

Justice Committee

Women Offenders

Letter from the Scottish Prison Service

At the Evidence Session on 5 November, I agreed to provide the Committee with details of the number of young women who have been accommodated in the Separation and Re-integration Unit at HMP and YOI Cornton Vale, which I referred to as the 'intensive management support suite'.

The Separation and Re-integration Unit (SRU) at Cornton Vale is a self-contained unit in Dumyat Hall, which was opened in June 2012. I attach a table showing full details of the number of occasions women have been held in the SRU, the length of time for each episode, the ages of the women, together with information on the 3 broad reasons that the women have been located in the SRU.

It would perhaps be useful to the Committee to set these figures in context and explain the ethos of Dumyat Hall and its role in managing the very complex needs of the women at Cornton Vale. The behaviour of a small number of women at times manifests itself in violence and disruptive behaviour; Dumyat Hall plays an important role in managing the women who exhibit those behaviours in a secure and safe environment and preparing them for return to the standard regime. All of the women located in the SRU participate in a case conference within 24 hours of their admission to the unit. The purpose of the multi-disciplinary case conference, which involves the women themselves, is to decide on their individual plan for their care whilst in Dumyat. The individual plan will include access to activities, visits and exercise, and provides an opportunity to discuss the unit regime and plans for returning to the standard regime.

A key aim of the unit is minimising the period of time a woman is located within their cell and the regime is designed to avoid isolating those who are located there. Unit staff encourage the women to participate in activities outside Dumyat such as the gym, education and exercise in the establishment's gardens with staff in attendance, hairdressers, and sessions with healthcare specialists and visits. The women are also encouraged to interact with other women held in Dumyat in a safe environment during recreation periods. As part of their re-integration plan, a woman may spend short periods of time in their usual living area with the option of returning to Dumyat if this is necessary.

Since the unit's opening, there have been a small number of women whose continually disruptive and violent behaviour has required prolonged periods in the unit. As explained above, the women who are held in the SRU often have a variety of complex behavioural and mental health issues and this can be displayed through acts of self-harm and violent and aggressive behaviour. Those women can feel threatened and at risk in the general living areas of the prison and prefer the perceived safety of Dumyat Hall. The management of those women is focused on dealing with their disruptive behaviour and developing strategies that assist them to cope in the usual prison environment.

I hope this information is helpful to you and your Committee colleagues. Please contact me if you require further information or explanation.

Colin McConnell, Chief Executive
Scottish Prison Service
14 November 2013

HMP and YOI Cornton Vale - Separation and Re-Integration Unit - Dumyat Hall

Women held in HMP and YOI Cornton Vale Separation and Re-integration Unit - June 2012 (date opened) – until 5 November 2013			
Number of episodes	Number of days	Number of women	Reasons
1 episode	1 day	16	10 women X Rule 95 and 6 X ACT2care
1 episode	2 days	3	3 women X Rule 95
1 episode	3 days	8	8 women X Rule 95
1 episode	More than 3 days*	3	3 women X Rule 95
2 episode	6 days**	1	Rule 95
2 episodes	9 days***	1	Rule 95
2 episodes	19 days****	1	3 days X Rule 95 and 16 days X Rule 41
2 episodes	177 days	1	Rule 95
5 episodes	96 days	1	61 days X Rule 95 and 35 days X Rule 41
5 episodes	272 days	1	Rule 95/RRC
6 episodes	387 days	1	Rule 95

* The 3 women spent respectively 5, 8 and 22 days in the Unit

** The 2 periods were of 3 days duration totalling 6 days

*** One period of 6 days and one period of 3 days totalling 9 days

**** One period of 16 days and one period of 3 days.

The age range of the 37 women accommodated in the Separation and Re-integration Unit ranged from 19 to 56 years of age; 8 of them were 21 or under; 3 of the 4 women held for the longest periods (96, 177 and 272 days) were under 21.

Reasons

Rule 41 (Prisons & Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011

- Where a healthcare professional advises the Governor that it is appropriate to accommodate a prisoner in specified conditions to protect the health and welfare of the prisoner or any other prisoners.

Rule 95 (Prisons & Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011

- Where the Governor may order that a prisoner must be removed from association with other prisoners when it is appropriate for one of the following reasons:
 - (a) Maintaining good order and discipline
 - (b) Protecting the interests of any prisoner
 - (c) Ensuring the safety of other persons

RRC (Refusal to Return to Mainstream Conditions)

- Where a prisoner refuses to return to a mainstream location once Rule 41 or Rule 95 conditions have been withdrawn.