

Report on an Inspection of the Training Unit,
Mountjoy Campus,
carried out in accordance with Section 31(1) of
the Prisons Act 2007

4 May 2017

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

Helen Casey
Office of the Inspector of Prisons

4 May 2017

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I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Ms. Aoife Watters and Ms. Karen Nolan, members of the Panel of Experts, for their advice and contribution to this Report and to staff within the office who assisted in compiling the Report; Ms. Emer O’Neill, Mr. John Byrne, and Ms. Eibhlis Burke.

On my first day of inspection I was accompanied by the late Judge Michael Reilly whose sudden and untimely death in November 2016 shocked all who knew him. His knowledge and experience is greatly missed, his many reports are a guiding light and pathway to all interested in ensuring that the human rights of those in custody are protected.

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FOREWORD

Since I completed my inspection of the Training Unit there have been considerable developments. I have been informed by Irish Prison Service Management that a decision has been made to close the Training Unit “*for refurbishment and repurpose*” to “*reopen as an older prisoners’ facility*”.

I was advised that prisoners currently in the Training Unit would be relocated to a section of Mountjoy Prison (Mountjoy West) which will be the new ‘semi-open’ facility for Enhanced¹ prisoners coming towards the end of their sentence.

Given the change in circumstances I have decided to draft an inspection report to highlight what I consider are salient issues and which should be given serious consideration in the decision to relocate the ‘semi-open’ prison.

The aim of this Report is to highlight both positive and negative aspects of the operation of the Training Unit. There are certainly some very positive features, which bring some ‘normality’ to the lives of those prisoners who are coming close to the end of long-term sentences. The ‘normalised’ activities assist in the reintegration of prisoners back to society. However, I also found that the Training Unit had lost its focus and is not operating as efficiently or effectively as it could. There are a number of factors which contribute to its lack of effectiveness which I will address later in the report and which should be remedied to ensure the ethos of a ‘semi-open’ prison is preserved.

¹ There are three regime levels, Basic, Standard and Enhanced. On committal a prisoner is placed on the Standard level and may progress to Enhanced if s/he, *inter alia*, show exemplary behaviour and engages in structured activities for a period.

http://www.irishprisons.ie/images/policy/incentivised_regimes_policy.pdf

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Report is the culmination of visits to the Training Unit, which commenced on 17 August 2016. I also visited the Training Unit on 18 August 2016, 26 October 2016 and 21 February 2017. All visits were unannounced with the exception of that made on 18 August 2016. The inspection involved, *inter alia*, meeting with the Campus Governor, local Training Unit management, prison staff, prisoners, In-reach personnel and the examination of certain records.

- 1.2 The main purpose of this Report is to set out the current status of the Training Unit and how it is managed, the facilities available to prisoners accommodated there, highlight positive aspects of the Training Unit and seek to inform the regime in the relocated Unit. I hope, at a minimum, the positive aspects of the Training Unit regime and activities will be replicated and expanded to enhance the regime in the new ‘semi open’ facility to equip prisoners with relevant skills to improve their prospects of employment and enable them integrate into society on release.

- 1.3 I wrote to the Director General of the Irish Prison Service having been advised by Irish Prison Service Management that a decision had been made to “*temporarily close the Training Unit for renovation and repurpose*” and that the “*prisoners accommodated in the Training Unit would transfer to Mountjoy West*”, previously St. Patrick’s Institution – a closed prison. In that correspondence I highlighted the importance of maintaining a ‘semi-open’ facility in the State, expressing my view that the ‘normalised’ environment provided in a semi open facility should not be diminished to the degree that the progression of prisoners through their sentence (particularly longer-term sentences) and their rehabilitation would be adversely affected by the closure of the Training Unit. In outlining the findings of my inspection (both positive and negative) to the Director General I sought clarity, *inter alia*, on whether or not it is the intention to replicate the Training Unit Regime in Mountjoy West and asked:-

- i. Will staff in Mountjoy West attend work in Plain Clothes or be in Uniform;
- ii. Will the Training Unit staff roster operate in Mountjoy West;
- iii. Will prisoners be unlocked early in the morning to facilitate early start at work/college/training;
- iv. Will prisoners be facilitated with late locked down in the evening;
- v. Will the external support services who are currently facilitated with visits after 5.30 p.m. be accommodated with evening meetings in Mountjoy West;
- vi. Will the open visit policy apply to prisoners when they move to Mountjoy West;
- vii. To facilitate prisoners who go out to work/college daily - will visits be accommodated in the evening, as is currently the situation;
- viii. How will visits be booked – currently the Training Unit staff manage visits.

