

Children Detention Schools Update

Summer 2007



Irish Youth Justice Service
Seirbhís na hÍdearnán um Gceardas I leith an Áraoí Oig

National Manager of Detention School Services takes up her post

Personal Message

My name is Mary Geaney, and I took up the post at the end of February.

Since then I have been very busy visiting the schools, meeting staff from all disciplines, and getting to know the issues in each of the schools. I have also been meeting with other key stakeholders in Health, Education and the Probation Service. There is a lot of work to do planning for future developments, and I look forward to working with many colleagues on these initiatives. Having lived and worked in the UK for the past 15 years, there is a lot to learn and re-learn about working in Ireland, but this adds to the excitement of the job.



The Children Act, 2001 provides us all with a huge opportunity to build on existing good practice, as well as develop new policies, procedures and programmes that will deliver for the children who come to us through the Courts. It is important to remember that we are dealing with children. It is also important to remember that a children's detention school has a particular role to fulfil for the State. At a recent meeting, Minister Lenihan highlighted the need to achieve a balance between child care and juvenile justice policies. We have a responsibility to the children who are detained, as well as a responsibility to ensure the services we offer promote their positive reintegration back into their communities. It is important that victims of crime have confidence in the programmes we deliver to address offending behaviour – these programmes will help reduce the risk of re-offending when these children return to their communities. This means a diverse approach to children's care and education. It means we need to strengthen, further develop and improve on the range of services which are currently available.

We all have a complex mix of duties, responsibilities, interests and relationships to deal with on a day to day basis. Added to our normal business, there is the need to change and the associated pressures which this can bring. We all know that change can pose both a challenge and an opportunity for each of us – I hope that the experience of change which will be provided through the IYJS will be a positive one for each of you. During the past ten weeks, I have been greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm and interest shown at all levels across the four schools.

The IYJS is committed to having a regular presence across the schools – you will get to know us personally over the coming months. I hope you will consider this direct access to my staff and myself as a positive development. We will be listening, consulting, seeking advice on the change programme – and there will be occasions when we will have to make decisions with which some colleagues may disagree. We will take every opportunity to deliver on our commitments.

I would like to formally acknowledge the success of the events in Finglas and the Oberstown Campus which were held to mark the management changeover of the schools on 1 March 2007.

I conclude by thanking everyone for their cooperation to date, and look forward to our on-going working relationship.

Mary



Pictured left to right — John Lynch, Board of Management, Patricia Flynn, Oberstown Girls School, Minister for Children Brian Lenihan TD., Brian Hogan, Oberstown Boys School and Ned Ryan, Board of Management.

Minister Lenihan was on the Oberstown Campus on 1 March 2007 to mark the change-over of the detention schools from the Dept. of Education and Science to the Irish Youth Justice Service.

New Legislative Environment

“It shall be the principal object of children detention schools to provide appropriate educational, training and other programmes and facilities for children referred to them by a court and ...to promote their reintegration into society and prepare them to take their place in the community...”

Extract from Section 158, Children Act 2001, as amended

Events were held in both the Oberstown Campus and at Finglas to mark the commencement of the outstanding aspects of the Children Act 2001, as amended, on 1 March 2007. These aspects include Part 10, which is concerned with the detention of children, and the full range of community sanctions which are available for the first time.

The children detention school model is now on a statutory footing and the concept of the industrial and the reformatory school has been done away with. The Act sets out clear goals for children detention schools which follow the education and care ethos. Some of the important changes are:

Girls up to 18 years old

Since 1 March, girls up to the age of 18 years who offend may only be detained in Oberstown Girls School. This is a very important legislative change, as it means that girls can no longer be detained in adult prison service facilities. A small number of girls aged 16 and 17 have been remanded or committed to the school to date. The IYJS is actively working with staff in Oberstown Girls School to open the Fourth Unit on the Oberstown Campus. We have had many meetings to consult with staff to re-commission the Unit – the modifications made will ensure improved accommodation for girls.

Sentencing

The legislative changes introduced have led to shorter sentences being available to the Courts which they have begun to avail of. It is early days yet but it is likely that we will see a much wider range of sentences being used by the Courts. Sentences since 1 March have ranged from two months to two years. The IYJS and the schools will closely monitor the trends to ensure that appropriate supports are quickly put in place to address any consistent change emerging from the trends.

A more detailed outline of all the changes which have recently come into force is enclosed with this bulletin.

Competition.

