

**A Report on an Inspection of
Loughan House Open Centre
by the Inspector of Prisons
Judge Michael Reilly**

3rd July 2014

**Office of the Inspector of Prisons
24 Cecil Walk
Kenyon Street
Nenagh
Co. Tipperary**

Tel: + 353 67 42210

Fax: + 353 67 42219

E-mail: info@inspectorofprisons.gov.ie

Web: www.inspectorofprisons.gov.ie

**A Report on an Inspection of Loughan House Open Centre
by the Inspector of Prisons Judge Michael Reilly**

Presented to the Minister for Justice and Equality pursuant to
Part 5 of the Prisons Act 2007.

Judge Michael Reilly
Inspector of Prisons

3rd July 2014

© Inspector of Prisons 2014

Contents

<u>Acknowledgement</u>	4
<u>Chapter 1</u>	
Introduction	5
<u>Chapter 2</u>	
General Impressions	7
<u>Chapter 3</u>	
Detailed Report	9
<u>Chapter 4</u>	
External work done by prisoners	19
<u>Chapter 5</u>	
Meeting with prisoners	22
<u>Chapter 6</u>	
Conclusions	23
<u>Chapter 7</u>	
Recommendations	25

Acknowledgment

I received a high level of co-operation from all people involved in my inspection of Loughan House Open Centre (hereinafter referred to as the “Centre”). I would, in particular, like to thank Governor Reilly, his predecessor Governor Gavin and the officers of the Centre for their constant willingness to assist me in all aspects of my inspection. All records and documents were made available to me. I would also like to thank the head teacher Ms. Brenda McMullen and her staff for their assistance. Ms. McMullen was ever ready to explain matters concerning the educational facilities in the Centre and I thank her for her time in this regard.

I was assisted in my investigation by Mr. James Doran and Mr. Sylvester Salley – two from my panel of experts who assist me with my work as Inspector of Prisons. The time spent by them in the Centre and their commitment and interest has meant that I have been able to finalise this Report on schedule. I would like to thank them for their invaluable assistance.

I would also like to thank all the persons that we spoke to including prison staff, teachers, prisoners, those that provide services to prisoners and visitors to the Centre for their forthright, helpful and candid views.

Judge Michael Reilly
Inspector of Prisons

3rd July 2014

Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to give a factual overview of the Centre that I have gained over a relatively long inspection process. I have visited the Centre on a number of occasions. My experts Mr. James Doran and Mr. Sylvester Salley have also visited the Centre. All of our visits have been unannounced.
- 1.2 Since 1983 the Centre has served as an open centre for male offenders over the age of 18 years. It has a bed capacity for 140 prisoners. In the 12 months up to the date of this Report the average daily population has been 125. The maximum number has been 140 on 21st May 2014 and the lowest was 64 on 25th/26th December 2013. The Centre is not overcrowded.
- 1.3 The Centre is well run. It is an essential cog in the wheel of the Irish Prison Service. All prison personnel are interested in working in the Centre and improving the lives of the prisoners. Relevant educational, vocational, therapeutic and recreational facilities are provided.
- 1.4 Prisoners are being equipped with relevant skills to enable them integrate into society on their release and to join the job seekers market with prospects of employment. Some prisoners intend starting their own businesses. **As proof of these statements I have witnessed work being done on an outreach basis by prisoners which is entirely voluntary but which benefits many communities and is appreciated by such communities. This is a prime example of restorative justice at work in a practical way. The prison authorities and the prisoners are justly proud of their achievements.** I refer to this in greater detail in Chapter 4.
- 1.5 In Chapter 2, I set out my general impressions of the Centre. I then, in bullet point form, set out my views on the general environment, record keeping and prisoner activities in the Centre.

