



Performance Audit: A Strategic Overview on the  
Correctional Services Agency's Operations at the  
Corradino Correctional Facility

Report by the Auditor General  
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## List of Abbreviations

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CCF	Corradino Correctional Facility
CCFMB	Corradino Correctional Facility Monitoring Board
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CO	Correctional Officer
COO	Chief Operations Officer
CoRRS	Centre of Residential Restorative Services
CRU	Care and Reintegration Unit
CSA	Correctional Services Agency
DG	Director General
ISSAI	International Standard of Supreme Audit Institutions
LN	Legal Notice
MCH	Mount Carmel Hospital
MHAS	Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement
MI	Medical Intervention
NAO	National Audit Office
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OMS	Offenders Management System
SL	Subsidiary Legislation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure



# Executive Summary

## Why This Study?

The Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF) is the country's main site in which the vast majority of individuals under arrest or serving a sentence of imprisonment are detained. It is estimated that by the end of 2021 CCF's operation would have cost the taxpayer circa €23 million in annual recurrent expenditure. Given the intrinsic national security and social importance surrounding this facility, together with the cited significant amount of public funds it absorbs every year, NAO resolved to conduct a performance review into the former's operations.

## What NAO Recommends

NAO recommends that the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement considers proposing a change in law so that the function of rehabilitation within correctional facilities in Malta is elevated and enhanced through better and comprehensively defined legal obligations.

NAO urges CSA to ascertain that all inmates are provided with a care plan and that care and rehabilitation opportunities are extended to reach a wider number of prisoners. Specifically, the Agency is encouraged to increase work placements (both internal and external) as well as educational opportunities which are intended to be part of a systematic rehabilitative framework.

This Office additionally notes that the full benefits of any enhancements made to the rehabilitative aspect, can never be fully reaped unless the challenges brought about by CCF's limited physical space are addressed and, consequently, a more appropriate environment is achieved.

## NAO's Key Observations

Throughout this review NAO observed a general sense of order, organisation and cleanliness throughout the facility. While noting CCF's generally unobjectionable state of repair, this Office however identified some shortcomings in the facility's upkeep which may be unduly compounding (though not to a critical extent) the already intrinsically difficult nature of incarceration.

NAO noted that CCF's physical capacity, considering especially the exponential increase in the number of the inmate population, is significantly strained with obvious negative implications, particularly on security, hygiene and privacy. This Office however acknowledges that the Correctional Services Agency (CSA) neither has control over the number of inmates who have to be detained at the facility, nor on the segregation requirements (both legal or as imposed by the Courts) that need to be respected.

Of significant concern, the audit team additionally observed that local legislation does not specifically impose sufficient obligations on CSA with regard to an effective system of rehabilitation. This consideration may lead to the Agency being fully compliant with local law even if insufficient effort is actually invested in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

This review in fact showed that, while significant efforts have been made in recent years to design care plans for CCF's inmates, care and re-integration initiatives are still not reaching the entire prison population. This is evident in the number of prisoners who do not have a care plan, together with the low number of work placements (both inside and outside the facility) as well as educational opportunities being provided to inmates. While acknowledging that such opportunities are also partially dependent on factors extraneous to the Agency, NAO still feels that these are too limited to be considered as an adequate prison-wide effort towards rehabilitation through work and education. Ultimately, NAO strongly believes that the availability of adequate rehabilitation facilities is of critical importance within CCF.

This review also showed how, based on figures provided by the CSA, drug abuse within CCF has declined considerably. These figures also depict what can be considered as a controlled situation within an environment which is conventionally prone to challenges in this area.

Through this study, NAO also observed that the complement of Correctional Officers and Care & Re-Integration Professionals has increased in recent years. Despite this, however the number of staff in both segments still falls short of the targeted complement, even if the latter is not supported by any comprehensively documented study.

While NAO is concerned with the lack of an electronic centralised information system within CCF up till writing of this report, it acknowledges the agreement signed with a third-party provider which will provide CSA with an Offenders Management System. This Office also acknowledges that CSA has initiated the process for its policies and procedures to be developed and drafted.

# Chapter 1 | Introduction

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**This introductory chapter contextualises the audited area and presents the audit's overall scope, objectives and adopted methodology, as well as the limitations encountered during this review. These are followed by a synopsis of the report's chapters.**

## 1.1 Why This Study?

- 1.1.1 The Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF) is the country's main site in which the vast majority of individuals under arrest or serving a sentence of imprisonment are detained. As at time of writing of this publication, this prison was housing approximately 800 inmates and was run by the Correctional Services Agency (CSA), the operations of which are estimated to cost the taxpayer circa €23 million in recurrent expenditure for the year 2021.
- 1.1.2 Given the intrinsic national security and social importance surrounding this facility, together with the cited significant amount of public funds it absorbs every year, NAO resolved to conduct a performance review into the former's operations.

## 1.2 Background Information

- 1.2.1 CSA falls under the portfolio of the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement (MHAS). CSA's operations at CCF are governed by the Prisons Act (Chapter 260 of the Laws of Malta) and by the Prisons Regulations (Subsidiary Legislation (SL) 260.03). The Agency and, consequently, the facility, are headed and managed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is also referred to as the Director or Director General (DG). The operations of this facility are regulated by the Corradino Correctional Facility Monitoring Board (CCFMB) whose members are appointed by the President every two years.
- 1.2.2 While the CCF is the main prison site on the island, CSA is also responsible for the running of three satellite premises, namely the Valletta Lock-Up subjacent to the Malta Law Courts, the Forensic Unit within Mount Carmel Hospital (MCH) and the Centre of Residential Restorative Services (CoRRS) at Imtaħleb. The Agency's operations are intended to fulfil five principal goals, namely to:
- i. keep prisoners in custody;
  - ii. maintain order, control, discipline and a safe environment;
  - iii. provide decent conditions for prisoners and meet their needs, including health needs;
  - iv. provide positive regimes which help prisoners address their offending behaviour; and
  - v. help prisoners prepare for their return to the community as responsible citizens.

### 1.3 Audit Scope and Objectives

1.3.1 While, as already stated, CSA is responsible to operate CCF as well as the three mentioned satellite premises, this overview will focus only on the main CCF site. Rather than delving in depth of detail in one specific area, this review is intended to be a strategic overview encompassing numerous higher-level aspects of the facility.

1.3.2 This Office acknowledges that CCF is a single cog in the broader correctional and reformative system, with several other external entities and factors significantly impacting on eventual results. To this end, NAO did not seek to pin rehabilitation and/or recidivism rates as conclusive indicators of the prison's efficacy, but rather endeavoured to evaluate the adequacy of the Agency's efforts in this respect on their own merits.

1.3.3 As with all prison systems throughout the world, CCF is a highly sensitive area of operations with security being an area of paramount importance and one which is kept under strict confidentiality. To this end, while the audit team did delve into certain security aspects with CSA's management, these will not be reported upon in this publication.

1.3.4 Scoped periods of analysis, particularly insofar as file review is concerned, differed from one section to another and are specified accordingly throughout the report. Unless otherwise stated however, all findings in this review are as at end June 2021.

1.3.5 Through this review, NAO sought to determine whether CCF is adequately maintained and resourced as well as whether its operations and modus operandi are conducive to rehabilitation of prisoners.

### 1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 After acquiring an overview of the Agency's operations through preliminary research, the audit team held an initial meeting with CSA's management for further insight. This was followed by a series of semi-structured meetings with stakeholders who work directly with the facility so that the audit team could gather information on any areas of concern they may have. These entities (whose input will be discussed further in Chapter 2) included multiple Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and various related Government bodies. Through these meetings the audit team gathered sufficient information to set a main audit question and could better scope its approach. In line with performance audit methodology, the audit team proceeded to compile a detailed Issue Analysis and Audit Design Matrix, through which several sub-questions, criteria and methodologies emerged. This provided the audit team with a clear pathway towards the successful conclusion of this audit.

1.4.2 Following this preliminary and planning stage, the audit team proceeded to hold a series of semi-structured interviews with members of CSA's management. As this exercise was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, most of such meetings were held online. The audit team

however still physically carried out five site visits at CCF to observe first-hand the conditions of this facility. It is to be noted that for these visits (the observations on which are discussed in detail in Chapter 3), the audit team was granted unrestricted access to the absolute majority of the facility's divisions and areas as identified by CSA management. NAO and CSA agreed that, for national security reasons and to safeguard the audit team's own safety, visits in the intelligence section of the facility and the maximum-security divisions were not carried out.

- 1.4.3 Throughout this review, the audit team also requested various documentation related to the audited area. NAO reports that all requested documentation was made available by CSA. Given the sensitive nature of some of the reviewed documentation, the audit team resolved to review these on site and record findings accordingly, rather than generating duplications thereof. This means that while the audit team did review primary data, in such instances no copies were retained.
- 1.4.4 Once all required information and observations were secured, the audit team carried out pertinent analysis accordingly and proceeded to produce the first draft of the report. This was then presented to the auditee for latter's final feedback before publication.
- 1.4.5 NAO conducted this performance audit in line with the Standard for Performance Auditing, ISSAI 3000.

