

IRISH PRISONS INSPECTORATE

LIMERICK PRISON

LIMERICK INSPECTION: 26th, 27th NOVEMBER
2002 AND 10th MARCH 2003

Role of the Inspector of

Prisons and Places of Detention for Ireland

The Office of the Inspector was established by an order signed by the Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform on the 21st February 2002. There is a statutory provision in the forthcoming Prisons Authority Bill for the establishment of a Prisons Inspectorate. The following are the terms of reference for the Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To -

- (a) Inspect and report, as the Inspector considers appropriate, to the Minister on prisons and places of detention under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- (b) Report in particular on conditions in those institutions and on the regimes in place for prisoners and detainees.
- (c) Investigate and report on any specific issue referred to the Inspectorate by the Minister.
- (d) Submit to the Minister an Annual Report on the activities of the Inspectorate.

GUIDELINES:

In carrying out an inspection of any prison or place of detention the Inspector will, in general terms, have regard to such matters as:

- (a) the quality of the regime;
- (b) the attitude of staff and inmates
- (c) health, safety and well-being of prisoners
- (d) the conditions of the buildings
- (e) questions of humanity and propriety;
- (f) any general pattern which may indicate possible inadequacies in the management of the prison

As the terms of reference provide, the Minister may also request the Inspector to investigate and report on specific issues or incidents connected with the running of any prison or place of detention. Furthermore, the Inspector may raise issues of concern, arising out of an investigation or an inspection, either with local management, the Director General of the Prisons

or the Minister. To facilitate the Inspector in carrying out his functions, he may consider complaints from prisoners but only to the extent that such complaints are relevant to the functions of the Inspector. The Inspector will, not later than four months following the end of each calendar year, submit a written report to the Minister on his activities during the year.

It is intended that the annual report will be published. The Inspector will also furnish the Minister with such information relating to his activities as the Minister may require from time to time.

The functions outlined above will also apply to any child detention centres and remand centres designated by the Minister under Section 150 of the Children Act, 2001.

These terms of reference may be further refined in the forthcoming Prisons Bill in the light of the experience gained in the interim. The Inspector will also be entitled to report and make recommendations, in the light of experience gained, on the contents of the legislation which will eventually make statutory provision for the Prisons Inspectorate.

Any enquires or comments about the inspectorate should be directed in the first instance to:

The Irish Prisons Inspectorate
1 Lower Grand Canal Street
Dublin 2

Phone no. 6610447

Fax: 6610559

E. Mail: info@inspectorofprisons.gov.ie

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Statistical Information
4. Governor's Briefing
5. Inspection of Prison (Female)
6. Inspection of Prison (Male)
7. Workshops
8. Prisoners Visitors Waiting Room Area
9. Isolation Cells
10. Meeting with Various Groups
11. Probation and Welfare
12. Visiting Committee
13. Meeting with the Prisoners
14. Health Services
15. Other Agencies
16. The Samaritans
17. Education
18. Health and Safety
19. Bullying
20. Recommendations
21. Conclusions

REPORT ON VISIT TO LIMERICK PRISON

COMMENCING THE 26th NOVEMBER 2002 TO 27th NOVEMBER 2002

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On the 26th and 27th of November 2002 an inspection of Limerick Prison was carried out by the Inspectorate Team which consisted of:

Mr. Justice Dermot Kinlen	The Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention
Mr. James Woods	Special Advisor Prisons Inspectorate
Mr. Martin McCarthy	Prisons Inspectorate
Dr. Jim Ledwith	Consultant
Prof. Claire Carney	Consultant (the 26th November)
Prof. Paul McCutcheon	Consultant

1.2 The purpose of inspection is to identify issues and take note of any areas of concern or good practice which may pertain.

Date: Mr. Justice Dermot Kinlen
The Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Limerick Prison is located at Mulgrave Street and part of it is the oldest prison in operation in the Country having been built between 1815 and 1821 on a three acre site.
- 2.2 The Prison holds sentenced and remand male and female prisoners aged from 17 years upwards. It is a committal prison and receives male prisoners from Counties Limerick, Clare and Tipperary since the females are committed from courts throughout the Munster region. Inter prison transfers are also detained there.
- 2.3 In recent years some subversive prisoners were held there and when they occupied part of it, the prison staff were augmented by the Gardai and the Army. Both the Gardai and Army are no longer there with the removal of the subversive prisoners. The current capacity of the prison is 173 male and 16 female. A new wing has been erected at the prison in recent years to replace the old "D" wing and another new wing is at present under construction. There is also a new accommodation facility opened for the female prisoners known as "E" wing.
- 2.4 A new automated telephone system has been installed which allows prisoners to have daily telephone contact with their families or legal advisors. There is a facility within the telephone system which allows prisoners confidential contact with the Samaritans. There is an additional cordless telephone which is programmed solely with the Samaritans telephone number which is also available to prisoners who wish to contact them. Practically every area of the administration and operations of the prison has been computerised since 2000.
- 2.5 All wings of the prison have t.v's electrical power points thus facilitating other equipment i.e music systems, cd players, tea making facilities etc within each cell. The new wings have in-cell sanitary facilities while the old A & B wings still have the slopping out practice of chamber pots in the cells.

