

## **Prison officer prevents disadvantages caused by communication restrictions in Vantaa Prison**

Vantaa Prison is a remand prison for male remand prisoners living in Southern Finland. The prison has 185 prisoner places and a separate unit of the Psychiatric Hospital for Prisoners. The main tasks of Vantaa Prison are to implement remand imprisonment and arrange prisoner transports. The purpose of remand imprisonment is to secure a criminal investigation, court proceedings and enforcement of a sentence and to prevent the remanded person from continuing criminal activities.

Vantaa Prison consists of different wards, such as a ward for underage remand prisoners, a ward for young remand prisoners aged 18 to 25, a ward for working prisoners and wards for remand prisoners with communication restrictions ordered by a district court. At the moment, Vantaa Prison has seven wards where remand prisoners with communication restrictions are placed.

I work in wards where the remand prisoners' communications are restricted under the Coercive Measures Act.

In practice, it means that the remand prisoners' communications outside the prison are heavily restricted: they cannot call, send letters or communicate with their

families. In Vantaa Prison, the prison officers focus a certain part of their working hours on remand prisoner with communication restrictions in order to support them to keep their heads together during the restrictions.



### **Communication restrictions**

The communication restrictions are laid down in chapter 4 of the Coercive Measures Act (806/2011): When the criminal investigation is in progress, contact between an apprehended, arrested or remanded person and another person may be restricted if there are grounds to suspect that such contact would endanger the purpose of the apprehension, arrest or remand. The restriction of communications may contain restrictions on correspondence, the use of the telephone, meetings or other contacts outside the place of confinement or the prison, or association with a certain apprehended, arrested or remanded person.

In Vantaa Prison, the daily number of remand prisoners with communication restrictions is about 60–90. In 2021, Vantaa Prison had in total 498 remand prisoners with communication restrictions.

The aim of the communication restrictions is to secure the work of the authorities carrying out the criminal investigation. As part of my work, I try to prevent the disadvantages caused by the communication restrictions by motivating the prisoners to take part in activities outside their cells. In practice, it means organising different kinds of sports or other activities, which I supervise, guide and instruct. I arrange work activities, such as chopping and packing firewood or cleaning, for a small group of prisoners. In addition, I organise activities linked to social rehabilitation together with the instructors working in the prison.

*“The remand prisoners have thanked me for arranging activities and the daily routines of many of them have changed for the better. Outside the prison, they may have slept in regularly, but now they are getting up early in the morning when the*



*cell doors open. In my opinion, the level of activeness affects both mental and physical well-being. When the body and mind are in balance, the person feels better.”*

The work of prison officers requires great interaction, cooperation and planning skills, an ability to manage large entities and think creatively and courage to try new things. Prison officers must be strong-minded to address problems, tolerate stress and adjust to changes. They need to be familiar with administrative matters and able to make assessments and take responsibility.

The work includes reinforcing dynamic security. In a prison setting, dynamic security is defined as follows:

**According to the concept of dynamic security, security applies to everyone and everything. It emphasises the significance of interaction, presence and observation. In prison, dynamic security means a method, where the staff prioritises the daily communication and interaction with the prisoners in their work. Dynamic security is based on high professional ethics and aims to ensure good order, rehabilitation and preparation for freedom.**

*“In my opinion, the social impact of my work is quite high because I can influence reoffending for my part. If even one person chose not to commit an offence, it would have a wide variety of benefits, including financial benefits.”*

Due to my work, I decided to research the matter as part of my master’s degree under the following title:

**Experiences of prisoners with communication restrictions on remand in custody and development of activities in remand prisons.**

The research focused on remand prisoners in two different wards in Vantaa Prison whose communications were restricted by an order of a district court. There was no previous research data on the activities of remand prisoners with communication restrictions and their impact on the remand imprisonment.

The aim of the research was to find out whether remand prisoners with communication restrictions participated in activities and how the activities affected them. In addition, the research brings up the challenges posed to the prison by the remand prisoners with communication restrictions.

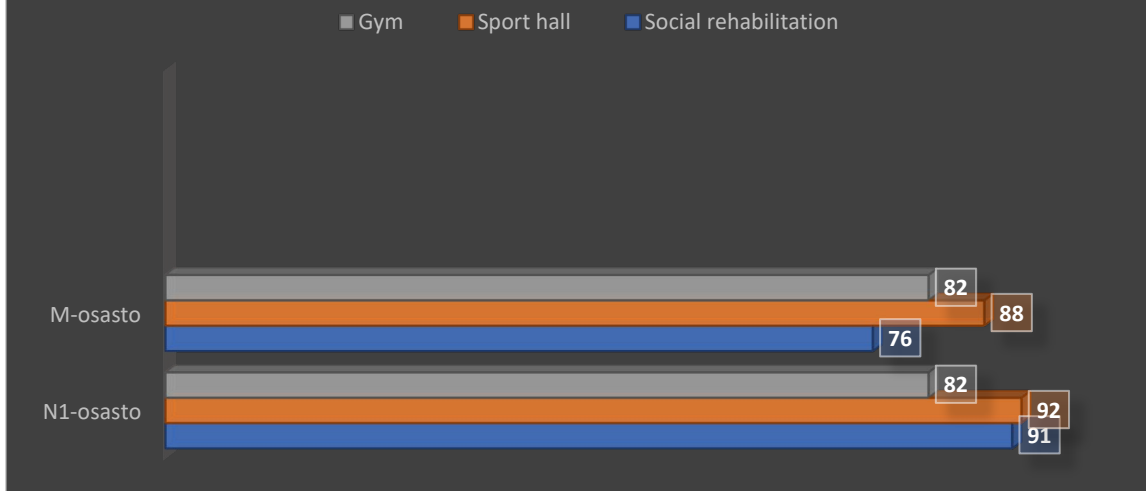
The research was conducted between 1 August and 2 November 2021, when physical and social rehabilitation activities were arranged in two different wards. In addition, 11 remand prisoners with communication restrictions were interviewed for the research and described how they had experienced the effect of the activities during their remand imprisonment.

The research showed that more than 80 per cent of the remand prisoners in both wards were willing to participate in activities organised by the prison and the activities affected their remand imprisonment. In particular, the physical and mental well-being of the remand prisoners with communication restrictions had increased during the research.

The research resulted in 11 recommendations which Vantaa Prison can use to develop its practices. The recommendations were linked to increasing the time remand prisoners with communication restrictions spent outside their cells, interaction between the remand prisoners and supervision staff and the cooperation with the stakeholders.



## PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES IN PERCENT IN 1.8-2.11.2021



Link to the thesis: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/744128>

Please note that only the abstract of the thesis is in English but the thesis itself is in Finnish.

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