1.4 It has been confirmed in the response from the Director General “*that prisoners who are being transferred into Mounjoy West are being relocated to a closed prison*”..... “*while every effort will be made to maintain the regime arrangements currently in place for prisoners in the Training Unit, it will not be possible to replicate all of the arrangements/facilities currently enjoyed by these prisoners*”. Therefore, significant aspects of the ‘relaxed’ regime currently available to the Enhanced prisoners accommodated in the Training Unit will not be available in Mountjoy West.

1.5 Having regard to the importance of a ‘low security semi-open’ facility where considerable trust and responsibility is placed on the prisoners in preparing them for their reintegration into the community, I decided it critically important, given the change in circumstances, to draft a report of my inspection of the Training Unit, despite the fact that a decision has been made to close this facility as a ‘semi-open’ prison.

- 1.6 There are certainly some very positive practices and programmes open to prisoners accommodated in the Training Unit. I found that the Training Unit programmes together with the support provided by other State Agencies and In-Reach Service Providers assisted in bringing some ‘normality’ to the lives of those prisoners who are coming close to the end of long term sentences. The ‘normalised’ environment supports the prisoners’ reintegration back to society and equip them with the skills to improve their prospects of employment.
- 1.7 Notwithstanding this, I also found that the Training Unit had lost its focus in many respects and is not being utilised to its full potential. I will address separately my concerns, as it is important that ‘negative’ practices adversely affecting the ethos of this ‘semi-open’ facility should not be replicated when this Unit is relocated nor should they be used as justification for the closure of the Training Unit as a ‘semi-open’ prison.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF THE TRAINING UNIT

- 2.1 The Training Unit is located at Glengariff Parade, North Circular Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7 and is the only ‘semi-open’ low security prison in the Prison Estate. Prisoners are held in secure custody but the internal regime is more relaxed and informal than a closed prison.
- 2.2 The Training Unit was opened in 1975. It can accommodate 96 prisoners. The focus of the Training Unit is to provide work, education and training to prisoners to assist them in securing employment on release. A number of prisoners are approved Temporary Release² (TR) to attend work/college external to the prison. It is the responsibility of prisoners to make their own way to school, work and in respect of those on external programmes, to hospital appointments.
- 2.3 The Training Unit is one of three low security prisons within the Irish Prison Service Estate. Loughan House, Co. Cavan and Shelton Abbey, Co. Wicklow are both Open prisons. These units are a necessary part of a modern, humane prison system. These prisons are also fundamental in facilitating the Irish Prison Service to realise its aim in “*providing safe and secure custody, dignity of care and rehabilitation to prisoners for safer communities*”³. In their Capital Strategy, published in 2016, the Irish Prison Service acknowledges the importance of lower security settings:

“an overriding principle is that prisoners should to the greatest degree possible be accommodated within security standards and regimes that are appropriate to their needs, and to the security risks they pose, and should not be subjected to security standards substantially and unnecessarily beyond those needs, as

² Temporary Release of prisoners serving a sentence is for a defined period and for a particular purpose. The granting of TR is subject to specific conditions.

www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2003/act/34/enacted/en/html

³ Irish Prison Service Mission Statement. <http://www.irishprisons.ie/index.php/about-us/mission-and-values>

*this compromises other objectives such as dignity, humanity, rehabilitation, cost effectiveness and proportionality”.*⁴

- 2.4 The ethos of the Training Unit centres on prisoner reintegration to the community. The principles of normalisation and empowerment (enabling prisoners to make decisions for themselves) are espoused by both staff and prisoners in the Unit. Prisoners progress from the Training Unit to an open prison or very often they leave the Training Unit with a job offer or a place on a training or college course. The prospect of not being able to find a job is one of the most insurmountable barriers to reintegration faced by prisoners on release. Reintegration is firmly enshrined as an aim of imprisonment in the most recent international human rights instrument pertaining to prisoners, the Mandela Rules⁵. The principles of normalisation and empowerment underpin many of the Rules, and are also reflected in other international human rights instruments and in the reports of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).
- 2.5 While part of Mountjoy Campus, the Training Unit is a stand-alone entity with its own entrance and visiting facility. The Training Unit is separated from Mountjoy closed prison by an internal high security wall with a built in locked door, through which access can be gained.
- 2.6 The Training Unit does not have a dedicated Governor or Assistant Governor. It has one Chief Officer whose hours of attendance are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday. At the time of the Inspection the Governor had dual responsibility for both the Training Unit and Mountjoy West. There was no Assistant Governor assigned to the Training Unit. In early December 2016, the Governor retired and was not replaced. A Deputy Governor attached to Mountjoy Prison was given oversight of the Training Unit while still attached to Mountjoy Prison.

