

Guernsey Prison

INDEPENDENT MONITORING PANEL



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Covid-19 pandemic presented Guernsey Prison with unprecedented challenges.

During this period we monitored the way in which management and staff rose to these challenges and we would like to commend them for their swift and positive response.

Regrettably, for three months the Panel had to suspend face-to-face visits due to the prison's lockdown measures. However, we received regular updates on the situation within the prison and arrangements were put in place should any prisoner have requested an IMP visit or in the event of a prisoner being placed in segregation. When lockdown was lifted the prison continued on its positive trajectory with encouraging developments in Healthcare, Education, Skills Training and Rehabilitation, observations of which are set out in this report.

Positive developments include:

- Improvements in Healthcare
- Progress on J Wing refurbishment
- Bank facilities for ex-offenders
- Community Workshop
- Education opportunities
- Rehabilitation

Among our concerns are:

- Weekend medication arrangements
- Digitising of health records still outstanding
- Cell call system

We are, as always, indebted to the staff at the Guernsey Prison - especially those officers who accompany us throughout our visits. Also the Governor and his senior staff who take time to speak with us at the end of our visits and who attend our meetings outside of their normal working day. We thank them all for their professionalism, courtesy, patience and good humour.

Tony Talmage

Chairman of the Independent Monitoring Panel

STATUTORY FUNCTION

The Guernsey Prison Service keeps in custody those legally committed to its care. Its duty is to look after them with decency and to help them lead law-abiding lives in custody and after release. The prison holds a diverse population, including those sentenced and on remand, men and women, young offenders, juveniles and vulnerable prisoners.

The Independent Monitoring Panel is constituted under the Prison (Guernsey) Ordinance 2013 (“the Ordinance”) as a body made up of members of the public. It is charged with providing independent oversight of the day-to-day operations of the prison and prison conditions, monitoring the administration of the Prison, the treatment of prisoners and whether the statutory objectives of the prison system are being met. The Panel also oversees the general well-being of staff who are employed by the Guernsey Prison.

To enable the Panel to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also to the prison’s records. Members:

- undertake a monthly unannounced visit of the Prison premises;
- visit prisoners personally at their request;
- visit prisoners who have been admitted to the Segregation Care and Progress Unit (SCAPU);
- attend, as observers, routine prison meetings; and
- attend bi-monthly Panel meetings.

The Ordinance requires the Panel to prepare an annual report at the end of each calendar year, which must include its findings, observations, recommendations and statistical information.

THE PANEL'S OBSERVATIONS in 2020

The following report arises from observations made on unannounced visits, visits requested by prisoners, informed contact with staff, attendance at prison meetings and discussions with prison management.

1 POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Prison during lockdown

As mentioned, Guernsey prison adapted remarkably well to this unprecedented situation. Staff quickly overcame uncertainty about attending the workplace and actively assisted the Governor in adopting new practices aimed at keeping both employees and prisoners safe. This included a new regime of work for the prisoners in the mornings followed by non-contact activity in the afternoons. There was a commendable camaraderie on both sides with prisoners understanding the significant risks of a Covid-19 outbreak within the prison estate and consequently they took responsibility for their roles within the community. This resulted in high standards of cleanliness in cells and communal areas, with a deep clean being carried out weekly. New receptions were subject to tests on arrival and a 14-day quarantine, and anyone with suspicious symptoms was placed in a separate isolated wing. We are pleased to report no-one presented a positive Covid-19 test. Overall, the regime worked so effectively that the Red Cross organisation requested copies of the Prison's lockdown documents for research purposes.

When life returned to normal, specific aspects of prison life continued the positive momentum built up during lockdown with improvements in a number of areas, some of which are detailed below.

Improvements in Healthcare

We are pleased to report that improvements observed in 2019 continued into 2020. The Healthcare team's ethos is one of care and empathy. As a result perennial complaints, which were a feature of previous years, have continued to diminish. In our opinion recruiting a professional with mental health expertise has also contributed to the general well-being of the prison population.

The continuing modernising of healthcare in the prison setting will benefit the prisoners, and prison as a whole, with Healthcare staff working as a team alongside prison officers and senior management. Already, Healthcare staff are attending sentence planning meetings, which assist in managing and monitoring individuals during their time in prison and establishing what support they might need during their sentence.

Progress on J Wing refurbishment

Despite the problems associated with the lockdown measures we are pleased to report the long overdue improvements to showers on J wing took a major step forward. Works to provide a much-needed upgrade of the facilities were approved. This will also mean the Prison will be compliant with soon to be introduced disability and equality legislation requiring access for wheelchair users, or people who have other physical disabilities or mobility issues. The wing's laundry has also been de-commissioned with the prison moving to a more efficient centralised system.

Bank facilities for ex-offenders

In previous reports we expressed our disappointment that some ex-prisoners were unable to access bank accounts on release. We are therefore delighted that a new banking facility has been introduced: Guernsey Community Savings, which is a non-profit charity providing basic financial services to previously financially excluded people. The prison's Resettlement Officer helps those wanting to apply for an account prior to release. Besides providing a practical necessity, having a bank account assists in both rehabilitation and reintegration by enabling ex-offenders not only to see themselves, but also be seen as, valued members of society.

