



Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies International Event at Wheatfield Prison

Over the past two years, Ireland's prison-based Community Based Health and First Aid has received international acclaim with an award from the World Health Organisation in 2011 for this prison health initiative as well as the Irish Innovation Awards in 2012. The programme has now been shortlisted for the 2012 Irish Medical Times award.

On Thursday 11th October 2012, the Director General Mr Micheal Donnellan opened an international event hosted at Wheatfield Prison. Special guests were representatives of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies of 37 countries in Europe as well as some from the Far East. There was also representation from the headquarters of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva. The delegates were in Ireland to attend the Red Cross/Red Crescent First Aid Education in Europe Network (FAEEN) meeting which is being hosted in Ireland from 11th -13th October.

The Irish Red Cross was represented by the Secretary General Mr Donal Forde and the City of Dublin VEC by its CEO Ms Jacinta Stewart. There were also representatives of Governors, chiefs, nurses and teachers from many of the prisons undertaking the programme. The purpose of this event was show case Ireland's Community Based Health & First Aid in Action programme to these visiting countries who are now interested in how this award winning programme could work in prisons in their own countries.

Inmate volunteers from Mountjoy, the Training Unit, Dochas Centre, Cloverhill, Shelton Abbey and Wheatfield presented examples of first aid skills and a wide range of health projects that they are undertaking as Irish Red Cross volunteers in their own prisons. At the end of the presentations, delegates were invited to visit the individual display stands of each prison and talk to the volunteers, their Governors, chiefs, nurses and teachers.

Opening the event the Director General of the Irish Prison Service, Michael Donnellan said that he recognised the importance of the project and acknowledged the important changes that it had already brought about in prison health. **“The Irish Prison Service (IPS) is going through a period of change where its strategic goals and aims will make a dramatic change to how custodial care is administered in Ireland and the programme fits very well into these with its community and voluntary service focus”** said the Director General. “

“The partnership between the Irish Prison Service, the Irish Red Cross and the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee began in June 2009 when the pilot Community Based Health and First Aid in Action approach to prison community health was introduced here at Wheatfield Prison. Since then it has been rolled out to five other prisons during 2010/12 and is set to start in Cork, Portlaoise, St Patricks and Castlerea Prisons in 2013. It is hoped that all fourteen prisons in Ireland will be operating the Programme by the end of 2014” he added.

The event was a resounding success and the volunteers from all prisons were well received by the international delegates who were amazed by the skills, knowledge and dedicated work being undertaken by them in the name of the Red Cross in Ireland.

Ends

For further information contact the press office at 043 3335203 or 087 6674284