- 2.6 In front of the prison there is a piece of sculpture which reads “The divided self. The separation of people from family, community and society is interwoven with the struggle for personal expression creativity and survival of the spirit in an environment where freedom is denied”. This sculpture was constructed by students of the education unit at the Prison while working under the guidance of the Sculptor Simon Moller.
- 2.7 The prison has a full time psychologist, a part time G.P who attends at the prison each morning Monday - Friday. A psychiatrist and a dentist attends at the prison one day each week while an optician is available on request. Some counselling therapists are also available part time as required. The prison has medical orderlies/nurses full time.
- 2.8 The Chaplaincy service at Limerick Prison is multi denominational and led by one full time chaplain while others attend as required on a part time basis.
- 2.9 There are three Probation and Welfare officers attached to the prison i.e one senior officer and two main grade officers.
- 2.10 The educational requirements of the prisoners is under the care of seventeen teachers and one senior supervisor. There is also a library service available to the prisoners.

3. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Prison consists of the following cell accommodation:-
Double Cells - 64
Single Cells - 47
Single Cells occupied by two people - 7
Isolation cells - 3

There will be an additional 78 single cells accommodated in the new "C" division which is due to open March/April 2003. On the first day of inspection (26th November 2002) the Limerick Prison population was 175 males and 14 females.

4. GOVERNORS BRIEFING

- 4.1 The Governor Mr. Laffan was unfortunately absent but was most apologetic for his perfectly understandable absence. He was well represented by Deputy Governor Jim Collins, Assistant Governor Padraig Twomey, Chief Officer Riordan and ACO Eamon Mullane. We were provided with a room with plenty of boiling water, tea, coffee, biscuits available at all times. The hospitality extended to the Inspectorate was very much appreciated.
- 4.2 Deputy Governor Jim Collins conducted the Governor's Briefing with the Inspector and his team. Reference was made to the new drug free wing which is under construction at present and is due for completion in March/April 2003. The Governor also pointed out that part of Limerick Prison is the oldest in Ireland and that the present construction programme is very welcome and indeed necessary. The new building on completion known as the "C" wing will also incorporate part of the administration offices.
- 4.3 The Prison provides work and training opportunities for prisoners although they are somewhat limited because of the physical size of areas they have to work within. The main work areas are those which facilitate the running of the prison such as cleaning, catering and laundering. The established workshops consist of the laundry, the kitchen, the upholstery, the craft and fabric shops. The Governor informed us that four out of the five workshops carried certification for the prisoners at the end of their course if they reach the required standards. He also outlined that they had planned for an industrial cleaning training programme for 2003.

- 4.4 The Governor also outlined a developing problem within the prison of illegal drugs being thrown over the boundary wall which he is treating very seriously.
- 4.5 The Governor outlined a number of incidents where prison officers were the target of intimidation outside the prison. This is indeed a very serious situation. The authorities i.e the Governor, The Irish Prison Service and the Gardai are all aware of it.
- 4.6 The Governor also informed us that there had been allegations of a sexual nature made by two women prisoners against male officers. A very thorough investigation by the Gardai and Prisons Authorities was carried out. These allegations were found to be false, nevertheless they had an effect on staff morale.
- 4.7 The Inspector raised the point of transfer applications from officers. The Governor informed us that there are three applications at present. This small number of transfer requests would suggest a reasonably satisfied workforce. The Governor also informed us that 100 officers are seeking a transfer into Limerick Prison.
- 4.8 There is a prisoner protection policy in place. This can be implemented at any stage from the time of induction or anytime throughout the term of sentence being served if so required.
- 4.9 We were informed of plans for the construction of a new female prison at the Roxsboro Road side of the prison which will be similar in design to the Dochas Centre at Mountjoy. If this development programme is completed the "E" wing now housing female prisoners will be incorporated into the male prison.

5. INSPECTION OF PRISON (FEMALE)

5.1 A section of "E" wing has been demolished and reconstructed. It re-opened just 10 days prior to our visit. The old part of the prison which housed the female prisoners, is now closed except for a servery area. This section represents a tremendous improvement in conditions for female prisoners. The cells are bright with good ventilation and include a new type window. They also have toilet, washing facilities and T.V within them. On the day of inspection there were fourteen female prisoners accommodated in this area.

5.2 E1

In addition to the cells there is a small reception within this area which is adequate. A passageway from this reception leads on to an exercise yard which is monitored by CCTV. There is a laundry for the exclusive use of washing female prisoners' personal clothing. The other general items such as towels, bed linen, etc are washed in the main prison laundry. There is an interview room which doubles as a surgery. There is also a gym which is quite small and sparsely equipped.

5.3 E2

There are six double cells within this area and an IT Unit which doubles as a classroom for subjects other than IT. There is a modern purpose built kitchen, fully equipped, for use by the education staff for domestic science classes. A small recreation room is provided but on the day of inspection it was also being used for art classes.

5.4 There is one modern isolation cell in "E" wing which has in-cell sanitation, alarm call bell, and is fitted with a water sprinkler and a fire alarm activator.

5.5 The Inspectorate was concerned about the design of the cells in "E" wing with regard to the location of the dignity screen therein. The screen around the

toilet facilities gives privacy to the prisoner when being observed from outside the cell door. This design would be totally satisfactory if it were a single occupied cell. However, as two or more have to share the same cell, the use of the toilet is in full view of the other occupants. This is a most unsatisfactory situation.