⁴ Irish Prison Service, *Capital Strategy 2016 – 2021*, p.21 (http://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/capital_strategy_2016.pdf)

⁵ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners referred to as ‘The Mandela Rules’

- 2.7 Staff have a roster which is unique to the Training Unit but which allows for considerable flexibility in providing a ‘normal’ setting for prisoners. The table at Appendix A provides details of the Roster and contrasts the regime of the Training Unit ‘semi-open’ prison to that of a closed prison.
- 2.8 The accommodation, while in serious need of refurbishment, provides those prisoners who have served a greater part of their sentence an opportunity to experience a more ‘normal’ environment prior to their release. One of the primary purposes of a ‘semi-open’ facility is to progress the reintegration of a prisoner by having a more relaxed but secure environment, which closely mirrors community living. All of the prisoners have a key to their bedroom door which they use to secure their room during unlock hours. Each room is single occupancy and has a window with curtains. The window can be opened or closed as the prisoner wishes. Having a key to their bedroom door places trust in the prisoner, increases his responsibility, allows him to freely enter and leave his room during unlock thereby minimising restrictions on the prisoner’s regime. This affords the prisoner dignity and reduces his institutionalised mindset developed over many years in a closed prison. Staff hold a master key to these rooms.
- 2.9 The importance of a ‘normalised’ environment is also recognised in the Irish Prison Service Capital Strategy in which it is stated:

“settings that normalise, to the degree appropriate and possible, the day-to-day lives of prisoners, are known to enhance the scope for rehabilitative outcomes.” That Strategy goes on to state that *“Such normalisation, may where appropriate incorporate communal dining, cooking, much enhanced environments for family interaction, facilities to support positive prisoner-prisoner association, activity flexibility, and facilities that provide living conditions and activities that reduce institutionalisation, reward positive conduct, and encourage mutual trust and personal responsibility⁶.”*

⁶ Irish Prison Service, Capital Strategy 2016 – 2021, p.22 (http://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/capital_strategy_2016.pdf)

- 2.10 While the rooms do not have in-cell sanitation, this was not a cause of concern to the prisoners with whom I spoke. They informed me that at night, during lock-back, they are allowed use toilet facilities at the end of their landings, if the need arises.
- 2.11 During my August 2016 Inspection, I was informed that Phase one of a two Phase Refurbishment plan had been approved by Irish Prison Service Management. Phase 1 included the renovation of staff facilities including relocation of Administrative Offices and some Workshops. When I returned in February, 2017 the following works were completed; new toilet and shower facilities for both male and female staff, new male locker room, refurbished staff mess (new kitchen, appliances and furniture) a newly furnished staff rest area.

The proposal for Phase 2, for which sanction was pending at the time of my Inspection, includes a new administration area for staff and all Service Providers, refurbishment and relocation to ground floor of all workshops and provision of a wheelchair assessable room. In addition, provision was made for a new keys office, new larger tuck shop and the installation of CCTV to specific areas.

CHAPTER 3

KEY ASPECTS OF THE INSPECTION

- 3.1 As stated in paragraph 1.1, I visited the Training Unit on four occasions as part of my Inspection. During all visits to the prison, I observed the conditions of the prison, the interaction between prison staff and prisoners and the interaction between management and prison staff.
- 3.2 On the first day of Inspection there were 86 prisoners in custody in the Unit, including 13 life-sentenced prisoners.
- 3.3 The Chief Officer is rostered from 8am to 5p.m. Monday to Friday. There is no cover at Chief Officer or Governor level in the evenings or at weekends. I was told by staff that an Assistant Governor from Mountjoy prison “*would do a walk through*” during weekends and Bank Holidays.
- 3.4 On requesting confirmation of the criteria for entry into the Training Unit I was advised by Irish Prison Service Management⁷ that there is no “*transfer in policy*” but prisoners being considered “*should satisfy the following general criteria*”, which includes:-
- *“Be willing to/request the transfer;*
 - *Be on the Enhanced Regime Privilege level (where this is achievable);*
 - *Have no recent P19 disciplinary reports;*
 - *Be drug free;*
 - *Can associate with other prisoners in the Training Unit;*
 - *Be approved by the Minister for transfer to the Training Unit arising from the Parole Board process (where applicable);*
 - *Any compelling compassionate grounds for a transfer to more open conditions, for example serious family difficulties (visits are more open);*

