Glasgow City Libraries.

6. Residential Accommodation

Residential halls are still overcrowded however the VC has observed that out of cell time is maximised with work, training and recreation being readily available. The visit timetable has been altered and time increased to one hour and convicted prisoners receive four visits per month. The VC has noted cleaning standards remain high in the halls despite the high population.

7. Prison Estates and Management

The Estates Management unit worked in maintaining and upgrading internal and external facilities throughout the year and had a full programme of work. There was a complete renovation of the Gate area and security system which is now complete. New showers are planned for the gym area and eventually there will be a completely new Reception area within the prison.

8. Link Centre

The Link Centre still deals with a large amount of admissions on a daily basis and staff continue to manage the situation well and screen all the prisoners coming through and work very well with all the outside agencies which have an input. The VC has commented on the valuable contact with outside agencies which can make a difference especially on prisoner discharge.

9. Family Contact Centre

This is always a very productive part of the Barlinnie regime with many positive outcomes. The Centre has moved into the small visits area to further develop its work and we are confident the level of success will continue. There is a local visitor drop-in centre organised by the local churches and based in a church hall down the road from the prison. The group is seeking premises nearer to the prison and this continues to be a help to families of prisoners.

10. Employment Services.

Work continues with partner agencies and new employability programmes have been developed. The 'Employment Ready' programme has taken the place of 'Changing Lanes'

Section 5.

The Work of the V.C.

11. Statistics

Recommended complement of VC members	25
Number of members at start of year	22
Number of members at end of year	23
New members joining	2
Members leaving	1
Number of VC meetings during year	4
Average attendance at meetings	10
Total number of prisoner requests	37
Total number of VC rota visits to prison	79

The visiting committee has a membership of 25 drawn from eight local authorities nominating a mixture of councillors and lay members. Two Local Authorities have either still to nominate or complete their membership allocation. Current membership is as follows:

Name	Nominating Authority
Councillor Ellen Freel	East Ayrshire Council
Rees Gallacher	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Matt Kerr	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Andy Carmichael	South Lanarkshire Council
Councillor George Black	West Dunbartonshire Council
Maria Corr	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Yvonne Kucuk	Glasgow City Council
Anne Desport	South Lanarkshire Council
Allan Devlin	North Lanarkshire Council
Jason Ditton	Glasgow City Council
Catherine Fallon	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Stuart Gallacher	South Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Terry Kelly	Renfrewshire Council
Anne Mills JP	Glasgow City Council
Gerard McElroy	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Jim Brown	West Dunbartonshire Council
Frances McGrade	Glasgow City Council
Baillie Hanif Raja	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Alan Graham	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Martha Wardrop	Glasgow City Council
Tom Swinney	North Ayrshire Council
Councillor Jim Montgomerie	North Ayrshire Council
Ann Wilkieson	Glasgow City Council

Meetings are held quarterly in the prison. The secretary prepares a rota which ensures two members are in the prison every fortnight. Generally we give notice of our visit so that an escort is provided and we are handed on from one part of the prison to another.

The following is a summary of members' attendance:

Name	Rota visits	Meetings	Comments
Rees Gallacher	2	2	
Matt Kerr	0	0	
Andy Carmichael	1	0	
George Black	2	3	
Maria Corr	0	0	
Yvonne Kucuk	0	0	
Anne Desport	1	0	
Allan Devlin	10	3	
Jason Ditton	3	3	
Catherine Fallon	1	1	
Stuart Gallacher	3	1	Appointed November 2013
Terry Kelly	1	3	
Anne Mills	1	2	
Ellen Freel	3	2	Appointed June 2013
Gerard McElroy	18	3	
Jim Brown	2	3	
Frances McGrade	1	1	
Hanif Raja	2	3	
Alan Graham	0	0	
Martha Wardrop	3	4	
Tom Swinney	25	4	
Jim Montgomerie	0	0	
Ann Wilkieson	0	3	

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

The following is a summary of the requests received:

Category	2012/13	2013/14
Accommodation	0	1
Education/training/work	0	2
Estates issues/conditions	1	3
Family/visits	1	6
Food	0	3
Health	8	8
Transfers	1	6
Staff/prisoners issues	5	1
Housing	0	0
Sentence Issues	1	2
Canteen Prices	1	0
HDC Issues	0	1
Discipline	5	4

12. Association of Visiting Committees

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

13.Training.

The committee has a local training co-ordinator to assist with local and national training.Members attended the national conference and visits to other establishment arranged by the AVC.At our meetings we have a training input on some aspect of prison operation.A new training programme is being drawn up to cover the SPS nationally agreed training requirements:

Local Induction
 Key Training
 Personal Protection Training
 Professional Boundaries
 Act 2 Care

This is a record of members attendance at training events :

MEMBER'S NAME	SPS TRAINING DELIVERED LOCALLY			
	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)
	Day Care Centre	Addictions	Catering	New Training Programme
	Gary McKechnie Barlinnie	Robert Kerr HMP Barlinnie	George McGhee HMP Barlinnie	Ronnie Dow HMP Barlinnie
Andy Carmichael				
Rees Gallacher		X		
George Black	X		X	X
Allan Devlin	X		X	X
Jason Ditton	X	X	X	
Maria Corr				
Hanif Raja	X	X		X
Gerard McElroy	X	X	X	
Jim Brown	X		X	X
Tom Swinney	X	X	X	X
Anne Mills			X	X
Terry Kelly	X	X	X	X
Martha Wardrop	X	X	X	X
Ann Wilkieson			X	X
Frances McGrade				X
Cathy Fallon Ellen Freel Stuart Gallacher			X	X X X

During the course of the year members have been signing up for the Personal Protection training and the Professional Boundaries course. Barlinnie training staff will assist with the new training needs as the year progresses and as long as the VC is in operation.