## 1.5 Limitations

- 1.5.1 Auditing the operations of a correctional facility is always a sensitive task due to the intrinsic security and sensitive considerations of the area under review. To manage this, the audit team did need to manoeuvre more cautiously than it would in other more mainstream audit assignments while carrying out its work. However, NAO reports that CSA management did afford the audit team all expected and reasonable assistance during this exercise.
- 1.5.2 As already highlighted, this audit was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and this did present slight challenges, particularly insofar as planning on-site visits was concerned. The audit team however notes that cooperation from CSA management in this respect was forthcoming and these visits could be conducted with next to no delays or complications.
- 1.5.3 Throughout the course of this study, CCF featured repeatedly on local media. It must also be noted that, during the latter stages of this audit exercise, CSA's CEO suspended himself from duty. While NAO followed closely these reports and developments, it remained withdrawn from opinions expressed by such sources and focused solely on the scoping parameters set for this assignment.
- 1.5.4 In addition, an independent Board of Inquiry was set up during the course of the audit to investigate a number of alleged concerns related to the Agency's operations. This Board, set up by the Minister MHAS, was tasked to:

- a. Scrutinise the CSA's procedures when it comes to assessing the inmates' mental and physical health upon admission at CCF. The analysis should include a study about the regulations adopted by the Agency when someone is introduced to the facility.
  - b. Scrutinise the procedures implemented to assess the inmates' mental and physical wellbeing throughout their stay at the facility, as well as analyse regulations followed by the Agency.
  - c. Analyse the procedures implemented by the Agency when an inmate is discharged from MCH and is re-admitted to CCF, and the systems in place that ensure continuous assessment of inmates.
  - d. Scrutinise the procedures, policy and regulations followed by the Agency when it comes to the rehabilitation of inmates, including the support provided to prisoners who suffer from addiction.
  - e. Scrutinise the measures linked to suicide prevention that are followed by the Agency.
- 1.5.5 As this Board's inquiry was due to be completed after the publication of this report, NAO resolved to not delve into any aspects which may be covered through the former's review so that this Office does not, in any way, influence the work of the former.
- 1.5.6 This Office also took note that, during the final stages of this audit, the Office of the Ombudsman initiated an investigation into possible systemic maladministration within CCF.
- ## 1.6 Report Structure
- 1.6.1 **Chapter 1** – This introductory chapter contextualises the audited area and presents the audit's overall scope, objectives and adopted methodology, as well as the limitations encountered during this review. These are followed by a synopsis of the report's chapters.
- 1.6.2 **Chapter 2** – This section presents the views of stakeholders, who work closely with CSA, on salient issues on CCF's operations. Main considerations tackled in these interviews served as bases for the audit team's review as presented in subsequent chapters.
- 1.6.3 **Chapter 3** – This chapter presents the audit team's observations on the general environment at CCF, including the state of repair of the premises, its cleanliness and whether order prevails or otherwise. This section also provides an insight on the drug situation within the facility.
- 1.6.4 **Chapter 4** – In this part of the study, CSA's financial budget allocation and human resources complement are reviewed in terms of their sufficiency and adequacy.

- 1.6.5 **Chapter 5** – This section of the report reviews the effort being allocated by CSA towards the functions of care and reintegration of prisoners. This analysis particularly focuses on the spread of this effort among the prisoner population, as well as on the different initiatives, or lack thereof, being undertaken by the Agency.
  
- 1.6.6 **Chapter 6** – In this chapter the audit team assessed to what level CCF's Standard Operating Procedures are standardised as well as the tools being used by the Agency to manage the extensive information it is obliged to maintain.

# Chapter 2 | Stakeholders' Views

This section presents the views of stakeholders, who work closely with CSA, on salient issues on CCF's operations. Main considerations tackled in these interviews served as bases for the audit team's review as presented in subsequent chapters.

## 2.1 Context

2.1.1 The operations of a correctional facility are complex and multi-faceted, to an extent that they cannot be all fully and meaningfully analysed in one audit exercise. To better scope its work therefore and to obtain a deeper understanding of the more salient considerations surrounding CCF, the audit team sought, through open discussion, to obtain views of stakeholders which, though independent from the Agency, work closely with the latter. Meetings with these stakeholders were held during the initial stages of this audit exercise, specifically between January 2021 to March 2021.

2.1.2 For this exercise, NAO engaged in discussion with five NGOs, four government bodies and the facility's chaplain. More specifically it held semi-structured meetings with:

### NGOs

- **Rehabilitation in Society Malta Foundation [RISe]** – provides community based rehabilitation programmes, intended to support inmates in changing their behaviour and attitude to become productive citizens and refrain from relapsing.
- **Mid-Dlam Ghad-Dawl** - assists prisoners and their families in handling the incarceration experience with more dignity and self-esteem.
- **OASI Foundation** – offers rehabilitation programmes to prisoners nearing the end of their prison sentence, aimed at tackling addiction and social problems.
- **Caritas Malta** – offers a rehabilitation programme catering for prisoners who are nearing the end of their prison sentence, as well as provides assistance to inmates who are still under arrest and not yet sentenced.
- **Fondazzjoni Suret il-Bniedem** – provides temporary residential care to homeless individuals (including recently released prisoners) and provides its clients with personal care.

### Government Bodies

- **The CCF Monitoring Board** – as per SL 260.03 (Article 104), monitors, inter alia, the treatment of prisoners, the state of prison premises and the overall administration of the prison.

- **The Offender Assessment Board** - as per Article 4 of Chapter 516 (Restorative Justice Act) of the laws of Malta, carries out, inter alia, analysis of reports prepared in respect of each prisoner, prior to and after sentencing, and makes recommendations accordingly to the Parole Board.
- **The Parole Board** – as per Article 9 of Chapter 516 (Restorative Justice Act) of the laws of Malta, evaluates, inter alia, applications for parole submitted by inmates and administers the subsequent sentences of such applicants.
- **Agenzija Sedqa** – provides, inter alia, treatment and rehabilitation to persons (including inmates) with drug and/or alcohol problems and other similar conditions.
- **CCF's Chaplain** - as per SL 260.03 (Article 45), attends to the religious needs of the prisoners, while paying special attention to young prisoners, habitual offenders, sick prisoners, prisoners with personal or family difficulties as well as prisoners under restraint or undergoing cellular confinement.

## 2.2 Salient Points

### CCF's Premises

- 2.2.1 The majority of interviewed entities highlighted that in recent years the physical condition and general state of repair of CCF has improved. While the audit team was informed that some areas would benefit from additional attention, most entities agreed that the current situation in this respect is different from what it was in the past. Entities specifically mentioned the investment made by CSA particularly insofar as the new Medical Intervention (MI) wing is concerned, as well as the improvements to the prison's kitchen and other areas.

### Cleanliness within CCF

- 2.2.2 Insight on CCF's cleanliness was positive, with some interviewed stakeholders highlighting improvements in this regard in recent years.

### Order and Organisation

- 2.2.3 Interviewed stakeholders affirmed that, in contrast with the situation prevailing for many years, presently there is a sense of order at the CCF. The audit team was informed that prisoner movement is now much more organised and controlled and therefore the facility feels more secure.

### Drug Availability and Abuse

- 2.2.4 Through these meetings, stakeholders highlighted that drug abuse and availability within the facility has significantly decreased over the past few years. While this is evidently a positive

development, some stakeholders did however remark that, unhealthy as it is, substance abuse in itself is a form of escapism. To this end, the significantly reduced availability of drugs within the facility has limited this possibility, and therefore the effect of incarceration, as legal punishment, is being experienced to a fuller extent.

## Discipline

2.2.5 NAO was informed by the interviewed entities that an increase in discipline was evident within CCF. While most of these stakeholders did agree that this was needed, some did point out that, at times, this is applied in a manner which they consider as firmer than proportionate. This notwithstanding, interviewed stakeholders did not provide NAO with examples of instances in which discipline was enforced excessively to an extent that, in their opinion, resulted in serious cause for concern.

## Overcrowding within CCF

2.2.6 Most interviewed stakeholders identified overcrowding as one of the most pressing challenges within CCF. NAO was informed that the facility simply does not have sufficient physical room to detain the current number of inmates adequately.

## Correctional Officers

2.2.7 During these meetings, interviewed entities did not have any notable adverse opinions on the quality of CCF's staff complement. However, some did point out that certain officers (particularly from the long-serving cohort) could benefit from better soft skills when it came to interacting with inmates. Nonetheless, none of the stakeholders mentioned particular incidents in which the quality of CCF officers proved to be cause for serious concern.

## Rehabilitation Effort within CCF

2.2.8 Most of the interviewed stakeholders pointed out that investment in rehabilitation within CCF is not sufficient and that much more could be done. While reference was made to some courses which were being delivered pre-COVID at CCF, most of these entities could not identify specific initiatives which were underway by CSA in this respect at the time of their meetings with the audit team.

## Chapter 3 | Overall Environment at CCF

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**This chapter presents the audit team's observations on the general environment at CCF, including the state of repair of the premises, its cleanliness and whether order prevails or otherwise. This section also provides an insight on the drug situation within the facility.**

*Note: The findings in this chapter are primarily based on five site visits conducted by the audit team at CCF. These visits were carried out on five separate dates, either during the morning while activity is at its peak or during rest time in the early afternoon. While, for security reasons, it was inevitable for the audit team to communicate a priori to CSA its intention to conduct a visit, the latter was generally not informed beforehand of which specific areas were to be inspected during each instance. To this end, while NAO acknowledges that the relatively short time it spent observing CCF operations may not have afforded the audit team first-hand experience of all occurrences and experiences within the facility, it believes it obtained a good general understanding of CCF's activities to address its audit questions.*

*As already stated in Chapter 1, the audit team inspected practically all the facility with the exception of the intelligence unit and the maximum security divisions. As also already mentioned, the audit team did enquire on some security aspects with CSA management during these visits but these will not be reported upon for confidentiality and national security reasons.*

### 3.1 Order and Organisation within CCF

#### Management of Prisoners' Movements

**3.1.1** During the audit team's visits at CCF it was noted that, insofar as daily activity was concerned, an inmate at the facility could be classified into one of two broad groups. More specifically, an inmate could either spend his/her day in his/her assigned division or be assigned to work inside or outside of the prison. The latter group also includes prisoners who are engaged in a rehabilitative activity (including formal education). The prevailing observation by the audit team on how daily activity is conducted, was that a notable sense of order and general organisation prevailed throughout.

**3.1.2** In the case of the first aforementioned categorisation of inmates, all were observed to be securely detained in their respective divisions (by means of locked gates) and not allowed to interact with inmates from other divisions or to roam other areas of the prison complex unless accompanied by a CCF Officer. During meetings with CSA management, NAO was informed that this practice is imperative for security purposes, particularly in the facility's efforts to quell internal drug trafficking and abuse. In addition, this practice of restricted movement

also assists CSA's management to enforce orders that could be imposed by the Courts of Law for specific prisoners not to be allowed to interact with each other.

