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Mission Statement

To enhance the quality of prison life, by working to ensure fairness and accountability in prison

Statement of Purpose

Members of the Independent Monitoring Board for Maghaberry Prison are appointed by the Secretary of State under Section 3 of the Treatment of Offenders Act (NI) 1968 and under the Prison Act (NI) 1953. The Board is required to:

- visit Maghaberry regularly and report to the Secretary of State on the conditions of imprisonment and the treatment of offenders;
- consider requests and complaints made by prisoners to the Board;
- report matters of concern to the Governor or, in serious cases, the Secretary of State; and
- exercise certain powers that are given under the Prison and Young Offender Centre Rules (NI) 2005.

The Prison Rules further require the Board to satisfy itself as to:

- the treatment of prisoners including provision for their healthcare and other welfare while in prison;
- the facilities available to prisoners to allow them to make purposeful use of their time; and
- the cleanliness and adequacy of prison premises.

Chairperson's Introduction

This Annual Report to the Secretary of State covers the activities and observations of the Independent Monitoring Board for H.M.P. Maghaberry for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.

Members of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) are appointed by the Secretary of State under the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953 and are required to:

- Visit the prison regularly and report on the conditions of imprisonment and the treatment of prisoners;
- Consider the requests and complaints made by prisoners to the Board;
- Report on matters of concern to the Governor or in serious cases to the Secretary of State.

The Independent Monitoring Board for H.M.P. Maghaberry consists of sixteen people from across Northern Ireland. Working on a voluntary basis, they bring to the prison a wide and diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience.

Maghaberry Prison is a highly complex institution housing all categories of prisoners from remand to life sentenced prisoners and all categories in between. It presents many, diverse and weighty challenges for those who operate the system and work in its environment. At times when these challenges are not met the results can not only be profound but tragic as in the sad and regrettable death of Colin Bell. The Board feels, as an internal investigation continues, that this report is not a proper vehicle to speak further on this subject. However, while the Board itself not covered by the investigation in any way; the Board believes that there will be lessons for all to learn and that many of these will result in significant changes in practice and procedures within the prison. Therefore, the Board sees this as a fitting point to review its own position to ensure that it continues to follow best practice in robustly and effectively fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.

This year the Board has opted for a considerably 'reduced' report; given the wealth of coverage which Maghaberry has seen from other quarters. This reflects a desire to produce a report which seeks not to echo the voices of others but rather to focus on some of our continuing work.

The working of the Board would not be possible without the support and assistance of the Secretariat. I thank them for their dedication, work and guidance. The Board is also supported by the Council of Independent Monitoring Boards (CIMB) made up from the Chairs, Vice Chairs and elected members of each of the Boards of the three prison establishments in Northern Ireland.

It is my privilege to serve as Chair of such a dedicated team.

James J. McAllister
Chairman

Summary of Recommendations

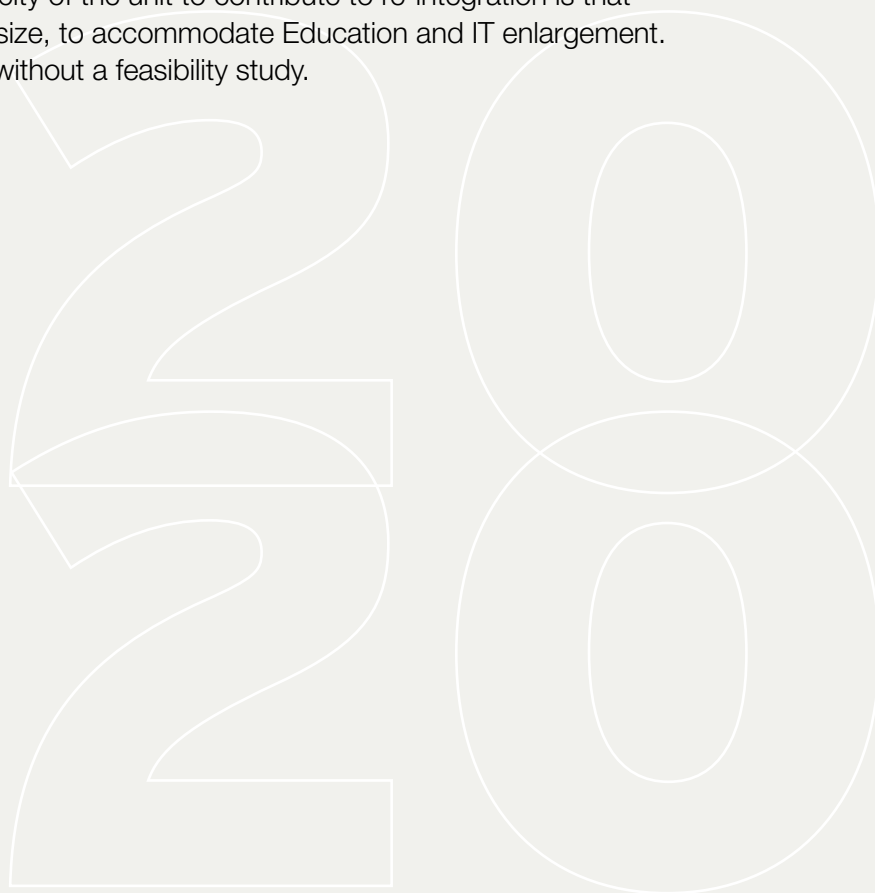
The Boards recommends that:

- prisoners are made more aware of the valuable contribution that working can make to their successful re-integration on release (Paragraph 1.4)
- the general tidiness of the reception area is improved and the problem of litter and vermin is addressed (Paragraph 2.2)
- child-centred visits are reintroduced on Sundays (Paragraph 2.4)
- Diversity Training is delivered to staff without delay (Paragraph 5.3)
- the punctuality of prisoners attending classes should continue to improve (Paragraph 7.5)
- dedicated dining areas are made available in the education department where possible (Paragraph 7.6)
- products for sale in the prison shop are priced competitively (Paragraph 8.3)
- the closure of the prison shop at holiday times should be reviewed (Paragraph 8.4)
- the catering operation should be moved to the new kitchen unit as soon as possible (Paragraph 9.5)
- all catering staff receive the required training and development (Paragraph 9.5)
- all catering staff receive specialised training in food cultural awareness to meet the religious or cultural needs of foreign national prisoners (Paragraph 9.6)
- the NI Prison Service develop and implement a food policy for prisons (Paragraph 9.7)
- support is given to the nursing team in the Healthcare Unit to effectively monitor and support older prisoners (Paragraph 10.8)
- a needs analysis is undertaken for prisoners with mobility challenges and provision is made for level access cells (Paragraph 10.9)

- a pro-active approach is taken with vulnerable mental health patients (Paragraph 10.12)
- the absence of work programmes and training for life sentenced prisoners is addressed without further delay (Paragraph 11.2)
- the structure of the life sentenced prisoners' day is changed to reflect life as it is on the 'outside' (Paragraph 11.3)
- the NI Prison Service address the fact that their method of assessment of prisoners progressing to the Prisoner Assessment Unit is failing (Paragraph 12.1)
- a wider and more comprehensive range of relevant training opportunities is available to staff working with vulnerable prisoners (Paragraph 13.4)
- staff with specific skills and aptitudes be deployed to work with vulnerable prisoners (Paragraph 14.1)
- greater effort is made to reduce the levels of drugs coming into the prison (Paragraph 15.1)
- increased enhancements for drug-free prisoners and drug-free landings are introduced (Paragraph 15.2)
- staff should receive specialised training in coping with and understanding prisoners with personality disorders and learning and behavioural difficulties (Paragraph 16.3)
- notification of the imposition of Rule 32 and the forwarding of relevant paperwork is sent to the Board's Secretariat within 24 hours of signing (Paragraph 16.7)
- the recommendations of the Rule 32 working group be acted upon as a priority (Paragraph 16.8)

