Justice Committee

Inquiry into purposeful activity in prisons

Written submission from Dumfries Prison Visiting Committee

1. *What is meant by ‘purposeful activity’ and how can this be measured*

Purposeful activity as the name implies is activity in which all participants place value on the outcome and are not only committed but are seen to be committed.

2. *The extent to which prisoners have an opportunity to engage in purposeful activity*

Here in Dumfries we have a multitude of purposeful activities and all inmates are actively encouraged to participate.

3. *What are the perceived benefits of purposeful activity and whether there are any examples of best practice*

By participating in the available activities, prisoners can regain their self confidence, feel they are being treated as individuals and feel that they have an identity. Many gain certification which in most cases this is the first time in their life. Many of the sex offenders are sent to Dumfries because they will not participate in sex offender programmes, the staff here perform an excellent job in encouraging them and in a lot of cases are successful in getting these prisoners to participate.

4. *What barriers may exist to prevent prisoners engaging in such activities*

We are not aware of any barriers, except for those prisoners who are only serving a very short sentence, other than a psychological one and the staff perform and excellent job in encouraging inmates to overcome this.

5. *Whether access to purposeful activities is consistent across the prison estate*

As far as is humanly possible access is consistent across the estate but with the above exceptions.

6. *Whether access to such activity can be improved*

As a committee we are fully aware that Staff and management are continually looking for ways to improve activities and as late as last week the committee were given a presentation on Dumfries Prison Regime Revision 2012-2014

Phil Hughes MBE
DPVC Chairman
23 January 2013