- 3.1.3 This notwithstanding, all prisoners (with the exception of those undergoing cellular confinement) were observed to be allowed free movement within the common areas of their respective division, that is, the interior space between the cells as well as the dedicated outdoor area available adjacent to every division.
- 3.1.4 With respect to the second segment of inmates, the audit team could observe those who, in some way or another, were engaged in activities within the confines of the facility<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, and amongst others, the audit team saw inmates working in the facility's steel workshop, sewing workshops, bakery, prison's kitchen and officers' mess. In addition, inmates could be seen engaged in other work such as cleaning, carrying out general maintenance throughout the facility, doing restoration works, collecting and transporting refuse as well as delivering food from the main kitchen to divisions. A small number of inmates were also observed engaging in formal education remotely through the use of desktop computers.
- 3.1.5 These activities, the audit team noted, were all carried out in an organised manner, with working conditions and environment, prima facie, closely resembling those of normal work outside the prison's confines. It is also important to highlight that although some of these inmates could move between a limited number of different areas within the facility, the audit team felt that such movements were with purpose and no loafing could be identified. NAO also feels it is worth noting that the disposition of inmates engaged in such activities was notably positive and they engaged freely in conversation both with CSA's staff and the audit team itself.
- 3.1.6 It is however important to note, that while the audit team considered this activity as a positive aspect of CCF's operations, it could not but notice that the vast majority of inmates were not engaged in such endeavours, but rather belonged to the first segment as described in point 3.1.2. This consideration is discussed further in Chapter 5 of this report.

### CCF Officers' Contribution to Order within the Facility

- 3.1.7 During its visits, NAO noted that CSA personnel always presented themselves smartly and went about their duties with purpose. It is also worth noting that, although CSA management asserted that staff shortages prevail (which issue will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4), the audit team could always observe a constant and notable presence of such officials throughout the facility, which presence invariably contributed to the overall sense of order and organisation within the facility.

<sup>1</sup> The audit team did not endeavour to carry out inspections on workplaces external to the CCF complex as it deemed this practice too intrusive.

## Noise Levels within CCF

3.1.8 Throughout the visits carried out by NAO, the audit team noted the acceptable level of noise in all areas of the facility. While normal conversation and general activity could be heard from inmates, the audit team cannot report any instances of shouting, clamour or unacceptably high noise levels during its visits. This consideration was mostly evident in what is referred to as the central building. More specifically, part of this area features an atrium that leads off to four general population divisions housing upwards of 300 male inmates. Even if these divisions are individually closed-off from this central space by gates rather than solid doors, noise levels generated by such a large number of inmates did not impede the audit team to converse with CSA officers normally.

## Tidiness within CCF

3.1.9 During its visits at CCF, the audit team observed how all areas of the facility were kept in an orderly fashion and free of clutter<sup>2</sup>. All of the divisions' common areas (both internal and external) were found to be kept tidy. Other areas of the facility (such as the kitchen, MI wing, prison's tuck shop, etc) were all kept well organised.

## NAO Observation

3.1.10 The general sense of order and organisation as observed throughout the facility is evident. This Office acknowledges that such a situation not only enhances the security aspect of the facility, but is also an essential part of the foundation unto which rehabilitation initiatives can be based.

## 3.2 CCF Upkeep and General State of Repair

### CCF Divisions' State of Repair

3.2.1. The upkeep of CCF's premises is a key consideration in the Agency's efforts towards the execution of its mandate. To this end, during the mentioned site visits, the audit team took particular note of the general state of repair of the facility's premises. This Office observed that, while it was evident that the facility is not a modern building, the condition of the premises inside the divisions did not present any immediate material concerns to the audit team<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, this Office noted that, prima facie, walls, floors and ceilings of most divisions were found to be in unobjectionable condition, an acceptable amount of natural light seeped through to all areas and all inspected cells were found to have sufficient artificial lighting. Notwithstanding, with the exception of a single division<sup>4</sup> (which the audit team observed as being kept to an elevated standard when compared with the rest), most inspected divisions would benefit, to varying

<sup>2</sup> Areas commented upon in this report do not include the actual inmates' cells, as the cleanliness and organisation of these are assigned to the inmates themselves.

<sup>3</sup> Through its site visits, NAO observed all divisions' common areas and general facilities of CCF. The audit team also inspected a number of cells during this exercise through a randomly selected indicative sample.

<sup>4</sup> This division is intended to house inmates which have a proven good track record and are nearing the end of their sentence. It is also intended for inmates who qualify for certain rehabilitation initiatives (discussed further in Chapter 5)

extents, from maintenance such as repainting of walls, repairs to flooring, refurbishment of communal shower facilities and overall upkeep of fittings (such as cell doors and beds).

- 3.2.2. NAO feels it is important to note that the immediately preceding comments also apply to the division specifically designated for cellular confinement. During its visits, the audit team observed that the upper level of this two-tier division featured cells which have been recently refurbished, with relatively freshly painted walls and fittings in good state of repair. On the other hand, it was noted that cells on the lower floor of this division would benefit from refurbishment, even if no critical shortcomings were, prima facie, observed. Specifically, while noting that these cells were clean, adequately sized and received sufficient amount of natural and artificial lighting, this Office also observed that walls were in need of fresh paint while some of the doors and basic fittings were in need of refurbishing or replacing. When queried on this, CSA management stated that the cells are due to be refurbished soon to be brought up to the standard as those on the upper floor.

### Condition of Supporting Premises within the Facility

- 3.2.3. To gather a more complete image of the state of repair of CCF's premises, the audit team also visited supporting facilities which are pivotal to the prison's core operation. Specifically, these consisted of the MI wing, prison's main kitchen, bakery, inmate recreational areas, prison chapel, canine section, officers' training grounds, officers' mess, prison tuck shop, motor vehicle workshop, sewing workshop and steel workshop. NAO observed that the condition of these facilities' premises was generally good with this Office having no material concerns to report. It is worth noting that when inspecting the MI wing, the audit team observed that the condition of this facility was exceptionally good and that it was very well equipped with an assortment of equipment intended to assist in a variety of medical interventions. CSA management highlighted that though this recently inaugurated facility benefitted from significant investment, most manual work involved was carried out by inmates. The audit team also observed extensive renovation works being carried out by inmates on the prison chapel and sports ground as well as other works such as new plumbing, restoration of gates, electrical work and other general maintenance.

### Cleanliness throughout the Facility

- 3.2.4. Another aspect assessed by the audit team during its site visits at CCF, was the overall cleanliness of the facility. NAO notes that all of the visited divisions and facilities were kept clean to a very satisfactory level with the audit team observing, on multiple occasions, recently washed premises. CSA further indicated that the responsibility for cleanliness of individual cells is assigned to each prisoner, with the audit team observing that the randomly selected indicative sample of inspected cells were found to be generally clean.
- 3.2.5. This Office feels it is worth drawing attention to the outdoor site in which the waste of the entire prison is kept after being collected from the facility's different areas and prepared for

eventual disposal. When visiting this site, NAO noted that it was kept clean, well-organised and that no foul smells normally associated with such sites could be detected.

## NAO Observations

- 3.2.6. While this Office does not have any particular concern on the general state of repair of all areas within CCF, it nonetheless feels that some identified shortcomings in this respect may be unduly compounding (though not to a critical extent) the already intrinsically difficult nature of the incarceration experience. This notwithstanding, NAO commends CSA on the numerous maintenance initiatives which have already been affected across the facility as well as those which were underway as at time of writing.
- 3.2.7. This Office acknowledges that cleanliness is of fundamental importance particularly keeping in view the considerable number of inmates detained at CCF. To this end, NAO positively notes the high level of cleanliness kept throughout the facility.

## 3.3 CCF's Physical Capacity

- 3.3.1 The European Prison Rules as published by the Council of Europe, inter alia state that prisoners "shall normally be accommodated during the night in individual cells except where it is preferable for them to share sleeping accommodation." These recommendations further call for accommodation to "only be shared if it is suitable for this purpose and shall be occupied by prisoners suitable to associate with each other" and "as far as possible, prisoners shall be given a choice before being required to share sleeping accommodation". These recommendations also distinguish between different categories of inmates and call for the physical segregation from one another during incarceration.
- 3.3.2 Local legislation closely reflected the above-mentioned requirements up till the enactment of LN 15 of 2016 which amended the Prisons Regulations (SL 260.03). Specifically, prior to this amendment, Article 19 of SL 260.03 stated that "every prisoner shall be lodged in an individual cell unless, due to lack of sufficient number of cells or other special circumstances, it is necessary to place more than one prisoner in a cell". This requirement was however removed through the enactment of LN 15 of 2016, with Article 19 of SL 260.03 now only stating that, where "accommodation is shared it shall be occupied by prisoners suitable to associate with each other in those conditions" and that such accommodation shall meet a certain standard of hygiene. In addition, local law (through Article 12 of SL 260.03) reflects the segregations set out in the European Prison Rules (point 3.3.1 refers) by stating that, "as far as practicable a distinction shall be made between:

- a. male and female prisoners;
- b. unconvicted and convicted prisoners;
- c. prisoners sentenced to detention and other prisoners;

- d. prisoners under twenty-one years of age and prisoners over that age;
  - e. prisoners sentenced to imprisonment for the first time and those sentenced more than once; and
  - f. short-term and long-term prisoners.”
- 3.3.3 In order to assess the situation at CCF, the audit team enquired on the actual capacity of the facility, to which CSA management replied that CCF comprises of 474 cells which ideally would house one inmate each (that is, 474 prisoners).
- 3.3.4 During meetings with NAO, CSA management asserted that the prison’s population is ever on the rise, increasing from 550 inmates in 2016, to an average of around 800 inmates as at time of writing. The audit team also noted, that during 2020, CCF’s population swelled to over 900 inmates, though CSA management acknowledged that this was a temporary spike. This notwithstanding, CSA management further stressed that the prison population is expected to continue increasing in the future. It is noted that these figures are well beyond CCF’s intended capacity (point 3.3.3 refers) which situation causes additional and undue challenges to the running of a facility which, by its very nature, is already a very complex and sensitive operation.
- 3.3.5 The challenges brought about by the high number of inmates at CCF when compared to the intended capacity, are further compounded by the Agency’s efforts to adhere to some of the segregations as cited in the European Prison Rules and local law. Specifically, NAO notes that such segregations complicate the allocation of prisoners throughout the facility, possibly resulting in inmates having to be placed in a division which is already well populated rather than in another with more available space. During meetings with CSA management, this Office was informed that, while the Agency invests efforts to adhere to these segregations, the size of the physical premises of the facility limits this compliance.
- 3.3.6 Specifically it was highlighted (and observed) that male and female prisoners were kept separate within CCF, young offenders are intended to be detained in the CoRRS facility in Imtaħleb and, to some extent, efforts were also noted to segregate inmates with short sentences from others with longer ones. NAO additionally acknowledges that CSA also has to comply with Court orders which would dictate that particular inmates should not be, at any time, in the presence of each other or that an inmate has to spend a pre-determined duration in solitary confinement<sup>5</sup>. This notwithstanding, the audit team was informed that the facility’s infrastructure (and the fact that CCF is the only general prison in the country) does not allow for inmates under arrest and convicted prisoners to be kept separate from each other. The same applies for those who have been incarcerated for the first time and repeat offenders.