- 1.6 In Chapter 3, I give a detailed report on all aspects of the Centre.
- 1.7 In Chapter 4, I give details of external works done by prisoners which benefits local communities.
- 1.8 In Chapter 5, I refer to my meetings with prisoners and give brief details of their views on the Centre.
- 1.9 In Chapter 6, I set out my recommendations for the future. **My comments in this Chapter are important if the evolving ethos of the Centre is to continue.**

Chapter 2

General Impressions

- 2.1 I was impressed by the atmosphere in the Centre. I was struck by the mutual respect between staff and prisoners which exists without any apparent compromise in the management and discipline of the prison. This is borne out by the level of absconding – 2 in 2014 as compared to 4 in 2013 and 37 in 2012.
- 2.2 Staff were particularly positive and spoke with enthusiasm of what has been achieved to date and the plans for the future. Staff acknowledged that Loughan House, though it required a period of adjustment, was a good place to work in.
- 2.3 There was an obvious atmosphere in the Centre of “*seeing a way around problems and getting things done*”.
- 2.4 I was impressed by the attitude of prisoners towards their environment. Given that it is an all male prison, the absence of the macho atmosphere was noted.
- 2.5 The Governor’s House is no longer in use. I support the suggestion by the Governor that it could be put to use as a family centre to allow for extended visits by families.
- 2.6 In this paragraph I set out in bullet points my impressions of the general environment of the Centre as follows:-
- Very clean throughout the centre, all prisoner and staff areas were well maintained with no visible graffiti or superficial dirt,
 - A good atmosphere of co-operation and communication,
 - A strong level of participation in all internal activities,
 - Prisoners appeared content,
 - Common purpose and information sharing, and,
 - Activities for prisoners were diverse and appropriate to the facility.

2.7 In this paragraph I set out, in bullet point format, my impressions of the record keeping in the Centre as follows:-

- Records on individual prisoners' files appeared to be exact,
- Education records of courses and attendances at such courses also of a high standard, and,
- Staff records were sufficient and appropriate to the demands of the complex.

2.8 In this paragraph I set out, in bullet point format, my findings in relation to prisoner activities in the Centre as follows:-

- The Centre has an open approach and prisoners have access to all relevant activities.
- Integrated Sentence Management is operating in a structured manner.
- Activities are Centre based with educational courses designed to be relevant to industrial activity.
- Prisoners have a daily routine.
- There is a considerable restorative justice element in everything that is done in the Centre.
- The Centre is an important and valued part of the general and extended community in that part of Cavan and the surrounding counties.

Chapter 3

Detailed Report

- 3.1 This Chapter is divided into a number of main sections with such sections subdivided for ease of reading.

Main building

- 3.2 This is an old established structure offering many period features. It has two upper floors that are used as accommodation quarters, two holding cells, a Church, a tuck shop and rooms for counsellors. Part of the ground floor is taken up with the administration requirements, namely, the general office and the control room which is also the Assistant Chief Officers Office. The kitchen, the communal dining area for the prisoners, the theatre, the games room and the laundry are also located on the ground floor. CCTV coverage is adequate.
- 3.3 The accommodation rooms, comprising 29 doubles and 22 singles, are located on the first and second floor. Access is from the main hall *via* connecting stairs. The rooms that I visited were clean and suitable for purpose. They do not have in-cell sanitation. However, the prisoners have keys and can access the toilet at any time during the night. Toilets and showers are located at the end of each landing. All toilets and showers that I visited, while old, were clean and well maintained.
- 3.4 The Administration Section was adequate and with easy access for all. Prisoners have direct access to the general office at specific periods. The staff allocation at present is for two clerks, with the replacement of such clerks by Prison Administrative Support Officers (PASO's). At present only one person manages this section. This means that certain tasks from this office are transferred to the Chief Officer.
- 3.5 The Laundry employs six prisoners on a rotational basis. The laundry caters for the entire Centre including the washing of the prisoners' private clothing. A Work Training Officer (WTO) manages this section.

- 3.6 The Kitchen employs twelve prisoners on a rotational basis. Two WTO's are in charge. The food is of a high standard. The area was clean. The kitchen has received awards similar to those awarded to kitchens in the community. It was evident that prisoners had a positive work ethic and from what I saw did not require intensive supervision. Prisoners enjoy the communal dining facilities in the Centre.
- 3.7 The Recreational facilities are excellent. The gymnasium is an excellent facility that offers a range of programmes appropriate to the prisoners. The instructors also take prisoners on external activities such as mountain climbs and away soccer tournaments. The activities for prisoners include:- football, badminton, table tennis, volleyball, basketball, handball, squash, racquetball, tug of war, weight loss and physical fitness programmes. An old disused tennis court has been repaired and is now fully operational.
- 3.8 The Medical section has a basic role to play. No serious concerns were raised with me. The surgery has been moved to the ground floor.
- 3.9 The Control room is also in the Assistant Chief Officer's office. It is central and fit for purpose.
- 3.10 The Tuck shop is ideally located. It is operated by the gym officer. Prices are a contentious issue among prisoners and there is widespread criticism of the mark up on certain goods.
- 3.11 A recreational hall offering appropriate levels of activities for prisoners is located on the ground floor of the Centre. Prisoner telephones are located in the corridor outside this hall. Prisoners can pay for additional calls.
- 3.12 Drug counselling is offered by two counsellors from Merchants Quay. The counsellors have devised innovative ways of providing counselling to certain cohorts of prisoners who, because of their ethnicity, would not engage in formal drug counselling programmes.

