



A REVIEW INTO THE OPERATION OF CARE AND SUPERVISION UNITS IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE

FEBRUARY 2022

WHAT ARE CARE AND SUPERVISION UNITS (CSUs) AND WHO IS HELD THERE?

CSUs are dedicated units in Northern Ireland's prisons where prisoners are segregated for their own safety, the safety of others, for breaking Prison Rules or because they are suspected of having drugs or other illicit items. Some people held in CSUs have severe mental disorders, vulnerabilities or complex needs that make them particularly challenging for staff to care for.

WHERE ARE THEY?

- ▶ The CSUs are at Maghaberry and Magilligan Prisons. A third shared unit at Hydebank Wood accommodated women from Ash House Women's Prison and young men at Hydebank Wood Secure College at the time of the review.

WHY REVIEW THE CSUs AND WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- ▶ CJI's Chief Inspector agreed to a request to carry out the review after significant concerns were raised with the Minister of Justice about the operation of CSUs in the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS).
- ▶ There are United Nations (UN) Standard Minimum Rules (known as the *Mandela Rules*) and accepted *Expectations* for the treatment and care of segregated prisoners that apply including access to health care and purposeful activity, such as learning, skills and physical activity.
- ▶ A team of Inspectors from CJI, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and the Education and Training Inspectorate were involved. Inspectors from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons reviewed the draft report.

WHAT DID YOU LOOK AT?

- ▶ We looked at how each CSU operated and the oversight and governance arrangements in place.
- ▶ We visited each CSU, we examined current and historic electronic and paper information, records and journals. We also viewed a sample of available CCTV and body worn camera footage.
- ▶ We spoke to staff at all levels in the NIPS including Prison Officers and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) staff working in the CSUs and education and training staff in each prison. We talked to prisoners held, or previously held, in the CSU about their treatment, care and experiences; stakeholders and service providers.

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WHAT DID YOU CONCLUDE FROM THE EVIDENCE GATHERED?

- ▶ The regime experienced by some CSU prisoners did not meet the UN Standard Minimum Rules. Some prisoners were spending too long in their cells without meaningful human contact and their regime amounted to solitary confinement.
- ▶ There was ineffective oversight of each CSU by senior leadership that led to an inconsistent approach to prisoner care and treatment that hampered opportunities to improve outcomes for prisoners.
- ▶ Some men and women with severe mental disorders were living in the CSUs.
- ▶ Inspectors met impressive and committed Prison Officers and health care staff. The NIPS need to develop appropriate staff selection and training to support Prison Officers.
- ▶ The regime, facilities and opportunities for purposeful activity in the CSUs were limited and the COVID-19 pandemic had led to further restrictions. Opportunities for prisoners to engage with others had become heavily dependent on prison and health care staff.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE?

Inspectors have made three strategic and 11 operational recommendations for improvement including:

At strategic (leadership) level:

- ▶ the development of a NIPS strategy and action plan for the effective operation of CSUs that enables the delivery of quality services and achievement of UN Standard Minimum Rules and *Expectations* for segregated prisoners;
- ▶ better arrangements to ensure prisoners suffering from severe mental health disorders are cared for and treated in a secure in-patient mental health or learning disability hospital; and
- ▶ improved purposeful activity provision for men and women held in CSUs including education and training opportunities and physical activity that is proactively encouraged and facilitated.

At an operational (on the ground) level:

- ▶ improvements to the CSU environment and facilities; and
- ▶ an IT solution that supports better record keeping and information sharing.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO SEE HAPPENING NOW?

- ▶ The NIPS, SEHSCT and education partners beginning work straight away to implement the review recommendations and improve conditions and outcomes for prisoners in CSUs.

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