<sup>5</sup> Solitary confinement differs from cellular confinement. More specifically, cellular confinement can be handed down at the Director’s discretion (for a period not exceeding that stipulated in SL 260.03) and entails the prisoner being confined to his cell for 23 hours a day and allowed one daily hour out of the cell for exercise in open air, weather permitting. On the other hand, solitary confinement, while enforced by CSA, can only be imposed by the Courts of Law and entails the inmate being placed in cellular confinement and prohibited from having communication with anyone else.

**3.3.7** CSA management highlighted that, in view of these considerations, it has become common practice that cells are shared, rather than occupied by a single prisoner. In addition, it was noted that to address the lack of space, CSA also had to resort to dormitories which would house a larger number of prisoners. During its site visits, the audit team observed five such dormitories. Specifically, three of these, though still dormitories, did not feature bunk beds and had adequate personal space, with two of these also having partitions to afford some degree of privacy. Another of these divisions was intended for female prisoners but, at the time of the audit team's visit, was not occupied as it was being used as a quarantine division for newly admitted female prisoners. It was however noted that this division featured bunkbeds with no partitioning. The last of these five dormitories is a division which CSA management highlighted was set up due to a spike of admissions. NAO was further informed that this dormitory is intended to house part of the cohort of inmates serving short sentences (less than one year). During its fieldwork, the audit team visited this division twice. In the first instance it was noted that this division was overcrowded within a relatively small area, with the audit team being informed that some 140 inmates were being housed at the time. These inmates were afforded individual beds, though these, in some occasions, were stacked in a three-tier bunk bed setup. While the division featured an adequately sized outdoor recreational area, the indoor space of the dormitory was very restricted for the number of inmates it housed, thereby affording close to no personal space to each individual. The audit team also noted that, despite that the division per se was clean, noticeable body-odour could be detected. While this can be attributed to the large number of individuals housed within such a restricted space, it is also important to highlight that this division only featured one shower cubical and water closet. NAO noted that this is obviously insufficient for such a large number of inmates to adequately maintain good personal hygiene. This division was inspected once again around six weeks after the first inspection, and a noticeable decrease in the number of inmates housed within could be observed. CSA management indicated that this decrease was possible as cells became available in other divisions, making it possible to transfer some of the inmates housed in this dormitory. While on this second occasion the division felt less restrictive, NAO still noted that the sanitary facilities (that is, a single shower cubical and water closet) were not sufficient for the inmates to maintain an adequate level of personal hygiene.

**3.3.8** Through further discussions with the audit team on these issues, CCF management highlighted that there is a plan to increase prison capacity by an additional 100 cells and that an area has been identified within the existing CCF grounds whereby a new complex of cells can be constructed. To substantiate this, the audit team was forwarded with an extract from the 2021 financial estimates which clearly highlight a vote of €1.5million for an 'Extension to Corradino Correctional Facility'. CSA Director further asserted that this is part of a €5million allocation for this project, which will be supplemented with a substantial amount of work being done by the inmates themselves. This Office however notes that, while commendable, an extension of an additional 100 cells would still not be sufficient to achieve an ideal situation of one prisoner per cell (point 3.3.3 refers) with the current inmate population, let alone if this population increases in the future. NAO additionally considers the fact that

this intended increase in capacity may also not be enough to enable CSA to comply fully to the ideal segregation criteria as mentioned in point 3.3.2.

## NAO Observation

**3.3.9** While NAO notes that standing legislation as at time of writing technically permits the housing of more than one prisoner per cell, it acknowledges that this is not ideal, as also cited in the European Prison Rules as published by the Council of Europe. This Office also acknowledges that the number of inmates being detained and admitted at CCF, as well as the segregation requirements that need to be affected, are completely out of CSA's control. Given that CSA has to detain all individuals who are ordered to be incarcerated by the Courts of Law, it has no other option but to constantly find practical and workable solutions to house all prisoners within the limited physical space it is afforded by the facility itself. This notwithstanding, NAO cannot but highlight the obvious negative implications of such a situation, which span over multiple areas particularly security, hygiene and privacy. This Office however also acknowledges the Agency's intention to mitigate this problem through the construction of additional premises within the existing facility to increase its capacity, even if this would still not achieve the best possible scenario.

## 3.4 Drug Abuse within CCF

**3.4.1** As highlighted in Chapter 2 of this report, interviewed stakeholders were in agreement that the drug problem in CCF has decreased significantly over the past few years. This assertion was also highlighted multiple times by CSA management during meetings with the audit team as well as the latter's site visits at the facility.

**3.4.2** In order to verify such a claim, NAO requested statistical information from CCF's medical team on substance abuse testing. Information in this respect was sent to this Office and covered the years 2019, 2020 and up till May 2021. During a meeting with NAO, CSA's medical team explained that this information showed primarily two broad categories of tests, specifically those taken on newly admitted inmates (that is within the initial four weeks of incarceration) and those which are taken at least four weeks after admission (these can be taken at random or targeted upon identification of potential symptoms of drug consumption). CSA's medical team explained that the four-week period allows for any trace of substance abuse which occurred prior to admission to CCF to subside, thereby clearly indicating which positive results are due to illicit drug consumption outside of the facility and those which occurred during incarceration.

**3.4.3** The forwarded information showed that positive tests upon admission were much more significant than those detected after the four-week period. As can be deduced from Table 1, of all tests carried out on newly admitted inmates through 2019, 2020 and 2021 (up till May), an average of 40% tested positive. This is in contrast to the occurrence of positive results (averaging 1% - Table 2 refers) of tests carried out after the aforementioned four-week

period. Though the number of positive cases is low throughout the reviewed years, NAO still notes the sharp decline of such incidents, particularly from 47 in 2019 to 14 in 2020 and only 3 in the first five months of 2021.

**Table 1: Substance Abuse Testing upon Admission**

Year	Total Admissions	Refused to be tested	Total Tests upon Admission	Tested Positive to Substance Abuse	Tested Negative to Substance Abuse	Tested Positive as % of Total Tests
2019	958	275	683	286	397	42%
2020	1,082	185	897	337	560	38%
2021 <sup>(Up till May)</sup>	434	96	338	148	190	44%

**Table 2: Substance Abuse Testing after Four Week Period**

Year	Total Tests (excluding refusals)	Tested Positive to Substance Abuse	Tested Negative to Substance Abuse	Refused to be tested	Tested Positive as % of Total Tests
2019	2,344	47	2,297	13	2%
2020	2,704	14	2,690	5	0.5%
2021 <sup>(Up till May)</sup>	1,128	3	1,125	0	0.3%

**3.4.4** To further substantiate these results, CSA medical team furnished NAO with information on prescription medication dispensed to treat withdrawal symptoms. The audit team was informed that this information has started to be compiled every six months as from May 2020. The information provided was very detailed and featured a large amount of medication which is used daily in this respect. After reviewing this information, the audit team positively noted that there was a general significant decrease in the dispensation of these medications throughout the mentioned period and that usage was reaching a plateau at a level which will remain in demand to treat withdrawal symptoms of newly admitted inmates.

### NAO Observation

**3.4.5** NAO commends CSA's efforts to quell drug abuse within CCF. Presented figures show a pronounced downward trend in this respect and depict what can be considered as a controlled situation within an environment which is conventionally prone to challenges in this area.

## 3.5 Disciplinary Processes' Audit Trail

**3.5.1** NAO acknowledges, that in a correctional institution such as CCF order and organisation cannot prevail without an acceptable level of discipline. This assertion was expressed by CSA management as well as all the interviewed stakeholders (Chapter 2 refers). It is important also to note that local legislation governing the operations of CCF specifically provides for measures which the Director may resort to so that offences are punished and order is maintained.

