



# AN INSPECTION OF APPROVED PREMISES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

November 2013

Criminal Justice Inspection  
Northern Ireland  
*a better justice system for all*





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November 2013



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## List of abbreviations

<b>ACE</b>	Assessment, Case Management and Evaluation process
<b>APs</b>	Approved Premises
<b>CJI</b>	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
<b>DoJ</b>	Department of Justice
<b>HMI Probation</b>	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
<b>MUST</b>	Mid-Ulster South Tyrone Association for Single Homeless
<b>NIHE</b>	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
<b>NIPS</b>	Northern Ireland Prison Service
<b>PAU</b>	Prisoner Assessment Unit
<b>PBNI</b>	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
<b>PBSW</b>	Presbyterian Board of Social Witness
<b>PPANI</b>	Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland
<b>PSNI</b>	Police Service of Northern Ireland
<b>RoSH</b>	Risk of Serious Harm
<b>SCNI</b>	Simon Community Northern Ireland
<b>SOPO</b>	Sexual Offences Prevention Order
<b>VCS</b>	Voluntary and Community Sector

**Approved Premises** Definition: *'Hostels which receive NIHE Supporting People funding specifically for offenders, allocate bedspaces for criminal justice referrals and apply PBNI Standards.'*



# Chief Inspector's Foreword

This is the second full inspection Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) has conducted of the Approved Premises (APs) in Northern Ireland, and adds to short unannounced inspections which we have conducted annually since 2008.

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The importance of the APs' role cannot be underestimated, both in terms of their contribution to the public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland, and in providing support for the rehabilitation of offenders. One of the most significant findings of this inspection has been to tangibly demonstrate that offenders reduce their risk levels while living in APs.

The inspection confirms that the criminal justice agencies, especially the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) give this issue significant priority. Their involvement has helped raise standards, and they support APs' staff to manage offenders more effectively.

We found that the level of cooperation between the voluntary organisations which run the APs and the statutory agencies is a model of best practice, and evidence of effective partnership arrangements which are delivering significant public protection.

There are several challenges - the governance standards required by funders are increasingly demanding for small charitable groups that manage APs. The larger organisations are better equipped to deal with the requirements of corporate governance, and have greater access to funds to modernise facilities, and to employ and rotate well-trained staff.

It is difficult to reconcile local community concerns about the location of APs with the reality of just how difficult it is for some offenders to find suitable accommodation. The limitations imposed on offenders residing in APs through residency contracts and licence conditions are stringent, and many are returned to prison if they fail to abide by the rules. This policy is essential if public confidence in the concept of rehabilitation is to be retained.

The report concludes that the APs practice have progressed since we last inspected. They continue to play a vital role in delivering public protection and providing offenders who want to change their behaviour with a new start.

This inspection was carried out in March 2013 by Tom McGonigle and Dr Ian Cameron. I offer sincere thanks to all who contributed.

**Brendan McGuigan**  
Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice  
in Northern Ireland

November 2013



# Executive Summary

CJI's conclusion is that the APs in Northern Ireland were meeting each of the six standards tested in this inspection, providing an important public protection service in support of statutory criminal justice agencies.

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This is the second inspection that CJI has undertaken of APs, including the performance of criminal justice agencies that work with them. The last inspection report was published in July 2008. It made 19 recommendations for improvement, and an Action Plan was prepared in December 2008 which set out steps to implement the recommendations.

There has been progress at strategic level. A strengthened working relationship between the PBNI and the NIHE, and recent involvement of Simon Community for Northern Ireland (SCNI) are positive developments. Each AP had prepared a Statement of Purpose, the PBNI had prepared an Offender Accommodation Strategy, and the NIHE Housing Related Support Strategy 2012-15 took account of offenders' needs.

Demand for AP places increased with the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 which created new sentences that required statutory supervision of more released prisoners than previously. APs are viewed as an important means of enhancing this supervision. Pressure on bedspaces increased after the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) suspended its Prisoner

Assessment Unit (PAU) in April 2011 as this removed around 20 beds for testing life and long-term prisoners in the community before being released. It was therefore a constant challenge to manage the portfolio of AP beds – which had increased from 76 to 86, in seven facilities. Six were run by large voluntary organisations and one by an independent local committee. A consequence of the increased pressure was that bail applicants and prisoners applying for home leave had very little prospect of obtaining an AP place.

Some of the APs had experienced governance problems since our last inspection. Although the large voluntary organisations were better equipped to avert difficulties, and to cope when problems arose, Inspectors also heard about the benefits of local involvement in the management of APs.

There was no evidence that public safety was compromised, or that residents were affected by governance concerns. Around 1,000 offenders had been accommodated in APs over the past five years; and we found that those who resettled successfully reduced their risk score by an average three points while living in the AP. This is notable given the



previous histories of many residents, and considering that 58% of new residents were involved with the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI).

Approximately half of AP residents resettled successfully, while unstructured lifestyles and difficulty in complying with regulations usually meant the others left as a result of enforcement proceedings, and unsurprisingly their risk scores increased. Inspectors found that the APs and statutory agencies managed the exit process responsibly, irrespective of the circumstances of residents' departure.

There had been improvements to the APs estate, and additional beds were provided: the SCNI had created four new bedspaces in the North West, and having undertaken management of Edward Street, redesignated it as an offender-only facility. Thompson House was totally refurbished and provided state-of-the-art supervised accommodation. The 18-month decant during refurbishment was well planned and implemented by the Presbyterian Board of Social Witness (PBSW), the Salvation Army (which hosted Thompson House residents and staff during the decant), and their statutory partners.

Several operational processes were better than in 2008: alcohol and drugs testing of residents, out-of-hours responses by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the PBNI, and support for APs residents with mental health difficulties had improved. APs management were engaging effectively with their statutory partners, the weekly allocation meetings were functioning well and

everyone said communication had improved. The PBNI had dedicated part of an Area Manager role to the APs brief, and a protocol for evictions had been agreed. A 2008 recommendation to rotate staff had been implemented by those APs where it was feasible.

The statutory criminal justice agencies along with APs had made considerable effort to engage with politicians, the media and local communities. However the topic of offender accommodation was highly emotive. Some premises were subjected to physical attacks, and campaigns of community objection made the task of offender rehabilitation even more challenging.

While there are issues to be addressed in respect of individual APs and their parent organisations, CJI's conclusion is that the APs in Northern Ireland were meeting each of the six standards tested in this inspection, providing an important public protection service in support of statutory criminal justice agencies. Their role is particularly challenging and there are some important pending initiatives such as re-establishment of the PAU, and new welfare legislation that could impact significantly on the APs estate. We make five recommendations for improvement.



# Recommendations

1

The PBNI, NIHE, NIPS and Department of Justice (DoJ) should undertake joint research to estimate future demand for APs places (paragraph 1.10).

2

The MUST management committee should, in conjunction with its statutory partners continue to review the respective advantages of joining a corporate parent body, or remaining under the stewardship of a local voluntary management committee. Due weight should be given to the benefits and challenges that attach to independence (paragraph 2.10).

3

The DoJ should clarify the arrangements for, and status of APs inspections undertaken by CJJ (paragraph 2.21).

4

The frequency and quality of APs managers file auditing should be developed in order to improve recording by keyworkers and other staff (paragraph 3.44).

5

The APs managers forum should seek a meeting with the Parole Commissioners to ensure each organisations perspective is understood in relation to evictions, decisions to release prisoners and recall them to custody (paragraph 3.56).