We are seeking suggestions for a name for the Fourth Unit, and the deadline for submission of names is 30 June. Suggestions welcome by post or email to the IYJS to usual contacts on the back page of this Newsletter.

Financial and Staff Audit

Raymond Kamanga is completing the process of a financial systems audit and staffing review across all four children detention schools. The purpose of this review is to give accurate information on the systems, procedures, staff numbers and grades to the IYJS – this report will assist us in planning for the future and the work is very near completion. It will be essential reading to enable the IYJS and the schools to work together in devising and implementing improvements to our structures across the schools. The time and effort put in by the administration staff, unit managers and management teams has been of immense assistance and is greatly appreciated.

Directors' Forum

The National Manager of Detention School Services has taken up her post and will chair a Directors' Forum – this consists of the four Directors and representatives of the IYJS. The Directors' Forum had its first meeting on 23 April and a number of working groups in the areas of data collection and policy issues are already being established. The IYJS is committed to working closely with the children detention schools to identify and bring about improvements in policy and practice where they are required. We see the Directors' Forum and associated working groups as one of the channels through which we can achieve positive developments in the system. It will also provide the opportunity to ensure effective communication.

Youth Justice Package Announced

Detention is just one element of the youth justice system. To ensure that it is genuinely a measure of last resort for a young person in trouble, the IYJS is involved in strengthening the other strands of the system, in particular, Garda Diversion and Community alternatives to detention. On 19 April, Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan TD, announced a package of new measures to enhance the delivery of coordinated services for young offenders. The measures included approval for 75 new posts for the Probation Service and the IYJS; an increase in the number of Juvenile Liaison Officers by 28; and approval for the appointment of three new District Court Judges to work exclusively in the Children Court. The new package of measures is designed to enhance the non-custodial responses to youth offending and provide improved supports to children.



**A new day begins — Change-over on 1 March 2007 being marked at
Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre.**

Pictured left to right — Liam Hughes, Dept. of Education and Science, Sylva Langford, Office of the Minister for Children, Michelle Shannon, National Director — Irish Youth Justice Service, Sean Aylward, Secretary General — Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Colette Walsh, Director — Finglas Child & Adolescent Centre, Jacinta Steward, Co. Dublin VEC, and Mary Geaney, Irish Youth Justice Service

Capital Projects – Updates

The IYJS has met with each of the schools to establish our protocols regarding capital projects. A number of proposals for minor works and purchases have been received and, where possible, these have been moved on to the quotes stage of the process. For this year all capital purchases are being paid directly by the IYJS on behalf of the schools. The day to day procurement is still being managed at local level, in partnership with the IYJS for items over €5,000. A mechanical and structural audit of all building stock is currently being carried out on the Oberstown Campus in order to better inform decisions on prioritising capital works. On completion, a similar audit will be carried out in Finglas. Work on the overall development of children detention school facilities is ongoing and developments will be reported on in future bulletins. In the meantime, the position in relation to more specific projects is as follows:



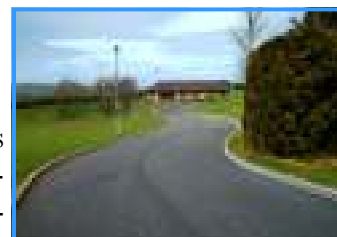
Swimming Pool

As you may know the swimming pool at the Oberstown Campus has been out of action for a number of years and the Minister for Children expressed an interest in getting it back in use. The advice obtained by the IYJS has indicated that it would be better value for money to build a new facility rather than repair the existing pool area. The IYJS is considering the options in light of this advice.

Finglas Roof and Fence



In the Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre work on repairs to the roof continues at pace which was due to be completed before the end of May, weather permitting. The long running saga of an internal system of fencing to expand the secure area for use as a recreation facility is moving forward and has reached the tender stage.



Fourth Unit

The reconfiguration of the Fourth Unit for use by Oberstown Girls School is moving on: the IYJS is in the process of commissioning adaptation works and staff in Oberstown Girls School have identified the equipment, furniture and fittings to be sourced. The IYJS appreciates the time and effort contributed by the management and staff of Oberstown Girls School in moving this project forward and the ongoing assistance of Trinity House School during this process.

The last word....

The end of the school year is nearly upon us. The IYJS would like to thank the teaching staff in all the schools for their commitment and dedication during the year. And for anyone - children or staff - facing into exams this summer - we would like to wish you the best of luck!!

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