Specifically, Article 78 (1) of LN 260.03 states that:

*If the Director finds a prisoner guilty of an offence against discipline he may impose one or more of the following punishments:*

- a) caution;*
- b) forfeiture or postponement for any period of any of the privileges under regulation 13;*
- c) exclusion from associated work for a period not exceeding fifty-six days;*
- d) assignment or reassignment of work for a period not exceeding fifty-six days;*
- e) stoppage of earnings, including any allowance, referred to in regulation 29(6) and regulation 30(1), for a period not exceeding fifty-six days;*
- f) cellular confinement not exceeding thirty days<sup>6</sup>;*
- g) forfeiture of not more than one hundred and twenty days of remission, whether earned or prospective, referred to in regulation 14 except in the case of a prisoner found guilty of wilful homicide, or attempted wilful homicide, or mutiny, or incitement to mutiny, or escape or attempted escape from prison, or assault on any person resulting in grievous bodily harm, and/or possession of and/or trafficking in narcotic drugs, in which case the forfeiture may be of not more than three hundred and sixty-five days;*
- h) in the case of a prisoner otherwise entitled to them, forfeiture for any period of the right, under regulation 8(1) to have the articles there mentioned; and*
- i) in the case of a prisoner guilty of escaping or attempting to escape and who is otherwise entitled to it, forfeiture of the right to wear his own clothing under regulation 22(2).*

3.5.2 In order for any of the above measures to be imposed, a process needs to be followed. Specifically, NAO was informed that this sequence of events starts off with a CCF Correctional Officer (CO) who would have observed or directly experienced an incident, submitting a report accordingly. This report (which in most cases was found to be handwritten), is then integrated into a template form by a CO of a higher rank who, amongst others, details which rules and regulations have been breached through the incident and recommends disciplinary measures. This form is then submitted to either a specifically appointed board, the Agency's Director or Chief Operations Officer (COO) for approval or otherwise prior to the imposition of the disciplinary action in question. A period then follows in which an inmate can appeal to this decision before an Appeals Tribunal.

3.5.3 While the audit team was not in a position to observe this process first-hand and therefore cannot comment on the full manner by which it is generally tackled, it did however review a number of inmate files (selected randomly as an indicative sample - discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6) which detailed this process. While none of these files featured a request for appeal, NAO reports that the documentation within regarding disciplinary procedures was found to follow the above process (point 3.5.2 refers) and clearly explained all stages.

<sup>6</sup> SL 260.03, Article 52 (5) also states that "the Director may defer the right of a prisoner to a visit until the expiration of any period of cellular confinement".

## NAO Observation

- 3.5.4 Disciplinary action is always a sensitive issue and even more so within a correctional facility. NAO notes that the manner by which disciplinary processes were documented in the reviewed files preserves an audit trail.

## 3.6 Recommendations

- 3.6.1 NAO encourages CSA to continue in its efforts, particularly insofar as maintaining order, cleanliness and low incidence of substance abuse are concerned. This Office acknowledges that such accomplishments are foundations unto which rehabilitation efforts could be based.
- 3.6.2 While reiterating that NAO has no particular concern on the general state of repair of any of the inspected areas within CCF, it urges CSA to continue and expedite its efforts to renovate the identified physical areas within the facility that need attention so that the premises themselves will not pose any undue negative effects (even if not presently at critical levels) on the inmates' incarceration experience.
- 3.6.3 This Office also encourages the Agency to expedite the construction of new premises to increase its current capacity. This would mitigate the related challenges being faced as at time of writing. As this initiative by itself will still not be sufficient to reach an ideal situation however, NAO also urges the Agency to explore other options through which its capacity may be increased even further, possibly at sites outside the current perimeter of the facility. Once viable possibilities in this respect are identified, CSA is urged to exert the necessary pressure, through appropriate channels, for such initiatives to be approved and have them materialised at the very earliest.

# Chapter 4 | CCF's Financial and Human Resources

In this part of the study, CSA's financial budget allocation and human resources complement are reviewed in terms of their sufficiency and adequacy.

## 4.1 Financial Budget Allocation and Investment

4.1.1 During discussions with the audit team, CSA management asserted that the Agency's annual financial allocation from central government, is considered adequate for the running of the facility. When reviewing Government's financial estimates for the last 3 years, the audit team observed a yearly average increase of 19% to CSA's yearly allocations, increasing from an estimate of €14.4 million for 2019 to €16.5 million for 2020, and up to €23.2 million for 2021. As already discussed in Chapter 3, a further €1.5 million was allocated in 2021 for an extension to CCF.

4.1.2 NAO was also informed that CCF can reap significant financial savings through works carried out by inmates themselves. In fact, CSA asserted that most of the structural works (such as construction works, plumbing, interior refurbishments and others) required within the facility, are carried out by inmates themselves in exchange for remuneration. As an example of this arrangement, CSA management stated that most of the work on the newly commissioned MI wing was done by inmates themselves and this, NAO was further informed, yielded significant financial savings.

### NAO Observation

4.1.3 This Office positively notes that the Agency feels it is being allocated sufficient financial resources from the yearly Government budget. This puts CSA in a good position to invest in the areas which it deems require attention.

## 4.2 Correctional Officers Complement and Ongoing Training

### Number of COs at CCF

4.2.1 During discussions with the audit team, CSA management asserted that the Agency is investing significantly in increasing its human resource complement, particularly COs. CSA management noted that this drive is aimed towards achieving a ratio of one CO for every three prisoners at any point in time. When queried if the Agency had performed any particular study to determine this ideal complement, CSA asserted that this ratio is based on general work experience,

discussions with COs and through observations of foreign prisons. NAO was further informed that the decision to aim for this ratio was discussed and agreed during management meetings. When asking for any supporting documentation on these discussions however, the audit team was informed that minutes of such meetings could not be traced. Rather, NAO was forwarded with a spreadsheet and a written explanation listing the projected ideal CO complement for the different divisions and other sections within CCF. Upon reviewing this forwarded information, the audit team however noted that the quoted target number of COs was not substantiated with documented justifications.

- 4.2.2 The above-mentioned information cited that, as at time of writing, CCF employed 333 COs. While this number is an increase over previous years (NAO specifically notes that CO complement at CCF stood at 254 in 2019 and 319 in 2020) this Office observes that it is still far from the target complement. In fact, the aforementioned forwarded information stated that CCF would require an additional 221 COs.

### NAO Observation

- 4.2.3 This Office is concerned that the ideal CO complement being sought by CSA is not backed up by a comprehensive study which clearly outlines justifications for the requirement of additional staff. NAO perceives the possibility that such a situation could lead to the Agency seeking the recruitment of more personnel than it actually requires, or to an inefficient deployment of COs throughout CCF's divisions and sections.

### Overtime Levels at CCF

- 4.2.4 Notwithstanding the above-mentioned shortage of COs, during its site visits the audit team noted that, in all the divisions and common areas it visited, the presence of COs was consistently evident. In discussions with CSA Management, this Office was informed that this presence could be achieved through the use of overtime in order to make up for the previously mentioned shortage of COs.
- 4.2.5 Given that the CO shortage as cited in point 4.2.2 is substantial and CSA management's assertion that overtime is being used to fill this gap, NAO enquired on the amount of overtime being done at CCF. In reply, CSA management forwarded overtime figures for all CSA staff (that is, not exclusively for CCF but including other areas under CSA responsibility such as CoRRs and MCH Forensic Section). CSA Management however further highlighted that most overtime work (around 89%) is carried out at CCF rather than in its satellites. Through this information NAO could compile Table 3 below to better present the extent of overtime hours at CCF.

Table 3: Regular vs Overtime Hours and Cost at CCF

	No. of Hours Regular	No. of Hours Overtime	% O/T of regular hours	Cost of Regular Payroll (€)	Cost of Overtime (€)	% O/T cost over regular payroll
2019	581,256	205,968	35%	5,215,483	2,439,446	47%
2020	727,024	230,098	32%	5,988,646	2,990,271	50%
2021 (up to May)	321,717	66,737	21%	2,760,500	1,100,123	40%

4.2.6 During meetings with NAO, CSA Management further highlighted that this very substantial level of overtime being registered at CCF is not meant to be a permanent solution. Specifically, the audit team was informed that additional recruitments are planned to occur within the next few years with the intention of drastically (but not completely) reducing the need for overtime merely to cover regular operations.

NAO Observations

4.2.7 NAO has reservations on the practice of using overtime as a means to fill in for a shortage of COs in the facility’s employ. While NAO understands that overtime is a valuable tool to provide for instances in CSA’s operations (such as incidents of emergency or instances which would require a temporary increase in CO presence), it does not agree that the Agency heavily depends on this option for normal operations. This notwithstanding, NAO understands that CCF’s options to fill in current staff shortage are limited, and acknowledges the latter’s efforts in recruiting additional COs throughout the years to mitigate this issue.

CO’s Quality, Recruitment and Training

4.2.8 During discussions with the audit team, CSA management stated that, while it is satisfied with the quality of most of CCF’s COs, it still has some concerns on a small number of officers. When asked to quantify these concerns, CSA management asserted that the problem was only minimal as the Agency had already relieved a number of COs which, in its opinion, were not adequate. In addition, the audit team was informed that the few remaining of such individuals are closely monitored by management.

4.2.9 CSA management also asserted that it is working to improve the recruitment process and induction training when engaging new COs. Amongst others, NAO was informed that the minimum age requirement for eligible applicants has been lowered from 21 to 18 years. This, CSA management explained, puts the Agency in a better position to engage young candidates, with good potential, who wish to join a disciplined force, and not automatically be disadvantaged when compared to other disciplined forces due to a higher age requirement. The audit team was also informed that the induction training being delivered in-house to new recruits, was extensive and covered a good range of skills which the officers would require in order to perform their duties up to the required standard. After reviewing the forwarded curriculum in fact, the audit team can confirm that the topics being covered are quite extensive and that this training aims to educate new recruits on both the academic and the practical fronts.

- 4.2.10 When querying CSA about the process adopted to monitoring the performance of COs, NAO was informed that the Agency does not have a formal and systematic performance assessment mechanism in place. The performance of COs, CSA asserted, is monitored in an informal way on a daily basis by the direct superiors of each officer and any issues that arise, are then discussed during informal meetings.
- 4.2.11 During discussions with the audit team, CSA also stated that in addition to its efforts in improving the quality of its new recruits, the Agency was also investing in the COs who have been employed at CCF prior to the introduction of the current induction training and selection criteria. NAO was informed that regular training on topics such as primary healthcare, sentence planning, cognitive behaviour and others is provided regularly.
- 4.2.12 When queried on the attendance rate of these courses, the Agency however highlighted that, while attendance was satisfactory, it was left on a voluntary basis. From documentation forwarded to this Office, the latter observed that, during 2021 a total of 138 COs (amounting to 39% of all Officers) attended to at least one training course. It was however noted that, the average attendance for each of the six training courses delivered was 48 (which amounts to 14% of the total CO complement). This essentially means that the 138 COs attending the training, did not attend all of the six courses that were offered. When requesting the same information for 2020 however, this Office was informed that even though training courses were delivered, records of attendance were not kept.