- 5.6 Another observation made by the Inspectorate related to the showering facilities for the entire unit being located in the reception area at "E1". This results in prisoners having to leave their landings and go to the reception area for a shower. If the showers were located on or just off the landing area it would be more beneficial to the management of the units. It is felt that this is something that should have been taken into consideration at the planning stage of this area.

6. INSPECTION OF PRISON (MALE)

6.1 RECEPTION

The reception area is where all male prisoners are received and processed into the prison. All items of clothing, particulars and personal belongings are itemised, special needs identified and all recorded. There are two holding cells, three cubicles for dressing and undressing plus three individual showers in the area. A medical orderly records the medical history and assesses the prisoner's risks regarding previous history of self harm etc. Normally, the doctor sees the new committal prisoner the following day and the assessment is continued by the professionals at the medical unit over the next week or so.

6.2 GYMNASIUM

The gymnasium was examined and found to be fairly well equipped. It is very well used by the prisoners, however the Inspectorate felt that the addition of two punch bags with appropriate quality gloves for the use on same would be

of benefit to this area. It was indicated that this would be received very positively by the prisoners and indeed by the supervising officers.

6.3 *THE LIBRARY*

The library is located in quite a small area but is very well stocked. There are 7,000 books at present stored within it but they are unable to display them all because of the demand on space. It was stated that there were an additional €6,000 worth of books ordered for the library. But with the limited space available it will be impossible to store and display the additional stock. The Inspector recommends an expansion to the entire library area so that both books and other displays can be viewed in their entirety.

6.4 *THE KITCHEN*

The kitchen is a modern facility which provides four meals per day per prisoner for the entire prison. It is well laid out and fully equipped, and the hygiene throughout was of an excellent standard. Part of the work of the kitchen involves training for up to twenty prisoners in all aspects of catering including food preparation, cooking, presentation and overall hygiene. The kitchen received the hygiene mark award from Excellence Ireland in August 2002. The Inspectorate noted that the interaction and liaison between prisoners and staff working within the kitchen was excellent and that the prisoners pride themselves in their individual work.

7. **WORKSHOPS**

7.1 *THE CRAFT SHOP*

The craft shop is operated under the supervision of a woodwork teacher supplied by the Educational Unit and a prison officer. Although the work area is small it was found to be well equipped. The work consisted mainly of wood turning and the production of decorative woodwork. We were informed that

eight to nine prisoners at any one time would be facilitated in this craft shop. There is also a FETEC certification programme in place if they reach the required standard.

7.2 *THE LAUNDRY*

The laundry allows the prison to be self sufficient. All laundering requirements of the prison are conducted here with the exception of female personal female clothing. Each prisoner has a change of clothing and bedding at least once per week with no limitation on underwear. The laundry provides prisoner training for up to fourteen prisoners and is under the supervision of an Assistant Industrial Supervisor and an officer. The laundry was found to be neat and tidy for a work/training area.

7.3 *THE UPHOLSTERY WORKSHOP*

The upholstery workshop was established over 15 years ago. It operates under the supervision of a prison officer instructor with other officers assisting him. Their work appeared to be of a high quality and they undertake work from the community on a commercial basis as well as refurbishment work within the prison. On the day of inspection there were 13 trainees at work. The maximum being 15 and there is a FAS certification programme in place here if the prisoners achieve the necessary standard. Prisons should be encouraged to interact with the commercial world outside like this unit.

7.4 *FABRIC SHOP*

The fabric shop is under the supervision of an Assistant Industrial Supervisor and an officer who produce a range of industrial garments for the Prison Service. A visiting tailor and pattern maker instructs prisoners and fabric shop staff in a modular training course which leads to FAS certification on satisfactory completion of training.

8. PRISON VISITORS WAITING ROOM

8.1 At present the reception area for visitors is two portacabins placed between a low wall at the side of the footpath and the main boundary wall. We were told that they are to be removed within the next few months. It is planned that the visitors entrance to the new waiting room inside the prison will be via a pedestrian door at the main gate which is under construction/refurbishment at present. It was brought to our attention that presently when visitors arrive early for their visit they are able to wait in the waiting area which provides shelter, seating, heating and is out of view of the general public. However, it was indicated that this facility will not be extended to the new arrangements. Perhaps an arrangement which would allow them into the prison to the new waiting area prior to their appointment time would solve this issue. The Inspectorate recommends that the Governor look at this arrangement urgently.

8.2 VISITS AREA

The main visiting area consists of a long wide table with a barrier of approximately one foot high placed down the centre and an officers observation station at each end and in the centre of the room.

Prisoners are seated at one side of the table while their visitors sit on the opposite side. There is concern within this area with regard to the smuggling of illegal articles. CCTV is in operation when visits are being conducted. Any prisoner caught in the smuggling of illegal articles are subject to a disciplinary Report (p.19). If found proven may be placed on screened visits for up to six months as a punishment. There is also a prosecution policy in place if a visitor is found smuggling or attempting to smuggle illegal articles into the prison.

8.3 OPERATIONS ROOM

The main operations room or central control room is a hub of activity with 24 hour 365 day monitoring in place. It is a rather small working area for the officers and some of the equipment would appear to be in need of modernisation.