# Inspection report



# Introduction and context

- 1.1 A thematic inspection of offender accommodation in England and Wales by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) in 2005<sup>1</sup> demonstrated markedly higher rates of reconviction by offenders who had accommodation needs (29.6%) than those in the general probation caseload (19.6%). The inspection also showed a much lower rate of reconviction by offenders while they were living in APs (3.1%) than by offenders who accessed mainstream accommodation services (36.6%). These findings illustrate the benefits of offenders having stable accommodation, and the value of APs' contribution to crime reduction and public protection.
- 1.2 The vast majority of offenders live in mainstream accommodation, whether permanent or temporary, and only a very small number resided in APs. In Northern Ireland there were around 3,500 people under PBNI supervision in the community in July 2013, of whom 86 (0.25%) were placed in APs.

## The APs in Northern Ireland

- 1.3 In July 2013 there were seven APs in Northern Ireland. They are listed in Table 1. Four of the APs accepted referrals exclusively from criminal justice agencies, while the other three offered direct access and accommodated non-offenders as well as offenders. Each of the premises was leased from a Housing Association, apart from Centenary House which was the property of the Salvation Army.
- 1.4 All seven APs were managed by Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations. This was a significantly different model from elsewhere in the United Kingdom where there was a fairly even split between Probation-managed and VCS-managed offender accommodation. Probation Trusts managed around 50% of the facilities in England and Wales, and they generally accommodated the more serious offenders. The position in Northern Ireland meant that the statutory criminal justice agencies could not match resource to demand as they did not own the places; nor could they tailor the business delivery model to address evolving needs and risks. While the PBNI were content with the local model, this is an important strategic issue that merits ongoing consideration in future design of the APs estate.
- 1.5 There were of course a considerable number of other temporary accommodation providers in Northern Ireland such as night shelters, homeless hostels and private landlords. While many of these facilities accepted offenders, they did so on the basis of homelessness, rather than to enhance their supervision. Conversely many PBNI referrals to the APs were not homeless, but were required to live in an APs to test their suitability to live independently in the community.
- 1.6 A very small number of female offenders required supervised accommodation. The MUST hostel had been the only provider when we last inspected in 2008, but since then the PBNI had also developed an arrangement with Women's Aid to provide bedspaces for female offenders and this was working well. Table 1 sets out the management arrangements, capacity, access criteria, accreditation status and dates of the seven APs.

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<sup>1</sup> *An Essential Element of Effective Practice - An Inspection of National Probation Service Work on Offender Accommodation*, HMI Probation 2005.

**Table 1: Northern Ireland APs factsheet**

	<b>Bonds Hill</b>	<b>Centenary House</b>	<b>Dismas House</b>	<b>Edward Street</b>	<b>Innis Centre</b>	<b>MUST</b>	<b>Thompson House</b>
<b>Management</b>	SCNI	Salvation Army	Extern	SCNI	Extern	Local Committee	PBSW
<b>Location</b>	Derry	Belfast	Belfast	Portadown	Belfast	Cookstown	Belfast
<b>Premises owner</b>	Ulidia Housing Association	Salvation Army	Helm Housing	Oakleigh Housing	Helm Housing	Open Door Housing	Helm Housing
<b>PBNI referrals/ total capacity</b>	4/16	13/120	14	8	20	8/20 incl female offenders	19
<b>Access/criteria</b>	Direct	Direct	Offenders only	Offenders only	Offenders only	Direct	Offenders only
<b>NIHE accreditation</b>	March 2013	December 2011	2011	October 2010	July 2012	July 2012	December 2012

## The policy context

- 1.7 While the PBNI did not provide or maintain APs, there was a legislative basis for their involvement. The Probation Board (Northern Ireland) Order 1982, Paragraph 4 (2) said the PBNI may, with the approval of the Secretary of State:
- '(a) provide and maintain probation hostels and other establishments for use in connection with the supervision and assistance of offenders; and*
- (b) provide and maintain bail hostels.'*
- 1.8 There had been three significant influences on APs during the past five years:
- The Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 created new custodial sentences which required most released prisoners to be supervised by the PBNI. The Parole Commissioners made the decisions about whether to release in many cases and frequently stipulated a period of residence in an AP in order to manage these prisoners' suitability for release.
  - Suspension of the NIPS PAU in April 2011 removed an important facility for testing long-term prisoners prior to release, adding considerable pressure to the APs estate. The PAU remained suspended in November 2013.
  - The SCNI took a policy position and put in place partnership arrangements with the PBNI to accept referral of offenders in 2012. This was both timely and helpful, and quickly generated additional bedspaces. These were initially in the North-West, which assisted the strategy to reduce concentration of APs provision in Belfast. The SCNI also offered a ready-made solution when governance difficulties emerged in Edward Street at the end of 2012, and by March 2013 it had assumed responsibility for Edward Street. On the wider front it was working with the remand prisons to increase capacity for bail applicants, and developing move-on accommodation for offenders who were leaving APs.

- 1.9 Strategic collaboration had progressed since the last CJI inspection, especially between the NIHE and the PBNI. Each had developed offender accommodation strategies which were mutually complementary, while the PBNI continued to be represented on regional and local Supporting People Commissioning Panels. The tangible outworking of this progress meant the total available bedspaces had risen from 76 to 86, with additional beds provided by the refurbished Thompson House, the SCNI beds in the North-West and reconfiguration of Edward Street.
- 1.10 The PBNI and NIHE priorities were to secure additional approved bed places outside of Belfast, improve provision for learning disabled and mentally ill offenders, and increase support services for offenders to help them sustain tenancies. It was difficult to obtain data that evidenced the impact of Northern Ireland APs on reoffending, though this was a target in the PBNI Accommodation Strategy. Nor were there any statistical projections of future demand or priorities, which would be helpful in planning ahead, and further work could be undertaken to assess the benefits of supervised accommodation. **We recommend the PBNI, NIHE, NIPS and Department of Justice (DoJ) should undertake joint research to estimate future demand for APs places.**

### Statements of Purpose

- 1.11 The main recommendation of the 2008 CJI inspection was that each AP should prepare a Statement of Purpose to outline the services they could provide and the resources they required, while the statutory agencies could identify how these services matched their needs. Each AP prepared a Statement of Purpose that dealt with a broad range of matters such as funding and staffing levels, security specifications and recording standards.
- 1.12 Considerable effort was invested by the APs and their statutory partners in developing the Statements of Purpose. These could never be completely prescriptive since demand for places was not fully within any of the providers sole control – the Courts and Parole Commissioners significantly affected demand; and availability was also affected by turnover of residents and unforeseen events such as the suspension of the PAU. Nonetheless, it was generally considered that the debate around Statements of Purpose had been helpful in clarifying some important features of the APs changing needs and working relationships.