⁷ Correspondence between this office and the Irish Prison Service

- *The likelihood that a transfer to the Training Unit might accelerate the person's reintegration into society improves his prospects of staying out of prison."*

There is no automatic right for prisoners to be sanctioned a transfer from a closed prison to a 'semi-open' unit.

- 3.5 On the first day of our Inspection we were told by a number of persons with whom we spoke that the requirement for entry to the Training Unit was not always complied with. That comment was reiterated by others on subsequent visits. The staff and some Service Providers stated that prisoners with at least 18 months left in their sentence would be most suitable for the Training Unit. They stated the aforementioned timeframe would best facilitate an initial in-house course/training and progression to external programmes/work to gradually prepare the prisoners for re-entry to the community.
- 3.6 On my examination of records, I found that prisoners who were transferred to the Training Unit were mainly from Dublin based prisons and predominantly from Mountjoy prison. Approximately 85% of the prisoners in the Training Unit in August 2016 were transferred from Mountjoy prison, with most of the remainder coming from Wheatfield prison. I found that during the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 July 2016 the Training Unit had a total of 102 committals; of those 87 (85.29%) were from Mountjoy prison.
- 3.7 Management of the Training Unit informed me that they are not always consulted when a transfer is being considered and felt a more structured approach is required. They stated that the decision to transfer a prisoner can be made "*at a Review meeting in another prison*" and that decision is made without their involvement.
- 3.8 Even though the intention is that the Training Unit is to be a 'drug free' environment, according to the records 69% of the prisoners who transferred to the Training Unit for the 12 months period up to the end of July, 2016 failed a drug urine test following their transfer.

- 3.9 During my August 2016 inspection dates there were 46 prisoners in-house, with 40 attending external activities. A concern was highlighted by prisoners, staff and in-reach service personnel that when the Training Unit accommodates prisoners still dependent on drugs there is a strong possibility those prisoners who leave the Unit to attend work in the community and/or college may be pressurised to bring back drugs.
- 3.10 Staff in the Training Unit stated that prisoners appear to be transferred immediately after completing a detox programme and in their experience individuals detox at different speeds. It would be their (staff) preference if a prisoner who completes a detox programme *“be given five to six weeks to prove that he can maintain a ‘drug free’ status before being transferred.”*
- 3.11 I found that restrictions on prisoners within the Training Unit are kept to a minimum, which is in keeping with the ethos of normalisation and enabling prisoners to make choices for themselves.
- 3.12 Staff have a roster which is unique to the Training Unit but which allows for considerable flexibility in providing a ‘normal’ setting for prisoners, such as being unlocked early in the morning to go to work etc. Staff in the Training Unit are happy with this roster, which facilitates the prisoner’s regime and the ethos of the Unit is predicated upon the cooperation of staff and their commitment to the principles of normalisation and empowerment. This in turn is reflected in the relationship that staff and prisoners have, which I found to be respectful, open and relaxed.
- 3.13 As outlined in the table at Appendix A staff in the Training Unit do not wear uniforms, which immediately breaks down barriers and minimises the formation of a ‘them and us’ culture. It also creates a more ‘normal’ environment for families and children when visiting. These qualities are crucial in any ‘semi-open’ unit. The Director General has confirmed that staff will wear uniforms in the new Unit in Mountjoy West.