- 3.13 The Theatre has been renovated to a very high standard. This has been a collaborative effort involving the school, prison management, prison officers, prisoners, significant external support from those involved in art design and the undoubted creativity of all concerned. This facility is being and will be widely used as a resource not alone for the prisoners but as a theatre for the wider local community.
- 3.14 The Catholic Church is centrally located in the Centre with Mass on Saturday evenings.

Pine Lodge Residential Unit

- 3.15 This purpose built two storey residential unit comprising 66 single rooms, recreation rooms, two kitchens, a computer room and a library was opened in 2008. This unit was very clean on all visits.
- 3.16 Although only in operation for approximately 6 years the building is showing significant evidence of considerable wear and tear. This is evident everywhere. The floor itself does not feel solid or sound. The defects in the structure go far beyond the usual wear and tear that should be expected. I have been informed that it was built as a temporary structure. I am not aware of the hoped for life span of the structure but in my, uneducated, opinion it appears to have a life span of limited years. It would seem that a temporary structure of this kind is and was at the time of its construction unsuitable for the purpose for which it was intended.
- 3.17 I am not aware how often, if ever, an independent health and safety audit was commissioned for Pine Lodge. If a comprehensive audit has not been carried out in the recent past this should be done paying particular emphasis to the issue of fire containment in each room and that in the event of fire the time tolerance that would be available for evacuation.
- 3.18 Rooms. The rooms are spacious and appropriate for the use. All rooms are designed for single occupancy.

- 3.19 Recreational facilities. This unit has basic recreation facilities. However, as the main complex has high quality recreational facilities I found this to be appropriate.
- 3.20 Local kitchens. These two kitchens were clean where prisoners prepare basic meals, make tea etc.
- 3.21 The Computer Room. This is a project jointly managed by the educational unit and prison management where enhanced connectivity can be provided to those prisoners who are studying Open University Courses etc.
- 3.22 The Library. This is an excellent facility. It is well stocked. It is run by a prisoner. No difficulties arise in this regard.

Visiting Areas

- 3.23 The main visits hall is a spacious family friendly facility. It is not supervised by staff but is appropriately monitored by CCTV. Prisoners book visits. There is a relaxed policy with families spending the day, bringing food and in good weather enjoying the outdoor facilities. A second child friendly room is also available. The privileges enjoyed are, in the main, not abused.
- 3.24 Staff in the Centre and the prisoners all agree that the system works well. However, if a prisoner abuses the system by bringing in drugs, contraband or otherwise he is immediately returned to a closed prison. On one visit we observed such a transfer taking place. It is quite apparent that trust is important.
- 3.25 I spoke with prisoners' families and friends in the visiting area. All agreed that the regime for visiting was positive with families and young children being able to have quality time with their imprisoned relatives and friends. Though difficult to get to, families of prisoners make great efforts, including travelling great distances, to avail of visits. They contrasted these visits to their experiences in trying to conduct any kind of a relationship with prisoners

in closed prisons where visits were short, where they had to conduct conversations, sometimes through screens, but in almost all cases in visiting areas where conversation was almost impossible. They also remarked on babies and children finding visits to closed institutions intimidating.

Grounds

- 3.26 The grounds are very well maintained. There are many examples of sculpture fashioned by the prisoners in the grounds. Prisoners and staff take an active interest in how the Centre looks.
- 3.27 All of my visits were unannounced and on all occasions the grounds were in pristine condition.