### Referrals and residents profiles

- 1.13 The function of APs had changed considerably over the last 15 years. Originally used primarily for homeless offenders, they had evolved to be almost exclusively required for released prisoners who required additional supervision in the community, and in some cases for testing prisoners prior to release. PBNI data shows that during January – December 2012, 39% of referrals had committed serious violence. Sex offenders comprised 22% and others (for example dishonesty, drugs and motoring offences) comprised 39% of referrals. Table 2 profiles referrals and new residents during January–December 2012:

**Table 2: Profile of referrals and new residents: January - December 2012**

	Bail	Post custody licence	Inescapable voluntary	Home leave	Community supervision	Other	TOTAL
<b>Referrals</b>	30	205	14	26	12	2	<b>289</b>
<b>Number refused</b>	3	8	0	0	2	0	<b>13</b>
<b>New residents</b>	14	162	11	14	9	0	<b>210</b>
<b>Subject to PPANI</b>	7	98	4	4	9	0	<b>122</b>

- 1.14 Post custody licencees comprised the majority of referrals (71%) and new residents (77%). Most of these people had originally been sentenced to imprisonment for serious offences. While 58% of new residents were involved with PPANI, APs residents were a distinct minority within the notifiable offender population: on 18 October 2012, only 41 of the 976 notifiable offenders living in the community resided in APs.<sup>2</sup> Table 2 probably does not reflect the true demand for bail beds as many bail applications were simply adjourned from week to week because places were seldom available for them. It may also be that potential bail applicants were deterred from applying because they knew availability was so limited.
- 1.15 'Inescapable voluntaries' (5% of new residents, down from 14% in the 2008 inspection) were offenders for whom the PBNI had no statutory responsibility. However in the absence of stable accommodation they agreed to be subject to probation supervision while living in the AP. There were a small number of referrals who were offered an AP place but ultimately did not arrive, for reasons such as parole applications being rejected or because they obtained alternative accommodation. In terms of risk management, a survey of 104 Northern Ireland APs residents indicates that the APs resource was being appropriately used: 58% posed a high risk of reoffending at point of entry, and 39% a medium level of risk.
- 1.16 Individual APs in Northern Ireland would not refuse an application on the grounds of offence type, as long as it complied with their other criteria, but they might decline on the basis of previous disruptive behaviour - many applicants were well-known, having had experience of living in APs or other hostels in the past. Other considerations at the application stage included proximity to victims' residence or workplace and compatibility with other residents. Firesetters were difficult to place as the Innis Centre was the only AP whose insurance cover permitted them to accommodate arsonists. These considerations meant referrals had to be constantly reprioritised to ensure the most needy were accommodated.
- 1.17 There was a particular problem in obtaining APs beds for prisoners who required supervised accommodation for home leave. The exact number was not known, but each year several prisoners remained in custody despite having been approved by the NIPS for Home Leave (including Christmas Home Leave) because beds were not available. This situation had been exacerbated by suspension of the PAU.

## Leavers

- 1.18 Many APs residents found it difficult to cope with the strict conditions of residence, pressures of communal living, and with new-found freedom after leaving prison. Moving on from an AP to independent living was also a significant challenge for residents. Table 3 demonstrates that reasons for leaving APs were fairly evenly split between resettled and unsettled.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Questions for week ending 2 November 2012.

**Table 3: APs leavers by status and reason January - December 2012**

	Bail	Post custody licence	Inescapable voluntary	Home leave	Community supervision	Other	TOTAL
<b>Resettled leavers</b>	1	61	7	1	5	4	<b>79</b>
<b>Unsettled leavers</b>	7	68	4	3	3	2	<b>87</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	8	129	11	4	8	6	<b>166</b>

- 1.19 The main reason for residents in our sample leaving in an unsettled way was when they breached licence conditions. Reconviction for fresh offences was not necessary for a resident to be breached – it might be due to conduct that raised concern about increased risks. The APs and PBNI aimed to apply proportionate responses that addressed individual risks and circumstances, but enforcement action by the PBNI usually resulted in recall to prison following referral to the Parole Commissioners. While rent and service charge arrears were an ongoing financial challenge for APs, they were seldom, if ever a reason for eviction.
- 1.20 Twelve months was the maximum preferred length of stay, and anything in excess of that had to be approved by a PBNI Assistant Director. Prolonged stays usually reflected a lack of suitable move on addresses: the Public Protection agencies had to approve the proposed address for each person who was subject to notification, and it could take time to obtain this approval.

**Table 4: APs average lengths of stay and occupancy rates in 2012**

	Average length of stay (in days)	Overall 2012 occupancy level
<b>Centenary House</b>	90	100%
<b>Dismas House</b>	146	96.25%
<b>Edward Street</b>	126	98%
<b>Innis Centre</b>	270	100%
<b>MUST</b>	150	95.79%
<b>Thompson House</b>	114	87%
<b>Overall average</b>	149	96%

- 1.21 The most significant feature of Table 4 is the increase in occupancy since we last inspected: the level had been 74% in 2005-06, and 69% in 2006-07. The relatively low Thompson House occupancy level was a factor of a phased return to its refurbished premises which only commenced in November 2012. Financial pressures meant each AP was focussed on maintaining their income streams, and practices such as hotbedding - which entailed various prisoners occupying the same bed on different nights of the week - although unpopular with residents, helped in this respect. While high occupancy is financially desirable, it exerts considerable pressure on APs and the referral process.



# Governance and oversight

- 2.1 In July 2013 each AP, with the exception of MUST was managed by a large voluntary sector organisation. Each of these organisations was based in Northern Ireland, apart from Centenary House which was managed by the Salvation Army. Governance expectations had increased significantly during the past decade, and there were advantages in the financial, personnel and information technology practices that a corporate body could provide. Risks could be better handled when good governance mechanisms – such as staff supervision and training schedules, team and residents’ meetings – were in place and there was active management committee involvement. It was governance failings that led Dismas House to forsake independent status and join Extern in 2007; and Edward Street completed a transfer to the SCNI in February 2013 for similar reasons.

## Developments since 2008

### Bonds Hill

- 2.2 A policy change by the SCNI led to them beginning to accept homeless offenders through formal arrangements with the PBNI in 2012. This was on the basis that many SCNI residents over the years had been offenders, even though they were not referred by the PBNI, and it meant that the SCNI would now accept anyone whose risk was deemed manageable. Four Bonds Hill beds were designated for offenders in March 2013.
- 2.3 The model of practice for Bonds Hill was carefully planned in conjunction with SCNI senior managers. Allocation of places was done by a Steering Group which comprised the SCNI, the NIHE, the Housing Association which owned the building, and the PBNI. This collective approach was helpful in managing their new client group, and the SCNI also felt supported in other ways such as by having staff trained with the PBNI.

### Centenary House

- 2.4 The Salvation Army owned and managed Centenary House, and its corporate policies were of considerable benefit to Centenary House in its public protection role. As a national organisation, corporate decisions were determined at United Kingdom level, with local input. The Salvation Army had an ongoing initiative to review staffing structures and salaries as part of their response to the challenges of austerity. The practical consequences for Centenary House were expected to include staff regrading and salary cuts. There were no unique implications for their offender management role, but if any emerge these would need to be addressed in conjunction with local statutory funders and partners.

## Dismas House and the Innis Centre

- 2.5 Extern - which manages Dismas and the Innis Centre - had to address a number of leadership issues and restructure roles across its business during the past three years. None of these issues directly involved, or impacted on, the management of risk or delivery of services at Dismas and Innis. Interim arrangements were put in place during 2012, a new Chair of the Board of Trustees was appointed in September 2012, and a new Chief Executive was appointed in July 2013.

## Edward Street

- 2.6 Governance weaknesses had been apparent in Edward Street for some time. These were identified in inspection reports, and most explicitly in a September 2012 organisational review that was undertaken by a NIHE-funded consultant. The weaknesses stemmed from a well-intentioned management committee that was too small and long-serving, lacked capacity and was applying outdated finance and personnel procedures. Progress on addressing the concerns had been very slow, but in late 2012 when concerns about financial irregularities emerged, a decision was taken that Edward Street services would be managed by the SCNI.
- 2.7 The SCNI conducted a full due diligence exercise and Edward Street Hostel Ltd ceased to exist in March 2013. The pace and efficiency of this transfer helped the statutory agencies and other APs as Edward Street's beds were badly needed. The full suite of corporate SCNI policies, financial and IT systems were immediately introduced, and core SCNI training and specialist criminal justice training provided for staff. Security was strengthened and a major redesign of the premises initiated.
- 2.8 Most of the staff remained. There was a full review of contracts, vetting, qualifications, supervision and appraisal processes and line management arrangements were clarified. A health and safety audit and deep clean of the building were undertaken, and SCNI uniforms were introduced. Board members and senior managers were regular visitors throughout the handover period in order to maintain communication with staff and residents. These were all positive steps that quickly strengthened the governance of Edward Street.