### NAO Observations

- 4.2.13 Acknowledging that performance of COs is constantly monitored by their direct superiors, NAO still perceives the lack of a formal procedure and of documented records on these assessments as shortcomings. Not having such a system and records impedes the Agency from adequately preserving transparency and an audit trail, that can be particularly important in the event of promotions and/or disciplinary actions.
- 4.2.14 While noting that the induction training being provided to new recruits is extensive, NAO feels that ongoing training can be more substantial. Specifically, this Office is concerned with the low number of COs who have attended training as well as the low rate of attendance for each of the courses. In addition, while NAO cannot contend the Agency's assertions that training was actually delivered during 2020, it remains concerned on the lack of proper documentation kept in this regard (such as attendance sheets).

## 4.3 Care & Reintegration Professionals at CCF

### Number of CRU Professionals

- 4.3.1 To complement this study's review of CSA's efforts towards care and reintegration of prisoners (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5), NAO reviewed the complement of the Care and Reintegration Unit (CRU) and how the Agency is ensuring that this unit has sufficient human resources. During meetings with the audit team, CRU management asserted that, while its

complement has increased recently, additional professionals are required for this complement to be at an optimal level.

4.3.2 When reviewing the complement of the CRU during the past two years, this Office verified that, despite experiencing an upward trend, the increase could only be considered as marginal. Table 4 below presents the complement of the unit's five staff categories from 2019 to (May) 2021 and shows how the staff complement at the CRU has increased by six employees (or 35%), when compared to 2019.

Table 4 - CRU Staff Complement from 2019 to 2021

CRU Group	2019	2020	2021 (as at May)
Management	2	2	2
Care Plan Section	7	11	8
Psychology Section	4	3	6
Social Work Section	3	4	5
Sports Section	1	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>

4.3.3 When queried on the ideal complement being sought by the Agency within this section, CRU management explained that identifying the total number of required employees is not an exact science. Specifically, NAO was informed that when increasing the capacity of staff in care and re-integration units, particularly social work, the workload increases correspondingly. This is mainly because the increased attention on more prisoners would identify additional issues which would need attention and addressing from the CRU. In view of this, CRU management asserted that the ideal complement is to be revisited periodically as the prison population is continuously changing and the needs of prisoners are constantly developing.

4.3.4 Notwithstanding the above, NAO was informed that the current target is to engage a further 12 professionals, namely nine psychology professionals, two social workers and one sports coordinator. NAO was however informed that recruiting such individuals was proving to be a challenge as their availability on the labour market is limited. When queried on how this target was set, CRU management replied that this is based solely on the professional experience of CRU management and that there are no comprehensive and documented studies supporting this claim.

### NAO Observations

4.3.5 While NAO positively notes the increased engagement of professional personnel within the CRU, it remains concerned on the relatively high number of vacant positions that persist. This consideration directly negatively impacts the Agency's rehabilitative capacity with obvious repercussions.

4.3.6 While not contending that additional professionals are required within the CRU, NAO perceives it as a shortcoming that no in-depth documented study to this effect was carried out. Similarly to

what was already stated in the case of COs, NAO feels that such a situation could be preventing CSA's management from fully understanding the correct level of recruitment which is required in this particular area.

## **4.4 Recommendations**

- 4.4.1** The CO complement within CCF is a critical player for the good performance of the Agency. In view of this, NAO is of the opinion that, in order to determine the ideal complement of these officials, CSA should support the knowledge gained through its experience by periodic, comprehensive and documented studies (featuring clear justifications) to ensure that the optimal complement is truly identified. In addition, the Agency is also urged to document critical discussions by its management in this respect.
- 4.4.2** NAO additionally recommends that, following the identification of the optimal complement, the Agency endeavours to fill in any identified vacancies at the very earliest. In so doing, CSA would minimise the use of overtime and employ this tool on an exception basis only rather than rely on it to conduct normal operations.
- 4.4.3** While acknowledging that the performance of COs is constantly monitored by their direct superiors, NAO still recommends that a formal performance assessment procedure is set up and the respective documented records are kept. This would ensure that the Agency is adequately preserving transparency and an audit trail of COs performance.
- 4.4.4** While once again acknowledging the extensive induction training course CSA delivers to new recruits, this Office encourages the Agency to ensure that any training provided reaches all COs, particularly those who have been employed with the facility well before the introduction of the current induction course. NAO further recommends that this training is formalised into a comprehensive program which is periodically refreshed and re-delivered.
- 4.4.5** NAO acknowledges the challenges (namely shortage of supply) that CSA faces in recruiting professional individuals for its CRU. This notwithstanding, the Agency is encouraged to persist in its efforts to recruit such personnel and to explore new initiatives on how these can be attracted towards CSA early on in their respective careers.
- 4.4.6** Even if this Office does not contend the need for additional professionals within the CRU, it still urges CSA to draw up a comprehensive and documented study which delineates the ideal staff complement required for this function to operate adequately.

# Chapter 5 | Rehabilitation Effort at CCF

This section of the report reviews the effort being allocated by CSA towards the functions of care and reintegration of prisoners. This analysis particularly focuses on the spread of this effort among the prisoner population, as well as on the different initiatives, or lack thereof, being undertaken by the Agency.

## 5.1 Local Legislation

5.1.1 As already stated in previous parts of this report, S.L. 260.03 regulates the prison system in Malta. Upon reviewing this legislation, the audit team noted that this mandates the instilling of discipline and responsibility, while being more yielding to the prison's obligation towards rehabilitation of inmates. Specifically, Article 3 (1) a of S.L. 260.03 primarily dictates that the "aim of these regulations is to instil in prisoners a sense of discipline and responsibility". This Article then proceeds to state that, "so far as possible", these regulations are also intended to enable prisoners to reform their character while undergoing their punishment according to law.

5.1.2 A review on subsequent parts of this law further confirms the above sentiment. First and foremost, the audit team noted that reference to rehabilitation efforts is very limited in this legislation when compared to other processes and procedures (relating to functions such as security, order and discipline). In addition, in the few instances in which the rehabilitation function is mentioned, this Office noted that, similar to Article 3, these are worded in a manner which is somewhat malleable. For example, Article 11 (b) relates to the preparation of training programmes for inmates. However, this law does not impose that such programmes are always prepared, but rather states that these "may" be drawn up "in appropriate cases". Similarly, Article 46 (3), which deals with education initiatives at the prison, does not strictly oblige the Agency to provide educational opportunities but merely states that any prisoner who is able to profit from such programmes "shall be encouraged to do so".

5.1.3 In addition, the audit team also observed that Article 4 (a ii) of Chapter 516 of the laws of Malta (Restorative Justice Act) calls for the drawing up of a care plan for each sentenced inmate. This care plan is mentioned a number of times both in this law as well as in S.L. 260.03. This notwithstanding, NAO noted that neither of these laws specifically defines obligations for this care plan to be actually executed. The audit team therefore interprets that the only legal requirement in this respect is for the compilation of these care plans but not their actual implementation itself.

## NAO Observation

5.1.4 Acknowledging that having in place an effective system of rehabilitation within any correctional facility is of critical importance, this Office is concerned about the fact that local legislation does not specifically impose sufficient obligations on CSA to this effect. This consideration may lead to the Agency being fully compliant with local law even in the event that insufficient effort is actually invested in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

## 5.2 Documenting Care Plans

5.2.1 As the preparation of a care plan stems from a legal requirement (point 5.1.3 refers), NAO sought to determine the manner by which these are prepared by CSA. During meetings with CSA's CRU, the audit team was informed that, at the point in which an inmate is admitted to CCF, he/she is allocated a care plan co-ordinator who is entrusted to draw up a core needs assessment after acquiring background information on the prisoner. These assessments are discussed in weekly CRU meetings so that a care plan for the respective inmate is drawn up. NAO was informed that a basic care plan is drawn up for all newly admitted inmates, while prisoners with a sentence longer than two years, or who would require special attention, are afforded with an enhanced care plan. These compiled care plans would lay out the rehabilitation effort intended to be invested in each inmate, namely through the identification of services required and the frequency of interventions deemed necessary for each case. CRU management further highlighted that even after such care plans are drawn up, the case of an inmate still remains subject to periodic review in weekly CRU meetings. The audit team was informed that such reviews are documented in case review forms and would include assessments on different fronts on the inmate's progress and any recommended courses of action accordingly, as well as a date for the next review. CRU management also highlighted that set care plans are subject to change, particularly if original targets are achieved.

5.2.2 As a Board of Inquiry was set up to scrutinise, amongst others, procedures, policy and regulations followed by the Agency when it comes to the rehabilitation of inmates (Chapter 1 refers), the audit team resolved not to comment on actual interventions carried out by CRU members nor did it endeavour to assess in detail the technical quality of the service offered, or the adequacy of frequency of appointments. This notwithstanding, NAO reviewed a sample of 30 files to assess the manner by which such interventions are documented. It is important to note that, due to the sensitive nature of these files, NAO resolved to not retain any copies of this documentation, but rather carried out its review on site and took notes accordingly.

5.2.3 During this exercise, the audit team noted that the process as discussed in point 5.2.1 was well captured in most of the reviewed files<sup>7</sup>. In addition, documentation within the reviewed files was generally found to be comprehensively filled-in and sufficiently clear with the depth

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<sup>7</sup> As discussed later in Section 5.3, this process was introduced in February 2020. During this review, files pertaining to inmates who were admitted after this date, were found to reflect well the process as discussed in point 5.2.1. An evident effort to adhere to this process (retrospectively) was also identified in reviewed files relating to inmates admitted prior to this date, though not to the extent of the previously mentioned cohort.

of the documented interventions in the large majority of cases being adequate enough for an external reviewer to understand the processes undertaken.

### NAO Observation

5.2.4 NAO is satisfied that the reviewed care plans are documented well enough for an external reviewer to easily follow and understand, thus preserving an audit trail of interventions with each inmate.