The farm and horticulture

- 3.28 The farm forms part of the entire 47 acres which comprises the whole complex. Some of the land is in pasture.
- 3.29 18 to 20 prisoners and at times a greater number work on the farm and in horticulture. They are managed by the farm manager (a prison officer). The farm and horticultural work is intensive. The farm manager is responsible for all aspects of the farm, the grounds, the horticulture, the waste management etc. **He should be congratulated for his achievements.** Prisoners achieve appropriate certification for their achievements.
- 3.30 As of the date of this Report there was a herd of 31 Friesian cattle grazing the land. These form part of the Bóthar Project. I refer to this project in greater detail in paragraph 4.2(b).
- 3.31 There are two poly tunnels. Vegetables, plants and flowers are grown which are used by the Centre or donated to external voluntary organisations.
- 3.32 A waste management recycling plant is another initiative under the control of the farm manager. This plant operates to a high standard. Prisoners who work in this plant gain valuable experience that will be of assistance to them when

they leave the prison system. Cardboard compressing, recycling and safe storage is carried out in a separate building.

3.33 Other facets of husbandry are evident in the Centre such as hen runs etc.

Bicycle Restoration Workshop

3.34 Prisoners restore and reconstruct old bicycles that have been donated. The restoration work is to a very high standard. This is a collaborative scheme run in conjunction with Rotary Club of Ireland called – “Bikes -4- Africa”. I refer to this project in greater detail in paragraph 4.2(a).

Projects under construction

3.35 A training office facility for the farm is under construction. A shed was sourced locally at no cost to the Centre. It was reconstructed by the staff and prisoners and is being fitted out. The Governor has planned the provision of 4 additional workshops which suggestion I endorse.

Education Centre

3.36 CMETB (Cavan & Monaghan Education and Training Board) are the providers of prison education at Loughan House.

3.37 6,997 hours are allocated for the provision of education at Loughan House Education Centre. The programme is broad and varied and caters for the needs and interests of the prisoners who have been transferred from the secure prisons around the country. The prisoners are aged 18 years and upwards and approximately 50% of them have dropped out of school at 15 years of age with no certification of any kind. Many of them are coping with drug and alcohol addictions and are engaged with the Merchant’s Quay Addiction Counselling Service. The education programme helps them to cope with their sentence, improve their confidence and self-esteem and encourages lifelong learning for themselves and their families.

- 3.38 The educational programme is delivered in partnership with the Irish Prison Service. The programme runs from September to July and PE is on offer during August.
- 3.39 The main objective is to prepare the prisoners for life after prison and to equip them with the skills to return to the workplace and lead law abiding lives.
- 3.40 FETAC is the main form of assessment which allows flexibility in the delivery of modules for learners who are enrolled on a continual basis throughout the academic year and beyond. The core programme delivered by 9 permanent whole time teachers provides classes in Literacy, Numeracy, Maths, English, ESOL, ICT, Woodwork, Music, Art, Home Economics, PE and Outdoor Pursuits. In 2013, 100 prisoners achieved component certificates at Levels 2, 3 & 4 across a range of 13 modules with most being successful at Level 3. Non-certificated courses are also offered for those who are not able or whose length of sentence does not allow for the completion of set courses.
- 3.41 Many prisoners learn to read and write during their sentence and this boosts their confidence enabling them to move on to other subjects. A majority of prisoners have difficulty with aspects of reading and writing. 295 prisoners were enrolled and timetabled from September 2012 – July 2013. On average, 100 prisoners engage with the education centre on a weekly basis and timetables are tailor made to facilitate them with their work and training commitments in the prison and in the community.
- 3.42 The following statistics demonstrate the worth of the school:-
- 71% of prisoners used the computer at some level though not all at certification level,
 - 1% of prisoners sat subjects at the Group Certificate level,
 - 52% of prisoners sat subjects at the Junior Certificate level,
 - 22% of prisoners sat subjects at the Leaving Certificate level, and,
 - 4% of prisoners sat the GCSE Northern Ireland (equivalent to Junior Certificate).

