



**Seirbhís Phríosúin
na hÉireann**
Irish Prison Service

	Annual report	Year - 2022
Chaplain	Debbie Moore Borland	
Institution	Shelton Abbey	

1. Director General

2. Governor

I am pleased to submit the Chaplaincy Annual Report for Shelton Abbey 2022. This is required under Prison Rules 2007. **119.** (1)

This report covers the period from January to December 2022. My hours are 18.5 hours per week which takes place over 3 days, mainly Sundays, Mondays, and Tuesdays. My main focus is advocacy and pastoral care, which is 'person centered', cultivating a supportive professional non-judgmental pastoral relationship, with staff, inmates and their families. During the past twelve months I continue to develop a positive pastoral stance with all inmates, staff and other services. I am hugely encouraged by the regular stream of both staff and inmates and families seeking support, and feel privileged to meet and offer pastoral support through compassionate empathetic listening to their human story, empowering them to look at alternative options. Confidentiality is central to chaplaincy ministry and I appreciate how well this is respected by all.

Section 1- General Commentary

Shelton Abbey is a highly dynamic environment with a demand for Chaplaincy and a volume of Chaplaincy work which requires the provision of a full-time Chaplain position. Throughout this Report the contribution of Chaplaincy to delivering on strategic aims of the Irish Prison Service - including Staff Support, Prisoner Support, Care and Rehabilitation, Safety, Humane Custody - is reflected across a wide range of Chaplaincy provision which mirrors the depth and intensity of Chaplaincy provision in an open center. Shelton Abbey differs from the majority of other prisons within the remit of the Irish Prison Service, due to the fact that it is an open prison, as such the nature and role of Chaplaincy also has to adapt and expand to provide for the unique needs of both residents, their families and the staff. One of the characteristics of the Chaplaincy's ministry is the model of 'Cura Personalis,' care for the individual personas as well as working out of the operative theology - meeting people **where they are at**, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically.

Shelton Abbey has a capacity for 115 inmates, which is broadly divided into two groups. The 'lifers' are housed in individual rooms in the Avoca house while, the more temporary residents occupy shared dormitories within the main building. These two groups have

vastly differing needs within what is already a unique environment where the main focus is on rehabilitation and preparation for reintegration into mainstream society.

Section 2. Provision of Chaplaincy Services

In Shelton Abbey my part time role is multi-faceted and goes far beyond just looking after the religious and spiritual needs of the inmates, families and staff. Chaplains keep faith with the basic goodness of human beings and seek the development of human potential. We seek to mend broken family relationships and build confidence in people in prison who we see have a significant contribution to make in the healing of our society

Pastoral Present/Empathic/ Reflective Listening/Supports

This takes up the main time of my role with inmates, families and staff. A confidential space, it helps promote healing and well-being.

Liturgies and services continue to be held and facilitated every Sunday morning. I take two Sunday morning's services a month to facilitate Christian contemplation and host other ministers alternately. The unavailability of priests is an ongoing concern, owing to the decline of clergy and their availability. I am grateful to those who made themselves available when possible. However, the lack of space to hold liturgies services is a problem and using the dining room is unfit for purpose and proving to be difficult.

Music events continue to be a therapeutic/spiritual benefit and a healing process. This was evident throughout our liturgical year and our open day in July, which saw over a 1,000 people visit Shelton Abbey. These events can help reduce anxiety, relieve stress, instill in inmates hope for the future, build up self-esteem, result in less self-harm, and assist in building up positive relationships within the community of Shelton, family and friends.

Darkness into Light annual event – In solidarity with the wider communities, this 5.00am run/walk, is very well supported by staff and inmates, for Pieta House.

The bereavement workshop was well attended. It helped participants to understand the process of their grief and explored ways to support their painful journey, becoming aware of their impact of personal loss and the importance of self-care.

Trauma Informed Mindfulness Based Yoga.

Most incarcerated people have a history of complex, interpersonal trauma. With support, this unresolved trauma can be addressed. Hence, I have invited a Trauma Yoga teacher, (trained by the Prison Yoga Project) to work with inmates once a week. This programme has proven to be a valuable support, specifically, to the 'lifers'. The aim is to respond to

the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of individuals who have previously undergone trauma or are currently in a traumatic situation.

Mindfulness-MBSR

This programme is new to Shelton and is a practical and experiential introduction to a variety of mindfulness practices. As well as other mental benefits, this program can help with self-acceptance, self-compassion and relate kindness to others.

Meetings

The weekly Multi-D-Meetings continue to be a source of helpful communication in which I give input on how the inmates are doing. The chopping and changing of TR for Shelton Abbey is not explicit enough and depending on HR personal, the criteria can alternate. I also attend the Management meetings and reviews meetings.