## 5.3 Care Plan Coverage Across Prisoner Population

5.3.1 During meetings with the CRU, the audit team enquired whether all inmates currently at CCF have care plans, with the former replying in the negative. CRU management explained that the process (as discussed in section 5.2) was started in February 2020 and therefore inmates admitted prior to this were not necessarily afforded this service. This notwithstanding CRU asserted that, while every new inmate after this cut off period underwent this process, this Unit also endeavoured to address the backlog created at the start of this initiative by starting to design such plans for inmates admitted at CCF prior to February 2020. CRU further highlighted that this backlog is being prioritised according to each inmate's release date (that is giving a higher priority to inmates who are due to be released sooner than others) and in the event that a prisoner would have applied for parole.

5.3.2 In view of the above explanations, the audit team sought to quantify the number of prisoners who currently do not have an individual care plan. From information forwarded by CSA, NAO could deduce that, as at July 2021, 114 prisoners did not have a care plan out of the 716 total inmate population (that is 16%). Apart from these, the audit team noted that 22 inmates (3%) had been offered this service but refused it, while care plans were still being drawn up, as at time of writing, for another 35 prisoners (5%). This means that, as at July 2021, 602 inmates (84%) had care plans at CCF. NAO feels it is important to highlight that, as a means of verification that the stated 602 care plans were actually drawn up, the audit team chose the reviewed 30 file sample (section 5.2.2 refers) at random from the provided list, and noted that all chosen cases did in fact feature a care plan.

5.3.3 When asked what is the reason for a significant segment of inmates (16%) that are still not provided with a care plan, CRU officials stated that this is mainly due to the fact that the initiative was only introduced last year and that, as already discussed in Chapter 4, the Unit is understaffed.

### NAO Observation

5.3.4 While acknowledging that significant efforts were made by the CRU to draw up individual care plans for most of CCF's inmates, this Office remains concerned with the fact that 16% of the prisoner population are still not afforded with this service. This means that a significant portion of the prisoner population is not even being provided with what is a legal requirement in this

respect (point 5.1.3 refers) and what is considered as a basic foundation to a systematic care and reintegration programme.

## 5.4 Educational Opportunities and Work Placements at CCF.

### Educational Opportunities

5.4.1 As part of this review, NAO enquired on the number of opportunities to enrol in an educational programme available to inmates at CCF. In reply, NAO was forwarded with information on courses made available to inmates in the period between October 2020 and September 2021. As Table 5 below shows, the audit team observed that throughout this period CCF provided 23 opportunities to inmates to enrol in such programmes, though a significant number had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the audit team was forwarded with information which showed that from 2019 to May 2021, five inmates were pursuing more extensive educational programmes at external organisations.

Table 5: Courses offered to CCF Inmates Oct 2020 - Sept 2021

Period	Name of course	Number of participants	Status
October 2020 – June 2021	Basic ICT	9	Completed course
	Spanish	29	Incomplete: stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	English – Elementary	11	Incomplete: stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	English – Basic	30	Incomplete stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	Digital Photography	10	Incomplete stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	Maltese	18	Incomplete stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	Cookery	6	Incomplete stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	Mathematics	10	Incomplete stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	Kickstart	15	Incomplete stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions
	Occupational Health and Safety	20	Group 1 complete and group 2 ongoing
	Life Skills Group	10	Group 1 complete and group 2 ongoing
Thinking Skills	14	Group 1 complete and group 2 ongoing	
August 2021 – September 2021	Maltese	11	Ongoing
	English	15	Ongoing
	Mathematics	13	Ongoing
	Digital Literacy and Numeracy	11	Ongoing
	Sport	12	Completed
	Cookery (incl. Occupational Health and Safety)	11	Completed
	Welding (incl. Occupational Health and Safety)	8	Ongoing
	Bakery	15	Ongoing
	Scaffolding and Rigging	9	Ongoing
	Art	12	Ongoing
Performing Arts	17	Ongoing	

5.4.2 Delving further into this issue, NAO noted that, in all, these opportunities consisted of a total of 316 placements for individual courses (including those which had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The audit team however perceives the possibility that one inmate would have availed of more than one of such opportunities, implying that the quoted number of placements does not necessarily reflect the number of individual inmates who benefitted from such initiatives. With this consideration in mind, NAO feels that, although significant, the 316 placements made available throughout this period is limited for a total prison population of approximately 800.

5.4.3 The audit team enquired on the reason for this limited number of opportunities, with CRU Officials affirming that it is not uncommon for interest from inmates to attend educational programmes (particularly academic rather than vocational ones) to be low. The audit team was additionally informed that, generally, inmates would prefer to work rather than to engage in educational programmes.

5.4.4 While taking note of the above argument, the audit team still enquired with CRU Officials on whether there were instances in which inmates would have expressed the will to participate in an educational initiative, but this was not afforded. The reply given by CRU was not clear and consequently the audit team could not determine whether this could also possibly be a contributor to the limited number of educational opportunities offered.

#### NAO Observation

5.4.5 While NAO acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively impacted the number of educational opportunities provided by CSA to prisoners, and that lack of interest from inmates could be a challenge, this Office still feels that the number of such initiatives and their attendances are too limited to qualify as an adequate prison-wide effort towards rehabilitation through education.

#### Work Opportunities Outside and Inside of the Facility

5.4.6 Considering work placements as an important aspect toward rehabilitative efforts, NAO enquired on such opportunities being offered to inmates at CCF. During this review, the audit team noted that work placements can be classified in two broad categories, namely those within the confines of the facility itself and those which would require an inmate to work at external locations.

5.4.7 Starting from the latter category, NAO was forwarded with information from CRU officials on work carried out by inmates outside of the facility. Primarily, the audit team observed that, as at time of writing, only 18 inmates were engaged in such initiatives. The average duration of these placements up till time of writing was that of 221 days, with the longest engagement standing at 911 days and the shortest at 43 days.

- 5.4.8 Apart from these, information forwarded also showed that, between 2019 and (May) 2021, 43 other inmates worked outside of the facility. However, the audit team also observed that some of these placements' durations were very short. Specifically, NAO calculated that the average duration of these work placements lasted only 124 days and ranged from a maximum of 710 days to a minimum of 2 days. Delving further into the forwarded information, this Office however noted that work out of CCF for the large majority of these inmates (30) was terminated either because they were released on parole, their sentence was terminated, or they were transferred to start a programme with an NGO. Seven others of these inmates were only assigned to work out of CCF on temporary assignments, with the average duration of these opportunities only lasting 24 days. However, NAO was informed that these individuals were all offered work inside the facility itself after the termination of this temporary assignment. The remaining six inmates who worked outside of CCF during the period in question, had their assignments terminated either as a disciplinary measure, due to a change in care plan or following a termination of employment by the placement provider.
- 5.4.9 When enquiring with CRU Officials on inmates who work within the facility, the audit team was informed that these placements do not fall under this Unit's responsibility but are rather within the remit of the operations section. From documentation forwarded by CSA in this respect, NAO noted, that as at September 2020, there were a limited 65 internal work placements at the facility. This documentation further specified that these placements involved work in the bakery and kitchen, electrical and mechanical areas, masonry and carpentry, stores and logistics, and fitting. When discussing this issue with CSA management, the latter verbally asserted that, as at September 2021, 355 inmates were engaged in work within CCF's confines, though most of these would only be engaged to clean the divisions' common areas. When NAO requested documented evidence to substantiate this claim however (including the date of engagement and, if applicable, termination of these internal placements), this was not forthcoming. Notwithstanding, the audit team was forwarded with documentation which detailed the launch of an Information Technology related pilot initiative, which is engaging 14 inmates. From information provided however, the audit team could observe that, as at time of writing, these inmates were only engaged on this initiative for one to two hours every day they were called in.

## NAO Observations

- 5.4.10 This Office feels that the number of substantiated work placement opportunities, both inside and outside the facility, is very limited when compared to the total population of prisoners. This notwithstanding, NAO acknowledges that this area features multiple challenges particularly insofar as external placements are concerned. Specifically, this Office notes that such placements feature elevated security risks and their availability is limited to the opportunities offered by potential external placement providers.
- 5.4.11 NAO is also concerned by the fact that the CRU has limited visibility on internal work placement opportunities. This Office feels that such a situation implies that work placements within

the facility are to be considered only as privileges rather than an integral part of a broader rehabilitative effort on each individual inmate.

## 5.5 Aspects of Care and Reintegration in CSA Staff Training

5.5.1 While, as already discussed in Chapter 4, ongoing training to CCF officials could be more substantial and better attended, NAO notes that different aspects of the rehabilitative function were included in such courses. Specifically, from information provided by CRU officials, the audit team noted that between January and May 2021 training delivered to COs included: Applying Restorative Justice; Biopsychosocial Wellbeing; Cognitive Behavioural Challenges; Primary Healthcare and Healthy Lifestyles; Resettlement of Inmates into Society; and Transition of Inmates into the Labour Market. A training course entitled “Sentence Planning” was also delivered to members of the CRU.

### NAO Observation

5.5.2 NAO acknowledges that the Agency is investing efforts to instil the importance of the rehabilitation function in its staff, particularly COs, through related training. However, as already stated in Chapter 4, this Office feels that such training is somewhat limited in its spread among CCF staff.

## 5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 As the design of local law is beyond the remit of government entities such as CSA, NAO recommends that the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement considers proposing a change in legislation so that the function of rehabilitation within correctional facilities in Malta is elevated and enhanced through better and comprehensively defined legal obligations.

5.6.2 While acknowledging the efforts by CRU to design care plans to most inmates as at time of writing, NAO strongly urges the former to, at the very earliest, see to the remaining segment of inmates who still do not benefit from such a service. In so doing, CSA would ensure that all its inmates have a set way forward detailing what is deemed as necessary for the latter’s rehabilitation and eventual reintegration in society upon release and that the Agency is fully compliant with the legal requirement for these plans to be drawn up.