9. ISOLATION CELLS

9.1 There are two isolation cells in the male prison, one is modernised and the second is to follow suit in the near future. There is no sprinkler system within either cell although both are fitted with a fire alarm detection system and an emergency call button. Both have in cell sanitation.

10. MEETINGS WITH VARIOUS GROUPS

10.1 POA:

The Inspector met the local branch representatives of the POA. The main issues raised were:-

10.2 The staff were suspicious of any management developments including appointments. Indeed the appointment of the new Inspector of Prisons is regarded as a continuity of the management structure. In response the Inspector was reassuring that his office is totally independent.

10.3 Fully agreed with the upgrading of the prisons facilities but disagreed with layout and planning. They were not asked their opinion at the planning stage. They were seen merely as knockers when they complained on completion of the development. The Governor assures us that he meets regularly with the P.O.A and any new plans or development are discussed and outlined prior to commencement. Plans of the new female prison were discussed with staff

and were posted on the wall of the meeting room in the staff quarters on four separate dates. Submissions from staff on the plans were welcomed.

10.4 Accusations made by female prisoners against male staff, also a lack of female staff in the female prison.

10.5 There are many people in prison who should be in a mental hospital and management have not faced up to this reality. The prison staff are not capable of dealing with the insane.

The Governors response to this was that of agreement. However, committals from the Courts must be accepted. There are difficulties in getting them transferred to C.M.H from the prison due to lack of spaces. If these prisoners could be transferred to local psychiatric hospitals it would improve the situation immensely.

10.6 They suggested to management that a holding cell facility should be provided in a local hospital to protect prisoners, staff and public but nobody acted upon their suggestion or recommendation.

10.7 Remand prisoners are not being accommodated in a separate wing and management are therefore in breach of the 1947 rules.

10.8 The staff feel intimidated and are not protected with backup from the Prison Service. The whole attitude of the Prison Service towards the staff is based on financial considerations.

10.9 There are disastrous industrial relations within the Prison Service and there is no real consultation or information being shared with the union members.

11. PROBATION AND WELFARE

- 11.1 The Probation and Welfare Service staff currently consists of a senior officer who works part-time in the prison and two other full-time staff members. The probation and welfare service provide support to prisoners in both dealing with personal matters and in the recommendation of programmes dealing with offending behavior.
- 11.2 The probation and welfare staff felt that there was a good relationship between themselves and the prisoners. However, this was contradicted by the prisoners (see 13.4)
- 11.3 The weekly multidisciplinary meetings chaired by the prison Governor, were said to be proving most valuable in establishing good foundations for the ongoing development of sentence management. They also were considered to be very effective in the implementation of group work programmes with prisoners through making maximum usage of limited resources.
- 11.4 Preparation for Release: The major difficulties being experienced by probation and welfare staff in relation to prerelease work with prisoners were described as :
- (a) the lack of accommodation available to some prisoners when their sentences have been served
 - (b) The need for the provision of hostel accommodation and day care attendance centres to which such prisoners would be obliged to report.

Much concern was expressed in relation to the financial cutbacks recently announced by Government in Community Employment Schemes which run centres on a non-profit basis for those seeking training or retraining to enter or re-enter the workforce.

The Governor outlined that improvements have taken place recently regarding accommodation for prisoners on release with the opening of a St. Vincent De Paul Society run hostel which caters for 48 people and another hostel in St. John's Square which accommodates 22 people. Of course not all of these places are for released prisoners, but some may be accommodated there.

- 11.5 The problems being experienced in accessing entitlements from the Community Welfare Service when prisoners are released on a Friday afternoon or over the weekend, were said to be a cause of hardship to ex-prisoners. It was stated that other difficulties to be experienced by prisoners was the seeking of General Medical Services cards prior to release.
- 11.6 The Inspector was amazed that during the meeting it came to his notice that the Probation and Welfare Service had never met members of the visiting committee. He had to introduce them to each other. It is certainly a criticism of both parties that neither party had met the other. Obviously the visiting committee should be familiar with all that is going on in the prison and particularly with the work of the probation and welfare service likewise (the probation and welfare service) should know about the work, plans and recommendations of the visiting committee.

12. VISITING COMMITTEE

- 12.1 The visiting committee consists of twelve people coming from Counties Longford, Galway, Offaly, Kerry, Limerick and Limerick City. There is a 50% representation of females on the committee. Some of them have been on the committee for many years. This makes it all the more amazing that they never met the welfare staff and indeed vice-a-versa.

12.2 They welcomed the decision in principle to build a new female prison on the same lines as the Dochas Centre in Dublin. They stated that the present unit is much better than the original which was diabolical and which did nothing for either the prisoners or staff. The Inspector was familiar with the old female unit and described it as appalling. However they stated that the present unit is unsatisfactory in that it is far too small for the number of prisoners who now, or in the future may be incarcerated there. The female population, as well as the male population, is inclined to increase and there is nothing to suppose that there will be any radical reduction. They outlined that the Prison Service should be aware of this growth and provide accordingly.