I am thankful to the number of communities who has supported the men by their various services and the donation of various gifts throughout 2022.

c. National

I welcome the support of my Chaplaincy colleagues and the Head Chaplain. The role of Head Chaplain is essential for the co-ordination, supervision and development of Chaplaincy across the State while also developing relationships with external stakeholders.

I am grateful to IPS for Supervision. Supervision gives the Chaplain reflective time to unpack the experiences and become centered and solid, even when facing difficult situations, hence, enhancing the ministry in Shelton Abbey.

Issues which continue to be relevant from previous Annual Reports.

Again, I reiterate the different landscapes we work out of in the IPS. This is evident at meetings where the needs of the Open Center are very different as are the type of Chaplain Services required.

I welcome the limited presence of the clinical psychologist in Shelton Abbey. However, the absence of fulltime Psychology Service is highlighted when a vulnerable inmate voices their emotional needs and sometimes suicidal thoughts, with the result being that the only option left to Management, is to have them moved to a closed prison for their own safety where they **possibly** may be met by the Psychology Service. This appears to defeat the purpose of inmates being moved to an Open Centre to further their rehabilitation. It also disrupts the huge work which inmates have put in to earn a place in Shelton Abbey which then is interrupted by their return to a closed prison. The perception of being sent back to a closed prison as a punishment is a reality which is also present in any such prisoner movement and this adds to an already difficult situation.

The inmates deemed 'statutory barred', is concerning, as they have not been afforded the opportunity to re-integrate back into society, not only for themselves and families but for society. Many of them feel in limbo when it comes to their sentence management and families feel powerless.

'Lifers' being released are also suffering from extreme anxiety and need considerable supports especially when trying to re-engage with society. Changes in expectations from the parole board and external Irish Prison Service management in terms of progression through release, temporary release, availability for work or community service release have led to huge anxiety issues and tension among residents. The inconsistencies in expectations and the changes in regulations provide great challenges for residents, their families and for staff who have to deal with the consequence of these inconsistencies. While Chaplaincy strives to assist residents in managing expectations and dealing with the consequences of these changes, it is an unnecessary factor which leads to disruption and tension within the community

Although the conditions at Shelton Abbey are a vast improvement on a closed prison and in general greatly appreciated by the residents, it is nonetheless a huge transition coming from a closed prison with rigid structure and discipline to an open prison, where residents are expected to adapt to an unfamiliar lack of routine, and to quickly develop the skills needed for this transition period of their time in custody. This is a crucial time for many, and how their time is spent in Shelton Abbey will often reflect the outcome and the subsequent success of their release. Therefore, this differs to the atmosphere and activities in a closed prison, giving me cause to question the sameness of IPS policies currently applied in what are very different settings and objectives.

Furthermore, Physical family visits are key to this in helping inmates strengthen existing bonds with their family and with the world outside of prison. The open spaces available on the grounds of Shelton Abbey presents opportunities to develop safe visiting spaces which would be in addition to what is already available and allow for meaningful visits to take place safely: I.e., a Visiting Centre. In the current IPS Strategic Plan there is a commitment under Priority 3 (Safe and Secure Custody 3.2.2) to review policies in relation to Open Centers, which to the best of my knowledge has not happened?

Restorative Practice

While a slow burner, I continue the exploration of restorative practice as one of the many valid alternatives to imprisonment. Consequently, I have begun a process with some inmates who are developing capacity to regulate and recognise and communicate feelings. For some, it's the first time for them to tell their story in a non-judgemental environment and perhaps to hear it for themselves. However, there is a perception, if they pursue this further, it will prolong their sentence. With the right supports, I believe Shelton Abbey is a place where Restorative Practice can be cultivated and new awareness of what is involved can be seeded.

As a prison chaplain I witness at first hand the effects of imprisonment on the people who are incarcerated in our prison institutions and their families. I am aware also of the long-term effects of imprisonment on people as they begin the process of re-integration on release. I continue to engage with inmates when they are released back into society.

I believe we can learn from the Finland model and that Shelton Abbey is a good news story for the IPS. Perhaps, Shelton Abbey as *'Open prison, could be seen as a secure social world in which offenders have the opportunity to develop constructive interpersonal relationships with one another, with staff, and with people from the free world. This creates a sense of acceptance in the convict's perception of the outside world and positively reshapes his self-definition.'* Ekunwe (2007: 143). It has the potential!

I would like to congratulate IPS for their support in the ongoing development of Chaplaincy. I would also like to acknowledge the support and the valuable work that is done by the Governor, Assistance Governor, Chief, Staff, Probation Services, the Education Services and the Addiction Counsellor.

I confirm I have complied with the Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation when drafting this report.

Yours sincerely,

Debbie Moore Borland

Chaplain

Date: 2nd May 2023