1 | Workshops

- 1.1** During the last reporting year, facilities have changed little in the workshops. Plastering and painting and decorating remain the most popular, followed by bricklaying, furniture craft, the kitchen, industrial cleaning, the gardens and gym.
- 1.2** Braille production continues, offering a range of translations for hymn books, prayer books, street maps, museum labels, calendars, music sheets, and also a bookbinding facility to complete the services. A blind person attends weekly to check accuracy. This is an excellent innovation, and facilitates the promotion of best practice. The unit also produces music in Braille, which is a very specialised and rare skill.
- 1.3** Wheelchair and bicycle refurbishment takes place at Mourne House. Unfortunately, occasional charity workshops have ceased, and Polish prisoners, in particular, who carried out this work, do not enjoy the association it facilitated. Workshops can be cancelled at short notice (due to staffing priorities) and this creates apathy, disappointment and pessimism.
- 1.4** Lack of attendance at these workshops still causes concern, and the problem appears to be that the prisoners prefer to watch television in their cells. The Board recommends that steps are taken to incentivise prisoners and make them more aware of the valuable contribution that working can make to their successful re-integration on release. However, the full impact of such work to re-integration is limited in that involvement cannot lead to nationally recognised qualifications offered (such as NVQ) as the instructors themselves are not qualified to deliver such programmes.
- 1.5** Further adding to limiting the capacity of the unit to contribute to re-integration is that the workshop is being reduced in size, to accommodate Education and IT enlargement. This appears to have taken place without a feasibility study.



2 | Visits

- 2.1** Maghaberry facilitate over 85,000 visitors to the prison each year requiring approximately 130,000 bookings. Over the same period almost 30,000 children visited the prison. This places substantial demands on staff to maintain high security levels whilst at the same time promoting as family friendly environment as possible. Lack of space for all that is involved is a particular problem.
- 2.2** The visitors reception building is often congested by the amount of clothing and items brought for prisoners. At times the floor area is littered with boxes, bags, cartons, etc which makes it difficult for Officers to expedite the arrival and throughput of visitors. It also noted that there is a considerable amount of litter around the visitor reception building which should be addressed. A much more serious concern is that decomposing vermin which has clearly been baited, killed but not removed, is giving off a nauseating stench in the area. The Board recommends that this is addressed quickly and as continuously as is necessary. Its presence is intolerable to visitors and staff alike.
- 2.3** Issues arising which appear to be causing difficulty include the change in prison policy whereby it is no longer possible to sign money or clothes in for a prisoner unless the person concerned is actually visiting him. This is problematic for some families and the Board urges the prison authorities to consider methods of offsetting the impact of this.
- 2.4** There is no doubt that the prison has made important and progressive advances in catering for family and child-centred visits. However, in recognition of their importance the Board recommends that child centred visits can be reintroduced so as to take place on Sundays.



3 | Chaplaincy

- 3.1** With the ever-increasing prison population, the demands on the prison chaplains are constant and increasing. As well as holding services in the prison chapel and Healthcare Centre, because of the unique nature of Maghaberry, services are held also in Bush and Roe Houses where the separated prisoners are in situ. Unfortunately, because of the situation of Wilson and Martin Houses, sited across the road from the main prison complex, it is an impractical task if prisoners did wish to attend the services in the prison chapel. At the same time there are personal visits by other ecclesiastical ministers to prisoners who have requested their own minister and they can meet them in the visitors' area. The chaplaincy work as a team, with a duty chaplain visiting the induction landing in Roe House every day, to visit new inmates and offer them the services of the chaplaincy.
- 3.2** The IMB recognise and commend the chaplains for the essential role that they play in offering pastoral care, assisting the prisoners to cope with their confinement and in maintaining the prisoners' self worth and dignity.

4 | Resettlement

- 4.1** Resettlement underpins the entire work of the prison. It is supported by strategic partnerships in the community with both statutory and voluntary bodies. The entire programme is built upon assessment of prisoner risk so as to minimise the risk of offending on release.
- 4.2** The Maghaberry team have accomplished innovative and ground-breaking work especially in the area of family relationships. However, this excellent and well-thought out system seems to have lost momentum over the last year or two. The main reasons for this appear to be, first, the high level of sickness absence throughout the staff of the prison with the monthly sick absence averaging 12.5% over the last year. In addition, the prevailing security-driven system requires the seemingly endless escorting of prisoners by staff who could be more usefully employed.
- 4.3** The absence of discipline officers, especially at a time of increasing numbers of prisoners, leads to cancellations of many activities as members of staff engaged in areas like resettlement are moved over to fill gaps. There were occasions when IMB members, visiting the resettlement department, found that all resettlement staff had been deployed elsewhere. Moreover, the lack of resources in certain specialist areas is becoming more acute; there are still long waiting lists for drugs and alcohol counselling and for courses designed to challenge attitudes and offending behaviour. And still not enough is done to help remand and short-sentenced prisoners.