12.3 The committee made other various useful suggestions as regards the health care services. They indicated that there should be far greater access to local psychiatric hospitals for patients as recommended by the prison psychiatrist. This should apply to both those in custody and those on release from the prison. They felt that prisoners should not be denied basic psychiatric care which is available to all other citizens.

The Inspector concurs with the views of the visiting committee and recommends that psychiatric care for prisoners should be on par with that provided in the general community.

13. MEETING WITH THE PRISONERS

13.1 During the prisoner group meeting the Inspectorate outlined the purpose of the visit and stated that they wished to have the prisoners views on a number of issues.

13.2 The inspectorate outlined various issues on a questionnaire and received the prisoners views on same. The meeting then opened into a general

discussion after the completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into seven categories which are outlined hereunder with the prisoners response to each category.

13.3 *Communication*

Use of telephones, letters, visits and legal representatives. The Prisoners outlined that they were not facilitated with a phone call to family or friend on committal to the prison and it was 2 -3 days after committal that they were allowed to contact their family. Now they can telephone their family free of charge once per day. They can write and receive letters and visits and they had no complaints regarding either facilities. They claim that they had requested their legal representative to come to the prison to visit them but they failed to do so.

13.4 *Information*

They stated that they received an information booklet on committal which outlined the rules and their entitlements. However, they complained that if it is ones first time in prison everything is new and one does not understand what the information booklet means. They suggested that it would be good if a liaison prisoner was appointed to convey such information to the prisoners on committal as the new committals could relate better with their own fellow prisoner. They stated that the rules and entitlements were outlined verbally to them at their first interview with the Governor/Chief after committal. The Inspector enquired if they had a copy of the 1947 rule book available to them and they stated they never saw it and did not know how to acquire it. Prison

management stated that the 1947 rule book is available at all times in the library.

13.4(a) Regarding information concerning what was taking place in the prison re visitors, visiting committee, programmes, etc, they stated that such information generally came to them by word of mouth from other prisoners. They knew about education classes and knew how to get enrolled in a class. They stated that they did not know how to see the probation and welfare officer or a member of the visiting committee. They also stated that they had no belief in the probation service and that the visiting committee members had no interest in prisoners.

13.5 *Drugs and Alcohol*

- (a) Half of the group admitted that they used illegal drugs prior to coming into prison while the other half of the group stated they did not touch drugs. None of the group had partaken of drug treatment prior to committal to prison. They stated that they did not take illegal drugs within the prison and that such drugs were difficult to obtain. None of them had received any treatment for drug dependency within the prison. [Later in the questionnaire they stated that they received drug counselling. See 13.9 (c)]
- (b) One of the group stated that he had an alcohol problem prior to committal while the others described themselves as “moderate drinkers”. The one person who admitted having a problem with alcohol stated he had not

received any treatment or help for his problem within the prison. However, when questioned regarding A.A. meetings he outlined he had attended them in prison. He stated that the only help that he got from the probation and welfare service was in organising the A.A meetings.

13.6 *Bullying and Racism*

The group stated that they were not bullied by other prisoners and generally not by staff either. They outlined that it was an easy going prison and there wasn't much hassle generally regarding racism. However, they stated that they enjoyed the large number of Indians who were in the Prison some time ago as they were different. The only bad thing about them was that some of the local prisoners were transferred to other prisons to make room for them. They felt that "foreign" prisoners were treated differently by Irish Nationals and that some staff had a poor attitude towards "foreign" nationals. However, they stated that all foreign nationals partook of the same programmes and facilities as were available to the Irish prisoners and that they mixed well at recreation, work place, education, etc.

13.7 *Food*

The group described the food as being very good with a fourteen day menu cycle in operation. The quality, serving and portions allocated were excellent. The only complaint raised was the issue of disposable plates for serving. If these paper plates could be changed it would improve the overall food presentation. They also stated that there was no dietician attached to the prison or at least they were unaware of one.

13.8 *Healthcare*

The group had different views concerning the health services provided at the prison. They all agreed that it was easy to see the doctor, dentist, nurse and medical orderly but difficult to see the psychiatrist and had to apply via the doctor to see the psychologist. They stated that there was no optician or dietician and there was no replacement for the dentist when he went on holidays and therefore there was no emergency cover during the period of his absence. They thought the services they received from the doctor and the nurse/medical orderly was poor. They stated that the only thing they issued was panadol. Health promotion awareness is non-existent regarding the prevention of H.I.V, Hepatitis etc. They all smoked and are getting help within the prison to stop smoking. [They further elaborated on counselling and psychological support at 13.10 (d)]

There is a contradiction to some of these statements by the Health Service Personnel. (See 14.4)

13.9 *Relationships & Regimes within the Prison*

- (a) They thought the prison was very clean and their visitors were received very well. The group stated they got on well with both staff and fellow prisoners. None of them was ever on disciplinary report (P.19s). None of them had ever been placed within the cladded or strip cells. They thought the atmosphere within the prison very much depended on the particular officer in charge of the wing. Most of the time it was good, however, that could change with different officers and their different mood swings.

- (b) They stated that there was sufficient work for all prisoners who wanted to work within the prison. Some of the work courses were considered to be beneficial to securing a job on release.
- (c) Some of them availed of drug counselling and educational courses and found them good.