- 3.43 All class rooms are bright, well equipped and fit for purpose. The teachers are interested and “go the extra mile”. The following epitomises this - *the maths class can act as a cover for helping prisoners with literacy problems. We met two prisoners who could not read or write prior to coming to Loughan House. After three months of intensive tutoring they both are at level two and were about to sit an examination before going on to level three. The two prisoners were very proud and were adamant that they would complete the courses and receive certification level within the two years before completion of their current sentences.* These examples are replicated in many parts of the school.
- 3.44 The education section regularly avails of workshops provided by The Artists & Writers in Prison Scheme with established artists in the community. In addition, various workshops have been offered and funded through PEACE II & III initiatives.
- 3.45 Drama and musical acts are staged in the theatre to motivate and inspire those prisoners who have an interest and ability in this area. These productions are under the direction of an artist selected from the Artists in Prison panel. A drama group of prisoners has been established with the support of a volunteer actor and director from the local community.
- 3.46 The Adult Guidance Teacher runs information events throughout the year, and prepares CAO applications for Colleges, for PLC’s, for Access Courses etc. Courses in Start Your Own Business, Parenting and Men’s Health topics are also provided when funding is available. The Driver Theory Test is also on offer and valued by those who need it. 20 prisoners sat the Test in 2012/2013 and 11 the CPC requirement.
- 3.47 Venues of educational interest in Cavan, Leitrim and Sligo are carefully selected and pre-booked guided tours are arranged over the summer months with the intention that prisoners can gain an appreciation of the worth of such places so that on release they will be able to appreciate and explore similar venues in their own areas.

3.48 **All of the teachers are interested in teaching in the Centre. They take pride in the achievements of “their” students. They are an essential element in the changing ethos of Loughan House.**

Work training workshops

3.49 The Work Training Officers take charge of these workshops. They provide training in relevant disciplines such as – industrial cleaning, tiling, car valeting and mentoring prisoners to start their own businesses. This mentoring has been successful with a number of businesses being set up. The workshops are fit for purpose and the officers **go the extra mile and display a great interest in furthering the interests and accomplishments of the prisoners.**

There are many other initiatives which help to equip prisoners on their release for life after prison. Some prisoners attend a Sculpture Centre in Leitrim where they learn forge and bronze work.

Red Cross Volunteers

3.50 The Red Cross Volunteers Project commenced in February 2014 with a group of 12 prisoner volunteers. This initiative between the Red Cross, ETB and Prison staff has resulted in a safer and more enhanced living and working environment for all. I have been informed that the prisons in Northern Ireland intend rolling out a similar programme in their prisons. They have requested support from the Irish Prison Service in this regard. A feature of such contact should be that it will give prisoners in our prisons a wider understanding of the international dimension of the Red Cross Organisation and should enhance cross border relations.

Gaisce Awards

3.51 The Gaisce Project which caters for seven 18-25 year olds has been successfully introduced in the Centre. This provides a focus for this younger age group. Projects and challenges in the prison and the outside community are agreed with the PE teacher, the Work Training and Gym officers and is

another example of collaborative work practices between the educators and the prison staff in the successful delivery of relevant programmes.

Governor's parade

3.52 Prisoners wishing to see the Governor must meet him in the education centre. This is an ideal location as it does not impact on the education, vocational or work programmes of the Centre. A high level of communication between the Governor and prisoners is evident.

Chapter 4

External work done by prisoners

- 4.1 In this Chapter I set out initiatives taken by the Centre which benefit society and the local community. These initiatives are the result of a new ethos introduced into the Centre over the last two years. All stakeholders – namely – prison management, prison officers, teachers, those that provide services and assistance to the prisoners; prisoners and local communities have collaborated in bringing forward these initiatives. What has been done must be built on for the future. **Therefore, my comments in Chapter 6 should be taken seriously.**
- 4.2 The following are a flavour of the initiatives referred to in paragraph 4.1 where prisoners either are sent out on work parties which benefit local communities or engage in work in the Centre which benefits outside communities:-
- (a) Prisoners repair bicycles that have been donated to Rotary Club of Ireland. When repaired these bicycles are shipped to Africa by the charity – “Bikes -4- Africa”. The latest shipment has brought the number of refurbished bicycles to over 1,000 bicycles.
 - (b) Calf rearing services for the charity – “Bóthar” are provided in the Centre. Donated calves are reared to a certain age and then shipped to developing countries.
 - (c) Prisoners have helped in the fundraising efforts for The Northwest Hospice in Sligo. The most recent project involved the growing of 3,000 shamrock plants and 2,000 sunflower plants.
 - (d) Assisting Cavan Cystic Fibrosis Society by proving marshals for fundraising events such as mountain climbs etc.
 - (e) Assisting the Cavan Fleadh Committee with the construction of garden furniture.
 - (f) Donation of garden furniture (made in Loughan House) to the Sligo Family Resource Centre and to St. Cecelia’s School (also referred to at (g) hereunder).