- 3.14 Staff in the Training Unit have informed me that none of them will be transferring to Mountjoy West with the prisoners nor, they state, were they given the option. Prisoners transferring to Mountjoy West will be in a new environment and supervised by officers whose experience is working in a security focused closed prison environment.
- 3.15 Visiting facilities are relaxed in the Training Unit; they take place unsupervised in a family room. The prisoners are allowed two visits per week which can be increased on application to local management. The booking of visits is much easier than a closed prison as the prisoner can make a booking with the Training Unit staff up until 8 p.m. the evening before. The prisoner will then inform his visitor(s) of the date and time of the visit. Giving a prisoner responsibility to manage the booking of his own visits empowers the prisoner, providing him with a sense of responsibility and control of his life, a further example of 'normalisation'.
- 3.16 Prisoners do not go through a screened search area on entry to the Training Unit. Searching is random which supports the ethos and enhanced status of the Training Unit and those accommodated there.
- 3.17 I evidenced good inter agency co-operation in the management of prisoners in the Training Unit. While there are a number of Support Services available to the prisoners in the Training Unit, I mention in particular the Probation Service and IASIO⁸, a State Agency and Community based Project. Both Organisations have dedicated staff attached to the Training Unit and in the community. Prior to the release of a prisoner both the Probation and IASIO staff link the prisoner to their colleagues in the community, which supports the rehabilitation and reintegration of the offender and thereby creating a smooth transition from prison to community living.

⁸ Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders - a community based organisation funded by the Probation Service and Irish Prison Service which support the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community.

3.17 I set out hereunder my positive impressions of the Training Unit environment.

- Clean throughout the Unit;
- An open approach with prisoners was evident;
- There was good engagement between staff and prisoners;
- In general prisoners appeared content;
- Prisoners have access to gym and library until 9 p.m.;
- Prisoners have daily access to the laundry until 9 p.m. and at weekends – this laundry provides employment for one prisoner who ensures the clothes are washed, folded and returned to the rightful owner;
- Lifers can hold meetings in the late evenings, unsupervised;
- The Training Unit prisoners have several State and non-State Support Services⁹ plus the Irish Prison Service Integrated Sentence Management¹⁰ (ISM) Officer who, *inter alia*, assists prisoners with a Pre-Release Plan, builds their confidence in regaining independence in catering for themselves and engaging with society following long term sentences, during which time some have become institutionalised;
- Support Services, such as AA, NA, Samaritans etc, are facilitated with unsupervised visits up until 9.30 p.m.;
- Up to 40 Prisoners go out to college, work or training daily;
- Dinner is served in the evening (5.15 p.m.) to cater for those working;
- Anyone returning after 5.15 p.m. can get their dinner re-heated;
- Early un-lock (7.10 a.m.) to cater for those who require an early start for course/work. This also facilitates those prisoners who are required to take early public transport to regional locations on day/overnight Temporary Release (TR) for re socialisation purposes;
- All prisoners have a key to their room;

⁹ The Probation Service, VEC Teachers, Guidance Counsellors, Addiction Counsellors, IASIO (Resettlement Officer and Training and Employment Officer), Social Services etc

¹⁰ ISM is a prisoner-centred, multidisciplinary approach to working with prisoners with provision for initial assessment, goal setting and periodic reviews of the prisoners' sentence plan.

- Lifers and long term sentenced prisoners have a small fridge in their room;
- Prisoners on transferring to the Training Unit sign a Contract (to remain drug free) and a Compact (to remain enhanced and comply with the Incentivised Regime policy);
- Multidisciplinary meetings take place every fortnight. I am informed that the progress of prisoners is discussed at these meetings and any decision taken involves all those who have an involvement in the personal development plan of the prisoner – a prisoner centred approach; and
- A new in-house course has been designed called “Healthy Relationship Programme”. This course is to support long-term offenders who are due to be released into the community or who are approved to attend external courses. It is to assist with their rehabilitation and to provide them with information on the norms and challenges of building positive meaningful relationships with others. Staff informed me that this course proved very effective and they received positive feedback from those who participated.