13.10 *General Discussion*

In the general discussion which followed the completion of the questionnaire the prisoners raised a few issues:-

- (a) The value of the vouchers (extra cash) issued in Limerick Prison was much smaller than what was issued in other prisons. e.g (€2.54 in Limerick as against €10 to €12.50 in other prisons). The prisoners felt that they were doing similar work or work training. They felt that it was an unfair system. The Inspector recommends a review of this anomaly (if it exists) to be carried out by the Irish Prison Headquarters and a standard fee put in place which would be applicable to all prisons on a unified basis.
- (b) The other issues of concern to them was how prisoners were going to be selected for the new drug free wing when it opens. They felt that undeserving cases might find themselves on that wing. They felt that drug addicts who partook of the programme and are continuously drug free or who

are partaking of a drugs treatment programme successfully (methadone maintenance) should be eligible to go into this new wing. They also felt that such prisoners if complying with the rules (i.e remaining drug free) should be eligible for the same concessions and privileges as other prisoners who were not convicted of drug related offences. (Sentence Management is of course a policy matter to be determined by the Minister).

- (c) A number of practical suggestions were made relating to access to the gym during evening recreation for prisoners who work full or partime in the kitchen. They raised the question of having a computer for study purposes in their cells. They expressed concern that the timing of classes for those who are involved in prison work. Delay in getting to classes when called for same was another worry.
- (d) They stated that the arrangements for counselling and psychological support were unsatisfactory. In particular they stated that the delay in securing appointments with the relevant professionals was such that, in effect, vital services were unavailable when they were most needed.

14. HEALTH SERVICES

- 14.1 The Inspectorate met nursing officers, the psychiatrist and psychologist attached to medical unit. One of the points raised was the possibility of moving the present surgery to the ground floor area of the prison, near the circle, as in this location area the prisoners could have easier access to it.

- 14.2 They also outlined that the surgery needed to be enlarged. In placing the whole medical area in the one location with separate rooms for psychologist, psychiatrist and dentist would make a lot of sense.
- 14.3 They outlined the necessity of a waiting room. They stated that female prisoners had to stand outside on the landing while awaiting treatment from the dentist and were subjected to catcalls and remarks from male prisoners. A new waiting room would eliminate this problem. The Inspector considers this suggestion to be worthwhile and recommends that the Irish Prison Service Headquarters considers same.
- 14.4 It was stated that the psychologist saw prisoners via the G.P, nursing officers or if they were referred to him from the multidisciplinary review meeting. The psychologist stated that he also took self referrals. However, from interviews with the prisoners they stated that they could only see him via the G.P. An optician attends the prison on request. There is no dietician attached to the prison. However prisoners with a special dietary requirement are referred to the dietician at the local hospital. Emergency dental surgery is also carried out at the local hospital when the dentist is on an annual leave.
- 14.5 The Inspectorate were also informed of aggressive behavior amongst prisoners to be a problem and it would help if there was a behaviour management programme put in place. The Governor informed us that anger

management counselling is available and that prisoners are referred for counselling through the local liaison meetings which are held weekly.

- 14.6 It was pointed out that there was a good liaison policy amongst the medical unit personnel. However this did not extend to the prisoner's family doctor on discharge from prison.
- 14.7 They also outlined that there was a serious demand from prisoners for benzodiazepines tablets to be prescribed but this has been resisted by the medical staff. There is a growing problem within the Limerick area of heroin coming on the market as heretofore the main illegal drug within this area was benzo. Attempts are made to smuggle illegal drugs into the prison. However there is a policy to prosecute those caught or attempting to do so.
- 14.8 The problem of getting prisoners transferred into the Central Mental Hospital was raised. They stated that there are prisoners suffering from schizophrenia and behavioural disorders who should be hospitalised but they cannot get them admitted.
- 14.9 The medical staff also felt that there was a need for a full time drug and alcohol abuse Counsellor for the prison. They outlined that four to five prisoners are on a methadone maintenance programme and that 85 ml of methadone was used daily.

14.10 It was felt that overall a very good general healthcare service is operated for the prisoners within Limerick Prison. The area of some concern was “D1” where there is limited exercise facilities and prisoners should only be accommodated there for the shortest period possible.

15. OTHER AGENCIES

15.1 Members of alcoholics anonymous, narcotics anonymous and gamblers anonymous are available to meet with prisoners who wish to see them. The Inspectorate met with an Narcotics Addictions Counsellor who informed them that she attends Limerick Prison one morning per week to see those who were on methadone. It was her last morning providing this service within the prison as she is leaving and no replacement, as yet, had been appointed.

15.2 She felt that methadone was of value but not to be used for life. She did not believe it should be abandoned by the development of a drug free unit within the prison.

15.3 It was her opinion that the detox programme in Limerick Prison was not good and stated that 300 ml of methadone per day was being used.

[The 300 ml dosage of methadone is contrary to that stated by the medical personnel. (see 14.9)]

THE SAMARITANS

- 16.1 There is contact by free telephone with the Samaritans. These calls are not monitored or recorded and do not effect a prisoners allowance of a call per day to his family or solicitor. Prisoners can also write and receive letters uncensored to and from the Samaritans.