5 | Equality and Diversity

- 5.1** The trend in the increase in the number of foreign prisoners committed to Maghaberry Prison has continued over the past year. In many ways, this trend reflects the larger societal picture of inward migration to Northern Ireland. Although the majority of foreign national prisoners at present are in Maghaberry on remand, there are increasing numbers of sentenced prisoners who will in all likelihood serve their sentences in the prison. This situation presents the authorities with unfamiliar challenges and statutory requirements.
- 5.2** An Equality and Diversity committee at the prison had its first meeting in February 2008 and a member of the Board was in attendance. The prison appears committed to taking forward the action plan that has been laid out by the Northern Ireland Prison Service and to achieving the set goals within the timeframe that has been structured.
- 5.3** The Board is aware that Diversity Training has been identified as an underpinning requirement of the strategy and recommends that this training can be delivered without undue delay. The area of Diversity includes many other areas of inclusion and equality of access and opportunity. The Board notes that there are members of the travelling community at most times in the prison and will continue to monitor the sensitive issues that arise and are handled with regard to these prisoners.
- 5.4** The Board recognizes the challenges that are presented by the dynamic and fluid situation of an increasing foreign national population and commends the authorities for devising a strategy for dealing with the many and complex issues that are arising. The Board is committed to engaging with the authorities on the Foreign National sub-committee and looks forward to the implementation of the action plan proposed in the strategy. The Board also recognizes its own duties and concerns in being accessible and relevant to prisoners who have special access needs by virtue of their nationality.

6 | Library

- 6.1** The library, which offers books, tapes, cassettes and DVD's for loan, continues to play an important role for many prisoners. A good deal of effort has gone into improving the opening times and increasing the availability of the service. The result has been an increase in the use of the facility and the annual footfall at the time of writing is already well up on the previous year. Also, due to a successful trial run, late night opening has now been incorporated as a standard service.
- 6.2** As stated earlier, a great increase in the number of foreign nationals has required the prison to source books and magazines in various languages to accommodate their needs. The Board welcomes these efforts.

7 | Education

- 7.1** Education can play an important role in the life of a prisoner by providing a means of managing his time and also preparing him to find suitable employment whenever he is released. Prisoners are interviewed at the committal stage and tested for their essential skills capability. At this interview they are given advice and a prospectus of the various courses, which are on offer.
- 7.2** The Department aims to provide programmes that address education needs, raises their self-esteem, prepares them for release and helps them to integrate back into society. A structured curriculum has been set up to deliver a comprehensive range of activities including academic, cultural, recreational and social courses. This Board has consistently supported the efforts of the Education Department as a critical function for prisoner's well-being and development.
- 7.3** Funding is mainly provided directly by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). Other sources of funding for Essential Skills training are in theory available from local colleges. However due to the imposition of stringent conditions by these establishments and the requirement of guarantees regarding attendance at classes, it is virtually impossible for the prison Education Department to make a successful application. The Board would hope for a more considerate and pragmatic approach from the colleges concerned. The sums of money involved are comparatively modest but nevertheless could make significant contributions to the overall objectives laid down by Government has in its policy to improve Essential Skills.
- 7.4** The Board recognises the many efforts made at educational provisions but recommends that efforts must be made to improve the promptness of attendance at classes. Again, arising problems can be attributed in many cases to the difficulties involved in the movement of prisoners and the apparent shortage of escorting staff. There also appears to be a need to update and improve the computerised system which is used in the management of prisoner movement. The Board feels that greater efforts should be made to ensure that prisoners are seated in their classes at the stipulated start time so that the teaching time is fully utilised. Also it is unproductive to have teaching staff in place waiting for their students to arrive.
- 7.5** The Board recommends that the prison continues to improve the punctuality of prisoners attending classes.
- 7.6** The Board recommends that dedicated dining areas be made available where possible.