## MUST

- 2.9 A NIHE audit found that some financial practices within MUST had contravened its Articles of Association, though there was no suggestion of fraud. The resilience of voluntary committee members and staff was tested by this experience and by an ongoing industrial tribunal case. The NIHE subsequently funded a consultant to provide governance training for management committee members; and MUST continued to play an important role in offender management and was able to retain a sizeable group of influential local people on its management committee, including representatives from the council, business community and the PSNI. Local involvement undoubtedly helped local confidence, as evidenced by successful street collections, work placements provided for residents, and prisoners successfully resettled in the district.
- 2.10 By 2013 MUST was the only remaining AP in Northern Ireland to be overseen by a voluntary management committee. Given the experiences of other independent APs when the capacity to manage governance challenges had been lacking (Dismas House in 2007 and Edward Street in 2012), the MUST management committee had explored the option of partnership with a corporate parent in order to share the burden

of responsibility and ensure longer term sustainability. They were confident that the current voluntary management committee was delivering the best service in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and local accountability, and it was their intention to continue with the present arrangements. However the management committee intended to review this position regularly in line with developments in funding, legislation and Supporting People requirements. ***We recommend the MUST management committee should, in conjunction with its statutory partners continue to review the respective advantages of joining a corporate parent body, or remaining under the stewardship of a local voluntary management committee. Due weight should be given to the benefits and challenges that attach to independence.***

## Thompson House

2.11 Thompson House was located within the PBSW residential services directorate. There had been no governance concerns since the last inspection. However considerable stamina had been required to design and deliver a complete refurbishment of 18 months duration, and in particular to address concerns that were raised by a local community group throughout that period.

## Oversight of APs

- 2.12 Corporate bodies were by no means exempt from governance issues, but they were better equipped to head off problems in the first place, and to cope when difficulties arose. There was no indication that management of APs residents had been compromised by any governance concerns we heard about in this inspection. Nonetheless good governance - especially financial and personnel practice – is a fundamental requirement to ensure the APs operate within an appropriate framework and context, and are spending public monies appropriately. The costs of failure can include reputational and operational damage, so it is imperative that statutory funders and partners can have continued confidence that the APs are operating within a healthy governance structure.
- 2.13 For these reasons a range of oversight mechanisms were in place to monitor different aspects of the APs practice. They were regulated by detailed standards that were agreed with the PBNI<sup>3</sup>. These standards prescribed what was required of both APs staff and referring probation officers in managing the risks posed by offenders. Other forms of oversight included the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and environmental health inspections; and there were regular inspection and maintenance schedules with the owners of the premises.
- 2.14 Receipt of NIHE funding meant that the APs were subject to accreditation by the NIHE Supporting People branch. Quarterly reports were required to ensure that providers were financially viable, had competent administrative procedures, effective employment policies and robust management procedures.
- 2.15 Each AP also had internal reporting cycles, usually on a weekly or monthly basis, that notified senior managers about residents progress, funding and maintenance issues. These mechanisms provided support for the APs managers, and also held them to account. Centenary House was an exemplar in this respect. It was subject to the Salvation Army's inspection regime which covered all aspects of their operation including finance, personnel, residents and staff feedback, and provided comprehensive written reports that awarded performance scores against all the indicators. Some of their corporate

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<sup>3</sup> Probation Board for Northern Ireland Best Practice Framework Incorporating Northern Ireland Standards, PBNI, April 2011.

policies were also very good. For example the Salvation Army's Complaints Logs showed that complaints were treated seriously and used as a means of learning.

- 2.16 The APs managers forum met to develop and review policy. It comprised APs managers and a PBNI middle manager, while senior managers from the PBNI, NIHE and the APs parent bodies met twice each year to consider strategic issues. Participation levels were reported as good and the forum was said to be worthwhile: it was suggested that the opportunity for Thompson House to decant to Centenary House – which proved very successful – would not have arisen if it were not for the APs managers forum.
- 2.17 APs managers were aware of probation officers' responsibilities to comply with the PBNI standards, and records of their monitoring reports were held on individual residents' files. The APs managers reported that probation officers adhered fully to the standards in nearly all cases.
- 2.18 Regular visitors were also useful in providing external perspective in the APs, and assisted the communication process between them and their statutory partners. Visitor books confirmed that there were a variety of external agencies, particularly police and probation officers visiting the APs each week.

## CJI inspections

- 2.19 CJI began a programme of unannounced annual visits after the 2008 inspection to assess the public protection contribution of the APs. Although the criminal justice voluntary sector which manages the APs lies outwith CJIs legislative remit, all the APs management boards had agreed in July 2006 that CJI should inspect their practice, and the then Minister of Justice acknowledged the value of this inspection work.
- 2.20 However in July 2011 the then Chief Inspector raised concerns with the DoJ about the status and adequacy of the unannounced APs inspection programme. The short visits have drawn mainly positive conclusions, but also identified governance concerns such as those at Edward Street that are outlined earlier in this report. However they can only provide a point in time snapshot, which means that routine oversight rests with the APs parent body. The Chief Inspector pointed out the Northern Ireland arrangements were *'out of step with England and Wales where the majority of hostels are directly provided by the Probation Service...'*
- 2.21 The matter was never resolved as the DoJ did not respond to the Chief Inspector's concerns. Consequently neither this announced full inspection nor the annual unannounced inspections have any defined legal status. It remains unclear whether they constitute 'Inspections' under section 46 (1), 'Reviews' under Section 47 (4) or 'Ministerial Advice' under Section 47 (7) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. Each of these has different implications for publication of the unannounced inspection reports. While there is no doubt in anyone's mind that APs inspections should continue, it is important that the position be clarified. ***We recommend the DoJ should clarify the arrangements for, and status of APs inspections undertaken by CJI.***



# Risk assessment and risk management

- 3.1 Six criteria (based on National Probation Service standards for APs in England and Wales) were applied to assess the quality of risk assessment and risk management by the approved premises.

## a. Resources for high risk work

***Inspection standard: The AP has the resources necessary to enable it to support the management of high risk of harm offenders.***

- 3.2 The main resources that APs required were adequate staffing and suitable premises, both of which were funded by the NIHE under two programmes: Housing Benefit and Supporting People.