17. EDUCATION

- 17.1 The head teacher outlined that there were a total of 22 teachers involved in the educational aspects of the prison. Two of the teachers were off on career and secondment leave. There were seven permanent teachers whole time and ten were part time. Three of the teachers were on EPT contracts.
- 17.2 A number of other people, who are not attached to the Limerick Prison teaching staff, visit the prison and give of their time and professionalism e.g sculpture workshop, printing, ceramic and mosaic, stained glass, story telling, drama, etc.
- 17.3 The subjects covered at the prison range widely from literacy, reading and writing to Open University. Five prisoners entered leaving certificate, nine prisoners entered Junior Certificate and two prisoners were studying Open University courses during 2002. The education unit also encourages prisoners to work towards accreditation whenever it is relevant and appropriate. This covers areas such as sound recording, music performance,

caring for children, to practical personal skills, tailoring, wood turning, communication, etc.

- 17.4 The educational staff are also involved in various other multidisciplinary activities that take place within the prison such as courses jointly run with other staff e.g Probation and Welfare, Prison Officers, Chaplains, Health Boards, FAS etc.
- 17.5 The educational staff at Limerick Prison displayed a fantastic exhibition in the City's Art Gallery entitled "The Great Escape" a few months ago. It was a multi-media collection of remarkable work done at the prison. The Inspector at an earlier date had seen this exhibition with the Gallery's enthusiastic curator. The Inspector was hugely impressed at the diversity and professionalism of the many exhibits.
- 17.6 The Head Teacher brought the Inspectorate on a tour of the various classes in operation. She made the point very forcibly that the school was scattered all over the place resulting in her having to send teachers to different parts of the buildings. Obviously it would be much better if the teaching unit was unified instead of putting the teachers in various sections and buildings.
- 17.7 The Inspectorate found the teaching facilities inadequate. Classrooms were cramped and often dirty. There was a lack of proper storage space for art and craft materials. The computers were antiquated. The Inspector recommends that when the plans are being drawn up for the refurbishment of

the rest of the prison that consideration should be given to having the educational unit placed within the one area and proper storage facilities provided.

18. Health and Safety

18.1 During the course of the visit the inspectorate had a meeting with the two staff members responsible for health and safety issues within the prison but especially the fire aspect of health and safety.

18.2 They produced records of the various inspections, examinations and evacuations which were carried out over the last year. They were most helpful and forthcoming with the information sought. Some of the responsibility for maintaining and servicing of the fire extinguishers, fire hose reels and fire detectors in the kitchen have been contracted out to the APEX Company, who carry out such examinations regularly as per their contract. A contract has also been placed with Seimens Organisation for the inspection and certification of all fire detectors and the fire alarms within the prison. Records of visits and inspections by both of these organisations are recorded by the Chief Trades officer.

18.3 Both officers emphasized the fact that the Limerick Fire Brigade is based just immediately across the road from the main gate of the prison and can reach the prison, if called upon, within 2 to 3 minutes. Furthermore, they outlined that the policy within the prison is that the fire service are contacted immediately irrespective of the volume or ferocity of the fire.

- 18.4 Records show that fire evacuation drills (which included the use of hoses and fire extinguishers) took place in the “E” Division (twice) and in “A” and “B” divisions during 2002. The staffing levels involved in these exercises were similar to the staffing levels on night duty. Both the senior officers stated that they found the exercises very useful as they exposed some faults within the system and also, the time for each evacuation was reduced with each drill practice.
- 18.5 An example of a fault exposed was the failure to account accurately for the correct number of prisoners and staff within the division. Another problem encountered was a prisoner who refused to leave his cell or to follow instructions given by the staff involved in the fire drill. This resulted in an additional 3 minutes being added to the evacuation time. It is noted that no evacuation drill took place in “D” division. (We were informed by Prison Management that evacuation fire drill exercise did take place in D wing between 14th and 18th October 2002).
- 18.6 Some of the fire extinguishers have to be placed in areas that prisoners have access to and prison management encountered difficulties with such extinguishers on a regular basis being interfered with. However, they stated that this problem has almost been overcome by changing the seal on top of the extinguishers and placing those observed interfering with them on (P19) disciplinary reports. They stated that the Governor took a very serious view

of all health and safety issues and the severe punishments imposed on the prisoners for damaging the fire extinguishers reflected his concerns.

- 18.7 Fire sprinklers are installed in the special isolation cell on E2 wing (female) but this is not applicable to the isolation area in “D” wing (see 9.1). There are smoke detector alarms on “A and B” division landings and in the extraction tunnel plus the attics. Smoke sampling appliances are fitted in the new “E” wing the “D” wing and the “C” wing when it comes into operation. The colt extraction system (special vents installed in the roof) is in place in all of the wings with large fan assisting same in “E” wing. This system can also be operated manually by flicking a switch. This is a most powerful system in clearing a smoke filled area in a very short space of time.
- 18.8 Records show that the emergency lighting is checked every three months which includes the emergency exits lights. If in the event of a disturbance and the mains electricity supply being cut off, there is a second set of emergency lighting installed for such situations.
- 18.9 There are three emergency stairs with exit points on each of the three landings which are left unlocked during periods that prisoners are locked in their cell. (There is a Governor’s order and instructions regarding these exits to be left unlocked during all periods of lock-down). There is an emergency exit stairs at the end of “D” division landing and a central evacuation stairwell. Evacuation routes are outlined via school to yard plus three other routes.