8 | The Prison Shop

- 8.1** The Prison Shop continues to stock a wide range of goods for the prisoners. The shop also provides a service where prisoners can order equipment from specialized catalogues; these goods include CD's, DVD's and radios. When prisoners place an order for any of these items they must state the maximum price they are prepared to pay. The item is ordered and if the price is above the figure agreed, prisoners are asked to confirm if they still wish to purchase the item. On delivery of their order prisoners receive a purchase receipt.
- 8.2** Prices in the shop have remained quite stable over the year. The Board, however, still has a concern over the 'mark-up' on some key lines. Moreover, the closing of the shop at set holiday times continues to present problems. These closures can be particularly problematic for new prisoners who have marked difficulty in getting necessary items at the start of their imprisonment.
- 8.3** The Board recommends that every effort is made to price products competitively for customers who are on a very low "income" and are disadvantaged by their location.
- 8.4** The Board further recommends that the closure of the prison shop at set holiday times be reviewed.

9 | Kitchen (Food and the Prison Environment)

- 9.1** The original kitchen at HMP Maghaberry continues to provide the catering needs for the prison. This unit was built to cater for 400 inmates; however it now caters for twice that figure. This has created major operational concerns as well as concerns regarding meeting food safety and hygiene regulations. A "state of the art" new purpose built kitchen was completed and handed over in the autumn of 2008. IMB members are particularly concerned that a new build which cost many millions of pounds, which was in effect finished from the autumn, has not (during this report) been operational owing to technical difficulties.
- 9.2** Members have noted that kitchen staff are experiencing extra stress due to the current situation concerning the ongoing uncertain timing delay of the move to the new unit. Absence levels in the kitchen are still quite high and as a result the kitchen frequently functions on less than the recommended staffing levels.
- 9.3** Staff development in this unit is currently affected as the required training is not happening. This causes concern as the NIPS have an obligation to meet legal requirements in all areas of training and development. To date the NIPS have shown little interest in developing a Food Policy for Prisons.
- 9.4** The situation whereby prisoners have to eat their meals in a cell that also houses the toilet area is one that members feel to be an unsafe food environment. Furthermore, foreign nationals with limited knowledge of the English language are experiencing difficulties when making menu choices.

9 | Kitchen (Food and the Prison Environment)

- 9.5** The Board recommends that the catering operation should be moved to the new unit as soon as possible and that all catering staff are trained and developed to the required level.
- 9.6** The Board also recommends that they receive specialized training in food cultural awareness; as many foreign nationals may require food suitable to their religious needs or cultural norms.
- 9.7** The Board recommends the NIPS develop and implement a Food Policy for Prisons.

10 | Healthcare

- 10.1** There can be little debate or argument that the provision of Healthcare in a prison setting is a hugely challenging and complex area. Indeed, previous IMB reports have continued to highlight the serious difficulties faced by both prisoners and staff in providing and accessing adequate treatment and facilities.
- 10.2** Many prisoners committed to Maghaberry will have pre-existing poor health with either diagnosed or non-diagnosed illnesses and/or severe addiction to illegal or prescription drugs or alcohol. Broadly speaking, health issues can be classified as either physical or mental, and within each of these categories there are multiple areas of challenge.
- 10.3** In respect of the management of care, the long awaited transfer to the Primary Healthcare Trust place on April 1st 2002 and although it is still early in the transition stages, the ultimate outcome from the change should be the provision of a more joined up approach to health issues with continuity in the community following release from prison, as well as better access to services for those in prison. A significant feature of the management of Healthcare by the Primary Healthcare Trust will be the improved clinical governance that will allow staff to work in a more enabling and supportive environment.
- 10.4** In the area of physical health and well being, the two main areas of concern to the IMB are provision of healthcare for existing illnesses as well as the promotion of positive health. In Maghaberry, a Nursing or Health Care Officer is assigned to each house. This 'NO' or 'HCO' effectively deals with all the immediate health needs of all of the prisoners on the wing where they are based. The NO or HCO will triage prisoners in advance of the weekly 'sick parade'. At present, there are three GP's who attend the prison on a weekly basis and each house will have a Doctor in attendance once a week for about three hours. It would appear from talking to staff that this level of medical intervention is not seen to be adequate, but the Board appreciates that negotiations are underway to improve this provision.