CHAPTER 4

FACILITIES, EDUCATION AND WORKSHOPS

- 4.1 **Computer Workshop** – This workshop opens Monday to Friday and caters for up to 20 prisoners. However, on the date of my visit no prisoners were present in the workshop. I was informed that the computer software was ‘*dated*’ as it had “*not been upgraded for several years*”. Apart from very basic computer skills, there was no training that could be provided to make the prisoner more employable on release.
- 4.2 The School also provides computer classes on, *inter alia*, the general use of computers that are required to conduct daily business on release.
- 4.3 There is no internet access for those who attend college or who are completing Open University courses.
- 4.4 Printers in this workshop had been replaced within the last two years but the computers were not linked to the printers.
- 4.5 There is, in my view, an unnecessary duplication of computer courses for prisoners Monday to Friday with neither available at evenings nor weekends.
- 4.6 **Industrial Skills** - This area caters for a number of small workshops such as picture framing, engraving, embroidery, t-shirt printing, sign plotting, arts and crafts which can facilitate up to 7 prisoners. The room was small for so many workshops but prisoners showed a keen interest in these skills and activities. However, the training is not accredited.
- 4.7 The Work Training Officer had insufficient space to hold stock that often resulted in a workshop, particularly framing, running out of material. However, refurbishment of the Training Unit had commenced during my inspection and a new location had been identified for the workshops that would provide adequate workstation space and a storage area.

- 4.8 **Metal workshop** - The metal workshop was closed and had been closed since the Instructor retired in May 2016. This workshop was fully functioning up to the date of the Instructor's retirement and I am informed was producing items such as Garden gates, Garden benches etc. I am further informed that up to 18 prisoners attended training in that workshop daily (3 classes of 6) and was a very popular workshop and was a 'feeder' to external community based projects such as PACE¹¹.
- 4.9 **Industrial Cleaning** – This is City and Guilds certified training, which facilitates gainful employment on release.
- 4.10 **Training Unit Kitchen** – Employs 10 prisoners, who spend a minimum of three months and up to one year there, at which time they progress to Mountjoy mess or alternative programmes. These prisoners are unlocked at 7.10 a.m. to enable them prepare to open the kitchen for breakfast at 8 a.m. They finish work at 7 p.m. having cleaned up after dinner. Appropriate breaks are afforded to these prisoners throughout the day.
- 4.11 **Mountjoy Mess** – Up to 15 prisoners from the Training Unit work in the mess daily. It is a work-training kitchen, which enables the prisoner to gain skills which supports his opportunity to gain employment on release. The prisoners working in the Mess leave the Training Unit at 7.30 a.m. and return between 6.30 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the evening.
- 4.12 **The Library** – this is managed by two prisoners. It is well stocked but there is no internet connection and only one free standing computer.
- 4.13 **Integrated Sentence Management** - is operational within the Training Unit. Multidisciplinary meetings take place every fortnight. The ISM Officer develops a Personal Development Plan for each prisoner who is transferred to the Training Unit. This plan is developed with the involvement of the prisoner

¹¹ PACE is a community based organisation providing support to offenders.

and in consultation with other stakeholders. The ISM Officer has regular contact with these prisoners and supports and monitors their progress.

CHAPTER 5

ISSUES OF CONCERN

- 5.1 **The non-adherence to the criteria for transfer to the Training Unit is adversely affecting the effectiveness of the Unit.**
- 5.2 On a random check of the records I found that the ‘drug free’ criteria was not strictly adhered to, in that some prisoners produced ‘dirty’ urines on committal or within days of entry. These prisoners were subject to a P.19 disciplinary hearing. The prisoners who were found guilty were reduced to the ‘Standard’ level of Incentivised Regime. Some prisoners were retained in the Training Unit on a ‘Traffic Light System’ (second chance policy).
- 5.3 I found that a number of the prisoners prior to transfer to the Training Unit had recent P.19 disciplinary records, which is also contrary to entry requirements.
- 5.4 The Mountjoy Campus Governor has oversight of the Training Unit as one of the prisons on his Campus. There is no dedicated Governor or Assistant Governor attached to the Training Unit. In August 2016, the Governor had responsibility for two prisons on the Mounjoy campus (Mountjoy West and the Training Unit). The Assistant Governor had been transferred and was not replaced. The Chief Officer was on a Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. roster.
- 5.5 In early December 2016 the Governor with dual responsibility for the Training Unit and Mountjoy West retired and has not been replaced. A Deputy Governor from Mountjoy prison is assigned responsibility for the Training Unit while still attached to Mountjoy prison. There is no senior management cover after 5 p.m. in the evenings, during weekends or bank holidays.
- 5.6 As the Training Unit forms part of Mountjoy Campus with its senior management having joint oversight of both the closed prison and the ‘semi-open’ facility, I found that the majority of prisoners were transferred from

Mountjoy prison. It is unclear why prisoners, predominantly Mountjoy prison, who do not meet the general criteria, are transferred into the Training Unit.