## Staffing

- 3.3 The APs managers were mostly long-serving and experienced, a cohesive group who worked well with statutory agencies and were mutually supportive. Each had clear links to their headquarters or management committee, and the Edward Street manager reported his line management was much clearer and more supportive since the SCNI took over in March 2013. All the managers were contactable on an on-call basis to deal with out-of-hours difficulties.
- 3.4 Staff teams were stable throughout the APs estate at the time of this inspection, and turnover was low. There was a good age and gender balance. There was some variation between the APs in terms of numbers on duty and shift patterns. The SCNI planned to double the Edward Street staff complement to conform to shift patterns which were based on legislative requirements of the European Union Working Time Directive.
- 3.5 The 2008 inspection had recommended that a staff rotation policy should be developed and implemented by each of the APs. This had not proven feasible for smaller providers, but Extern had been able to move staff between Innis and Dismas; and the SCNI envisaged rotating staff as part of its routine deployment. The larger organisations could also provide staff with flexibility in their working arrangements and cross-deploy from other facilities when shortages arose.
- 3.6 Relief staff were regularly used, and some worked in more than one AP. Inspectors heard they always worked alongside full-time staff and were never on duty alone. Managers reported that their relief pools were experienced and competent, well-integrated with permanent staff, and familiar with residents and working practices.
- 3.7 The APs were small, and sometimes intense environments. Some residents were particularly challenging, so training in handling aggression, risk management and substance misuse was important for APs staff. It helped to have a manager onsite, and out-of-hours support was crucial. While morale was generally

good, public attitudes could make the job difficult, especially when staff had worked hard to resettle residents whose placements broke down following media interest and community pressure.

- 3.8 Qualification requirements differed between APs but staff training was comprehensive. In the larger organisations it included mandatory training, as well as criminal justice specific training that was often undertaken with other agencies. This was important as APs staff and their statutory partners needed to understand each others needs and priorities. The costs of training were significant as vacancies in the rota had to be backfilled in order to maintain safe staffing levels. It was especially difficult to free up night staff for training; and the same shortages regularly arose when individual residents had to be accompanied offsite if they were not allowed out alone.
- 3.9 The staff whom Inspectors met recognised their public protection responsibilities and were positive about their roles. Team meetings were well-attended and there was evidence of good shared learning between APs staff teams and the PBNI. Minutes of staff meetings showed a concentration on residents' issues, though corporate business was also dealt with. The minutes verified that most staff felt valued and well-supported in their roles. Supervision and appraisals were being conducted and work/life balance was reported as a positive element of the job.

## Premises

- 3.10 APs were never designed as prisons in the community, though some were actually more restrictive than a low security prison, and two - the Innis Centre and Thompson House - were modern, purpose-built facilities that had high levels of security designed into their fabric. Bonds Hill had been refurbished as a general homeless hostel in 2012. Dismas House and MUST were in good condition, while Centenary House and Edward Street were old buildings that were never designed with supervised accommodation in mind, and had been adapted in a piecemeal fashion over the years.
- 3.11 Thompson House was refurbished to a high specification during 2011-12. The 18-month decant was well-planned and implemented by the PBSW, the Salvation Army (which hosted Thompson House residents and staff during their decant) and their statutory partners. The SCNI had plans to refurbish Edward Street, and, it was taking ideas from the Thompson House design and technology which were working well.
- 3.12 Each AP had a written contingency plan - which was known to the PSNI, the PBNI and the NIHE - for accommodating residents in the event of an emergency. The plans took account of residents' risks, identified which APs or other community facilities to approach, and which police stations should be contacted.
- 3.13 Re-opening the NIPS PAU could have important implications for the APs, and might free up spaces for bail applicants. In February 2013 the NIPS annual cost per prisoner place target was £67,600.00. With each AP place costing less than £20,000 per year, there is potential for significant savings. The dynamics of APs residents' groups could change considerably, and there could also be financial implications for the VCS organisations that run the APs. For these reasons it will be important for the NIPS and the PBNI to consult closely with voluntary and community sector organisations which have experience in running APs, when designing the new PAU.

3.14 The majority of post-custody licensees and PPANI cases went to the APs which took offenders only. Differentiation between APs and the current shortage of bail beds will be important considerations in forward planning the APs estate, as will the new NIPS step-down facility. Debate about whether the PBNI ought to directly manage an AP has always been under consideration, though never to date been deemed necessary on the basis that no offender has ever been refused an AP place. The PBNI viewed the status quo as preferable as nothing additional would be gained by them directly managing an AP and also because management by voluntary sector organisations promotes greater community acceptance of APs.

## Funding

3.15 The APs were primarily financed from the NIHE's Supporting People and Housing Benefit funding streams, and the NIHE also provided substantial financial support to organisations that supported ex-APs residents as they were progressing into independent accommodation. APs could also apply to the PBNI for limited additional funds for specific risk management purposes.

3.16 Table 5 shows that quite different amounts were provided to each AP. Differences between APs funding levels were due to factors such as size of the premises, numbers of staff and their qualification levels. The NIHE provided benchmark costs of £204 per bed per week for generic single homeless, and £349 for Single Homeless with Addictions.

**Table 5: APs funding levels 2012 - 13**

	Housing Benefit	Supporting People	TOTAL
<b>Bonds Hill</b>	£88	£288	£376
<b>Centenary House</b>	£116	£124	£240
<b>Dismas House</b>	£109	£452	£561
<b>Edward Street</b>	£93	£236	£329
<b>Innis Centre</b>	£178	£370	£548
<b>MUST</b>	£101	£306	£407
<b>Thompson House</b>	£93	£141	£234

3.17 The 2008 inspection had recommended that funding should be sought from health providers, especially statutory mental health services, given the number of APs residents who required mental health support. Although there had not been any significant developments in this respect, energies had been concentrated, with some success, on acquiring better mental health support services for residents.

3.18 All APs residents were required to make a contribution towards their keep. However each AP sustained a level of arrears and identified an inherent tension between providing supported accommodation and collecting rent and service charges. One manager said *"We would be bankrupt if we enforced payment of all arrears... we have to handle residents rent debts sympathetically."* The SCNI had an explicit policy that, since it actively fundraised to reduce homelessness, it would not create homelessness, and therefore residents' arrears would never be the sole reason for anyone being evicted.

## b. PPANI placements in place and known

**Inspection standard: Offenders subject to Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) have relevant public protection plans in place, which are known to, and implemented by APs staff.**

- 3.19 The Public Protection Arrangements were put in place to help agencies enhance public protection through coordinating their risk assessment and risk management roles. The PPANI process applied to certain offenders who were required to notify including those who had committed violent and sexual offences.
- 3.20 There were a total of 82 offenders in residence in the APs in the July inspection. Table 6 shows that 59% of them were involved with the PPANI at the time of this inspection. The National Association of Probation Officers conducted a study in England and Wales which found that nearly 90% of APs residents there were being monitored by the Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels, which are their PPANI equivalent; and that over 80% of residents were deemed to be high or very high risk to the public.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 6: APs residents' status on day of inspection**

Conditions of residence	Post release	Transfers from other hostels	Emergency admissions	PPANI involvement	Lifers	Bailees	SOPOs	RoSH
65	62	8	11	48	17	1	35	10

3.21 Table 6 also shows that:

- 76% (62/82) of residents came to an AP after completing a custodial sentence; and
- 79% (65/82) were statutorily required to reside in APs.

While PPANI statistics for 19 December 2012 show there were 116 Category 2, and five Category 3 (the highest risk level) offenders living in the community, only 18 of these (three Category 3 and 15 Category 2) people were living in an AP.

- 3.22 Emergency admissions posed difficulties because there was little time to assess them or plan for their arrival. Some emergency admissions were unavoidable because of court decisions; in other cases difficulties could possibly be offset if the PBNI and NIPS were able to anticipate needs prior to a Parole Commissioners' hearing. This was complicated due to legal and human rights requirements, as well as the unpredictability of placements, and will merit continued close attention from all the agencies that are involved.
- 3.23 The PPANI agencies viewed the APs as a significant support for public protection by providing a base to assess and manage offenders' risks. Inspectors saw good evidence of information sharing at an appropriate level. This confirmed the findings of annual CJI unannounced inspections between 2008-12 which consistently found that public protection was a priority for everyone who worked in the APs.