10 | Healthcare

- 10.5** There are many areas of good practice in the prison but these are not often recognised because of pressure on the staff. When the staffing numbers were set for Maghaberry, the prisoner complement was to be around 450 men. Now this number is consistently at or above 800 prisoners with little or no adjustment having been made for staffing on the Healthcare side. It is also worth noting that out of the 800 plus prisoners in Maghaberry, almost 650 of them receive daily medication. This places a very great burden on the staff to monitor and deliver medical supplies to prisoners. Each prisoner is assessed on committal, and will be allowed to maintain up to a month's supply of his medication based on continuing assessment for self administration.
- 10.6** In the Healthcare Unit, there are numerous clinics run for the benefit of men. An effort is made to promote 'Well Man' care and clinics are run for those with asthma, diabetes and other chronic illnesses. A Podiatrist is in attendance daily, as is a Dentist and Dental Assistant. There is also a Palliative care team in the prison to assist those with a terminal illness or severe mobility issues.
- 10.7** Of growing concern in Maghaberry is the growing population of older male prisoners. There are now 25 men who are over 65, and their health will need to be monitored more closely than those in a younger age cohort. Health care conditions in prisons do not resemble those in the community in any way, and cognisance has to be taken of this fact. Exercise is limited as is access to fresh air and other forms of mental stimulation. The result of this is that the ageing process can be accelerated and conditions such as arthritis, dementia and heart disease are more prevalent and more pronounced. Although there are downstairs cells in Bush and Roe house, there is otherwise only one disabled cell in Maghaberry prison. All other cells are up two flights of stairs and are inaccessible to prisoners on Zimmer frames or wheelchairs.
- 10.8** The Board recommends that support is given to the Nursing Team in the Healthcare Unit to effectively monitor and support prisoners in the older age range.
- 10.9** The Board recommends that a needs analysis of prisoners with mobility challenges is undertaken and provision made for level access cells.
- 10.10** In addition to the number of prisoners with physical health concerns and pre-existing conditions, there are a significant number of prisoners with mental health issues. There appears to be some debate as to the types of numbers of prisoners with mental health issues, so it might be useful for the Board to try and break this down into the environmental reactions prisoners will have that effect their general mental health in addition to the more serious types of severe and enduring mental health problems that some prisoners will have.

10 | Healthcare

- 10.11** Being detained in prison can be a distressing time for many prisoners, and there are significant numbers who will attempt self-harm and indeed carry through to suicide while in Prison. A further section of this report will look more closely at Prisoners at Risk, but we feel that some efforts should be made to provide some elements of distraction for those at risk. Ironically, it is often the prisoner who has poor coping skills that will have his television or radio removed, thereby further excluding and isolating him and potentially increasing the risk of harm.
- 10.12** The Board recommends that a pro-active approach is taken with vulnerable mental health patients and they are allowed some form of distraction where requested.
- 10.13** The prisoners with more serious mental health issues such as schizophrenia continue to pose a custody problem for the Northern Ireland Prison Service. As we have noted in the past, there is no High Secure facility for prisoners with severe and enduring mental health problems in Northern Ireland. Carstairs State Hospital is the provider of this level of care, and it is to state the obvious that this is not a suitable geographical solution. It is well recognised that family links are critical in the stability of such prisoners, and moving them across the water to a remote hospital is not an effective solution.
- 10.14** The Board appreciates that the timeframe for the implementation of the Bamford Review (2007) may be up to 10 years, but we feel that the provision of appropriate care for prisoners with severe and enduring mental issues should remain at the top of the agenda.



11 | Life Sentenced Prisoners

- 11.1** Maghaberry prison is the only category A high security prison in Northern Ireland. All life sentenced prisoners are held in different house blocks throughout the prison complex, A small number of prisoners who have worked through from Category A to C and who are coming to the end of their sentence are held at the Prisoner Assessment Unit located at the Crumlin Road in Belfast.
- 11.2** However, the practice of housing short term prisoners in houses with life sentenced prisoners is still the norm. Again the Board expresses concern that this is having a major adverse affect on those life sentenced prisoners housed under these conditions. Furthermore, the Board remains concerned at the lack of constructive work for prisoners in Wilson and Martin houses. This was highlighted in last years report; and if anything the position has deteriorated in this reporting year. The absence of work programmes and training leaves a gap in progressing life sentenced prisoners to hopefully lead a normal life in society. The Board recommends that this issue is addressed without further delay.
- 11.3** The Board recommends that the structure of the life sentenced prisoners day reflects life as it is on the 'outside'. It is clearly not customary in wider society that lunch time is a two hour break with prisoners going back to bed at this time, as they have been used doing in the main prison complex.