- (g) Work parties to St. Cecelia's School to carry out painting and maintenance work. This school caters for students with moderate, severe and profound learning disabilities.
- (h) Work parties to provide assistance to the Tidy Town Committees in Blacklion, Manorhamilton and Bundoran.
- (i) Work parties to tend the grounds of Irish Prison Service Headquarters in Longford.
- (j) Renovation work carried out to the McNear Resource and Amenity Centre, Drumkerrin Church, the animal shelter in Drumkerrin and the Glen Centre in Manorhamilton.
- (k) Work parties to assist with painting and decorating to various schools including –St. Michael's School in Glenfarne, Blacklion National School, Bawnboy National School, Belturbet National School and Ballisodare National School.
- (l) The provision of meals to approximately 20/25 senior citizens in the local community complex once a week.
- (m) Integrating with members of the local community either in the Centre or outside where cultural events involving both members of the local community and prisoners are staged.
- (n) Assisting farming communities in local cooperative initiatives.
- (o) Providing Christmas Dinner and entertainment in Loughan House for approximately 60 senior citizens from the area. This is an annual event.

4.3 The initiatives outlined in paragraph 4.2 are examples of restorative justice at work.

4.4 In order to be able to provide the types of initiatives as outlined a considerable degree of mutual trust had to be built up by the Centre on the one hand and the general community on the other. This mutual trust is evident.

4.5 It is clear that only prisoners who are interested and trustworthy can engage in these restorative justice projects. **I address this in greater detail in Chapter 6.**

- 4.6 All prisoners that I spoke to felt that being involved in “*trying to do some good for others*” gave them a greater understanding and appreciation of the needs of others in society and their experiences in this regard helped, they hoped, to equip them for life after prison.
- 4.7 The communities and organisations that benefited from the endeavours of the prisoners appreciated the work done by the prisoners and saw such prisoners “*in a different light*”.

Chapter 5

Meeting with prisoners

5.1 My team and I spoke with many prisoners. The following will give a flavour of the attitude of the prisoners:-

- Two prisoners attending a special class for travellers. They were happy to be able to avail of the counselling. They were not subject to abuse or “*slagging*” by other prisoners or staff. They are able to attend remedial classes without adverse comment. “*This would not happen in other prisons*”.
- A lorry driver recently completed his PCP driver’s course in Sligo. His experience in the Centre is very positive as opposed to “*bad experiences in other prisons*”.
- A prisoner in the computer room who has completed many courses. His impression – “*no fights or bullying*”.
- A prisoner who had recently been transferred to the Centre from a closed prison commenting on the closed prison – “*staff were terrible you had a problem with one and you had a problem with them all but not here*”.
- A prisoner learning to read and write not discriminated against.
- A prisoner from another closed prison who talked of witnessing “*some bad incidents*” in that prison. He is a tradesman and is able to put his skills into practice in the Centre.

5.2 I spoke to many prisoners who were involved in the initiatives referred to in paragraph 4.2. They were proud to have been so involved and to have been able to contribute to society. **However, they also appreciated having their endeavours recognised not only by those in the Centre but by the communities that benefited from their endeavours.**

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Conclusions

- 6.1 Loughan House Open Centre has a pivotal place in the Irish Prison System. It is clear from this Report that the ethos is one of openness, of addressing challenges that prisoners will face when they leave prison, of challenging the attitudes of prisoners by education, work training, physical wellbeing and with a strong emphasis on the prisoners becoming involved in external works and initiatives.

- 6.2 Involvement in external works and initiatives not alone promotes strong personal development in the character of the prisoners but also enables them to contribute in a positive way towards helping those involved in charitable projects, community development and worthy causes. In essence this is Restorative Justice at work in a prison setting.

- 6.3 Unlike closed prisons there is considerable movement of prisoners in and out of the Centre on work parties to various destinations and trips to assist charitable projects as outlined in Chapter 4 of this Report. There is a cost associated with such movements. It is not possible to cost the positives that flow from the external initiatives or to put a monetary value on the external work being carried out. However, using any yardstick the positives for both prisoners and the community must far outweigh the cost of providing such initiatives.