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Probation Officers Briefing *Probation Hostels and High Risk Offenders* February 2011.

- 3.24 This priority was maintained by APs staff paying careful attention to individual residents, as well as to the group dynamic, which was ever-changing and could easily be upset by one incompatible person. For example Centenary House held void beds in case contingency provision was required when Thompson House was recanting, and residents' return to the refurbished Thompson House was carried out on a phased basis.
- 3.25 It was clear that APs staff and supervising probation officers were familiar with risk management plans, and residents also knew the features of their personal plans. Even though they were not always content with their plans, it was important that residents understood the details, intent and rationale that had been put in place to help manage their risks.
- 3.26 In order to reduce risk, work was undertaken with each resident to address factors that had contributed to their offending behaviour. Every APs resident was allocated a supervising probation officer, even if they were not subject to statutory probation supervision. Risk management plans were agreed, and regularly reviewed between the probation officer, keyworker and resident. In addition to applying restrictions on movements and interactions, the plans addressed residents' personal circumstances such as health, work/training and independent living skills. Constructive interventions included vocational training schemes, assistance with housing applications, art therapy, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and church involvement.
- 3.27 Around 85% of APs residents were taking medication and the elderly population was increasing. Belfast APs were very positive about the support they received from a community nurse who visited regularly and conducted men's health groups, as well as dealing with individual health matters. Community mental health services in Belfast were also reported as much better than when we last inspected.
- 3.28 We found that all the APs worked hard to develop residents' competence in areas such as personal hygiene, cooking skills, budgetary management and constructive recreational pursuits, as well as in developing relationships that were safe and appropriate. These were important for men who, on leaving the APs would have to move from a communal environment to living alone, often in a new area. Many were socially isolated and needed considerable assistance to sustain positive lifestyles and avoid relapse into substance misuse or other negative behaviours which might increase their likelihood of reoffending; and some ex-residents had to return to an AP when crises arose in the community or independent living became too difficult.
- 3.29 Some matters that needed to be improved at the point of release from prison were being addressed by the PBNi with the NIPS. These included provision of appropriate quantities of medication, since community GP registration could take up to two weeks; and photographic ID which was increasingly required for various official purposes. The APs were already helping residents prepare for challenges of the Welfare Reform Bill and introduction of Universal Credit.
- 3.30 Although mental health support had improved, it was difficult to obtain services and move on accommodation for residents with a learning disability. They were few in number, but they were vulnerable adults as well as offenders, and therefore potentially at risk within APs. One learning disabled AP resident was only meant to stay for three days but had been there for nine months as his Health and Social Care Trust was unable to secure move on accommodation for him. The PBNi was working with the Trusts to develop a greater range of supported accommodation for learning disabled offenders; and also for other minority needs groups such as young people and foreign national offenders.

- 3.31 It could be very difficult for many APs residents to obtain move on accommodation. Significant effort was invested in arranging planned moves, but resettlement could be difficult, especially when addresses had to be approved by the statutory agencies. One resident had 13 addresses refused (due to schools' proximity and families with children living nearby); another had three addresses refused because they were too close to schools or did not have their own front door. Several APs residents therefore stayed beyond the preferred 12-month maximum, but there was often no option.
- 3.32 Some residents felt the PPANI agencies were slow to conduct address checks, and said they tended to shift the blame for delays between each other. Things became more difficult when private landlords and estate agents conducted their own background checks via the internet and then refused applicants after learning about their offending histories. It was also difficult for APs residents to obtain rent deposits (£800 on average), as well as guarantors. Many landlords now required two guarantors, one of whom had to demonstrate they had employment earnings of at least £17,000 pa.
- 3.33 Move-on opportunities were however reported as better in rural areas than in Belfast, via both the NIHE and the private rented sector, and in some instances private landlords actually approached APs to offer tenancies. It was hoped that the SCNI's involvement in the APs system would make their Rent Deposit Bond Scheme more widely available. This supported residents in moving on by covering one months rent and additional risk costs to cover damage. The SCNI had enrolled 80 landlords in this Scheme so far; and successful applicants also had the benefit of monthly home visits from a Floating Support worker to help them adjust to independent living.
- 3.34 APs residents' feedback to this inspection was nearly all positive, both in interview with Inspectors and confirmed by minutes of residents meetings. These meetings dealt almost exclusively with routine communal living and domestic matters; and there were no apparent concerns about public protection risks that were being missed or ignored. Although most residents wanted to live independently, some were hard to move on because they had become comfortable in the APs, and all residents recognised the efforts that staff were making on their behalf.

### c. Risk assessment

***Inspection standard: The case file shows that all relevant documentation is available to the APs in respect of risk assessment; and that the AP contributes to ongoing risk assessment.***

- 3.35 Initial assessment of offenders usually took place when they were appearing before court for sentence, and was subsequently reviewed and updated during their time in custody and after release. The PBNI led the risk assessment and review processes, with contributions from partners including PPANI agencies and the APs. The assessments led to the risk management plans which were applied for the duration of their supervision, including stay in an AP.

## The Allocation Panel

- 3.36 All referrals for an AP place were routed through an Allocation Panel which convened weekly. Membership comprised the managers of each AP, with a PBNI chair and administrative support. Terms of reference were in place to set out the purpose, selection criteria, frequency of meetings and timing of referrals. The PBNI dedicated part of an Area Managers role to concentrate on APs because of their significance in supporting supervision of offenders in the community.
- 3.37 The Allocation Panel had to transact a considerable amount of business as there were around 100 cases for consideration at each meeting. These comprised a mix of prisoners - lifers, prisoners due for Parole Commissioners hearings and bail applicants – and community supervisees. Inspectors heard that the highest risk applicants invariably found their way to the top of the list, while limited availability of bedspaces meant that bail applicants seldom featured. Nonetheless all referrals were brought forward each week, even if only for mention, in order to ensure nobody was missed.
- 3.38 The Panel's list was in a constant state of flux since there were always short notice referrals that had to be prioritised following decisions by courts or the Parole Commissioners. These referrals caused difficulty if APs were not able to assess them properly in advance of arrival. While the Parole Commissioners had no direct engagement with the allocation process, the PPANI Co-ordinator had delivered training to Commissioners which included explanation of the APs role.
- 3.39 A detailed referral form was completed for each applicant, and cases were assessed before a decision would be taken by the Panel. APs undertook these assessments, on the basis that they were assessing for a placement in any AP, rather than exclusively for their own facility. Ninety percent of prisoner assessments were undertaken by videolink, usually from PBNI offices, though PPANI Category 3 referrals were also visited at least once in prison by two APs staff before an offer would be made. Probation officers could also use an AP to interview prisoners who were on home leave, in order to reduce lone working risks.
- 3.40 Although it operated under some pressure, the Panel was working well. Its processes had been refined over the years, there was a good degree of consensus and collaboration, and it provided a useful mutual support mechanism for the APs managers. It also provided a good information-sharing opportunity for the APs and for the PBNI, as many referrals had previous experience within the APs estate. The PBNI exercised a strict gatekeeping function to ensure nobody was occupying an AP bed unnecessarily. Inappropriate referrals were returned to probation officers to explore alternatives such as night shelters or multi-disciplinary homelessness team support.