12 | Prisoners Assessment Unit

- 12.1** It is with regret that the Board must report the fact that in this reporting year on average one life sentenced prisoner has been returned every month to the main Maghaberry complex. The Board asks the prison authorities to take note of how their assessments of prisoners progressing to this stage of their sentence has failed. The fact that prisoners are being returned in such large numbers makes it even more difficult for prisoners when finally released to reintegrate back into society.

13 | Vulnerable Prisoners

- 13.1** The humane and therapeutic management of vulnerable prisoners poses one of the most demanding challenges facing the Northern Ireland Prison Service. To be vulnerable is to be capable of being physically or emotionally wounded or injured, or to be open to successful attack. Vulnerable prisoners therefore need appropriate help, support and protection. For some prisoners their vulnerability may be short-lived and episodic; sadly others will require ongoing and consistent intervention. How to provide such support to make appropriate judgements and to respond therapeutically and compassionately is a mammoth and complex task. Current provision within Maghaberry includes Glen House, the R.E.A.C.H. Landing, the Hospital and occasionally SSU.
- 13.2** Glen House cares primarily for prisoners who need to be segregated from other prisoners for their own safety, though often others with enduring and intractable difficulties, linked with a mental health diagnosis, are accommodated here as well. In general this landing works well, evidencing a happy atmosphere and is manned by staff who display good interpersonal skills. Staff generally seem to engage positively with the prisoners, are reasonably well acquainted with their family backgrounds and circumstances and are usually proactive in noticing, addressing and managing any potential difficulties before they escalate. Most prisoners placed here appear content. Unfortunately there are limitations in the closed regime which militate against personal progress and development - particularly in relation to work and education. The Board would like to see efforts made to remedy this so that by default vulnerable prisoners are not prevented from achieving and progressing. At times, within the last reporting year, Glen House has not always operated at maximum capacity, and the Board feels that there are other prisoners who could have benefited from this environment.
- 13.3** The Reach Landing, when it was set up, was aimed at those prisoners described as “poor copers” or who demonstrated symptoms commonly associated with personality disorder or other classifiable mental illnesses. Many of the prisoners housed in this landing present with fluctuating levels of distress and have poor communication and interpersonal skills. Staff on this landing need to be highly motivated and to display proactive engagement skills. Despite an auspicious start, the Reach Landing did not sustain its original ethos, focus and intervention. More aspirational than a reality, the programmes of activity and therapy are limited and often do not take place as planned. Whilst prisoners have reported to the IMB of the benefits they gained from the yoga classes, the gardening opportunities and occupational therapy activities, provision is all too frequently sparse and unimaginative. Landing staff appear to lack direction and guidance; unsure what to do and how to go about it.

13 | Vulnerable Prisoners

13.4 To work effectively with vulnerable prisoners, who have a limited empathy and whose behaviour and presentation fall outside the norm, can also be emotionally challenging and draining for staff. Thus to work positively and therapeutically with vulnerable prisoners requires robust training, supervision akin to that provided in clinical settings, and the opportunity for reflective practice and debriefing. This can best be achieved by multi-disciplinary training and co-working - by ongoing monitoring and support from experienced and practised staff members. The Board recommends that a wider and more comprehensive range of training opportunities are available to staff including the participation in courses run by Further and Higher Education Colleges.

14 | PAR 1 and Suicide Prevention

14.1 Whilst procedures and guidelines are in place to address this, tragically they have not always been followed appropriately. Too often it has been the expectation that prisoners should be able to identify their own needs and bring them to the Authority's attention. Instead, staff need to be more alert to prisoners' needs and engage at a "feeling" level, helping them articulate their fears, anxieties and worries. Board holds that action at a crisis point is simply not good enough. Preventative measures must be implemented by staff that are capable of recognising and responding appropriately. The Board recommends that staff with specific caring and nurturing skills and aptitudes be deployed to work with vulnerable prisoners.

14.2 The Board waits to be informed by the events of recent deaths in custody.



15 | Alcohol and Substance Abuse

- 15.1** There is no denying that Maghaberry, as with many other prisons, faces a huge challenge from drug and alcohol abuse within its walls. Previous IMB reports have repeatedly highlighted the attendant problems faced by both staff and prisoners. While the Board fully acknowledges the efforts made at all levels by prison staff and management to cope with these problems it feels that greater efforts could be made to reduce the levels of drugs coming into the prison
- 15.2** Greater efforts could also be made to reduce the dependency upon drugs by prisoners in their care by the introduction of increased enhancements for drug-free prisoners and the maintenance of drug-free landings.