- 5.7 While there were many positive aspects to the Training Unit, it is regrettable that it is not a total ‘drug free’ environment. The benefits of a ‘drug free’ environment is a matter that was raised as a concern during my inspection by prisoners, staff and Service Providers alike (para. 3.9 refers). Service Providers expressed concern that those who are ‘drug free’ but still required a ‘drug free’ environment may be encouraged to partake in drugs and relapse, “*which would undo all the good work achieved*”. They expressed the view that the semi open environment was not suitable for those using drugs and are unhappy that senior prison service personnel allow those who fail urine tests to be allowed remain in the Unit.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

- 6.1 Following my Inspection, I can but concur with the late Judge Reilly's comment that the Training Unit "*is not being utilised to its full potential*"¹².
- 6.2 There are many causative factors that have led to my conclusion, which I mention hereunder, and which I feel could be remedied, provided the benefits of a 'semi-open' prison are recognised, accepted and seen as greatly assisting in the reintegration of the prisoner back into society. The following factors, in my view, have led to the current situation and the Training Unit "*not being utilised to its full potential*".
- i. failure by Irish Prison Service Management to strictly apply the criteria for entry;
 - ii. no dedicated Governor to safeguard the ethos of the Training Unit with a particular focus in maintaining its 'drug free' status;
 - iii. the Training Unit should be used as a conduit to the Community Support Scheme and/or open prisons, from all closed prisons;
 - iv. no Chief Officer or higher rank rostered for duty in the Training Unit in evenings and/or at weekends;
 - v. failure to update computer software;
 - vi. failure to fill vacant Instructors posts;
 - vii. unaccredited training courses exist;
 - viii. many prisoners are without a Sentence Plan on arrival in the Training Unit;
 - ix. need to continue with the refurbishment programme which was in progress during my inspection.

¹² An Overview of Mounjoy Prison Campus with particular emphasis on the Separation Unit, 2014, para. 2.17, page 7. www.inspectorofprisons.gov.ie

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The criteria for entry into Training Unit should be strictly adhered to.
2. The governance of the Training Unit should be independent of the Campus governance. It should have its own Governor and a back-to-back Chief Officer.
3. Suitable prisoners serving long term sentences from all prisons across the Irish Prison Estate should be identified, prioritised having regard to the criteria for entry and placed on a waiting list for transfer to the Training Unit to assist reintegration upon release. Management of the Training Unit should have an input into the identification of suitable prisoners for the Unit.
4. A structured pre-release sentence plan should be in place for all prisoners transferring to the Training Unit.
5. Courses/Training should be planned and approved in advance of transfer through the multi-disciplinary process and overseen by the Integrated Sentence Management officer(s).
6. Prisoners should have access to a broad range of training workshops, internal/external courses and employment. This would give them better opportunities for future employment upon release. As far as practicable training should be accredited.
7. Those going on courses or attending third level education should have the use of a computer including internet access subject to overall prison policy on such usage.
8. The Training Unit does not have a Recreational Room for use by the prisoners. I recommend the provision of Recreational Room and a dedicated meeting room(s) suitable for small group meetings such as Lifers group, AA etc.

9. Those prisoners on external courses or programmes should be allowed unsupervised access to the garden area on the grounds of the Training Unit. Currently prisoners have supervised access for one hour at lunch time and two hours in the evening.
10. Given the semi-open prison status of the Training Unit, prisoners who breach their TR conditions and therefore classed as ‘Unlawfully at large’ (UAL) should not be returned to the Training Unit upon their re-arrest/voluntary return.
11. Any new ‘semi-open’ facility should provide prisoners with the elements of ‘normalised’ living such as; communal dining, open visits, flexible visiting hours, early unlock, late lockdown, dinner in the evening and accommodation of evening/weekend support meetings such as AA, GA, Lifers Groups etc. to cater for those attending college and/or working¹³.
12. A low security regime should be utilised in any new open facility thereby creating a more ‘normal’ environment and giving prisoners autonomy in their preparation for reintegration back into the community.