## Progress by APs residents

- 3.41 As part of this inspection the PBNI compiled data to assess residents' progress after they left the APs. This was done by sampling Assessment, Case Management and Evaluation (ACE) scores of 104 residents. ACE measured the risk of reoffending and was the most tangible measure of progress available. Analysis of the data shows that offenders who resettled from APs reduced their risk score by an average three points while living in the AP; and their average scores had reduced by a further three points by the end of 2012. While this progress cannot be uniquely attributed to an AP placement, when considered alongside the qualitative feedback that we received, it is reasonable to surmise that the APs made some contribution.

3.42 The data also shows that:

- the average ACE score of unsettled leavers increased by four by the time they left the AP; and it remained the same at the end of 2012;
- those most likely to resettle after leaving an AP were older on arrival;
- resettled residents had an overall average six months stay; unsettled leavers stayed for an average of five months; and
- significant differences in average lengths of stay were unduly influenced by a small number of residents who stayed for very long periods of time.

**Table 7: Resettled leavers progress by APs**

RESETTLED LEAVERS	Centenary House	Dismas House	Edward Street	Innis Centre	MUST	Thompson House	TOTAL/ OVERALL
Sample size	8	10	7	10	9	10	<b>54</b>
Average age on arrival	49	46	39	48	35	42	<b>43</b>
Average length of stay	11 mths	5 mths	4 mths	4 mths	4mths	11 mths	<b>6 mths</b>
ACE range on arrival	13 - 41	12 - 45	15 - 45	12 - 47	14- 43	22 - 63	<b>12 - 63</b>
Average ACE score on arrival	28	22	30	29	31	33	<b>29</b>
Average ACE score on departure	18	25	30	26	32	27	<b>26</b>
Change in ACE score	-10	+3	0	-3	+1	-6	<b>-3</b>
Average ACE score at 31/12/12	17	18	30	18	27	28	<b>23</b>
Change in ACE score since leaving AP	-1	-7	0	-8	-5	+1	<b>-3</b>

**Table 8: Unsettled leavers progress by APs**

RESETTLED LEAVERS	Centenary House	Dismas House	Edward Street	Innis Centre	MUST	Thompson House	TOTAL/ OVERALL
Sample size	8	7	9	10	6	10	<b>50</b>
Average age on arrival	39	30	33	29	28	33	<b>32</b>
Average length of stay	7 mths	5 mths	3 mths	3 mths	6mths	6 mths	<b>5 mths</b>
ACE range on arrival	16- 43	19 - 39	16 - 61	28 - 61	15 - 56	14 - 49	<b>14 - 61</b>
Average ACE score on arrival	26	33	38	43	39	33	<b>35</b>
Average ACE score on departure	34	36	41	42	50	31	<b>39</b>
Change in ACE score	+8	+3	+3	-1	+11	-2	<b>+4</b>
Average ACE score at 31/12/12	36	36	39	42	48	33	<b>39</b>
Change in ACE score since leaving AP	+2	0	- 2	0	-2	+2	<b>0</b>

## Information recording and sharing

- 3.43 Each AP maintained a summary sheet that highlighted key information such as residents' status, curfews, conditions of residence, offences, PPANI requirements and key contacts. These provided a very useful summary since they were colour-coded and constantly updated as residents came and went, and as their individual circumstances changed.
- 3.44 Residents' files were more consistently structured and maintained than when we last inspected. They contained relevant information such as application forms, pre-sentence reports, criminal records and statutory licences. Other file material was generated by the AP including case supervision records and reviews, and domestic documents such as tenancy agreements, rent details and medication records. Files evidenced the restrictive and constructive interventions that were being applied. A few areas required improvement including:
- some keyworker entries, although present, were not as frequent as required;
  - there was under-developed recording in some files. For example 'Education - left school at age 15' was repeated in each review in one case, rather than outlining the educational challenges and possibilities for the resident. In another review the keyworker's commentary on 'Goals obtained' was limited to 'Tenancy maintained,' which was very limited commentary; and
  - some recording contained little evidence of the APs distinct contribution to risk management, beyond providing a base for the offender to live; others showed little recognition of the likelihood or consequences of the resident reoffending.

The appropriate way to address such inadequacies is via APs managers file audits. While most managers undertook file audits, these appeared to be mainly done on a random basis rather than in a planned fashion. **We recommend the frequency and quality of APs managers file auditing should be developed in order to improve recording by keyworkers and other staff.**

- 3.45 Considerable amounts of personal data were required to inform the Allocation Panels deliberations, and to provide APs with the information they required to manage residents. Probation officers provided most of this documentation, and they were also sometimes able to share useful information about direct access residents, since many of them were also offenders. Referral documentation had been improved since the last inspection as it now explicitly conveyed information about applicants conduct while in custody, as well as notification of PPANI outcomes to the APs.
- 3.46 Each AP had a data protection plan in place. While working towards a paperless system, this was not yet possible as they could not afford the secure 'gsi' e-mail system. However staff had received data protection training and the PBNi provided the AP managers with secure briefcases to transport confidential material. All the documents we saw were kept in locked cabinets, computer systems were password protected, offenders' initials only were used in e-mails, and we were told no sensitive material was taken off the premises by APs staff.

## d. Monitoring and surveillance

**Inspection standard: Staff carry out monitoring and surveillance in line with their policy and individual risk management plans.**

3.47 APs had to balance constructive interventions with restrictions in order to manage their residents' conduct. Monitoring and surveillance were key elements of these restrictions. The residents included some challenging and high profile people, and one manager commented that they accommodated "lots of unhousable offenders." In these cases additional measures were put in place to manage the risks and conditions of residence could be more limiting than life in prison. For example some residents were only allowed one hour unaccompanied outside the AP each day, whereas in the latter stages of sentenced custody they might be permitted 24 hours unaccompanied home leave. Such conditions were difficult to enforce as APs staff often had to accompany individual residents to medical or benefits appointments; and they could lead to staff shortages for supervising the remainder of the residents group.

### Dynamic and static security

3.48 APs closely monitored residents' movements and interactions, both within and outwith the premises. To this end they applied varying degrees of surveillance, both static and dynamic. Static arrangements included CCTV camera coverage, door and personal alarms. Nearly all the APs were situated in close proximity to PSNI stations, and local police held keys to each building, as well as internal floor and room plans in the event of an emergency. Dynamic security was based on vigilance and information sharing between APs staff and external agencies, and came from room searches, curfews, log in and out books, residents' diaries, breathlyser and drug tests. Security arrangements were constantly under review. For example the SCNI moved quickly to improve things when it took over management of Edward Street by tightening curfews, and by proactively phoning residents to remind them when curfew expiry times were approaching.