16 | Special Supervision Unit

- 16.1** Maintenance of good order and discipline is an essential part of prison life and prisoners are transferred to the Special Supervision Unit (SSU) if they behave in a manner which threatens this. One of the primary functions of the SSU is therefore to deal with disciplinary breaches. It accommodates prisoners who have been awarded periods of cellular confinement as a result of adjudication and those who will, it is hoped, benefit from a “cooling off” period following some altercation. The ethos of the unit and its regime are designed to act as a deterrent and present a less attractive option to normal prison life. In addition to having a deterrent effect it is hoped that confinement in the SSU provides prisoners with an opportunity to reflect on their negative behaviours and to consider the need to address these on return to wider prison society.
- 16.2** The other principal function of the SSU is to house prisoners who require separation for their own safety and protection or for the protection of others, for example where bullying is involved. This is permitted under Rule 32 of Prison rules where, not only ‘for the maintenance of good order or discipline’ but where it is necessary in a prisoner’s ‘own interests’, the association permitted to him can be restricted. Unfortunately, at times prisoners do not always accept that the confinement is in their own interest. Prisoners held in this way remain in the Progressive Regime and Earned Privileges (PREPS) system and continue to receive weekly reports and may progress or regress as necessary. This is in contrast to those prisoners serving Cellular Confinement or held under Rule 35(4) (which lasts no longer than 48 hours) who do not retain privileges appropriate to their regime level.

16 | Special Supervision Unit

- 16.3** There is little doubt that at times staff within the SSU are presented with extreme and highly challenging behaviours and attitudes. Many prisoners found in the SSU are those who find conforming to the usual prison regime more demanding and difficult than most; indeed many also display symptoms more commonly associated with personality disorders and specific learning and behavioural difficulties. Faced with a disproportionate degree of non compliance and aggression requires staff to balance their duty of care with the need to control and protect. The Board recognises that to handle such individuals properly requires specialised training which goes beyond contain and control techniques. The Board therefore recommends that staff should receive more specialised training in coping with and understanding these individuals.
- 16.4** As in past years, the Board continues to make the SSU a priority, with those members on Rota duties being obliged to visit on a weekly basis. This enables prisoners a regular opportunity to speak with IMB members and have their views and opinions listened to at first hand. Feedback from staff is also encouraged. Members are also able to closely monitor the living conditions and physical circumstances of prisoners.
- 16.5** The SSU is also the place where adjudications are held. IMB members make every effort to attend as many adjudications as possible and seek to satisfy themselves that procedures have been followed and the decision to restrict association, etc are reasonable. Throughout the year members have been impressed with the conduct of adjudications and the care and respect shown by adjudicating Governors to prisoners faced with disciplinary charges. IMB members also attend the initial case conferences leading to the signing of Rule 32s and subsequent case conferences where extensions of the Rule 32 are considered. Where it is not possible to attend, members will satisfy themselves as soon as possible thereafter that procedures have been followed and that the application of Rule 32 has been reasonable in the prevailing circumstances.
- 16.6** Overall the Board continues to note improvements and developments in the operation of the SSU both in the physical environment and in the interpersonal exchanges between staff and prisoners.
- 16.7** The Board has no specific new recommendations to make in relation to the SSU itself. However, the Board again recommends a timely forwarding of all Rule 32 paper work to the Boards Secretariat within 24 hours along with HQ comments shortly after signing of the Rule.
- 16.8** In addition the Board again recommends that the recommendations of the Rule 32 working group be acted upon as a priority.

Appendix

MAGHABERRY BOARD MEMBERS

Mr James McAllister **(Chair)**
Mr Dennis Constable **(Vice Chair)**
Mrs Lilian Jennett **(Training Officer)**
Mr Jack Walls
Dr Michael Boyle
Ms Vicky Boland
Mr Louis Brennan
Mrs Charlotte Beck
Mr Henry Harding
Ms Clare McCarty
Mr Noel McKenna
Mr Christopher Noel Quinn
Mrs Patricia McCusker
Mrs Myrtle Elliott
Ms Sheila Fitzgerald
Mr George Bratty