Community workshop

This facility, provided in association with local charity Creative Learning In Prison (CLIP), continues to teach prisoners a range of practical skills which may be useful in life on release. It is funded by a combination of public, private and charitable sector donations and allows prisoners to learn and work on projects which directly benefit the community. On one visit to

the workshop a prisoner told a Panel member how working as a carpenter and joiner had helped him to turn his life around. He said he had accommodation and employment arranged for his release and he faced his future with confidence. For him, prison had been a positive experience but one he was not intending to repeat! Effectiveness of the facility was enhanced with the recruitment of three new prison officers who have trades, teaching and supervisory experience.

Recycling

Underpinning the training carried out in the workshop is that done in the recycling area which encourages contacts with local employers, targeting the construction and utilities industries. The intention is for prisoners to learn relevant skills to increase their employability on release. We have observed first hand how prisoners benefit from having worthwhile activities during their sentence. Not only does this give them skills which they can use when they are eventually released, to secure employment and reduce the risk of further offending, but it also gives them a sense of achievement which assists rehabilitation.

Education

The Panel welcomes the appointment of a new, full-time Education Manager to organise work previously undertaken primarily by externally contracted tutors. We were impressed by her enthusiasm and her plans to introduce courses that would lead to external qualifications, including GCSE, City & Guilds and the Open University. This curriculum-based learning is in addition to more recreational classes such as arts, crafts and yoga, along with projects led by an artist from 'Arts for Impact' (funded by CLIP).

Visits

IMP Members were pleased to learn that the online 'virtual' visits scheme is now functioning allowing prisoners, particularly those from overseas, to see their families on a regular basis. As stated in previous reports, the Panel has observed first-hand how important family ties are to prisoners and how important it is for them to maintain contact with their loved ones during their time in prison.

Rehabilitation

The prison ethos is based on rehabilitating prisoners and encouraging them to become contributing members of society. The Panel acknowledges the value of prioritising work and educational activities aimed at enhancing a prisoners' ability to resettle successfully into the community after release. It also reduces the likelihood of re-offending.

We were therefore pleased that the part-time Resettlement Officer post, based within the Offender Management Unit, has been made a full-time role. This will improve outcomes in preparing prisoners for release, especially those who may not have family or friends to support them, as it is widely acknowledged ex-offenders can often struggle to find appropriate accommodation and employment after leaving prison. An increasing number of prisoners are assessed as having complex needs and people convicted of sexual-offences (which make up an increasing proportion of the prison population) often have considerable additional barriers to securing accommodation and employment and this requires increased resources and careful consideration.

2 CONCERNS

While the appendices provide statistics on specific issues raised during visits, our chief concerns are highlighted below:

Cell call system

Technical issues have dogged the prison cell call system and, after a review, a replacement setup was due to be installed in 2020. This would have improved efficiency and allowed vital data to be collected. However, due to the effects of the pandemic on the UK suppliers the installation has been stalled. While this is totally beyond the control of the prison authorities we nevertheless register our concern and urge the installation be made a priority when circumstances allow.

Weekend medications

An issue raised regularly by prisoners was that of the times allocated for dispensing medication at weekends. On a Friday, Saturday and Sunday 'Meds' are dispensed at 4.30pm, which means anyone needing to take medicine at a later hour can be particularly affected –

for instance those suffering from insomnia who do not wish to have their medication administered at 4.30pm. The reason for this is that 'lock-up time' for prisoners is earlier at weekends - 5.00pm - and therefore it is not possible to dispense any later than 4.30pm. The medications have to be administered by a healthcare professional, and cannot be given to the prisoner to take later, due to the potential security risks or possible misuse. We understand some prisoners are now refusing to take their medication at weekends. We would therefore ask prison management to explore any and all possible solutions to this issue.

Another healthcare concern, raised in previous reports, is the out-dated system of record-keeping. As we pointed out in our last report, the Unit's effectiveness could be improved by moving from a paper-based to a computerised clinical notes system.

3 GENERAL COMMENTS

The Panel was extremely impressed with the positive way in which the prison as a whole responded to the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic, especially the positive and proactive stance of the prisoners, irrespective of the disruption the pandemic presented for them.

IMP recruitment was hindered by the lockdown and this resulted in the Panel's wide range of responsibilities being shared among just five members for most of the year. We are therefore pleased to report that new members will be taking up their posts early in 2021.

The IMP met with the President and Members of the previous Committee *for* Home Affairs in August 2020 and had a productive meeting. The Panel had no need to raise any issues with the Committee in 2020. The Panel welcomed the provision of an updated guidance document for IMP members to replace one issued in 2013. We acknowledge it will be a useful reminder of our responsibilities and an indispensable guide for new recruits.

In conclusion, we have particularly noted a generally positive atmosphere in the prison this year with a constructive relationship between officers and prisoners. The administration of the prison continues to be good and our attendance at the prison's internal meetings continues to provide useful background information for our visits. Prisoners have been

treated humanely and with dignity and respect, and responses by the authorities to our visit reports, and any follow-ups, have been constructive.