**Table 9: APs main security features**

	Bonds Hill	Centenary House	Dismas House	Simon Community Portadown	Innis Centre	MUST	Thompson House
<b>External cameras</b>	14	4	4	3	3	6	13
<b>Internal cameras</b>	10	50	12	6	13	19	73
<b>Door alarms</b>	0 but doors locked	1	3	2	2	6	4
<b>Staff personal alarms</b>	Optional	Optional	3	Mobile phones & radios	3	9 Compulsory	Optional
<b>Room checks</b>	Subject to individual risks	1 per day & 1 at night	3 per day	4 per day	3 per day	Daily	5 per day
<b>Residents daily checks</b>	Sign In/Out;	2 Sign In/Out	4 Sign In/Out	4 Sign In/Out	4 Sign In/Out	3	5
<b>Night cover</b>	2 x waking staff	2 x waking staff	2 x sleep-in staff	2 x waking staff	2 x sleep-in staff	2 x sleep-in staff	2 x sleep-in staff
<b>Breathalyser</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
<b>Drugs test</b>	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N

- 3.49 The differences in static security illustrated in Table 9 were largely a factor of each buildings age and design history. Dynamic security practices were more consistent. The 2008 inspection had recommended that alcohol testing should extend to all APs, and drug testing should be introduced where necessary. By April 2013 nearly all the APs were authorised to conduct alcohol testing. This could be done on their own initiative as long as the resident had a licence condition to refrain from alcohol. The APs could also breathalyse other offenders at the PBNI's request, even if they did not reside in an AP. Drug testing was more rigorously controlled, and could only be conducted if there was a relevant licence condition and written approval was provided by the local PBNI manager.
- 3.50 Risk management arrangements were particularly rigorous in some cases: one resident required a round the clock armed police guard outside the AP for five days following threats against his life. In another case an AP had to notify local police when they were opening alarmed doors simply to put bins out in order to avoid false alerts. A Category 3 resident was subject to a weekly police e-brief, the DoJ was involved in his case reviews, and an electronic tag was stipulated as one element of his controls.
- 3.51 Such arrangements impacted on the entire life of the AP, and could heighten tension for everyone who lived and worked there. Four APs residents were subject to electronic monitoring at the time of this inspection. Electronic monitoring had initially been difficult because the steel used in some buildings interfered with signals, but these technical problems had largely been ironed out. Inspectors saw records of significant incidents in each AP. These comprised mainly of alcohol abuse, curfew breaches and aggressive behaviour by residents. All the recorded incidents were addressed promptly. They were also notified to senior managers within AP organisations, and to PBNI senior management.
- 3.52 Residents were well-aware of security provisions while living in an AP. Some resented their individual restrictions, and several complained that levels of security were unduly intrusive. However most acknowledged they had been made aware of what was required in advance of arriving. They also recognised the APs applied standard rules for all residents; and that any additional individual requirements were not specified by the AP, but by the statutory criminal justice agencies – the PBNI, PSNI, and NIPS, usually under the auspices of the PPANI, and often in conjunction with the Parole Commissioners or courts.

## e. Risk management and enforcement

***Inspection standard: Responsibility for the monitoring of risk management and the enforcement of orders/licences is clearly defined with appropriate systems in place. There is evidence of effective enforcement in all cases and clear evidence and documentation with regard to the link with risk management.***

- 3.53 While APs and probation officers worked hard to help offenders comply with licence requirements, there was little tolerance when APs residents deviated from their conditions of residence. The process was clear: in the first instance the AP notified the supervising probation officer (or on-call manager if out-of-hours) when a resident failed to comply. It was then for the PBNI to decide whether enforcement action was required, and if so to determine what action should be taken and how urgently it was needed.

- 3.54 There was a scale of enforcement action, depending on the nature of infringements. At the lower end verbal or written warnings would be issued for minor transgressions. Serious misconduct could lead to eviction, which was often accompanied by the offender being returned to court, and/or recalled to prison: 36 APs leavers (out of 50 in the sample for this inspection who were not resettled) were arrested and recalled to prison. The APs had agreed a clear protocol for evictions with the PBNI. This was important as risks could be heightened by residents suddenly becoming homeless, so every effort was made to seek alternative accommodation if the departure was not resulting in an immediate return to custody. As far as possible decisions were taken collectively by the relevant agencies, which was important to ensure a consistent approach to risk management.
- 3.55 The APs reported that they received very good support from all their statutory justice partners, both on a routine basis and when crises arose. The PBNI had reviewed its out-of-hours contact arrangements since the past inspection and these were reported to be working well. Each AP said they had good links with their local police, in particular the Public Protection Units who were supportive when asked to search premises for contraband or to respond to incidents. Inspectors heard and read about good practice by APs in managing offenders' risks, including current and ex-residents being arrested due to the vigilance of off-duty staff who noticed suspicious activity.
- 3.56 Ultimately it was for the Parole Commissioners to determine the appropriateness of an offender being recalled to custody. They required clear evidence of increased risk, and the Commissioners would not endorse a recall simply on the basis of homelessness or lack of an approved address. This could mean APs sometimes had to manage very challenging and aggressive behaviour pending a recall decision. There had been no lasting adverse consequences to date, but the APs managers experienced considerable anxiety about these situations. There would be mutual benefit in the APs managers and Parole Commissioners meeting and sharing perspectives. ***We recommend the APs managers forum should seek a meeting with the Parole Commissioners to ensure each organisations perspective is understood in relation to evictions, decisions to release prisoners and recall them to custody.***

## f. Links with local communities

- 3.57 A criminal justice system can protect the public most effectively when it has community confidence and support. APs are an essential element of the criminal justice system in many jurisdictions, including Northern Ireland, but they can be contentious because the nature of their residents offending is often highly emotive, which makes rational engagement extremely difficult.
- 3.58 All of the Northern Ireland APs were known in their local areas, and some suffered adverse attention because of their role. This included damage to the property and staff cars, as well as pickets, petitions, media articles, verbal abuse and graffiti.
- 3.59 Local communities who protested against APs simply did not want them in their neighbourhood. The APs and statutory agencies acknowledged residents views, but still affirmed the benefit of APs in managing risks outweighed these concerns. The evidence at Paragraph 1.1 clearly supports the case for APs, irrespective of their location or residents' offending histories. Other important considerations include:

- While by no means all APs residents had sexual convictions, sex offenders attracted the greatest levels of opprobrium. Yet reconviction rates for sex offenders are low - MoJ Quarterly Proven Reoffending Statistics show that *'Between July 2010 and June 2011, as in most previous years... sexual (child) offences had the lowest proven reoffending rate at 8.9 per cent.'*<sup>5</sup> Previous inspections have demonstrated that sex offenders in Northern Ireland can be effectively managed within the Public Protection Arrangements.<sup>6</sup>
- One AP explained the context well by pointing out that there were hundreds of people with criminal convictions living in their area, of whom around 80 were under PBNI supervision; yet only eight of these people lived in the APs, where they were much more closely curfewed and supervised than anyone else.

3.60 The statutory agencies, in particular the PBNI, PSNI and PPANI worked closely with the PBSW to engage with the local community in the lead up to reopening of Thompson House. A considerable amount of proactive media engagement and education work has been done by the PPANI communications sub-group and others. Their joint outreach efforts included information sessions which outlined the processes for selecting residents, regime and controls, and offered opportunities to tour the premises and to join a stakeholder group which would provide residents with a forum where they could raise issues of concern. Thompson House valued the statutory support that was provided, and its usefulness was apparent when the PSNI were able to dispel myths that were circulating about some residents.

3.61 The Minister of Justice was supportive of Thompson House throughout this difficult period. The PPANI communications sub-group had made repeated efforts over the years to educate politicians and local communities, but the events they organised were poorly attended. From local representatives' perspective it was simply impossible to reconcile their constituents' interests with rehabilitation of offenders, and they invariably reflected the former in public debate.

3.62 As such there remains a significant ongoing challenge for APs to be accepted by their local communities. The transitional AP approach has been to maintain a low profile, engaging only in limited community liaison, usually on a reactive basis; and it has often fallen to their statutory partners to address community concerns about APs. While this may be understandable given recent experiences, this inspection has again found that the APs add significant value to offender management. It is imperative that, despite resistance, they and their statutory partners maintain a proactive outreach programme to explain their role and public protection achievements to local communities.

<sup>5</sup> See *Reconviction rates of serious sex offenders and assessments of their risk* UK Home Office Report 164.

<sup>6</sup> See *An Inspection of Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland* CJI, 13 June 2011.



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14 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast BT2 7BA  
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