¹³ Irish Prison Service Management has confirmed that Mountjoy West is “*a closed prison*” and “*while every effort will be made to maintain the regime arrangements currently in place for prisoners in the Training Unit, it will not be possible to replicate all the arrangements/facilities enjoyed by these prisoners*”.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Whilst creating a prison for ‘older’ prisoners is to be welcomed and I support such a development, an older prisoners’ facility should not be created at the expense of one of the more positive aspects of the Irish Prison Service.
- 8.2 The ultimate aim of any humane society that punishes those who commit offences through the deprivation of liberty must be their reintegration into society. Indeed, this is an aim of the Irish Prison Service. The Penal Policy Review Group, which published their final report in 2014, also recommended that rehabilitation should be an overarching aim of imprisonment. In a specific recommendation (Recommendation 18) they call for an increase in the use of open prisons, and considered the possibility of providing an open prison in the Dublin area.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the fact that there are problems within the Training Unit, it does provide a very important rehabilitative avenue for prisoners within the Irish Prison Estate. In my opinion, the current proposal to redesignate the Training Unit is not in keeping with the aforementioned Penal Policy Review Recommendation and conflicts with a strategic objective of the Irish Prison Service Capital Strategy 2016-2021.
- 8.3 I could only support the closure of the Training Unit if assured that prisoners would benefit from the same regime in a similar facility. Regrettably, that assurance has not been forthcoming and I am of the view that the imminent move to Mountjoy West cannot support the semi-open prison ethos.

¹⁴ Penal Policy Review Group, *Strategic Review of Penal Policy: Final Report* (2014, Department of Justice), p.60

**CONTRAST THE REGIME OF THE TRAINING UNIT SEMI-OPEN PRISON
WITH THAT OF A CLOSED PRISON**

This is not an exhaustive list.

Training Unit ‘Semi-Open’ prison Regime	Closed Prisons’ Regime
Minimal internal security. (Random ‘pat down’ search of prisoners by Training Unit staff).	Maximum internal security. Full Security checks (full strip search of prisoners entering and leaving a closed prison) including Canine presence on entry.
Staff Roster 8 a.m. to at 10 p.m. but a staff member commences work each morning at 7 a.m. to unlock prisoners who leave early for work/ training/college.	Staff Roster 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Unlock approx. 8.30 a.m.
Late lock-back at 9.30 p.m.	Lock back at 7.20 p.m.
Main meal served at 5.15 p.m. If a prisoner is late back from college/work/training and is late for evening meal it is retained and will be reheated in a microwave by an officer on duty.	Main meal served at 12.30 p.m. Supper served at approx. 4.30 p.m.
Access to the kitchen from 7.10 a.m. to 8.45 a.m. to prepare their own breakfast. Bread, milk, butter, tea bags, toaster, cereals are left for prisoners. The kitchen is also available to prisoners from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.	No access to kitchen in a closed prison.

All staff attend work in 'Plain Clothes'.	All staff wear Uniform.
Delph and cutlery used by prisoners.	Paper plates and plastic knives and forks used in closed prisons.
Rooms with doors and windows.	Cell with cell bars.
Own key to room.	No key to cell.
Window with curtains – no bars.	Cell window, some with bars, no curtain.
Evening (after 6 p.m.) in-reach services such as AA, GA, NA, Toast Masters, Peace Education, Release Project, Bible Studies, Choir practice, Lifers meetings etc.	Evening activities not normally facilitated. In-reach services normally attend during the day.
Communal dining.	No communal dining – food eaten in cell.
Access to the Gym up to 9.30 p.m.	Access to gym restricted to specific times and when Gym Officer is available to supervise.
Prisoners have watches.	No watches allowed in Mountjoy prison.
Family enjoy unsupervised visits in family room booked through Training Unit staff.	Visits supervised, booked through Campus Visitors Booking system. All visitors processed through the search area.
Laptops allowed for those attending College	Not normally allowed in closed prison.
Staff in plain clothes when escorting prisoners on Temporary Release (those who are not on external programmes) to hospital appointments/visits, interviews, resocialisation purposes etc.	Staff wear uniform when escorting prisoners.

Lifers and prisoners coming to the end of long-term sentences permitted a small fridge in their room.	No fridges in cells.
Prisoners studying music are allowed musical instruments in their rooms.	Not normally permitted.
Prisoners who are approved Temporary Release programme(s) for resocialisation organise the Temporary Release themselves through direct consultation with the staff member in the General Office.	No direct access to the General Office Staff.
Low Security (random 'pat down' search of prisoners by Training unit staff). Minimum security for visitors entering Training Unit.	Full search of prisoners on all occasions when entering and exiting the prison. All visitors go through screening.
Within reason, no restriction on personal clothing.	Normally only up to three sets of clothing permitted.