- 6.4 As the Centre has a different ethos from closed prisons it is important that the prisoners transferred to the Centre will appreciate and benefit from the Centre. Prisoners being transferred to Loughan House should have proven through their previous behaviour and engagement that they are ready to progress to an Open Centre. Such prisoners should have a considerable period of their sentence remaining to enable them have time to engage with the Centre in their sentence management and to benefit from the regime in Loughan House.

- 6.5 It is counter productive and a waste of resources to transfer prisoners to the Centre who are not focused or only have a short part of their sentences left to serve. There will be no incentive for such prisoners to engage and their presence in the Centre will only deprive others of an opportunity. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment should be carried out on all prisoners who might be considered for transfer to the Centre to ensure that only those who meet the criteria should in fact be transferred.
- 6.6 Prisoners with at least three years of their sentences remaining should be considered for transfer as referred to in paragraph 6.5.
- 6.7 Staff for Loughan House from Governor to Recruit Officer should only be recruited if they have an appreciation of the ethos of the Centre, are willing to improve this ethos and see the benefits that flow to the prisoners, to themselves and the community from the regimes presently operating.
- 6.8 The Irish Prison Service must ensure that an adequate number of work training officers are assigned to the Centre to ensure that the existing training and workshops are maintained, that outside initiatives are not scaled back but are expanded and that further projects can be taken on.

Chapter 7

Recommendations

- 7.1 The Centre should operate to its full capacity which at present is 140. This figure should be kept under review.
- 7.2 Temporary residential units such as Pine Lodge Residential Unit should not be constructed as they do not appear to give value for money. Resources may have to be provided in the short to medium term to replace Pine Lodge. Provision should be made in this regard.
- 7.3 If a comprehensive health and safety audit of Pine Lodge has not been carried out in the recent past such an audit should be carried out which should pay particular attention to fire safety issues in Pine Lodge.
- 7.4 The ethos of the Centre should be maintained and built on.
- 7.5 The emphasis on restorative justice within the Centre and the greater prison system should be encouraged.
- 7.6 Only those prisoners who have been assessed as being suitable for transfer to the Centre should be so transferred as referred to in paragraphs 6.4 and 6.6.
- 7.7 Adequate resources should be available to the prison to ensure it can continue to provide work parties and assistance to the local and extended community.
- 7.8 The additional workshops referred to in paragraph 3.35 should be provided as a matter of urgency.
- 7.9 Adequate numbers of Work Training Officers should be assigned to the Centre.

Additional Comments

- 7.10 The benefits to prisoners and the general community of an Open Centre, such as Loughan House with its relevant regimes and ethos coupled with its

emphasis on Restorative Justice, is clearly demonstrated throughout this Report.

- 7.11 I have referred to the selection process of prisoners for transfer to Loughan House in paragraphs 6.4 to 6.6 of this Report.
- 7.12 There is no Open Prison for women prisoners in this Country. There are many women serving long sentences in our two women's prisons who would satisfy the criteria for transfer to an Open Centre (see paragraphs 6.4 to 6.6 of this Report). Such an Open Centre would have to create its own ethos but the experience of Loughan House would be an ideal template to work from.
- 7.13 From my experience I am satisfied that a cohort of women would benefit. I am further satisfied that such a Centre would be an invaluable asset in the reintegration of such women back to their families and into society.
- 7.14 In making these comments I am **NOT** advocating that women prisoners serving short sentences should be candidates for this type of an Open Centre. Such a Centre should be in addition to and not in substitution for the Centre proposed for the Dublin area for targeted women with specific needs as referred to in paragraph 2.26 of my Interim Report on the Dóchas Centre dated 10th October 2013.
- 7.15 I accept that the provision of prisons is a policy matter for the Minister and the Irish Prison Service. **However, I would strongly urge the Minister and the Irish Prison Service to give positive consideration to the opening of an Open Centre for women with an emphasis on preparing such women for life after prison, with equipping them with relevant skills to return to their families and to the workplace; and with considerable emphasis being placed on engaging in voluntary works for the benefit of society, local communities and voluntary bodies – in other words Restorative Justice in a prison setting.**