



# Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Pauline McCabe



- Fully independent
- Fair, impartial investigation
- Open and transparent

# Social Characteristics of Prisoners

Characteristic	General Population	Prison Population
Ran away from home as a child	11%	47% male and 50% female sentenced prisoners
Taken into care as a child	2%	27%
Regularly truanted from school	3%	30%
Excluded from school	2%	49% male and 33% female sentenced prisoners
No qualifications	15%	52% men and 71% women
Numeracy at or below Level 1 (level expected of 11 year-olds)	23%	65%
Reading ability at/below Level 1	21-23%	48%
Unemployed before imprisonment	5%	67%
Homeless	0.9%	32%
Suffer from two or more mental disorders	5% men and 2% women	72% male and 70% female sentenced prisoners
Psychotic disorder	0.5% men and 0.6% women	7% male and 14% female sentenced prisoners
Drug use in the previous year	13% men and 8% women	66% male and 55% female sentence prisoners
Hazardous drinking	38% men and 15% women	63% male and 39% female sentence prisoners

# Internal Complaints Process



- 2 Steps/Confidential
- Residential Governor Response
- Time Limits for each stage

# Areas of Concern



- Some prisoners encouraged not to complain
- Complaints must be in writing
- Staff reluctant to overturn colleague decisions



# Prisoner Ombudsman Complaints

- No requirement to write
- Freephone Service for all prisoners
- Immediate confirmation of eligibility
- Translation Service



# Types of Complaint

- Assaults
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Privileges
- Regime
- Lockdowns
- Visits
- Postal Services
- Phone calls

BROMLEY BR  
PRISON FACTS

November 2009

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# Recommendations

- Individual or group
- Changes to policy and practice
- Realistic and achievable
- 90% plus accepted





# Deaths in Custody



Inform:

- The Coroner
- The Prison Service
- The Family

# Colin Bell – Key Findings

- Minimal human contact
- Cold
- Checks not taking place
- Officers playing with computer/  
going to bed
- Made a number of attempts to die





Thank you  
Go raibh maith  
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