- 18.10 There are two ring water mains installed within the prison, one for domestic use and the other for fire hose use. There are fourteen stand pipes, all clearly marked, with one in the circle centre point of the prison. There are thirty nine hose reels and the water pressure is suitable for the fire brigade's equipment. The fire brigade personnel are familiar with the lay out of the prison and know where the hydrants, hose reels etc. are located. The fire brigade personnel have also brought their newest and largest fire tender into the prison for a practice run and were able to have free access to all locations necessary.
- 18.11 There is staff accommodation available at the prison but only a very small number of staff avail of it. (one or two stay there a few nights during the week when their duty roster is not suitable for them to travel home). There is both burglar and fire alarms fitted to the building. If someone is residing there for the night he must notify the supervising officer on duty accordingly. No fire evacuation practice has taken place there as no permanent residents reside there.
- 18.12 Regarding B.A (breathing apparatus) fire training, 20 staff members have received the full refresher training while 87 staff have completed part training (donning and doffing). Records show that March 2002 was the last time that staff fire drill training took place. There appears to be an urgent need to bring this B.A and fire drill staff training up-to-date and the Inspector recommends accordingly.

19. BULLYING

- 19.1 There was an indication that bullying between prison officers was a significant problem, however, on deeper probing there appeared to be a reluctance to divulge much information or give any examples as to what type of bullying was being spoken of. The whole issue became rather vague with a reluctance to continue discussion on the matter.
- 19.2 The question of using local staff services (support) officers to deal with such matters or having such matters dealt with by an outside agent was raised. There appeared to be differences of opinion as to who were the most suitable people to deal with such matters. It is difficult for the inspector to make a comment or recommendation on this matter with the limited information supplied.
- 19.3 However, it is the Inspectors opinion that the matter was raised because of the concern of some staff and that there is bullying taking place in some form or other. The Inspector recommends that the Governor should keep this matter very much under review.

20. Recommendations

- 6.2 Gymnasium.... **The addition of two punch bags with appropriate quality gloves for the use on same**
- 6.3 Library.... **The expansion of the entire library area**

- 8.1 Access to the visitor waiting area in the new development.... **An arrangement which allows access for visitors who arrive early**
- 12.3 Psychiatric care **The Inspector recommends that psychiatric care for prisoners should be on par with that provided in the general community**
- 13.10(a)The value of the vouchers **The Irish Prison Service Headquarters should establish a basic standard amount which would be applicable to all prisons on a unified basis.**
- 14.2/3 The providing of one medical area with new waiting room attached...**The Inspector recommends that the Irish Prison Service Headquarters includes this in any future refurbishment plans**
- 17.6/7 Teachers having to be sent to various buildings and inadequate storage space.... **When plans are being drawn up for the refurbishment of the rest of the prison that consideration should be given to having the educational unit placed within one area and that proper storage facilities be provided.**
- 18.12 Records show that March 2002 was the last time that staff fire drill training took place.... **Staff fire drill training should be updated on a regular basis**

19. Bullying amongst staff....**The Governor should keep this matter very much under review**

21. Conclusions

The prison consists mainly of the “old” and the “new”. The new wings replacing the old ones are constructed to a high standard with modern facilities while the old wings are in desperate need of modernisation.

Re-building is ongoing resulting in hoarding surrounding part of the inside of the prison which is a general building site.

The prison overall is quite small and cramped due to a lack of space to expand or extend. If a new women's prison is constructed, as planned, it will help somewhat as the male prisoners could then move into the area now occupied by the female prisoners.

The reconstruction of the old women's prison is very welcome as heretofore the conditions of the accommodation for women prisoners were deplorable.

The design of the cells in the newly constructed women's prison regarding the dignity screen around the sanitary facilities is unsatisfactory when more than one prisoner occupies the cell. It is a pity that with a new facility, that better planning could not have gone into the layout of the cell or else ensure that only one prisoner occupies the cell. The showering facilities for women prisoners being located in the reception area could also have been better planned.

Members of the prison visiting committee and the probation and welfare officers attached to the prison never met prior to our inspection. In order to have a cohesive plan in the management of the prison, it is important that all strands of the organisation meet and share their expertise towards the overall common goal in the management of the institution.

An area of concern is the sentence release management when it appears that it is a cause of hardship to prisoners who are released in the afternoon on Fridays or at the weekend and cannot get any assistance from the community welfare officer as this office is closed at those times.

Accommodation for prisoners on release is another problem which is ongoing throughout the service.

The facilities in "D1" especially the exercise area needs to be improved and it is important that prisoners are accommodated within this location for the shortest period possible.

The food was of high quality and well presented (except that paper plates are used and presentation would be improved if served on a crockery/delph plate). The staff dealing directly with the inspectorate were most helpful and courteous, however, overall staff morale did not appear to be as good as we found in other prisons. The Governor and senior staff disagree that staff morale was not good. They state that they have worked very hard at

improving the morale within the prison. However at the time of inspection overtime cutbacks were being implemented which may have had some effect on the morale.

The Prison Service Estates Management in Headquarters has informed the Inspectorate that “refurbishment work on C & E wings almost complete. Also the Gate Lock is being redeveloped and a small extension to the Laundry Building is currently under development”.