Finally, in what has been a particularly challenging year, I would like to acknowledge and thank my fellow Panel members, who are a group of ordinary people doing an extraordinary job.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Installation of the cell call system be made a priority when circumstances allow
2. To explore all possible solutions to the issues related to the early dispensing of medications at weekends
3. To introduce computerised health records

APPENDIX 1 - STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

1. Total number of visits

Type of visit	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Unannounced	10**	12	12	12	12	12	12
Requested Visits	22	35	18	20	38	15	9
SCAPU*	7	33	15	12	6	3	2

** It should be acknowledged that there is a legal requirement for the Panel to undertake monthly unannounced visits to the prison. However, due to the unprecedented circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in the Prison ceasing all external visits, the IMP were unable to conduct visits in April, May and most of June.

*The Segregation, Care and Progress Unit (SCAPU) is used to hold prisoners separately from the main population. There are a number of reasons for a prisoner to be segregated. Generally the reason for separation is that they present an increased risk to themselves, to staff, or to the rest of the population and cannot be managed effectively on a normal wing. SCAPU in Guernsey Prison is not used as a punishment, although may be used for a period of cooling off should a prisoner be presenting aggressive behaviour. The ethos of the SCAPU within Guernsey Prison is that of individually-focused care. The intention is to support individuals so that they can safely be returned to mainstream accommodation.

The Panel's role is to ensure that the decision to separate a prisoner, and the experience of separation for that prisoner, is governed by principles of fairness and decency. Separation should never be prolonged, or indefinite, and care should be taken to ensure that an individual's mental health is not adversely affected by the separation. To this end the IMP are immediately requested to visit when an individual has been placed in SCAPU.

Monthly unannounced visits	2020		2019	
	Number of concerns raised by prisoners	Number of enquiries made by IMP	Number of concerns raised by prisoners	Number of enquiries made by IMP
A. Accommodation & Cells	7	4		
B. Adjudications & Warnings / discipline	1			
C. Canteen	5	5		
D. Association Time / Gym	6	5	1	
E. Equality, Diversity & Discrimination				
F. Fabric or maintenance of the prison building	5	4	6	3
G. Smoking / Detoxification	5	3	2	
H. Healthcare	2	2	1	
I. Incentives & Earned Privileges (IEP) Status & Rules			1	
J. Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)	2	2		
K. Food / Kitchen	3	2	1	
L. Cleanliness	2	2		1
M. Money / Pay	1	1	1	
N. Bullying / Unfair treatment				
O. Personal belongings or issues	3	2	1	
P. Prison Information System (PIMS)				
Q. Parole				
R. Regime – Education / Employment	7	5		
S. Sentence Planning – Access to courses				
T. Transfers			1	
U. Use of force				
V. Visits/Calls	5	5		
W. Reception into custody / Info	1	1	1	
X. Support post-release & resettlement			2	
Y. Misc. complaints	3	3	1	1
Z. No concerns raised		1*		

*The Panel made a visit to a prisoner but no concern was raised.

Requested visits by theme	2020		2019	
	Number of concerns raised by prisoners	Number of enquiries made by IMP	Number of concerns raised by prisoners	Number of enquiries made by IMP
A. Accommodation & Cells	1	1	2	1
B. Adjudications & Warnings / discipline	2	2	2	
C. Canteen				
D. Association Time / Gym			2	2
E. Equality, Diversity & Discrimination				
F. Fabric or maintenance of the prison building	1	1		
G. Smoking / Detoxification	3	3		
H. Healthcare	9	7	14	11
I. Incentives & Earned Privileges (IEP) Status & Rules	4	3	3	2
J. Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)				
K. Food / Kitchen				
L. Cleanliness				
M. Money / Pay				
N. Bullying / Unfair treatment	3	3	2	1
O. Personal belongings or issues	2	2	4	3
P. Prison Information System (PIMS)				
Q. Parole	2	2	1	1
R. Regime – Education / Employment				
S. Sentence Planning – Access to courses			2	2
T. Transfer	2	2	1	
U. Use of force	1	1		
V. Visits/Calls				
W. Reception into custody / Info	1			
X. Support post-release & resettlement			1	1
Y. Misc. complaints	1	1	4	2
Z. No concerns raised			1	

* 1 healthcare issue was resolved prior to member attending the visit.

APPENDIX 2 - ANONYMOUS EXAMPLES OF PRISONERS' CONCERNS

Confidentiality prevents the Panel from providing specific details of individual concerns raised. Even brief summaries could potentially risk identifying the prisoner; therefore, we have outlined some general examples.

Healthcare

- Appointments with the Doctor
- Detoxification processes
- Mental health concerns

Fabric of the building

- J wing shower temperature & pressure
- Smells emanating from shower drains

Regime

- Gym access
- Medication dispensing times

Other complaints:

- The price of new E-burns
- Lack of healthy food choices in the canteen
- Water quality