5.6.3 NAO once again acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively impacted the extent of educational opportunities provided by CCF to inmates during the period under review, and that the lack of interest shown by a portion of the inmate population in this regard presents a challenge to the Agency. As these initiatives are considered as pivotal to the rehabilitation function however, this Office still urges the Agency to ensure that more inmates benefit from such opportunities and increase the frequency by which these courses are delivered.

- 5.6.4 This Office also highly recommends that CSA continuously explores avenues through which work placements could be made more widely available to the inmate population. Acknowledging the limitations and elevated security risks associated with external work, NAO makes emphasis on internal work opportunities. Apart from work to support the facility's operations per se, this Office supports the idea of the creation of internal work which end-product would be intended to be supplied out of the facility. In particular, such end-products could be specifically targeted to assist entities (governmental or otherwise) that provide services to vulnerable segments of society. In so doing, the facility would be elevating its social image and assist in the mitigation of the generally negative view by which inmates are perceived by society at large.
- 5.6.5 This notwithstanding, NAO feels it is of paramount importance that any internal work placements are offered to inmates within a systemic rehabilitative framework and not merely as a privilege. To this end, this Office is of the opinion that the CRU should be involved in the allocation of any internal work placement opportunities to ensure that it is aligned with the care plan of the respective inmate.
- 5.6.6 With respect to more widespread training to COs on rehabilitative aspects, reference is made to recommendation 4.4.4 whereby such training could be included in this broader initiative.

# Chapter 6 | SOPs and Information Systems at CCF

In this chapter the audit team assessed to what level CCF's Standard Operating Procedures are standardised, as well as the tools being used by the Agency to manage the extensive information it is obliged to maintain.

## 6.1 SOPs within CCF

6.1.1 As part of its review, NAO enquired on whether CCF has an adequate Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) system in place which regulates its operations. To this, CSA management stated that no formal and fully documented system is in place as at time of this study but asserted that all employees are well conversant with their duties. This notwithstanding, the audit team was still forwarded with a number of documents which seem to regulate distinct functions within the facility. Specifically, this documentation related to processes which amongst others regulate:

- i. the use of tools and equipment within the facility;
- ii. escorting of high-risk prisoners;
- iii. training, use, deployment and administration of service dog teams;
- iv. procedures following a suicide case;
- v. drug searches on newly admitted inmates;
- vi. procedures following the discovery of a deceased inmate;
- vii. use of weapons by COs;
- viii. entrance and exit in and out of the facility;
- ix. firearm training;
- x. urine testing for substance abuse; and
- xi. use of force.

6.1.2 When reviewing the forwarded documentation, the audit team observed that these were presented in varying formats and to different extents of formality. It was also noted that the distinct operations of a correctional facility are much more numerous than those regulated with the above-mentioned documents.

6.1.3 When enquiring with CSA management about this situation, the latter acknowledged that improvements in this area are needed and proceeded to highlight that a private consultancy firm has been engaged to document, in a professional and in a standardised manner, SOPs, policies, and applicable manuals for CCF's operations. The audit team was informed that this set of policies and procedures will be divided into four major sections namely, security, operations, administration and training as well as inmate services. NAO was provided with five

documents which present an overview of all the SOPs that are going to be developed through this exercise.

## NAO Observation

6.1.4 While NAO acknowledges CSA's assertion that all CCF personnel are well conversant with their duties and responsibilities, it perceives as a significant shortcoming that policies and procedures are not documented adequately, comprehensively and in a standardised manner, particularly in a sensitive operational environment such as that at CCF. Having no structured written procedures could give rise to inconsistent application of processes (or the perception thereof) thereby creating otherwise avoidable complications. This notwithstanding, NAO acknowledges and commends the fact that CSA has initiated the process for these policies and procedures to be developed and drafted.

## 6.2 CCF's Records and Information Management System

6.2.1 During discussions with NAO, CSA management asserted that the documentation maintained by the facility on inmates was extensive. This information can be classified under the following broad areas:

- i. Inmate Records (such as computation of sentences, personal and biometric information etc);
- ii. Care and Re-Integration Unit (such as psychological records, core needs assessments, care plans, social work activity, etc);
- iii. Discipline;
- iv. Medical Records; and
- v. Inmate Accounts and Services (such as inmates workbook, work placements, inmates' personal financial accounts etc).

6.2.2 As part of this review, the audit team visited CCF to observe the manner by which this information is retained and operated by CSA officials. While NAO noted that electronic information is kept by the facility in a vast number of databases, not all documentation is inputted and kept in such a manner, with the Agency still relying to some extent on hard copy documents.

6.2.3 During meetings with CCF's records office, the audit team also observed that individual databases are kept in silos with no links through which these could interact with each other. This Office was additionally informed that the administration and overall responsibility of each individual database is not assigned to one central administrator, but rather each database is controlled by the respective department to which the particular information relates. CCF's records office acknowledged that this setup has a significant negative impact on the efficiency by which records are updated, recalled or reviewed. Notwithstanding, during site visits at the facility the audit team observed that CCF officials appeared to be well conversant with the information system in place at the time.

- 6.2.4 NAO was informed that in order to improve this situation, CCF is in the process of designing a new Offenders Management System (OMS). This OMS is intended to replace the current system of multiple databases hosted in different places and will therefore create a central and integrated repository for critical information on all offenders. When queried on the status of this project, CSA asserted that, as at time of writing, a contract of service has been signed and that the Agency is currently working with the service provider to set up the new system.
- 6.2.5 Despite CSA's acknowledgement on the current information system's deficiencies, NAO still sought to assess the latter's adequacy given its significant role in CCF's operations. To this end, the audit team conducted a pilot study on five randomly selected inmates and reviewed all related documentation being kept by CCF. This was done to assess whether this generated and retained documentation, even if stored inefficiently, was sufficient for this Office, as an outsider, to easily follow and comprehend. In this respect, the audit team was able to adequately understand the documents found within. Given the large amount of documentation in question, and the fact that the aforementioned pilot study revealed that related documents were adequately kept, NAO concluded that further analysis in this respect would not prove to be cost effective. To this end, the audit team resolved to not review files on a larger sample of inmates and report solely on the abovementioned pilot exercise.

**NAO Observations**

- 6.2.6 The lack of a centralised information system within CCF is a shortcoming which causes concern. This situation significantly increases the risk of human error which, within a sensitive environment such as that of CCF, can carry serious consequences. NAO notes that this also has a real effect on the efficiency by which the Agency's information is accessed and utilised, to the obvious detriment to CCF's operations.
- 6.2.7 NAO acknowledges the securing of an agreement between CSA and a service provider intended to design and launch a new OMS. NAO considers this investment as a necessity for the streamlining of CCF's information management.

**6.3 Recommendations**

- 6.3.1 This Office urges CSA to ascertain that the outsourced process of developing and drafting policies and procedures is completed at the earliest so that associated benefits can be reaped. Following this, NAO recommends that these are integrated in CO's training programmes (both at induction stage and ongoing) and that they are kept constantly and easily accessible to all personnel, possibly through electronic devices at key points throughout the facility.
- 6.3.2 The Agency is encouraged to persist in its efforts to expedite the full design and implementation of the new OMS so that it can start reaping its benefits at the earliest.

## Concluding Remark

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This Office acknowledges that the running of any correctional facility, not least CCF, is a very demanding undertaking which features multiple high-risk facets and is heavily characterised by sensitive issues. This notwithstanding, such an operation still needs to meet standards which benefit today's society. In this respect NAO positively notes the high level of cleanliness observed throughout the facility, the evident order by which it is run and the significant investment which has been undertaken to enhance the facility. This Office also positively notes the drastic decrease of drug availability within CCF, thereby mitigating a core problem to a significant segment of inmates, giving them a better chance at an improved life upon their release. These measures help to lay a solid foundation for any systematic rehabilitative process which should be given the highest priority by the facility's management.

Of particular concern to this Office, this review has however also showed that CCF's current physical capacity is significantly strained, resulting in obvious negative implications on security, personal hygiene and privacy. NAO additionally draws attention to the fact that, notwithstanding progress registered in the design of care plans for the majority of inmates, the rehabilitation effort within CCF does not reach all of the prison's population. Educational initiatives and work placement opportunities are clearly limited, resulting in a wasted opportunity to a number of prisoners. NAO however also acknowledges that this shortcoming could partly be the result of factors extraneous to the Agency, such as the shortage of available professionals in this area, as well as other challenges, particularly the disinterest exhibited by a segment of inmates toward rehabilitative opportunities. Above all, NAO attributes this issue to a long-standing lack of commitment towards rehabilitation by successive administrations, which manifests itself in the malleable requirements on rehabilitative efforts cited in local law. This essentially leaves care and reintegration initiatives in a situation in which they have to compete with, rather than complement, stronger legal obligations such as those relating to discipline and good order.

In view of these considerations, NAO urges CSA to give due attention, at the very earliest, to the recommendations presented in this report so that a better overall service could be provided to the prisoner population.

## 2020-2021 (to date) Reports issued by the NAO

### NAO Annual Report and Financial Statements

May 2021 National Audit Office Annual Report and Financial Statements 2020

### NAO Audit Reports

December 2020 Report by the Auditor General on the Public Accounts 2019

December 2020 A review of implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 1 - Malta's efforts at alleviating poverty

January 2021 Performance Audit: Is LESA suitably geared to perform its traffic enforcement function adequately?

February 2021 Performance Audit: The effectiveness of plastic waste management in Malta

April 2021 The contract awarded to the JCL and MHC Consortium by the St Vincent de Paul Residence for the management of four residential blocks through a negotiated procedure

May 2021 Performance Audit: Preliminary review: NAO's role in reviewing Government's measures relating to the COVID-19 pandemic

June 2021 Follow-up Reports by the National Audit Office 2021 Volume I

July 2021 Performance Audit: Fulfilling obligations in relation to asylum seekers

October 2021 Information Technology Audit: Examinations Department

October 2021 Follow-up Reports by the National Audit Office 2021 Volume II

November 2021 Performance Audit: Smart and RF meters' contribution to more accurate and timely utilities billings

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